



NEF State of Play

Network^{of}
European
Foundations

Update
March 2026

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Alliance for Gender Equality in Europe

Foundations involved: Fondation CHANEL, Fonds L'Oréal pour les Femmes, King Baudouin Foundation, Bodossaki Foundation, Fondation de France, Fondation RAJA-Danièle Marcovici and Fondation BNP Paribas.

Forecasted budget 2026: approx. €2 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:

Fondation BNP Paribas joins as a member

AGEE is delighted to welcome Fondation BNP Paribas as the newest member of the Alliance for Gender Equality in Europe. This is a testament to the strength of our collective efforts.

Recruitment of new Advisory committee members

The Alliance welcomed a new Advisory Committee, composed of [seven diverse leaders and experts](#) committed to advancing gender equality and driving lasting change across the continent. The new advisors will provide guidance to the Steering Committee and the Alliance team, helping us achieve our mission of strengthening gender equality organisations and movements through grant-making, capacity strengthening, and awareness-raising.

Networking reception on the margins of the 70th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women

The Alliance co-organised this donor-only event with its members Fondation CHANEL, the L'Oréal Fund for Women, and the RAJA-Danièle Marcovici Foundation in New York City, bringing together 40 US senior philanthropy leaders. Conversations touched upon the issues many funders are grappling with right now, from sustaining and unlocking new funding for gender equality to building trust across stakeholders and shifting narratives from uncertainty to hope.

Revised Funding+ Framework

In March 2026, the Alliance revised its Funding+ Framework, which guides the Alliance's provision of financial and non-financial support, as part of a broader commitment to bolster the capacities of small and medium-sized gender equality organisations in Europe. The new framework's objective is to strengthen grantee partners' resilience and agility, with an approach that is more needs-driven, participatory, and collaborative. This Funding+ framework will cover the period 2026-2027 with an estimated budget of €414 561.

Based on positive partner feedback, AGEE will continue offering organisational development grants and grantee convenings. Both have been highly valued and have proven effective in strengthening capacities and fostering connections across our cohort. In last year's final reporting, 95% of organisational development grant recipients reported improved overall capacity, and 13 grantees established new collaborations following our convenings.

At the same time, a new set of grants, the crisis response grants, will be introduced to enable grantee partners to rapidly address attacks, sudden emergencies, or crises. Feedback from grantee partners, gathered over the course of the previous period, indicates that grassroots organisations are operating in increasingly challenging and hostile contexts. These one-time grants of up to €15,000 will be available on a rolling basis and seek to mitigate the intensifying risks facing grantee partners. The Alliance will expand its offering to also include pro bono and financial management support.

New opportunity and emergency grants

The Alliance approved three Opportunity and Emergency Grants, awarded between October 2025 and January 2026. 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 €19 408 grant was awarded to [Fundacja Interakcja](#), Poland's first and only organisation entirely dedicated to advancing intersex human rights. This grant will bring back its annual in-person community gathering in 2026. Collective spaces are among the most effective ways to counteract the shame, isolation, and marginalisation experienced by intersex people.
2. A €30 000 grant was awarded to [Les Glorieuses](#), an independent feminist media organisation based in Europe. Following the loss of key institutional funding, this grant will enable the newsletter's continuation throughout 2026, ensuring that rigorous, feminist, and evidence-based journalism remains available at a critical moment for gender equality and democracy.
3. A €30 000 was awarded to [SAFE](#), a European organisation working to ensure that anyone who wants an abortion can access one regardless of where they live or how much money they have. With this grant, SAFE will sustain emerging and established groups with essential infrastructure, funding, and back-office support.

Alliance for Socially Engaged Arts

Foundation partners: Allianz Foundation, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (Chair), Cariplo Foundation, Compagnia di San Paolo, Daniel and Nina Carasso Foundation, European Cultural Foundation, Fundación Banco Santander, het Cultuurfonds, Hilti Foundation, King Baudouin Foundation, "la Caixa" Foundation, Moleskine Foundation and Stiftung Mercator Schweiz.

Forecasted Budget 2024-2026: €2,240,000

Timeframe: July 2024 – 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 13 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

Two new foundations joined the Alliance in December: Fundación Banco Santander and het Cultuurfonds, growing the number of partners to 13 foundations.

The [2025 annual report](#) was published in March, presenting the milestones, activities, and learnings from the Alliance's first year as A SEA began building connections across the field and laying the foundations for a growing ecosystem supporting socially engaged arts.

