



NEF State of Play

Network^{of}
European
Foundations

Update March 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	8
European Fund for the Balkans	9
EPIM – European Philanthropic Initiative for Migration	11
HUB for Democratic Culture – Faktor D.....	13
Joint Action for Farmers’ Organisations in West Africa (JAFOWA).....	15

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: New strategic period of 2025-2027

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. It is composed by Bodossaki Foundation, Fondation CHANEL, Fondation de France, Fondation RAJA-Danièle Marcovici, JPMorgan Chase, King Baudouin Foundation, and L'Oréal Fund for Women, and hosted by the Network of European Foundations. 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:

External evaluation of pilot phase 2021-2024

To assess the impact of our pilot phase, the Alliance commissioned an external evaluation. The findings reinforced the critical role of the Alliance in the European funding landscape, especially as financial support for gender equality in Europe continues to shrink. From grassroots organisations to leading experts, stakeholders see the Alliance as a vital mechanism for directing resources where they are most needed: small, grassroots organisations working to advance gender equality across Europe.

The evaluation also revealed the myriad of value-adds for member foundations beyond the administrative efficiencies inherent to any re-granting organisation, including:

- Peer exchange and learning on gender equality and philanthropic best practices.
- Greater reach and ability to fund differently.
- Increased potential for impact.
- Flexibility in adapting to individual funders' needs.

New strategy for 2025-2027

Responding to the recommendations of the external evaluation, the Alliance developed a new strategic framework that sets out what our donor collaborative aims to achieve over the next three years and how it will get there. The steering committee refined the Alliance's vision and mission, streamlining four objectives into two strategic approaches and developing a North Star for our fund – an attainable goal that is within our grasp, yet will take time, resources, and collective effort to get there.

Additionally, we identified six strategic tactics (three per approach), which will be implemented through a range of activities in this next phase. These were further translated into six expected outcomes or 'changes we want to see' that will bring us closer to an inclusive Europe where gender equality is achieved for all.

In this new phase, the Alliance will double down on its commitment to mobilising the philanthropic community in support of the grassroots gender equality movement for a more inclusive Europe.

Two new funding priorities

While we will continue funding Economic Opportunities and providing capacity strengthening support, we also launched two new sub-funds:

- Movement-Building Sub-Fund

Aims: By enabling greater collaboration, strategic alignment, and solidarity, we can unlock tangible, long-term wins for gender equality in Europe.

We are currently conducting a sector-wide consultation to better understand the needs and opportunities for strengthening the movement. We are 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.

- Opportunity and Emergency Sub-Fund

Aims: By equipping grassroots organisations to withstand the destabilising pressures of the anti-gender movement, we can strengthen their capacity to defend democracy and advance gender equality more effectively.

In October 2024, the Alliance approved two Opportunity and Emergency Grants. These targeted, short-term grants provide critical support to organisations addressing urgent challenges or seizing emerging opportunities to advance gender equality.

Renewals for Economic Opportunities Sub-Fund

The Alliance has launched a closed call for proposals, allocating €2.55 million to renew support for grantee partners from the 2023 Economic Opportunities Fund. This funding will enable them to build on their work advancing economic opportunities for marginalised women, transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming people. By integrating insights from the first phase of the Alliance's support, grantee partners can deepen their impact. Applicant organisations will be notified in June 2025, with grants starting in July.

Organisational development grants

The Alliance offers grants for organisational development of up to 15 000€ per organisation, available to all the grantees and their partners. More than half of the cohort applied by the end of the year and many more plan to do so in 2025.

Grantee convening

In November, the Alliance convened 32 grantee partners, alongside its steering and advisory committee members, for a two-day gathering in Athens, Greece. In the post-event survey, grantees said they were extremely satisfied with the convening. Co-creating the agenda with a grantee committee helped ensure that the convening was useful, and a majority reported that the peer-led sessions held during the convening improved their awareness of strategies and practices that they can integrate into their work.

Site visits

We conducted site visits to grantees in Greece, Spain, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Bulgaria and Romania. During our site visits, we also met with other stakeholders active in the gender equality sector, such as women's rights organisations and anti-violence centres.

Process for strengthening safeguarding

In late 2024, the Alliance launched a process to strengthen its safeguarding policy – a set of guidelines to protect vulnerable individuals from harm of any kind that may be caused due to their coming into contact with the Alliance or its grantee partners. A team of two consultants was hired to conduct a comprehensive review. The findings highlighted gaps in safeguarding knowledge and lack of internal policies within the Alliance and its partners. While grantee knowledge and formal policies vary, most organisations recognise its value and integrate it informally through feminist-informed approaches.

