

An abstract geometric network diagram composed of light blue lines connecting various points, creating a complex web of triangles and polygons across the entire page.

# NEF State of Play

Network<sup>of</sup>  
European  
Foundations

Update  
November 2025

## Contents

|                                                                                    |    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Alliance for Gender Equality in Europe .....                                       | 3  |
| Alliance for Socially Engaged Arts .....                                           | 5  |
| Civitates - A Philanthropic Initiative for Democracy and Solidarity in Europe..... | 6  |
| European Artificial Intelligence & Society Fund .....                              | 9  |
| European Fund for the Balkans .....                                                | 11 |
| European Philanthropic Initiative for Migration.....                               | 13 |
| HUB for Democratic Culture – Faktor D.....                                         | 16 |
| Joint Action for Farmers’ Organisations in West Africa .....                       | 18 |

## Alliance for Gender Equality in Europe

Foundations involved: Fondation CHANEL, Fonds L'Oréal pour les Femmes, King Baudouin Foundation, Bodossaki Foundation, JPMorgan Chase, Fondation de France, Fondation RAJA-Danièle Marcovici

Forecasted budget 2025: approx. €3 million

Timeframe: 2025-2027 Strategic period

Background: The [Alliance for Gender Equality in Europe](#) (the Alliance) is a philanthropic initiative created in 2021 to support and strengthen the grassroots gender equality movement in Europe. Through grant-making, capacity strengthening, and awareness raising, the Alliance improves gender equality for all by transforming harmful gender norms and addressing the structural barriers that reinforce inequality and exclusion.

### **Latest developments:**

#### ***Renewals through a closed call for proposals***

In line with our new [strategic framework](#), which identifies economic inclusion as a continued priority for the next period, all Economic Opportunity grantee partners were invited to apply for a renewal of their grant earlier this year. This funding enables them to build on their efforts to advance economic opportunities for marginalised women, transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming people. By integrating lessons learned from the first phase of the Alliance's support, grantee partners can deepen their impact.

In June, the Steering Committee renewed 18 grantees for two years, for a total of €2,488,185, with an average grant of €138,233, half of which are core grants.

Two renewed *Economic Opportunity* grantees have been featured on our website through in-depth articles that highlight both the urgency of their work in local contexts and their expertise in driving lasting, meaningful change:

- [Why Muslim women face multiple barriers in Europe](#)
- [How to make work actually work for mothers](#)

To close the 2023–2025 *Economic Opportunity* grant-making cycle, the team has been conducting final reporting with grantees since August. Prior to this, we organised two capacity-strengthening webinars for our grantees on Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL), focusing on how to effectively measure and communicate impact.

#### ***Shaping of the feminist movement building sub-fund***

This year, we conducted a sector-wide consultation to better understand the needs and opportunities for strengthening the feminist movement in Europe. The insights from this mapping exercise will inform the development of a future sub-fund designed to foster greater collaboration, strategic alignment, and solidarity in order to unlock tangible, long-term wins for gender equality in Europe.

We are currently also piloting this sub-fund with an initial grant to seven women's funds, supporting their programmes and collaboration as movement builders in Southern and Eastern Europe.

### ***New opportunity and emergency grants***

The Alliance approved two [Opportunity and Emergency Grants](#), awarded in June and August 2025. These targeted, short-term grants provide timely support to organisations responding to urgent challenges or taking advantage of emerging opportunities to advance gender equality.

1. A €30 000 grant was awarded to the [Bulgarian Fund for Women](#). With this grant, it will advocate for the inclusion of gender equality as a priority in the EU's 2028–2034 budget. With civic space shrinking and anti-rights actors pushing to cut funding, EU resources are one of the few reliable lifelines sustaining civil society organisations. Protecting and expanding this funding is vital to better support grassroots movements and improve gender equality for all.
2. A €30 000 grant was given to [My Voice, My Choice](#). As a movement of 250 organisations and 3000 volunteers across Europe, it has gathered 1.1 million verified signatures calling for an EU financial solidarity mechanism to ensure everyone has access to safe abortion care. The ability of individuals to decide about their own health and future is key to advancing gender equality. This grant will help the campaign continue pressing for change at EU level.

Additionally, we conducted mid-term reporting with Martynka (providing legal, medical, and safety support for refugee women in Poland) and final reporting with My Voice, My Choice (first phase of the campaign) for Opportunity and Emergency grants awarded at the end of 2024.

### ***Grantee convening***

This year's grantee convening took place in Brussels, bringing together nearly 50 gender equality organisations and member foundations of the Alliance. Over two days, participants explored how to nurture communities and movements, sustain and scale impact, respond to a shrinking funding landscape, and address the decline of democracy and civic space across Europe. Discussions focused on shared challenges, opportunities, and resources for change.

The convening prioritised grantee-led discussions, creating spaces for critical, first-hand learning. It also included individual reflection, small group work, and plenary sessions to strengthen relationships and trust, foster opportunities for joint action, and build collective resilience and solidarity. The event's key insights and reflections were captured by the facilitator and published as a [blogpost](#) on our website.