The Alliance has begun a strategy development process to begin giving shape to the strategy for the next edition that will run from 2027 – 2028. The goals of this process are to define the scope of the Alliance's activities, building on learnings and insights from the pilot edition. A facilitated strategy workshop is being planned for the upcoming Steering Committee meeting in April, which will take place in Madrid. Several prospective partners who we have been in touch with over the past months have been invited to take part in the strategy development process. The workshop will be facilitated by our learning partners, New Silk Roads.

The Fellowship

The Fellows have continued to make strong progress and remain highly active across several strands of the programme. The capacity-building component is now fully underway, with monthly online sessions offering structured space for learning and exchange. In January, Fellows were invited to submit proposals for both the Leading Question grants (€30,000) and the Mobility grants (€5,000), enabling them to advance core areas of their inquiry and strengthen their organisational capacities.

Alongside this, the Fellows have been developing their individual impact stories, which will form part of our upcoming *Stories of Impact* series. These will be published on the Alliance's website through an interactive map, offering a portrayal of the reach and significance of socially engaged arts across Europe. Together, the stories will highlight the breadth of methodologies within the field.

Planning for the second Fellowship residential is also well underway. The next convening will take place in Sofia, Bulgaria, from 15–18 June, offering Fellows the opportunity to reconnect in person and to reflect on the work that's been carried out up until that point.

Advocacy

A SEA has continued working with Shape History to develop the Alliance's advocacy strategy. In January and March, A SEA convened two online workshops with the Steering Committee to co-shape the strategic direction and identify priority areas. The draft strategy will be reviewed at the upcoming Steering Committee meeting in April and will guide the next phase of our advocacy work.

Through our partnership with Culture Action Europe, we have also begun to engage more actively in EU-level advocacy. This has included attending the Culture Deal for Europe event, participating in a policy lunch hosted by MEP Nela Riehl, contributing to a European Parliament event, and submitting written input to rapporteurs from the LIBE and CULT committees to encourage stronger collaboration between the European Commission and philanthropic foundations. These engagements have helped deepen our understanding of the EU policy landscape and have given

the Alliance an important early footing in this arena. We are also working closely with Culture Action Europe to ensure that socially engaged arts are represented at the six regional Satellite BEYOND Events taking place across Europe in April and May.

The dual research commission launched last year is now approaching completion. Both research partners are incorporating feedback from the Alliance into the internal and public reports, with the public-facing report scheduled for publication by June.

Impact, Evaluation and Learning

The Alliance's learning partner, New Silk Roads, finalised a new impact and learning framework earlier this year, which was formally adopted in January. Since then, the framework has been operationalised. New Silk Roads have produced a baseline evaluative report that offers a snapshot of the Alliance's starting point (as of December 2025). They have now begun the second phase of data collection, the findings of which will inform the interim evaluative report. A first draft of this report will be submitted ahead of the upcoming Steering Committee meeting in April and will be central in guiding our strategy discussions shaping the Alliance's next steps.

Team

The Alliance's Programme Manager, Daniela Nofal, has been promoted to Senior Programme Manager. The Steering Committee also approved the ring-fencing of funds to cover the cost of part-time freelance support.

Civitates - A Philanthropic Initiative for Democracy and Solidarity in Europe

Foundations involved

Adessium Foundation, Bodossaki Foundation, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Daniel Sachs 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, Luminare 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.

Budget 2026: about 6 million Euros

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 last two months, Civitates has conducted mid-term calls with our grantee partners over the three subfunds to report on their progress during the first year of their grants. Civitates also evaluated the final reports for our cohort of Austrian grantee partners (SF1).

As some of our grant agreements end at the end of December 2026, renewal processes for SF1 (Europe), SF2 (France and Ireland), and SF3 (Europe) will be conducted over the coming months for about 20 grantee partners. New contracts will run from early 2027 until the end of 2028.

In addition, in January 2026, a core grantee in Austria has been identified among the projects Civitates supported in 2025. Two new digitally focused organisations joined the cohort of grantees to advocate for a strong AgoraEU envelope during negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF).

As of March 2026, Civitates supports 78 grantees across 22 European countries.