Improving accessibility in our communications

Updating our website is an opportunity to offer clearer user journeys, more impact-oriented copy, and meet higher accessibility standards. The new website will launch in the spring of 2025.

Alliance for Socially Engaged Arts

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

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

Timeframe: Pilot phase- July 2024 to end 2026.

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

A multilateral partnership agreement has been signed by 11 partner Foundations and NEF. The governance model was adopted at the last Steering Committee meeting in February.

As of March, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Carasso Foundation and Cariplo Foundation will be involved in the Executive Committee. Additionally, the Alliance has three active working groups: fellowship, advocacy and communications and evaluation. In October 2024, Daniela Nofal officially joined the Alliance as its Programme Manager, who will be responsible for overseeing the coordination and implementation of the Alliance’s activities.

Launch of the Alliance

The Alliance for Socially Engaged Arts was publicly announced in January 2025 at “Arts and Culture for a Socially Impactful Europe”, an event organised by the Alliance and hosted at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon. The event was attended by over 120 leaders from the arts, philanthropy and policy sectors to shape a vision for a stronger, more connected and socially impactful European arts ecosystem. Overall, the launch of the Alliance has been an outstanding success reflected in the overall coverage and reach it has had.

The Fellowship

The call for expressions of interest for the Alliance for Socially Engaged Arts Fellowship also launched in January. The Alliance received a total of 890 applications, reflecting both the timeliness and relevance of such a programme. This represents the first stage in a three-stage selection process, where successful fellows will be announced in June.

The Fellowship is a programme designed to connect and support visionary leaders of arts organisations driven by community engagement and social change across Europe. Starting in June 2025, this 18-month programme will welcome up to 15 leaders working across diverse artistic disciplines and societal issues to support personal growth, organisational development, and collaborative learning. In October 2024, The Audience Agency, Fitzcarraldo Foundation and Culture Action Europe were selected to partner with the Alliance on the design and delivery of the inaugural Fellowship. They are currently underway with their plans to develop a curriculum that weaves together four key topic pillars: advocacy; holistic leadership; impact and evaluation; and narratives and storytelling.

Advocacy

Over the next couple of months, the Alliance will work towards defining the next steps to advance its advocacy goals. In the meantime, the Alliance is working on drafting a briefing paper to contribute to the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework (2028–2034), to demonstrate how socially engaged arts align with the EU's current priorities and how collaboration between philanthropy and the EU can be mutually beneficial.

Civitates - A Philanthropic Initiative for Democracy and Solidarity in Europe

Foundations involved: Adessium Foundation, Bodossaki Foundation, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Erste Stiftung, European Cultural Foundation, Ford Foundation, Fondation de France, Fritt Ord Foundation, King Baudouin Foundation (Chair), Mercator Switzerland, Oak Foundation, Limelight Foundation, Luminate Foundation, Isocrates Foundation, Open Society Foundations, EFC/Philanthropy for Impact, Porticus, Robert Bosch Stiftung, Rudolf Augstein Stiftung, Sigrid Rausing Trust, Stefan Batory Foundation, Veronika, and Shoepflin Foundation, Aspiration Tech, McArthur Foundation, The Reva and David Logan Foundation, Evens Foundation, Ikermann Foundation.

Budget 2025: around 4 million €

Timeframe: 2024-2026

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. At the time of writing, Civitates had [24 foundation partners](#).

Latest developments:

New foundations joining Civitates

In 2024 our foundation partners grew in diversity and number. We started 2024 with 17 donors; by the end of the year we had 24. An example of the increasing variety of donors to join us in 2024, is the Roman Czernecki Educational (EFC) Foundation, which is the first private family foundation from Poland to join Civitates. We're

increasingly attracting smaller family foundations such as EFC, led by family members, successful entrepreneurs or high net worth individuals, who have not necessarily operated on a transnational level before.

In 2024 we were also joined by the Bodossaki Foundation, Civitates' first- ever foundation partner from Greece, a country that is experiencing rapid democratic decline and media concentration, and which is now a priority country for our grant making. The France-based Inkermann Foundation (Fonds Inkermann) is another example of a family foundation which recently decided to join Civitates. Meanwhile the Schöpflin Foundation rejoined our media sub-fund.

Last year our Tech and Democracy sub-fund was joined by three US donors: the Ford Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation and Luminate. They share the common goal of supporting trailblazing organisations working on the implementation of the DSA, the world's groundbreaking experiment in holding big tech to account.