### ***Philea Forum***

At this year's Philea Forum in Lisbon, the Alliance held a session during the Agora. Our Chair Marion Schaefer and Lead Nadège Lharaig explored how collaborative philanthropy can make a difference amid growing global challenges.

As the first and only pooled fund dedicated to advancing gender equality in Europe, the Alliance has demonstrated how collaboratives can deliver value for participating funders, the wider field, grantees, and the communities they serve. Drawing on our experience as an alliance of seven foundations, we [shared reflections](#) on what our members gain from being part of a collaborative and what it takes to make donor collaboratives work.

### ***Recruitment of new Advisory committee members***

The mandate of the current Advisory Committee concludes at the end of 2025. Through an open call for participation, we have recruited seven new members from diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise to begin their term in January 2026.

Their responsibilities will include advising on trends, best practices, and approaches to advancing gender equality in Europe; providing recommendations on the development of grant-making strategies; proposing initiatives to raise awareness within the philanthropic community; and supporting the continued growth of the Alliance.

## **Alliance for Socially Engaged Arts**

Foundations involved: Allianz Foundation, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (Chair), Cariplo Foundation, Compagnia di San Paolo, Daniel and Nina Carasso Foundation, European Cultural Foundation, Hilti Foundation, King Baudouin Foundation, “la Caixa” Foundation, Moleskine Foundation, Stiftung Mercator Schweiz.

Forecasted Budget 2024 – 2026: €2,230,000

Timeframe: July 2024 to December 2026 (pilot phase)

Background: The Alliance for Socially Engaged Arts is a philanthropic programme launched in 2025 to scale the visibility, support and impact of socially engaged arts across Europe. It brings together 11 philanthropic foundations from across Europe to align resources and expertise to amplify and scale the recognition and impact of socially engaged arts across the continent. The Alliance aims to connect and elevate visionary leaders and organisations in socially engaged arts across Europe, transforming public and policy awareness and securing vital recognition and funding to accelerate their impact.

### **Latest Developments:**

#### ***Governance***

The Alliance hosted a funders’ breakfast session during the Philea Forum in June. Over 30 foundations were invited to attend to find out more about the Alliance’s work. This sparked interest from several foundations, including from het Cultuurfonds who have expressed an interest in joining the Alliance, with conversations with them currently underway. Additionally, several exploratory meetings with foundations that reached out independently have been held, including with Fundación Banco Santander and Fondazione di Venezia. While some have shown interest in joining this pilot phase (2024-2026), others have expressed a desire to be involved in the next edition (2027-2029).

The Alliance’s team has also been working closely with its Executive Committee and Steering Committee on strengthening its governance. This has involved developing several frameworks, including an accession framework for prospective partners interested in joining the Alliance, as well as a risk management framework to help identify, manage and mitigate emerging risks. The Alliance is due to begin its strategy development process for the second edition in January next year.

#### ***The Fellowship***

In June, the Alliance announced the inaugural cohort of 15 Fellows who were selected to join the Alliance for Socially Engaged Arts Fellowship. The cohort of leaders represents a wide range of artistic disciplines, geographies and social issues. Their organisations address urgent challenges such as the climate crisis, homelessness and peacebuilding through participatory and co-creative arts approaches. Their pioneering work spans arts-led legislative models, urban regeneration and community-centred governance models, and more.

The Fellowship programme officially launched in June. Since then, the Fellows have participated in several online sessions as well as attended the first in-person residential that took place in the city of Turin in October over five days.

In terms of grant-making, over half of the Fellows have received the first €30,000 instalment that will go towards covering organisational and core costs. Over the course of the months ahead, Fellows will be invited to submit their mobility grant proposals (€5,000) that will enable them to engage in study visits, peer exchange and networking, as well as their leading question grant (€30,000), which will be used to develop a set of pilot actions in response to a key challenge or opportunity that is relevant to their organisation's mission.

### **Advocacy**

As the European Union currently redefines its strategic priorities, ahead of its new strategic cycle Multiannual Financial Framework (2028–2034) and the new Culture Compass, it presents a timely and strategic opportunity for the Alliance to engage and influence European policymakers. The Alliance's combined advocacy efforts aim to ensure that socially engaged arts are at the heart of the European ecosystem.

Achieving these goals requires partnerships that complement the Alliance's internal capacity and expertise. Three strategic partnerships will help enhance our ability to advocate for policy change, build a robust evidence base, and communicate impact effectively:

1. Advocacy partnership: Culture Action Europe – to ensure sustained engagement with EU institutions and policymaking processes.
2. Communications partnership: Shape History – to translate our advocacy and research into compelling narratives and public engagement.
3. Research partnership: The Field Consulting, KEA European Affairs and Fondazione Santagata – to conduct a dual research commission to gather evidence and insights needed to shape our strategy and strengthen the sector's position.

### **Impact, Evaluation and Learning**

An Impact, Learning, and Evaluation Working Group was established earlier this year to guide the Alliance's efforts in defining its priorities in these areas. To support this process, a two-part workshop was held with experienced external facilitators, aimed at developing a clear set of evaluation priorities that would inform a Request for Proposals as part of a closed tender process. New Silk Roads has since been selected as the Alliance's learning partner. They will lead the development of a new impact measurement, evaluation and learning framework and conduct an evaluation of the Alliance's activities during this initial pilot phase.