Civitates Forum

The Civitates Forum took place from March 9-12 in Bruges, bringing together for the first time all foundation and grantee partners since the fund's establishment in 2018. Overall, more than 150 participants from 95 civil society and media organisations and 34 foundations came from about 20 European countries.

The Civic Forum, held on Monday and Tuesday and reserved only for our grantee partners, fostered new connections at national and transnational levels, and peer learning. The following day (Wednesday), in Democracy Futures, grantee and foundation partners explore long-term democratic scenarios and share strategic pathways. On the final day (Thursday), during the first Civitates General Assembly of 2026, foundation partners took stock of the insights gained and began reflecting on the strategic implications for Civitates' work.

The event was well-received, with grantees and foundation partners praising the opportunity to meet, exchange ideas, and strategize together.

Foresight – Democracy futures

During the Civitates Forum (March 2026), grantee and foundation partners engaged in a joint foresight exercise examining scenarios for the future of European democracy over the next 20 years.

Building on the key trends identified at our Steering Committee meeting in Athens (mid-November 2025), this exercise helped identify opportunities, weaknesses, and blind spots in the current Civitates' strategy (2023-2028).

These collective learnings will guide our discussion at the upcoming General Assembly in Zurich on the evolution of Civitates' strategy beyond 2028, ensuring it remains relevant and effective in a rapidly changing environment.

Grantee convenings

A key priority this year will be to bring together our grantees to continue peer learning, collaboration, and joint strategy development begun at the Civitates Forum.

- Sub-fund 1: In November 2026, Civitates is planning to organise an in-person event for our Civic Power grantees in Berlin, in partnership with the Civil Society Forum. We are also organising online learning hubs/case clinics throughout the year for civil society grantees. Additionally, we are exploring options to organise an in-person event for our Italian grantee partners.
- Sub-fund 2: We are exploring an opportunity to organise an in-person event in Fall 2026, with a potential focus on promoting an alternative ecosystem of social media.
- Sub-fund 3: In partnership with Reference Circle, we will be holding knowledge -sharing online grantee meetings throughout the year, as well as an in-person event in September 2026 in Gdańsk alongside the new Breakwater Journalism Festival.
- Future of Europe project: In partnership with the Good Lobby, we are organising online meetings, every two months, and in-person workshops (January and September 2026) for grantees to strategise and coordinate on their common advocacy strategy.

Team

Maria Guerra-Arias started as the new Impact and Learning Manager in January and has already started to strengthen Civitates' capacity to serve as a peer-learning platform and to demonstrate impact across our portfolio. Monika Ramos, our Programme and Grants Officer, is currently on maternity leave and will be back in a full-time position at Civitates in September. Elea Cogoluenhes is acting as maternity cover.

The team remains small but highly effective, currently comprising 6 FTEs.

Growing the pooled fund

As of March 2026, Civitates has 34 foundation partners.

Contributions under the new threshold (100k/year) currently account for 18% of our annual budget. Our new governance framework stipulates that these contributions should not exceed 5% of our budget so a priority in 2026 will be to use the upcoming renewals as opportunities to meet the minimum threshold, while keeping all foundation partners on board.

Civitates organised its first Leadership dinner in conjunction with the Forum in March, which was attended by 20+ foundation CEOs, founders and board members. Guests expressed a strong interest to convene in such informal settings and the Civitates team will look into options for additional engagement events this year.

European Artificial Intelligence & Society Fund

Foundations involved: Luminare (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, Postcode Loterij, Robert Bosch Foundation, Hewlett Foundation

Budget 2026: 3,5 million euros

Timeframe: established 2020

Background:

The European AI & Society Fund mobilises a powerful public interest community in Europe to fight for Artificial Intelligence that serves people, society and planet. We award grants, build the field, fundraise and forge collective strategies.

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.

Through the Fund, 18 philanthropic partners combine resources to award grants, build the field, fundraise and forge collective strategies. Since 2020, we have distributed over €13.6 million to public interest organisations across 27 countries.

Latest developments:

At its last December Steering Committee call EAI SF adopted a [new five-year strategy](#) for the European AI & Society Fund. This moves the Fund's role from an ecosystem enabler to a strategic actor focused on building the public interest community's collective power to shape the future direction of AI. The Fund will work towards three objectives:

1. A stronger public interest community: a skilled, co-ordinated and independently-funded community of tech and social justice experts and advocates is working strategically to redirect AI to serve people, society and planet, by shaping debate, setting the policy agenda and securing accountability.
2. More funding to the field: a greater number and more diverse range of funders are growing their support for a public interest agenda for AI in Europe and the resources available to the field are increasing.
3. A more strategic approach: the public interest community and the funders that support them have the insights and infrastructure to work strategically and effectively together to turn the tide on AI.