New cycle of grant-making

At the end of 2024, we finalised our grant-making on all the sub-funds. Our call was based on our new strategy, which we finalised when the Steering Committee agreed on a slight shift of direction for Civitates in March 2024. One of the key changes is that we now have priority countries for each sub-fund. Our support will be more effective if it's targeted where it's needed most: in countries that are either already under authoritarian or populist rule, and in those places, where are still windows of opportunity – where civic space is closing quickly and there's democratic backsliding, and less funding for independent civil society or independent journalists. The new grantees have started their work—all the info is [here](#), and there is a [link](#) to the announcement of the grantees on the website.

We have started a new grant-making process with open calls on SF3 (Europe), SF2 (Europe), and SF1 (Italy). We have just received the concept notes, and selected applicants will be invited for full proposals in May and a final decision by early July. New grantees will start in September for a two-year contract (2025-2027).

Civitates' team is expanding

We have recruited a communication consultant (part-time), a programme and grant officer (PGO) (shared with the AI fund), and an Impact and Learning Manager (thanks to a special contribution from Bosh Foundation). The PGO will start at the end of March and will increase the administrative capacity of the team. The Impact and Learning Manager will start in May/June and will help the team implement Civitates' newly developed Impact and Learning Framework.

Grantee convenings planned for this year

One of the main focus of the Civitates' team this year will be to bring its grantees together online and offline. We hold a quarterly online meeting with our grantees; with the grantees from the various subfund meeting each other for the first time in early February 2025. Our Europe SF1 grantees will meet in person in July in Pech (Hungary) at (Re)building democracy Conference organised by Power of Humanity. SF3 grantees met in November at the Reference Circle meeting in Publix. They will meet again in May at Data Harvest in Mechelen and then again in November for the Reference Circle member meeting. SF2 grantees will meet at the Civitates/EAISF grantee convening in early October. We will start planning all our Civitates grantees meeting in early 2026 by mid this year.

Impact and Learning Framework

The Civitates team is finalising an impact and learning framework with the help of a consultant (Marta Arranz). The Impact and learning manager will implement the framework. The framework will for the first time help the Civitates team and partners assess the impact of its grants at a grantee's, subfunds' and programme's level. It helps draw more learnings from Civitates' work to be shared in its communication to civil society and the wider philanthropic field.

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: 4,4 million euros

Timeframe: 2020-2025

Background:

The European AI & Society supports diverse public interest groups across Europe by galvanising funding to empower them with the capacity and skills to shape policy and debates so that AI is used to promote fair, inclusive and sustainable societies.

By pooling philanthropic resources, since 2021 we have invested over €10 million in growing a community of civil society groups that can shape the AI agenda in the public interest, free from corporate or government ties.

Latest developments:

Grantmaking: Making Regulation Work Programme

In Autumn we [launched two open calls](#) totalling €2.4m to use new and existing laws to deliver accountability and justice and address AI caused harms under our new Making Regulation Work Programme. We received an overwhelming response of nearly 400 applications combined, showing the appetite in civil society across Europe to deliver this urgent work.

Through the two open calls our Steering Committee awarded:

- [10 AI Act Implementation grants](#) to put social justice at the heart of Europe's new AI regulation, totalling €436,000
- 15 AI Accountability grants to use new and existing laws to deliver accountability over AI use, totalling €2.06m. Grantees will be announced in the coming weeks.

Growing the Fund & strengthening the field

In 2024, the Steering Committee and Fund's team set a goal to bring an additional €10m into the field over the next 18 months, aiming to scale philanthropy's response to ensure rapid developments in AI serve people and society, now and into the future.

Since then, [we've raised over €5m towards our target, and welcomed three new funding partners to the Fund](#) – AI Collaborative, Fondation de France and Hewlett Foundation.

Our next funders' briefing on 2 April with Foxglove Legal (UK), Superr Lab (Germany) and Data Labellers Association (Kenya) will spotlight the human labour behind AI and explore strategies to build solidarity with data workers in the global majority as they fight for fair working conditions.

Please [get in touch](#) if you'd like to join this conversation and learn more about AI and labour.

We're also planning our next community event taking place in June that will bring together our grantee and funding partners to share learnings and strategies and build resilience of our ecosystem in these uncertain times.

Internal updates

At the latest Steering Committee meeting in March 2025, Guillermo Beltrá from the Luminate Foundation was re-elected as the co-chair of the Fund and will continue to support our work and strategic development for another two years.