## **Civitates - A Philanthropic Initiative for Democracy and Solidarity in Europe**

Foundations involved: Adessium Foundation, Bodossaki Foundation, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Edmond de Rothschild Family Philanthropy, Erste

Stiftung, European Cultural Foundation, Evens Foundation, Flora Foundation, Ford Foundation, Fondation de France, Fritt Ord Foundation, Inkermann Foundation, King Baudouin Foundation (Chair), Mercator Switzerland, Oak Foundation, Limelight Foundation, Luminate Foundation, Isocrates Foundation, Open Society Foundations, EFC/Philanthropy for Impact, PKO Bank Polski Foundation, Porticus, Robert Bosch Stiftung, Rudolf Augstein Stiftung, Sigrid Rausing Trust, Stefan Batory Foundation, Stichting Democracy and Media, TreeHouse Giving, Veronika, and Shoepflin Foundation, Aspiration Tech, McArthur Foundation, The Reva and David Logan Foundation, Zeit Stiftung Bucerius, Zennstrom Philanthropies.

Income 2025: €7,811,317

Estimated income 2026: €4,440,378

Background: Civitates is the European Democracy Fund. It provides funding to organisations that protect civic space (offline and online), the freedoms to assemble and associate, and that enable access to trustworthy information. Through its three portfolios (or “sub funds”) – civic power; tech and democracy; media – it supports strong, inclusive and resilient civil society networks to defend civil liberties; a solid regulatory framework at European and national level to safeguard civil public discourse and hold Big Tech to account; and independent public interest media to support a healthy information ecosystem. In addition to providing long-term funding, Civitates has a Funding Plus component, through which the fund supports capacity development, special projects and convenings.

#### **Latest developments:**

##### ***Grant making***

Over the past few months, five new calls for proposals have been completed, including two that were not initially planned at the start of the year.

- **Media sub-fund** (€960,000): The open call attracted **58 proposals**, of which **9 were selected**. The call focused on **independent, non-profit, public interest media outlets in 7 countries including Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Italy Poland, Slovakia and Spain**.
- **Tech and Democracy sub-fund** (€1,655,483): The open call attracted **104 proposals**, of which **11 were selected** focused in 5 countries including **Hungary, Romania, Spain, Poland, the Netherlands**.
- **Civic Power – Italy** (€240,000): The open call attracted **55 proposals**, of which **9 were selected**. The selected projects reflect significant diversity in terms of organisational size, geographic spread, and thematic focus, including a couple of youth organisations.

In addition, a **core grantee** is being identified among the nine Austrian project partners selected in 2024.

Beyond regular sub-fund activities, two additional calls were launched:

- **Emergency media support:**  
In response to funding cuts from the U.S. government, Civitates initiated a closed call to provide emergency assistance to independent media outlets. Working with the **Journalism Funders Forum**, under the leadership of **Adessium, Limelight**, and others, €1.2 million was raised to support **five outlets** most affected by the cuts. This initiative enabled Civitates to support organisations in new countries (notably **Cyprus** and

**Lithuania)** and establish a new partnership with the **Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP)** to strengthen capacity building.

- **AgoraEU advocacy support:**

Based on a pan-European mapping, this closed call (€450,000) identified **five organisations** to advocate for a strong **AgoraEU envelope** during negotiations on the **Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)**. Civitates is collaborating closely with **Philea** on this initiative.

As of **November 2025**, Civitates supports **76 grantees across 22 European countries**.

### ***Grantee convenings***

A key priority this year has been to bring together new grantees to foster a strong cohort culture and to create opportunities for **peer learning, collaboration, and joint strategy development**.

- **Sub-fund 1:** In June 2025, alongside the (Re)Building Democracy conference, we convened new Civic Power grantees for exchange, learning, and strategic dialogue.
- **Sub-fund 2:** In October 2025, we convened grantee partners in Ljubljana in partnership with EU DisinfoLab, for a strategy session on how to support EU digital regulation implementation at the EU and national level.
- **Sub-fund 3:** A knowledge-sharing grantee meeting was held in Athens, in partnership with the Reference Circle alongside iMEDD, fostered practical peer exchange on fundraising, engagement, and leadership.

### ***Civitates Forum***

Preparations are well underway for the first **Civitates Forum**, scheduled for **March 2026** in **Bruges**. This will be the first gathering of all foundation and grantee partners since the fund's establishment in 2018.

The three-day programme will include a grantees-only session (day 1), a joint foresight session for foundations and grantees (day 2), and a Steering Committee meeting to reflect on the outcomes of the gathering (day 3).

The Forum will provide an important opportunity to strengthen community ties and align around shared priorities.

### ***Foresight – Democracy futures***

At the upcoming Steering Committee meeting in Athens (mid-November 2025), foundation partners will engage in a foresight exercise to explore key trends shaping democracy and civic space over the next 15 years.

The purpose is to identify potential blind spots, opportunities, and gaps relevant to Civitates' three sub-funds and to inform future strategic direction beyond 2028, when the current strategy period concludes.