EAI SF is working now to operationalise this strategy into our programmatic activities.

Grantmaking:

EAI SF has 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.

We are currently analysing final reporting from our outgoing cohort of grantees as well as mid-term reporting from the AI Accountability grantees. This will inform our fieldbuilding work and help determine whether to offer funding extensions to accountability grantees.

We are also beginning exploratory work to develop grantmaking programmes at three intersections of AI: climate, labour and social fabric. We are conducting interviews and desk research to map the existing field and identify the most effective points of intervention for the European AI & Society Fund.

Strengthening the field:

Our community working on EU policy around AI has been engaged in pushing back against a deregulatory drive that proposes to rewrite freshly passed regulation around artificial intelligence. We plan to host a strategy meeting in June for selected grantees working at both European and national levels to support them to adapt to the new context and work more effectively together.

Grantees have identified the dominant industry-driven narratives around AI as a key barrier to progress. We have commissioned research together with our funding partner Luminare to understand the fields needs and aim to design capacity building support based on the findings.

Growing the Fund:

EASIF is pleased to welcome Postcode Loterij, the Dutch national postcode lottery funder, as a partner to the European AI & Society Fund with a commitment of €1m. This commitment means we have reached our target of an additional €10m which we set mid-2024.

Events, research and publications:

We continue our Funders Briefings events, with a meeting in November focused on Digital Sovereignty, followed by a [short paper](#) and a meeting in February focused on the deregulation push under the [Digital Omnibus](#).

We have published research into the [expertise gap around technical skills](#) among civil society groups, co-commissioned with Civitates.

Internal updates:

Evelyne Paradis joined the Fund as co-director in January, based in Brussels. Evelyne has spent more than 20 years working across organisational leadership, governance and social justice advocacy. Her experience includes a range of roles within the human rights and equality sector, most notably 14 years as Executive Director of ILGA-Europe, the European and Central Asian LGBTI organisation.

We have conducted a successful recruitment to a Programme and Grants Officer role, after Monika Ramos, moved to a full-time position at Civitates. Caterina Sanniti will begin in April, based in Philanthropy House.

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 2026: 2 million €

Timeframe: 2007-2026

Background: The European Fund for the Balkans is a joint endeavor 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 democratization, 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 civil society based on solidarity and demand-driven dialogue, as well as providing means and platforms for informed and empowered citizens to act and demand accountable institutions and democracy.

Latest developments:

Governance and internal updates

In January 2026, during the Steering Committee meeting held in Skopje, the chairmanship of the EFB Steering Committee was transferred from the King Baudouin Foundation to Robert Bosch Stiftung, marking an important leadership transition. Shortly after, in early February, the EFB team organized a Work Planning Workshop (organised with the Leadership Team, NEF HR advisor) designed to be highly participative, engaging team members in clarifying the organization's purpose and identifying what is needed to achieve higher-level goals. The workshop resulted in a comprehensive mapping of internal and external work processes, which led to a reconfiguration of the organizational structure, the creation of new job descriptions, and a clearer division of responsibilities. Alongside these structural changes, recruitment efforts advanced successfully with the appointment of a Programme Manager for CGP, while the final rounds of interviews for the MEL and Communications position are currently underway. In March, EFB launched its new website along with a user-friendly grant management platform. Together, they provide more structured and transparent information about EFB, while also offering users the opportunity to express interest and stay informed about grant dissemination. This integrated approach fosters collaboration and ensures a more efficient way of engaging with EFB's activities.

The Engaged Democracy Initiative

Over the past several months, the Engaged Democracy Initiative has undertaken a participatory redesign of the Response Hub grant mechanism, working closely with activists and civil society practitioners from across the Western Balkans to ensure the programme reflects the realities and needs of those on the ground. The result of this collaborative process was a reimagined Response Hub, now open on a rolling basis and offering five distinct grant types: Social Urgency, Organizational Urgency, Innovation, Travel, and Organizational Development. Each grant type is designed to meet organizations where they are, whether they are responding to an immediate crisis or investing in their long-term capacity. Furthermore, we are pleased to welcome three new local advisors to the EDI Advisory Committee, joining from Serbia, Montenegro, and North Macedonia, and bringing with them deep roots in their respective civic ecosystems.