We are currently working on our new strategic framework post-2025 that will be presented and adopted at the next Steering Committee meeting in October.

Our plans for 2025

[In the year ahead](#) our work will be to challenge the stranglehold of big tech vision for technology and chart a new future where AI serves people and society.

Some of the activities include:

- Running our new Making Regulation Work programme with 25 new grantees across two cohorts
- Continuing growing the available resources for the field and working towards our €10m fundraising goal
- Bringing together our funders and grantees at our flagship community event in June
- Working on our new strategic framework post-2025

European Fund for the Balkans

Foundations involved: King Baudouin Foundation (Chair); Robert Bosch Stiftung; ERSTE Stiftung

Budget 2025: 2.3 million €

Timeframe: 2007-2025

NEF-EFB has a registered representation office in Belgrade, Serbia.

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:

The Engaged Democracy Initiative

The third Engaged Democracy Convention preparations are underway. This regional gathering takes place every two years and brings together the whole community of all five thematic regional groups.

The first call of the 20205 micro granting mechanism **Response Hub** has been successfully finished, selecting 13 grants.

The Engaged Balkans Platform with around 600 members of the EDI network, launched a participatory process for co-designing the agenda and engage in online discussions based on their needs regarding the upcoming EDI Convention. The bimonthly newsletter keeps its members informed and engaged, featuring latest updates.

The Balkans in Europe Policy Advisory Group (BiEPAG)

In October 2024, BiEPAG marked its 10th anniversary in Sarajevo. Attendees used this opportunity to emphasise that the past decade has been the longest period in EU history without enlargement, while democratic backsliding and the rise of ‘stabilocracies’ continue across the Western Balkans. In December 2024, BiEPAG members visited several institutions in Brussels and met with the European Parliament Western Balkans Rapporteurs and Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) responsible for the Western Balkans to discuss key developments in the region. Additionally, BiEPAG and the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) organised the event “Will the Rush for Lithium Crush EU Standards?” in Brussels. The event focused on the EU’s approach to lithium mining in the Western Balkans and its impact on democracy, the rule of law, and environmental standards. Participants highlighted that the EU’s support for lithium extraction projects, despite concerns over institutional capture and environmental risks, is undermining its credibility in the region.

Since the last report, BiEPAG has produced numerous blog posts and podcast episodes covering key regional and geopolitical developments, including Bosnia’s EU path, Kosovo’s 2025 parliamentary elections, student protests in Serbia, Croatia’s role in the region, the implications of Trump’s presidency, and the effects of German parliamentary elections on the Western Balkans. Furthermore, two policy briefs tackling mining in the Western Balkans and the future of protests and democracy in Serbia were authored by BiEPAG members.

The beeEFB Alumni Network

In December 2024, the closing ceremony for the 3rd edition of the [beeEffect Programme](#) was organised. The gathering was used as an opportunity for strategic brainstorming, where different ideas for alumni engagement, beeEFB’s ongoing plans, and new ideas for enhancing future collaboration and sustainability were discussed. In January 2025, the newly appointed board members officially stepped into their roles for the 2025-2026 term. Their first in-person meeting was organised in Belgrade at the end of February, where they discussed the upcoming annual event and key activities for 2025.

The Common Ground Programme

Launched in January 2025, this programme aims to address inter-ethnic divides and political polarisation through locally led peacebuilding, peacekeeping, and reconciliation efforts across the Balkans. Emphasising a participatory approach, the programme’s first phase focuses on engaging stakeholders, mapping key actors, and holding roundtable discussions to not only co-design, but guarantee the locally-led nature of the programme’s strategic framework with those whom the program intends to support. Insights from this phase will shape the implementation stage set to begin in September 2025, which supports grassroots reconciliation and peacekeeping efforts across the Balkans. The programme seeks to foster cooperation and embolden regional solidarity, strengthen trust among communities, reignite collaboration and establish sustainable mechanisms for long-term cooperation and peace.

The Joint History Project 2.0 (JHP 2.0)

The JHP 2.0 is a project that takes up the jointly written 6 joint history books for 13 countries of Southeast Europe, covering the period from the Ottoman Empire to 2008. This project is structured around three media campaigns, each dedicated to promoting two history books. To engage diverse audiences, JHP 2.0 utilises a dynamic mix of educational content, including video lessons, cartoons, and social media posts. Additionally, the project fosters

historical dialogue through key events, such as a conference on the change of borders and a workshop on the culture of dialogue. The latter will culminate in a video debate on a sensitive historical topic, showcasing that open dialogue is not only possible but essential for resolving conflicts. All books, available in up to nine languages, can be found and downloaded from the website, (<https://jointhistory.net/>) which will soon evolve into a platform offering engaging materials for teachers and students, along with news, updates on the project, and insights into history.