Insights from this process will be further developed during the Civitates Forum, with the second day of the event designed as a continuation of the foresight exercise.

## **Team**

Following an unsuccessful recruitment earlier this year, the Learning and Impact Manager position was re-advertised in September. The process attracted over 450 applications, with three candidates invited for in-person interviews. An appointment is expected shortly, with the new team member anticipated to start in early 2026.

This role will significantly strengthen Civitates' capacity to serve as a peer-learning platform, analyse trends, and demonstrate impact across its portfolio.

The team remains small but highly effective, currently comprising 4.5 FTEs.

## ***Growing the pooled fund***

As of November 2025, Civitates counts 32 foundation partners, representing a 25% increase over the past 12 months.

This growth reflects both an increasing philanthropic interest in addressing democratic decline in Europe and the strength of Civitates' value proposition—targeting key drivers of democratic erosion such as shrinking civic space, media capture, and Big Tech's influence on public discourse.

Looking ahead to 2026, we anticipate steady growth that will allow for the renewal of current partnerships and potential team expansion to support our growing donor and grantee community.

The absence of Italian foundation in the pooled fund remains notable, although two Italian high-net-worth individuals have joined, contributing both funding and strategic input to our work in Italy.

A key priority for 2026 will be to deepen engagement with philanthropists in Central and Eastern Europe, to ensure greater geographic diversity among funders.

## **European Artificial Intelligence & Society Fund**

Foundations involved: Luminate (Co-Chair), Stiftung Mercator (Co-Chair), Adessium Foundation, AI Collaborative, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo, Fondation de France, Ford Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, King Baudouin Foundation, Limelight Foundation, Mozilla Foundation, Oak Foundation, Open Society Foundations, Porticus, Robert Bosch Foundation, Hewlett Foundation.

Budget 2025: 4,5 million euros

Timeframe: current strategy 2023-25

Background: The European AI & Society Fund pools resources from 17 diverse funding partners to mobilise a powerful public interest community in Europe fighting for Artificial Intelligence that serves people, society and planet.

Since 2020, our partners have contributed over €10.5 million to support the European AI & Society Fund's mission. With that money we have supported over 65 organisations from around Europe to shape Artificial Intelligence to better serve people and society.

### **Latest developments:**

#### ***Grantmaking***

Our Build Initiative empowers diverse tech and social justice groups from around Europe with sustained and flexible funding to shape the direction of AI in the public interest. Over the summer the Fund offered 24 of its current grantees the opportunity to apply for a funding renewal under this initiative. We have assigned €1,8m to extend funding to 14 organisations until the end of December 2027, ensuring ongoing capacity within civil society to be a strong voice for the public in AI policy.

#### ***Strengthening the field***

In June, we gathered more than 80 people from across grantee and funding partners at our annual Community Event in Brussels. Across two days, we mapped challenges and joint infrastructure needs, and dove deep in emerging topics, such as AI and securitisation. One of the outcomes that strongly came through was the growing importance of narrative change and the need for our community to build narrative power. Read more insights from the Community event.

Following the needs that grantees identified at the Community event, we have developed two organisational development training programmes that will be delivered between October and December 2025, focused on fundraising and financial resilience which will be delivered to around 40 people.

Our first Community of Practice on AI Accountability is now up and running, engaging 19 grantee organisations. The first meeting focused on transparency in AI systems, zooming into litigation and tools available to help organisations uncover how systems work and are deployed, which has been identified as one of the five main challenges grantees are facing at the Community event. This work was deepened at an in-person meeting in October. The Community of Practice will continue running until April 2026

We have hosted three Funders' Briefing sessions this year, averaging 30 registered per session, with a fourth one on digital sovereignty planned for late November. We captured insights from the most recent session into a short thematic paper on AI & welfare.

#### ***Growing the Fund***

Thanks to additional investments from existing partners and contributions from new partners, we are now close to reaching our target of bringing an additional €10m into the field.

#### ***Internal updates***

We are finalising our strategy for the forthcoming period 2026-2028.

After a successful recruitment process over the summer, we are in the process of appointing a co-director who will jointly lead the Fund alongside the current director, Catherine Miller. The incoming co-director will focus on delivery while Catherine will focus primarily on programme development.

## European Fund for the Balkans

Foundations involved: King Baudouin Foundation (Chair); Robert Bosch Stiftung; ERSTE Stiftung; Mercator Stiftung and German Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Budget 2025: 2.3 million €

Timeframe: 2007-2025

**Background:** The European Fund for the Balkans is a joint endeavour that envisions, runs, and supports initiatives aimed at strengthening democracy, fostering European integration, and affirming the role of the Western Balkans in addressing Europe's emerging challenges. The current programme strategy is focused on four overarching areas – fostering democratisation, enhancing regional cooperation, peaceful interaction and boosting EU integration. By implementing different projects, initiatives and activities, the Fund supports the process of affirming the political credibility of the enlargement policy across the Western Balkans region, improving regional cooperation among the civil society based on solidarity and demand-driven dialogue, as well as providing means and platforms for informed and empowered citizens to take action and demand accountable institutions and democracy.