The Balkans in Europe Policy Advisory Group (BiEPAG)

In early November, six analytical pieces on the European Commission's Communication on EU enlargement were published, along with two policy briefs - "Enforcement, Incentives, and the Missing Link: How Accession Treaties Can Strengthen Europe" by Odeta Barbullushi and Jovana Marović, and "Resetting the EU's Approach to Serbia: Lessons from the 2024-25 Protests" by Nikola Burazer, Marina Vulović, and Jelena Vasiljević. The latter was presented at a public panel in Brussels on Serbia's student-led protests, hosted by the EPC. Two policy experts have been awarded a BiEPAG Fellowship to spend three months at the Centre for Southeast European Studies in Graz. In March, BiEPAG conducted an advocacy visit to Paris, including meetings with the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Presidency, as well as a public panel. BiEPAG also finalized a regional study on mining in the Western Balkans and prepared its dissemination through events in Sarajevo, Belgrade, Berlin, and Brussels in April. Finally, a

strategic assessment process has been concluded, the results of which will be presented at BiEPAG's Semi-Annual Meeting in April in Vienna.

beeEFB

The BeeEffect Program of the EFB Alumni Network (4th cohort) launched in September with an opening ceremony in Tirana, bringing together six mentors and twelve participants selected from around 120 applicants. From September 2025 to March 2026, the participants worked in groups of three and engaged in mentorship sessions, learning exchanges, project development, and online trainings, concluding with a pitching session held at the closing event in Malta. In December, national gatherings across Western Balkans cities strengthened engagement within the network, while strategic meetings in Belgrade set priorities for 2026. A comprehensive evaluation of the network is underway and will be finalized by April, offering guidance for future development.

Common Ground Programme

In late 2025, CGP launched the first open call for fifteen grants of EUR 20,000 each under its Core Programmatic Support facility, designed to provide flexible support for the ongoing work of local civil society organizations working on bridge-building and dialogue across communities in the Western Balkans region. The call attracted over 850 applications, evidencing a great need for funding security in this space following the withdrawal of many large, previously dependable donors. The result of the call will be announced shortly, followed by the launch of a rolling call for Rapid Opportunity Grants, designed to leverage modest but timely funding into greater impact.

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, The Human Safety Net

Budget 2026: 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:

EPIM held its second annual Forum in Berlin on 26–27 November 2025. The Forum offered the opportunity to deep-dive into EPIM’s learning approach, sense and evaluate the overall programmatic strategy, sensemake thematic clusters and enact conversations on the future of the ecosystem. As 2025 marked EPIM’s 20th anniversary, the Forum concluded with a celebration on the evening of 27 November, followed by another ecosystem gathering in Brussels on 4 December. This milestone offered the occasion to reflect on EPIM’s journey and to honour the people and organisations that have shaped it.

In early 2026, EPIM launched Forum Micro-Grants of up to €2,000 to support member-led initiatives that translate the trust, ideas and shared narrative generated during Forum convenings into concrete actions in the wider ecosystem.

A new wave of grants and partnerships was announced across EPIM's clusters and action pillars. In addition to cluster-level grantmaking (detailed below), EPIM advanced several pillar-level initiatives. For instance, under the Reimagining Funding pillar, EPIM launched the [Migration and Belonging Network](#), a joint initiative with [Philea](#) to convene a light-touch, practice-informed community of mutual interest for philanthropic foundations across Europe. EPIM also continued long-term support to [PICUM](#) and [ECRE](#) to ensure cohesion, fairness and rights remain central to EU Multiannual Financial Framework negotiations. Under the Building Bridges and Strengthening Ecosystems pillar, EPIM introduced Forum Micro-Grants of up to €2,000 to enable member-led initiatives translating Forum learnings and insights into concrete ecosystem action.

EPIM’s sensemaking work on European labour mobility continued to advance. Under the Holistic Migration Pathways Initiative, EPIM completed a comprehensive systems and ecosystem mapping process, identifying systemic problem and opportunity loops, key actors and leverage points.