EPIM – 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 (formerly Fondation Abbé Pierre), Porticus Foundation, 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:

EPIM hosted its inaugural Forum on the 13th and 14th of November 2024, bringing together 38 actors from across the migration ecosystem in Europe, in Brussels. Forum members bring diverse lived experiences and expertise from civil society, government, private sector, social entrepreneurship, migrant activism, academia, journalism and philanthropy.

Framed from a trust-building perspective, the inaugural Forum offered participants a chance to reflect upon the current state of the migration ecosystem and envision the transformation needed towards a regenerative, resilient, and forward-thinking ecosystem. We also had a chance to prototype some of these ambitions and put them into action, co-shaping the directions of EPIM's Reimagining European Migration Governance cluster, guided by insights from the first-ever [systems map on migration governance](#).

Finally, the Executive Council, EPIM's core governing unit, was appointed at the inaugural Forum, with [Audrey Guichon](#) and [Elizabeth V. Kassinis](#), acting as Co-Chairs, supported by [Eunice Romero](#), [Hannes Einsporn](#), [Iliaria Caramia](#), [Janina Stürner-Siovitz](#) and [Letícia Ishibashi](#), serving for the council's first three-year term.

Future editions of the annual Forum will offer 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.

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: Transition Grants ending – Development of the new grantmaking scheme in progress

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.

Over the past months, 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.

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, 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

Our partners span the region, addressing critical infrastructural issues like healthcare and mental health, access to education, the creative use of public spaces, civic engagement, job creation and entrepreneurship

EPIM launched the CEE Network for Migration and Inclusion in Bratislava in May 2024 and will hold the second gathering of the Network on May 27–28, 2025 in Bucharest. Additionally, a national network of Romanian organisations may also be launched in May.

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 Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), Chico Mendes, European Sex Workers' Rights Alliance; Fonds de Dotation Merci, Next Step, ORBIT, Karibu, ACOF, Jobs4Refugees

Updates:

EPIM built on its grantmaking pilot on the deskilling of migrants in 2024. Following the late 2023 sensemaking process, the Pilot's [Council of Practitioners](#) – comprising individuals with professional and personal experience in the area – recommended several organisations to be considered for funding. Three organisations were eventually selected, including [ACOF — Associació Comissió de Formació de la Coordinadora de la Llengua](#), [Karibu](#) and [Jobs4Refugees](#).

Projects funded under EPIM's open call on Decent Work and Adequate Housing for All in 2022 are slowly coming to an end. The projects focus on ecosystem building and involve collaborations across sectors, as well as between CSOs and other actors, including local authorities, the corporate sector, and trade unions.

In 2025, EPIM will kick off 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.

Transition and Closing Grants to Consolidate Progress:

EPIM provided 17 partners with transition grants between 20 and 30K EUR in 2024. The grants were designed with the aim to consolidate the progress made over the past years, strengthen organisational capacities, and support partners in identifying ways to pursue their vision and goals after the end of EPIM's support. We expect that these grants will provide some measure of sustainability and/or funding for scaling changes partner organisations have initiated over the past years.

HUB for Democratic Culture – Faktor D

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

Budget 2025: 650,000 €

Timeframe: 2023-2026

Background:

In the DACH region (Germany, Austria, Switzerland), many organizations, individuals, and foundations are working with innovative solutions, high motivation, and resources to defend and further develop democracy. However, these solutions are often conceived and implemented nationally, their scaling remains limited.

The challenges our democracies face are so great that we must significantly amplify the impact of the pro-democratic field. We believe the key lies in a new form of collaboration: a strategically coordinated approach that transcends outdated boundaries. We aim to tackle problems together, set common goals, develop ideas collectively, and bring new solutions to life. In short: We want everyone working on Democracy to pull in the same direction.

Faktor D focuses on consolidating efforts to foster a self-confident and resilient democratic culture in the DACH region. Its aim is to connect and coordinate different parts of society to arrive at common, cross-border answers to the challenges our democracies face today. Faktor D engages with initiatives and organizations that act as multipliers in their respective fields and assume activating, reinforcing, and supporting roles within their spheres of influence.

