UNIVERSITY
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Annual Plan 2026 – 2028 ARENA Centre for European Studies

ARENA – Centre for European Studies is a multidisciplinary research centre at the University of Oslo studying the direction, dynamics and sustainability of the evolving European political order. The Annual Plan sets out ARENA's main goals and priorities in the medium term. It provides a basis for the continuing development of the Centre, in line with the principles and regulatory frameworks of the University of Oslo.

The Annual Plan is decided by ARENA's Board and reviewed annually for a rolling three-year period [Last revision: 05-03-2026]. It is grounded in the overall goals and priorities specified in "Strategi 2030" of the University of Oslo and in the Annual Plan of the Faculty of Social Sciences.

ARENA'S PURPOSE AND VISION

ARENA shall be a leading academic environment on political integration and cooperation in Europe.[1]

ARENA's core purpose is to provide *excellent research on the evolving multilevel European political order, including Norway's role in it*. ARENA's research shall provide innovative and credible answers to significant questions. By significant questions, we mean research questions that contain theoretical and/or empirical puzzles of high scientific and societal relevance. Such questions have the potential of raising interest and addressing concerns both within and outside academia. By credible answers, we mean answers based on purposeful research designs that provide sound arguments in favour of the propositions we make. Innovative answers provide new insights beyond the expected.

ARENA's research shall have *impact*, by which we mean that our findings are being acknowledged and have long-term effects on research and in society. Scholars, students, policy practitioners and/or the general public should pay attention to what we find.

Besides its core purpose of research excellence, ARENA shall be *a leading hub for theoretically and empirically informed public debate on the transformation of the European political order*. Since ARENA started its activities in 1994, European political, economic, social and legal integration has deepened, both within the European Union (EU) and between Norway and the EU. The societal issues

[1] *Administrasjonsreglement ved ARENA Senter for europaforskning,* passed by the Faculty board 27.10.2023.

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that Norwegians care most about – including welfare, climate, energy, migration, security, trade, human rights – are to an increasing extent

determined by decisions made in Europe. ARENA responds to the need in Norway for an easily accessible reservoir of research-based knowledge useful for navigating the changing European landscape.

PRIORITISED GOALS AND MEASURES 2026-2028

The Annual Plan specifies ARENA's priorities and measures for the coming three-year period under four headlines: Research, Dissemination and Outreach, Teaching and Organisation.

Research

ARENA has developed a distinctive way of organising research, characterised by strong integration between researchers and administrative staff. ARENA functions as a research collective, where senior researchers, junior researchers and administrative staff work together as a team to develop, implement and disseminate our research.

ARENA's specific research agenda should evolve in response to the creative ideas of its researchers and to developments in the European political order. It should be continuously evaluated, with the overarching aim of providing innovative and credible answers to significant questions concerning Europe's evolving multilevel political order. An interdisciplinary profile should remain a distinctive feature of ARENA's research.

Priority: Increase the number of competitive proposals

Measures:

- Follow ARENA's "Key principles and guidelines for external funding proposals" (see Annex 1).
- Prepare for a full CoE application to the RCN in case the phase 1 application (submitted 12 November 2025) is invited to phase 2 (deadline TBA/Autumn 2026).

Priority: Stimulate inspiring and useful discussions of ongoing research

Measures:

- Uphold and further develop the Tuesday and Research in Progress seminars.
- Ensure a high level of participation at international academic conferences in EU studies.
- Strengthen cooperation with relevant research institutes, nationally and internationally.

Priority: Uphold a high number of high-quality peer-reviewed publications

Measures:

- Use some of the Research in Progress seminars as publication-focused sessions to assist younger scholars in their publication strategies.
- Set a guiding expectation that senior researchers and research professors aim for an average of two publication points per year (three-year average), recognising that individual output may vary and that quality and scientific impact remain central.

Dissemination and outreach

ARENA should disseminate research and research-based knowledge in ways that amplify its impact within the scholarly community and among students, practitioners and the general public, including through publishing our research at a highly competitive level. The specific communication goals for the period 2026–2028 are:

- To contribute to an informed public debate
- To be a trusted source of knowledge for stakeholders and decision-makers
- To foster dialogue with relevant stakeholders
- To be perceived as an attractive cooperation partner by other academic institutions
- To increase knowledge about ARENA's research and about European studies more broadly among students and young scholars.

Priority: Reinforce ARENA's activities and visibility in Norwegian and European public debates
Measures:

- Hold regular meetings with stakeholders, such as practitioners in relevant ministries.
- Maintain and further develop the podcast series Arena Europa, established in 2025. The purpose of Arena Europa should continue to be to disseminate research in an accessible format to stakeholders and to a wider interested academic and non-academic audience.
- Maintain and further develop the ARENA Policy Brief series, targeting policymakers in Norway and internationally. This series complements ARENA's working paper and report series, which primarily address academic audiences.
- Encourage academic staff to publish at least one policy brief and/or op-ed per year to strengthen ARENA's contribution to a knowledge-based public debate.
- Evaluate outreach and impact on a regular basis.

Teaching

ARENA's staff contributes to teaching at UiO and elsewhere, primarily at the PhD and Master's levels. There are good reasons to strive for increased engagement in teaching: ARENA's research benefits from the interaction between scholars and students, and the centre holds important expertise on the evolving European political order and Norway's relationship with Europe.

Interdisciplinary research programmes remain attractive to students, and teaching opportunities are likewise attractive to ARENA's staff — both for intrinsic academic motivations and for career development.

ARENA has previously sought support for developing an interdisciplinary and internationally competitive Master's programme in European Studies. These efforts have not yet been successful, but the centre remains committed to contributing to high-quality education in this field.

Priority: Develop teaching opportunities for ARENA's staff
Measures:

- Identify opportunities for ARENA's staff to contribute to existing educational programmes at UiO.
- Consider contributing to continuing education programmes in partnership with units at UiO or external actors, provided that funding for course development is made available.

Organisation

ARENA shall have an organisation that is well suited to fulfilling its purpose, characterised by a competent and motivated staff, a viable economic model and a stable position as an independent research centre within the Faculty of Social Sciences. We aim to provide a stimulating, collaborative, welcoming and open work environment, where ARENA's staff are informed and involved in the organisational matters of the centre.

The financial model of the Faculty of Social Sciences implies that all employees at ARENA are, in effect, externally funded and therefore need to contribute to securing the future funding of their own positions. The model includes incentives for prioritising EU funding, due to the financial reward (RBO) attached to such grants. While the RBO has been significantly reduced in the financial model adopted in 2025, it remains important. ARENA is well placed to take advantage of these incentives given its competences and long-standing experience with EU-funded programmes.

It is essential to ensure strong alignment between financial resources and levels of activity to maintain sustainable operations. Equally important is providing employees and students with a safe and supportive physical and psychological working and learning environment. Furthermore, developing administrative competencies tailored to the centre's needs will enhance organisational efficiency and support ARENA's long-term strategic goals.

Priority: Secure funding to uphold and expand ARENA's level of activity
Measures:

- Continue to explore additional sources of funding beyond the major research funding institutions.
- Develop and further specify ARENA's research funding strategy.
- Ensure that all senior researchers are aware of — and actively take responsibility for — the need to secure external funding.

Priority: Secure long-term recruitment of research staff capable of leading new research projects
Measures:

- Support and recruit emerging top-level scholars in European studies or relevant research fields, including through collaborative projects and individual grants such as ERC and the Researcher Project for Early Career Scientists.
- Announce new permanent positions when possible.