Looking ahead, EPIM has a number of key convenings planned. In May 2026, EPIM will host the third annual gathering of the CEE Network for Migration and Inclusion in Prague (13–14 May), bringing together civil society, local government, academia and private sector actors to deepen collaboration on belonging and resilience across the region. On 30 June, EPIM will convene different actors from policy, civil society, labour markets and implementation in Brussels for a full-day event exploring how labour mobility can serve as a fair and durable governance tool. EPIM will also present a session at the Philea Forum in Copenhagen (18–21 May), within the Migration and Belonging Network: “From Labour Pathways to Belonging: Reimagining Europe’s Migration Narrative”. Co-curated with Philea, the session will explore how labour mobility can serve as a practical entry point to reshape migration narratives in connection with broader societal challenges.

Clusters Updates

Cluster on the Future of European Migration Governance

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

Partners: PLACE Network, MedMA, SINGA Global, Mosaico, Migration Matters, Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI)

Updates:

- In 2025 and into 2026, the Migration Governance cluster has made significant strides in advancing its strategic approach to grantmaking. By structuring work around the newly formed cluster committee — mirroring the Forum’s balanced composition of foundation and non-foundation members — the cluster has refined its focus on the leverage direction “Reimagining Governance Processes”. This has led to a new round of grants supporting actors tackling root causes, shifting narratives, fostering cross-sector collaboration and experimenting with innovative governance approaches.
- [PLACE Network](#) and [MedMA](#) began implementing their projects in 2025. In 2026, four additional partners joined the cluster's implementation phase: [Mosaico](#) (Italy), working to reduce bureaucratic barriers for migrants through social mediation and inter-institutional coordination in Turin; [Migrant Rights Centre Ireland \(MRCI\)](#) (Ireland), pursuing structural reforms on tied work permits, family reunification and regularisation through litigation, advocacy and coalition-building; [Migration Matters](#) (Germany), bridging the gap between migration policy, frontline implementation and migrants' lived experience through participatory storytelling. EPIM also provided a grant to the [Starting New Coalition](#), via [SINGA Global](#). Rooted in the lived experiences of migrant members who take an active part in coalition work, the initiative seeks to reframe newcomer entrepreneurship as a cornerstone of Europe’s economic strategy.

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, AIPG, Hungarian Helsinki Committee, From Streets to Homes Association

- EPIM will hold the third CEE Network for Migration and Inclusion in Prague on 13-14 May 2026. The event will bring 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.
- 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, Karibu, ACOF, Jobs4Refugees

Updates:

- In 2025, EPIM launched a comprehensive sensemaking process to define the cluster's priorities, with a focus on a future of dignified work and the creation of long-term economic and social conditions for belonging. This took place within the framework of the [Holistic Migration Pathways Initiative](#), which aims to reimagine fair labour mobility to Europe. The initiative takes labour mobility 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 all dimensions of long-term belonging.
- The sensemaking process produced a systems and ecosystem map identifying problem and opportunity loops across the European labour mobility system. These analytical outputs — drawing on more than 40 actor conversations conducted across Europe and multistakeholder events — are being used to inform EPIM's future grantmaking direction in this cluster.
- In parallel, EPIM launched a Community of Practice on Labour Mobility and Narrative Change (2026–2027). Running over twelve months, the COP brings together a carefully selected group of actors — including migrant-led organisations, narrative practitioners, media professionals, and philanthropic partners — to explore labour mobility as a strategic entry point for shifting Europe's migration narratives. The starting premise is that labour mobility, being both politically legible and operationally unavoidable, creates space to reopen questions of rights, dignity, and belonging that are otherwise blocked in more polarised debates. The COP combines seven curated online sessions with a final in-person convening in Turin in early 2027 and uses popular culture and media as vehicles for amplifying narrative change at scale.

HUB for Democratic Culture – Faktor D

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

Budget 2026: 650,000 €

Timeframe: 2023-2029

Faktor D is hosted by NEF.

Background:

In the DACH region (Germany, Austria, Switzerland), many organizations, individuals, and foundations are working on defending 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. 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.

Three years into implementation, the core ideas behind Faktor D have proven to be effective. The name Faktor D is now recognized as a go-to network for democratic actors in the region. What sets us apart is our clear focus on strategy development and building communities around solutions. This approach has struck a chord with our audience, positioning Faktor D as a network that helps democratic forces work together more effectively.

Latest developments:

Three central Learnings after three years

1. A strategic network thrives on a clear, shared “product.”

Trust and motivation grow through networking, but coordinated action needs a tangible focus. In the next three years, Faktor D will bundle mission outcomes into a single, collectively created output -making our goals easier to communicate and our impact stronger.