### **Latest developments:**

#### ***Governance and internal updates***

Veton Zekolli, the new director, started in early September. Aleksandra Tomanić passed the baton in this change of leadership, having successfully adapted the EFB strategy to reflect the region's evolving realities. Veton brings a wealth of experience and a strong commitment to democratic development, dialogue, and regional cooperation — traits that were recognised as essential for continuing the EFB's strategic direction in an ever-changing regional context.

As the new strategic period (2026–2028) begins, the EFB team is being reconfigured: new programme strands are launched or undergo slight changes in direction. In early 2026, with the support of the Leadership Team, the EFB team will undertake a Work Planning Workshop, a highly participative workshop which engages team members in understanding the purpose of the organisation and what is needed, practically, to accomplish those higher-level goals. This will facilitate synergies among the various EFB work streams, particularly during the onboarding of new team members. Similarly, the robust NEF performance system will be adapted for the EFB and training will be provided. Work to align the EFB with NEF standards will continue in 2026, covering areas such as grant-making, human resources, administration, and programming.

In 2026, the term of office of the EFB steering committee members will be extended by one year. The chairmanship will then rotate from the King Baudouin Foundation to Robert Bosch Stiftung. The current EFB 'local' board members have agreed to extend their terms by a year. The next Steering Committee will be organised in Skopje in early January 2026 to agree on the budget for 2026 and its related activities, as well as to review the different programming evaluations (Biepag, Alumni).

#### ***The Engaged Democracy Initiative***

The third edition of the *Engaged Democracy Convention (EDI2025)* took place from 21 to 23 May 2025 in Skopje, North Macedonia. As a biennial regional forum, it brings together the entire community across five thematic groups - Media, Decent Work, Human Rights, Environment, and Public Spaces. This year's convention welcomed over 100 engaged citizens, journalists, changemakers, movements, initiatives, and civil society representatives from across the Western Balkans. As part of the Response Hub instrument, two calls were successfully implemented, with 22 awarded projects now being in their implementation phase. The Investigative Journalism call

resulted in 6 selected journalists embarking on their six-month investigative assignments. In parallel, the regional call focused on the Human Rights thematic area was concluded successfully, and the awarded project is currently underway.

### ***The Balkans in Europe Policy Advisory Group (BiEPAG)***

BiEPAG has continued to strengthen its role as a leading regional policy network through a vibrant mix of publications, events, and policy dialogue. Its Semi-Annual Meetings in Zagreb featured a public panel on “*Geopolitical Shifts and Security in the Western Balkans*,” co-organized with IRMO, while the one in Podgorica featured the panel “*Montenegro at the Crossroads: Driving EU Integration in the Western Balkans*” at Europe House. At the Engaged Democracy Initiative Convention in Skopje, BiEPAG members presented key policy work, including the brief “*Mining in the Western Balkans – The Rise of Dangerous Transactionalism*” and Jovana Marović’s “*From Norms to Noise*,” which examined the EU’s credibility crisis in the region. The podcast “*Seriously Balkans – The BiEPAG Talks*” released six new episodes focused on regional politics, democratic developments, and EU integration, while 18 blogs provided timely insights into elections, protests, and geopolitical developments. The network also welcomed six new members, further strengthening its thematic depth and regional reach.

### ***The beeEFB Alumni Network***

In May 2025, the beeEFB Alumni Network convened in Kumbor, Montenegro, bringing together 50 members from across the Western Balkans to reflect on their shared journey and shape the network’s future. Through interactive sessions, participants offered feedback on ongoing activities, with a focus on creativity, digital responsibility, and regional cooperation, setting the tone for the next phase of engagement. In September, the network launched the fourth edition of its flagship *beeEffect* Programme in Tirana, Albania, uniting young professionals, mentors, and regional experts around leadership, mentorship, and social impact. Six mentors and twelve mentees embarked on a dynamic exchange aimed at fostering personal growth and strengthening collective capacity within the network.

### ***The Common Ground Programme***

Since launching in January 2025, the Common Ground Program (CGP) has focused on building the foundation of a regional grant-making initiative aimed at fostering dialogue, trust, and social cohesion across the Balkans. Its consultation and design phase engaged over 45 CSO representatives and more than 100 individual actors through meetings, bilateral consultations, and an online survey, ensuring the program’s strategic direction reflects local priorities and experience. During this period, the European Fund for the Balkans has been developing the policies and procedures that will guide CGP’s grant-making. The first open call for Core Programmatic Support Grants is scheduled for November–December 2025.

### ***The Joint History Project 2.0 (JHP 2.0)***

The JHP 2.0 team has made significant strides in expanding its impact and reach. A regional conference titled “*Borders in Southeast Europe: Geography or Imagination*”, held as part of the project’s activities, attracted over 100 participants at its opening and showcased the work of 30 historians across five thematic panels. The presented papers will be published free of charge, thanks to the support of a Slovenian publishing house in collaboration with the Faculty of Political Science in Ljubljana. Additionally, the team produced 10 new video lessons, released three comic books, and launched the Friends of JHP initiative - <https://jointhistory.net/about-jhb/friends/>. Notably, the Civil Society Forum within the Berlin Process officially recommended the inclusion of JHP books in the education systems of SEE countries. Progress is also being made

on certified teacher training, with an agreement nearing completion with the Ministry of Education of Montenegro and discussions being underway in Serbia and other countries in the region.