The initiative operates through three implementing partners: Initiative Offene Gesellschaft e. V. in Germany, Stiftung Dialog - Campus für Demokratie in Switzerland, and Demokratie21 in Austria.

Latest developments:

Highlights Year Two

The first three years of Faktor D are framed as the set-up phase. In Year One, we focused on establishing Faktor D in the field and testing the core products. Year Two was dedicated to evaluating and strengthening our existing output while exploring and launching new products and solidifying our network.

Key Milestones

Since the start of Faktor D, we have reached far over 2000 organisations through our various products and activities in all three countries. We have provided the essential framework for the development of fifteen project ideas that tackle relevant issues. Nine of these projects have been granted funding in total of 200.000 Euros.

Mitmacht festival

Mitmacht festival was launched in early September of 2024, with conceptual work beginning in early 2024. By positioning it as “the festival for collective strategies”, we aimed and succeeded at attracting forward-thinking, impact-oriented players from the democracy world.

Mitmacht was held live from September 4–6, 2024 in Ingolstadt at the Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt.

With the first festival edition, we managed to establish an important live element in our otherwise digital product portfolio. The festival strongly helped to boost our profile within the German-speaking democracy world: The month of the programme release was our single best month of 2024 in terms of impressions and engagement on our channels. In the post-festival survey, the festival organisation was given a 4.5 out of 5 points by respondents.

Right now, preparations for the second edition of the festival are already underway. A date and location has been fixed: The festival will take place in November 2025 in Vienna – the European Capital of Democracy 2025.

Mission #2

Our second Mission was launched in summer 2024 on the subject of Artificial Intelligence and democracy. More specifically, we raised the question of how artificial intelligence can be used to combat polarization. With the second iteration of our mission framework, we addressed a hot topic and proved to be able to tackle current and urgent issues that are at the top of everybody’s minds.

The Mission included an Innovationsprozess that brought together experts from the field with the goal to co-create practical solutions to existing challenges. Additionally, four events as part of our Im Diskurs series were realized. The mission attracted considerable attention within our network and beyond. The Innovationsprozess yielded eight project ideas of which five were fully funded by the group. The projects are now being implemented.

Fundraising and Organizational Development

In year 2, Faktor D has intensified its fundraising efforts to ensure its long-term organizational stability and development. Based on its strategy and products, Faktor D has developed a fundraising plan. It has applied for funding at Erasmus Plus and CERV as well as for smaller national grants that are compatible with the general strategy. Several foundations have been identified and approached for potential future funding of Faktor D’s core work or specific missions.

Next Steps

For the upcoming months, our objective is to increase the impact and visibility of Faktor D by further extending its activities and network. In order to reach and engage more democracy actors, the website will be relaunched with a stronger focus on knowledge transfer and community engagement. Additionally, we will launch a new newsletter format called BRIEF that showcases practical and strategic insights relevant for democracy actors.

Following our strategy of promoting issue-specific strategic cooperation, we will launch further thematic missions while continuing to support and report on our previous missions. For the next edition of the festival, event curation, the publication and selection of an open call as well as the development of strategic partnerships are at the heart of our activities in the upcoming months.

Joint Action for Farmers' Organisations in West Africa (JAFOWA)

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:

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' organizations (FOs) through grantmaking and capacity development with a geographic focus on Burkina Faso and Senegal.

Latest developments:

Since September 2024, the programme has been managed by a programme manager and a deputy manager based in Senegal, increasing JAFOWA's localisation and sustainability.

At the end of 2024, the team was able to carry out monitoring missions in Senegal and Burkina Faso, which overall confirmed that the partners were making good progress in their work. The duo brings complementary expertise to strengthen project evaluation, monitoring and support to the projects. Jafowa has finalised the monitoring and evaluation system for its funded projects and at its own level.

The Steering Committee and the team were also able to finalise the 2025 Call for Proposals, which will be launched in April. The call will be based on the newly approved JAFOWA Roadmap. JAFOWA will fund around 8 to 10 projects, each lasting 2-3 years, through a closed process inviting initially 40 POs in Senegal and Burkina Faso. The total budget is €900,000. The selection process (concept note followed by full dossier and site visits) should be completed by September 2025. By the end of 2025, JAFOWA will support the simultaneous development of around fifteen projects.

JAFOWA also participated in the Salone del Gusto Terra Madre organised by the Slow Food network in Turin (Italy) at the end of September 2024, hosting a workshop on "Partnerships for agro-ecological intensification and sustainable food systems in Africa".