2. The Mitmacht festival is a strategic anchor for our work.

The festival has shown high demand and potential as a space for reflection and strategy. Going forward, we’ll expand its role: Mitmacht will become the moment where mission alliances meet, synthesize progress, and set shared directions, tightly linking it to our year-round work.

3. Fewer standalone projects, more shared impact.

Our strength isn’t funding many small initiatives but aligning actors to create and scale shared resources. Instead of defaulting to new projects, we’ll focus on collaborative strategies, tools, and scaling what works - using our flexible funds (€100k) to deliver concrete products for democracy.

Democracy Playbook 2029

In November 2025, Faktor D started to 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 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.

Chapter Third Places (launched June 2025) strengthens libraries as democratic spaces across Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. It connects librarians with democracy practitioners and researchers, scaling the best facilitation and participation methods to transform libraries into forums for democracy. A core output is the digital "Democracy Guide for Libraries", featuring ready-to-use formats (e.g., community dialogues, media literacy clubs, youth councils), case studies from the DACH region, and practical insights for libraries to actively promote democracy. The guide has generated significant interest, with two articles planned in professional journals and prominent presentations at national fairs in Switzerland and Germany alongside mission partners. Partners in all three countries are organizing online events to promote the guide. Its content was developed with renowned authors from over five countries and includes nearly 40 formats.

Chapter 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. The mission develops practical methods - reframing, values-led messaging, moderating difficult feelings, trust-building, and social-media tactics and tests them in use. A 2026 scaling track brings 30 communication experts into 5 workshops to turn concepts into implementable tools and pilots. Core outputs might include a practical guide, training formats, a campaign concept, and templates for facilitation and messaging.

All meta-learnings flow into a Playbook chapter on emotional, democratic communication so organizations can adopt and scale what works.

Festival: Mitmacht 2026

Mitmacht 2026 will take place March 23–26, 2026 at SRH University Berlin, co-hosted for the first time with reCampaign to expand its focus on communication and campaigning. Partnering with change.org and other organizations, the festival expects 350–400 participants from across the DACH region.

The 3.5-day program combines strategic discussions with hands-on, practical workshops, placing a strong emphasis on spontaneous networking and exchange. Through the collaboration with reCampaign, this year's event will also attract experts in communication and campaigning, adding depth to the program. With the venue confirmed and the content framework finalized, the team is now preparing for the Open Call, which opens on April 13, 2026. Ticket sales will begin in mid-June 2026.

The festival's guiding theme is: Strategy, skills and community for a strong democracy movement.

Communication Strategy

We will shift to campaign-driven outreach, activating key partners, speakers, and networks as multipliers around major moments such as the Mitmacht Festival and Playbook releases. We will also design user journeys by aligning our website, newsletter, and formats to create clear entry points and follow-up paths for engagement. Our aim is to share results systematically as actionable resources, not just documentation, and to anchor everything in the Playbook by translating communication insights into reusable knowledge for spreading democratic narratives and formats.

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 2026: € 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:

Six projects, each lasting between 24 and 30 months, were selected under the 4th Call for Proposals (three in each of the two countries). They began between December 2025 and February 2026.

JAFOWA is now currently supporting 12 initiatives led by farmers' organizations, which naturally opens up new opportunities for exchange and sharing of experiences among its grantees partners.

JAFOWA was able to organize—for the first time since 2022—a new series of workshops dedicated to the “contribution of farmers' organizations to sustainable food systems” with the 12 farmer organizations leading the projects and their main implementing partners, totaling about thirty participants per country.

JAFOWA's capacity strengthening pillar aims to strengthen participants' conceptual capacities regarding sustainable food systems (analysis and evaluation, creativity and innovation, strategic vision, etc.) and to define the potential roles of POs, alongside their partners (local governments, government agencies, local or international NGOs, researchers, etc.), in structuring and ensuring the sustainability of these food systems.

As part of JAFOWA's convening and learning support to FOs, JAFOWA organised two three-day “country” workshops in Burkina Faso and Senegal, which took place in January and February, and a final online workshop for all participants. This third workshop will be held in two phases: at the end of March with all participants to consolidate the work; and then at the end of April, for a presentation open to other stakeholders and the public.

The governance and team leading JAFOWA remain stable.