### ***EU Interest in Mining Projects Across the Western Balkans***

Launched in February 2025, funded by Stiftung Mercator, and implemented by BIEPAG members and external consultants, the project aims to deliver comprehensive mapping and critical analysis of mining initiatives throughout all six countries of the Western Balkans. Its core objective is to equip stakeholders, ranging from local communities and civil society organizations to EU institutions and member states, with factual, transparent, and nuanced insights into the region's mining landscape. By examining legal frameworks, institutional practices, environmental and human rights standards, and mechanisms for citizen participation, the project seeks to inform and potentially reevaluate the EU's approach to critical raw materials and mining investments in the Western Balkans. Following an extensive data collection phase, including surveys, interviews, and focus groups with a wide array of stakeholders, the study is now in the drafting stage. Results will be presented and disseminated during the first half of 2026.

## **European Philanthropic Initiative for Migration**

Partner Foundations: Adessium Foundation, Barrow Cadbury Trust, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Compagnia di San Paolo, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Fondation de France, The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, King Baudouin Foundation, Oak Foundation, Robert Bosch Stiftung, Fondation pour le Logement des Défavorisés, Porticus, Kahane Foundation, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Fred Foundation

Budget 2025: 3.2 million €

Timeframe: EPIM has existed since 2005. Its current strategy covers the timeframe 2024-2028.

### **Background:**

EPIM is Europe's largest and longest standing philanthropic collaborative working on issues of migration and inclusion. We fund and nurture alliances and partnerships, curate the migration ecosystem and cultivate a shared narrative for belonging and democratic resilience.

Working in a collaborative manner, EPIM's Mission is to build dialogue, alliances and partnerships between those working on migration directly and indirectly, with a systemic approach. We combine funds, expertise and networks to connect and support people, organisations, institutions and movements to change the way migration is being addressed and perceived.

EPIM's vision is a Europe where migration is accepted as part of its history, present and future, where its societies thrive, and where migrants belong, assert their rights and have the agency to shape their future. We see change as complex, interconnected and never linear. We believe that to truly change migration in Europe for the better, we need to sustain it by creating a shared sense of purpose amongst a diversity of actors across the ecosystem. See [EPIM's Pathway to Change](#).

EPIM's [approach](#) is structured around four Action Pillars, three Thematic Clusters and a Political Response, Opportunity and Innovation Fund.

### **Latest developments:**

Over the past months, EPIM has continued strengthening its work at the intersection of migration, democracy and belonging through new partnerships, convenings and tools for systemic change.

A new wave of grants and partnerships was announced, including initiatives funded not only through EPIM's clusters (please see below), but also through the budget lines of EPIM's four pillars and the Political Response, Opportunity and Innovation Fund. These range from [refugee inclusion in Greece](#) to [community organising residencies in the UK for Eastern European artists](#), and the [creation of a "Belonging Beyond Borders" network designed to foster new narratives, strategies, and bold visions](#) among those working on migrant and racial justice, pluralistic democracies, and related fields. Together, these projects reflect EPIM's commitment to supporting actors who bridge communities, foster inclusion, and reimagine governance.

EPIM's ecosystemic approach continues to evolve through the Forum, which welcomed [Abbas Sbeity](#) and [Markos Karavias](#), two practitioners whose work bridges culture, community and policy.

EPIM will host its second Forum in Berlin on the 26th and 27th of November 2025, offering the opportunity to deep-dive into EPIM's learning approach, sense and evaluate the overall programmatic strategy, sensemake thematic clusters and further and enact conversations on the future of the ecosystem. Moreover, as 2025 marks EPIM's 20th anniversary, the Forum will end with a special celebration on the evening of 27 November, and another celebration in Brussels on 4 December. This milestone is an opportunity to reflect on EPIM's journey and to honour the people and organisations that have partnered with EPIM along the way.

EPIM also launched its [new website](#), reflecting its evolving identity and collaborative approach. This is a refreshed space that reflects who EPIM is and how it works at the intersection of migration, democracy and belonging. The site offers a clearer view of its mission, community and impact – from the people and organisations behind EPIM, to its approach to collaboration and stories of change.

Over the summer, EPIM welcomed [Janina Stürner-Siovitz](#) as the new Learning Lead, working at the intersection of systems thinking, collaborative learning, and narrative change. Together with the EPIM team, she'll be co-designing and implementing a cross-cutting approach to learning, supporting EPIM and its partners to enable positive change across the migration ecosystem.

### **Clusters Updates:**

#### **Cluster on the Future of European Migration Governance**

Aim: Support civil society organisations in rethinking and reshaping outdated, bureaucratic and securitization-driven models of migration management, ensuring they become more effective, ethical and grounded in the realities of migrants and those in the ecosystem.

Partners: Transition Grants ending – Development of the new grantmaking scheme in progress. New partners: the PLACE Network, MedMa.

#### Updates:

- In 2024, EPIM co-created a [systems map of the Migration Governance system in Europe](#) in collaboration with practitioners who have both lived and professional experience, as well as expert knowledge of relevant laws, policies and issues. This sensemaking process along with the resulting map helped gain clarity about the system and identify opportunities for leverage that informed our cluster strategy.

- In 2025, the Migration Governance cluster has made significant strides in advancing its strategic approach to grantmaking. By structuring our work around the newly formed committee cluster, mirroring the Forum’s balanced composition of foundation and non-foundation members, we have refined our focus on the selected leverage direction *"Reimagining Governance Processes"*. We have been trying to shift to a more intentional selection process, ensuring that our support reaches organisations best aligned with our vision. Guided by insights from the systems map, this has led to a new round of grants supporting actors tackling root causes, shifting narratives, fostering collaboration across sectors and communities and experimenting with innovative approaches to governance, where strategic support can help unlock further momentum. Two organisations have already started working, while others are in the final phases of the grantmaking process. Two organisations, [PLACE Network](#) and [MedMA](#), have already begun implementing their projects, while others are in the final stages of the grantmaking process.

### **Cluster on Building Inclusive Societies in CEE**

Aim: Since 2022, EPIM has been instrumental in aiding war-displaced Ukrainians across CEE, supporting over 24 projects in the region. In 2024 and 2025, EPIM’s strategy pivoted to offer holistic, comprehensive and long-term support for inclusive community building across CEE. Goals include creating intersectional and trans-sectoral networks among diverse stakeholders; addressing migrant needs within a broader societal context; cultivating belonging and strengthening democracy across CEE; and supporting migrant leadership.

Partners: Mareena, Communities of the Future, AMIGA, MigAct, Konsorcium CZ, Hands Across Romania, eLiberare, AIPG, Hungarian Helsinki Committee, Next Step

- EPIM launched the CEE Network for Migration and Inclusion in Bratislava in May 2024 and held the second Network gathering on 27–28 May 2025 in Bucharest. The event brought together diverse actors from across Central and Eastern Europe to explore how civil society, the private sector, and democratic institutions can work together to build welcoming and resilient communities. It also sparked conversations about launching a national network of Romanian organisations.
- The newly formed BISC Cluster Committee—comprising representatives from the Bosch Foundation, Porticus, the Civil Society Forum, and the European Fund for the Balkans—will guide efforts to strengthen inclusive and active communities in the region. The focus is on building resilience to political adversity and fostering regional and non-traditional partnerships. The Committee has officially adopted the new Cluster Strategy for 2025–2027.

### **Cluster on Dignified Work and Housing**

Aim: Creating the economic and social conditions to belonging through a future of work that centres on the dignity of all work and all workers, and a future where decent and affordable housing is a reality for all

Partners: European Sex Workers’ Rights Alliance, Fonds de Dotation Grazie, Next Step, ORBIT, Karibu, ACOF, Jobs4Refugees

Updates:

- In 2025, EPIM is launching a comprehensive sensemaking process to define the cluster’s priorities, with a focus on a future of dignified work, and ultimately the creation of long-term economic and social conditions for belonging. This will take place within the framework of the

[Holistic Migration Pathways Initiative](#), which aims to reimagine fair labour mobility in Europe. The initiative takes labour pathways as a practical and politically viable entry point to reshape migration systems around rights, fairness and inclusion. Grounded in systems thinking, it recognises that mobility cannot be reduced to economic function alone, but must encompass housing, education, healthcare and long-term belonging.

## **HUB for Democratic Culture – Faktor D**

Foundations involved: Robert Bosch Stiftung, ERSTE Stiftung, Stiftung Mercator Schweiz

Budget 2024: € 650,000

Timeframe: 2023-2026

Background: In the DACH region (Germany, Austria, Switzerland), many organizations, individuals, and foundations are working with high motivation and resources to defend and further develop democracy through innovative solutions. However, these solutions are often conceived and implemented within national contexts, limiting their scalability and fostering competition rather than collaboration. There is a notable absence of a societal function that strategically brings together these democratic actors across borders.

Faktor D - The Strategic Network for Democracy seeks to address this gap. As a network, it unites and strengthens democratic forces, acting as an aggregator for new solutions, promoting scalability, and providing a platform for mutual learning. Through cross-border collaboration, it seeks to find common answers to the challenges that democracy faces today. The initiative targets organizations and initiatives that can act as multipliers, playing an activating, reinforcing, and supportive role within their areas of influence.

Faktor D is implemented through three partners: Initiative Offene Gesellschaft e.V. in Germany, Stiftung Dialog - Campus für Demokratie in Switzerland, and Demokratie21 in Austria.

### **Latest developments:**

#### ***Democracy Playbook 2029***

From November 2025, Faktor D will develop a Democracy Playbook as the frame for our work through 2029. The vision: democratic actors rally behind a shared agenda and act toward clear strategic goals. The result we're working toward is the Democracy Playbook 2029 - both a strategy framework and a movement that builds common power ahead of the decisive 2029 election year. The path: the playbook is organized into thematic chapters. For each chapter, a broad alliance co-creates and agrees on one overarching goal; actors then align their programs and communications to it, act together on implementation, and create visibility.

In the past month we developed the basic concept for the playbook together with several experts of the field.

#### ***Missions***

Our missions feed into the playbook - each mission will ultimately become a chapter in the Playbook.

**Mission #3** - *Meeting Point: Democracy* (launched June 2025) - strengthens libraries as democratic spaces across Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. It connects librarians with democracy practitioners and researchers and scales the best facilitation and participation methods to make libraries forums of democracy internationally.

**Mission #4** - *Emotions & Democracy* (launched Oct 2025) - treats emotions as a democratic resource to overcome paralysis and polarization across Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. It convenes practitioners and researchers through online sessions and a Mitmacht lab to build a futures-driven narrative.

### **Festival: Mitmacht 2025**

The democracy festival Mitmacht 2025 will take place from November 19 to 22, 2025 in Vienna. About 210 participants from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland will come together to develop strategies to strengthen democracy. Mitmacht 2025 is a key platform for networking and joint learning, focused on strategic collaboration across the German-speaking democracy field - aligning actors behind shared goals and coordinated action.

Mitmacht 2025 places the start of the Democracy Playbook's development at its core. The festival's labs develop visions for the thematic chapters of the Playbook, turning collective insights into clear guiding goals that actors can align with. Across four days, the program features over 60 events such as labs, good-practice sessions, interactive workshops, networking formats, keynotes, panels and creative contributions - many shaped via an Open Call to enable broad participation and an intensive exchange of experiences.

Mitmacht 2025 is being organized in cooperation with the City of Vienna as part of the European Capital of Democracy initiative (ECoD) and in partnership with APA – Austria Press Agency, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation Austria, the European Forum Alpbach, “Demokratie, was geht?”, Burg Kino, and instax.

### **Strategic Communication**

Over the past six months, our focus has been on further developing the festival's identity and positioning it as an empowering event for collective strategies. For the visual design, we once again collaborated with the award-winning Swiss designer Erich Brechbühl, whose work continues to shape the CI of the festival.

The two open calls - one for the festival and one for the second innovation process - were successfully positioned to reach new networks and further strengthen the overall profile of Faktor D. Encouraging festival speakers and their organizations to act as multipliers for both the festival and Faktor D proved to be an effective approach, helping to expand our visibility and engagement.

### **Governance**

At the moment, together with an external consultant, we are working on revising our organizational structure, organigram, and roles within Faktor D. The goal is to make our way of working clearer and better aligned with our current needs. Our setup is quite complex: three countries, three organizations, and four Managing Directors. It has worked well so far, but after two and a half years, we want to become even more efficient - especially when it comes to our strategic decision-making.

We are also working on our committee structure: there are two central committees: the Rat (Council) and the Strategy Committee. The Rat is made up of representatives from the three

foundations and has a mainly structural and advisory role. It meets four times a year and focuses on organizational topics such as fundraising or overall strategic direction. The Strategy Committee currently consists of 13 members and is also being restructured to better fit the goals and requirements set out in the Playbook.

### **Next Steps**

In the coming months we will develop the Democracy Playbook and prepare its launch, shaping the core narrative and architecture while defining the first chapters with partners. In parallel, we will identify lead organisations and foundations to secure multi-year funding.

## **Joint Action for Farmers' Organisations in West Africa**

Foundations involved: Compagnia di San Paolo (Chair); Fondazione Cariplo; Fondation de France; and King Baudouin Foundation.

Budget 2025: € 1.4 million

Timeframe: 2016–2026

### **Background:**

Joint Action for Farmers Organizations in West Africa (JAFOWA) seeks to reinforce Farmers' Organisations who work with smallholder farmers, pastoralists and fishermen, to manage good quality local food systems that benefit their families and communities in ecologically sustainable ways. It aims to support a strong and equitable farmers' movement in West Africa.

JAFOWA aims then to contribute to the following changes: Farmer organizations, along with their partners, are the cornerstones of sustainable food systems, building on long-term multi-stakeholder partnerships. They integrate gender considerations as well as the roles, needs, and expectations of youth in promoting agroecological intensification. They also develop educational and advocacy initiatives.

JAFOWA supports farmers' organisations (FOs) through grantmaking and capacity development with a geographic focus on Burkina Faso and Senegal.

### **Latest developments:**

Based on its [2025–2028 strategy](#) and new [roadmap](#), JAFOWA launched its fourth call for projects at the end of March 2025 with the aim of supporting new farmers' organizations in Burkina Faso and Senegal and their partners in their agroecological transition strategy.

The program received 22 concept notes from 38 candidate organizations that confirmed their interest and selected 14 candidates (8 in Burkina Faso and 6 in Senegal). These candidates submitted their complete applications with detailed proposals at the end of June 2025.

In order to enrich its analysis of the proposals and their context, JAFOWA then organized two exchange missions and field visits to the 14 pre-selected organizations and their partners. These field missions took place in July (Senegal) and August (Burkina Faso) and provided an opportunity to gather additional information on all the projects submitted and to strengthen dialogue with the project leaders.

In September, the JAFOWA Steering Committee finally selected six proposals, three in each of the two countries, each lasting between 24 and 30 months. Final discussions are currently being held with the grantees to refine certain points of their proposals, and the selected projects will start between November 2025 and January 2026.