

EUI Strategy 2026-2031



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PREAMBLE: A COLLABORATIVE FOUNDATION FOR THE EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE (EUI) STRATEGY 2026-2031

The EUI Strategy 2026–2031 is the outcome of a collective endeavour that engaged the full EUI community – students, PhD researchers, postdoctoral fellows, faculty members, professional staff, and the representatives at the High Council. Fifteen working groups examined core dimensions of the Institute’s work, from academic excellence to operational innovation, and their proposals were refined through broad consultation with internal and external governing bodies. Their insight, commitment, and creativity have been, and will continue to be, vital in shaping the Institute’s direction in the coming years.

The process of developing the Strategy was demanding but energising, marked by open debate, sustained engagement, and a shared readiness to confront complexity – a model of how academia must function in an age of contested truths. Disagreement proved to be a strength, allowing for the testing of assumptions and the refining of evidence into argument. The Strategy’s breadth reflects the diversity of its contributors; its precision, the rigour of revision; and its legitimacy, the openness to limits and choice. In an era of misinformation, responsible action lies not in easy consensus but in accountable, evidence-based deliberation that remains open to critique and evolution.

More than a planning exercise, this process became an occasion for reflection on the Institute’s identity and purpose. It fostered a shared understanding of where the EUI stands and where it seeks to go, creating a foundation for dialogue that will continue beyond this document.

The present document weaves together the insights, priorities, and aspirations expressed across the working groups. While it does not reproduce each group’s contributions in its entirety, it recognises and values the intellectual and institutional investment that underpins them. The working group papers will remain a valuable resource for the Institute, offering a reservoir of ideas and proposals that can continue to inspire future initiatives, and guide the ongoing reflection on the EUI’s evolving role. The Strategy thus represents both a shared vision for the coming years and a living framework for ongoing conversation across the Institute.



INTRODUCTION: THE EUI AT 50 – COMMITMENT TO EUROPE, CONTINUITY IN PURPOSE, INNOVATION IN ACTION

As the EUI marks its 50th anniversary in 2026, it enters this chapter with energy and an unwavering commitment to the European project, anchored in its unique role as a university and an intergovernmental institution. Europe has been built upon democracy, freedom, peace and reconciliation, transnational governance, economic integration, and social development around a consensual model of society. Little is now left of the structural stability of the political forces upon which this was premised. This is a critical moment that requires reimagining Europe's future and the direction of social and technological transformation. Established to advance knowledge for and about Europe, the EUI continues to combine rigorous research, interdisciplinary collaboration, and public engagement. The Strategy 2026–2031 honours this legacy, while preparing the Institute to meet the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

The Strategy aims to translate the long-term [Vision for a Future EUI](#) into concrete action while distilling the outcomes of the process led by the working groups. The three dimensions of the Vision – excellence, engagement, and communication – provide the **framework** for the Strategy (Part I). The **strategic priorities** articulate the Institute's forward-looking agenda, which encompasses reimagining Europe; co-creation of knowledge; digital transformation; equity, diversity, and inclusiveness; sustainability; and alumni engagement. These priorities guide research, teaching, training, and outreach, ensuring that the EUI remains at the forefront of European scholarship (Part II). Finally, the **enablers** – agile administration and working culture; partnerships; funding; and quality assurance – provide the culture, structures, and resources to deliver the Strategy (Part III).

The EUI Strategy 2026-2031 is ambitious yet grounded; it recognises the challenges of both global and European academic landscapes and the need for adaptability, reflection, and evidence-based decision making. While bridging disciplines, sectors, and generations, the EUI is committed to providing orientation to institutions and society at large and to leading the future of higher education in a digital era. With clear priorities and calls for long-term infrastructural investments, the Strategy acts as a compass for the years ahead. It is a bold statement of purpose that positions the Institute as an intellectual leader in excellence and innovation.



STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The European University Institute's mandate – as set out in Article 2 of its founding Convention – is to contribute, collectively and individually, to the development of the cultural and scientific heritage of Europe, through “teaching and research at the highest university level” while also developing “interdisciplinary research programmes on the major issues confronting contemporary European society”, and to act as a “forum for the exchange and discussion of ideas and experience”. Academic excellence, interdisciplinarity, and public engagement have always been the foundation of the EUI.

Whether curiosity-driven or solution-oriented, research can transform the world. As publicly funded scholars, the EUI's academics are accountable to the societies that support and legitimise them. The EUI, as a small and internationally oriented institution, must develop its own reflective and inclusive criteria for assessing academic quality.

These criteria continue to be grounded in established approaches while allowing us to define additional understandings of excellence in light of the EUI's unique mission.

The EUI, collectively and with its constituent academic units – the Departments, the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies (RSCAS), the Florence School of Transnational Governance (STG), and the Max Weber Programme – have consistently operated at the highest standards of academic excellence, exemplifying rigorous scholarship and intellectual leadership on issues facing European societies. This is especially noteworthy as the EUI community is highly dynamic, with no tenure for professors, and relatively small. Looking forward, and following the EUI's long-term vision, the Institute's scholarly and social contributions are structured around three interdependent dimensions:

EXCELLENCE

across research, supervision, teaching, and training, defined through rigorous international academic standards;

ENGAGEMENT

activities that connect scholarship to institutions and society at large, also supported by Institute-wide initiatives that enable the co-creation of knowledge;



COMMUNICATION

disseminating our work effectively beyond the confines of academia.

This strategic framework, grounded in academic excellence and enriched by engagement and communication, enables the Institute to build upon its tradition of rigorous research and intellectual freedom, while honouring its legacy in public scholarship and showcasing its relevance in a rapidly changing social and political landscape. The work of each academic unit of the EUI contributes to these three dimensions.

EXCELLENCE

Our notion of excellence remains anchored in the principle of academic freedom. To ensure that the EUI remains a credible, independent voice in addressing social challenges, individual scholars and academic units must retain intellectual autonomy. This autonomy coexists with a shared responsibility across the academic community and the EUI leadership to advance the mission and priorities of the Institute. The EUI recognises that there are multiple ways to achieve excellence within disciplinary and interdisciplinary programmes and that excellence must be assessed in a contextualised, inclusive manner, considering career stage, discipline, and structural barriers.

Excellence in research

Excellence in research remains anchored in internationally recognised criteria, including, but not limited to, peer-reviewed publications with leading journals and presses as well as monographs with leading publishing houses; scholarly influence, including citations, recognition, and leadership roles in the wider academic community; success in securing competitive research funding; and interdisciplinary research activities.

Excellence in research must moreover be adaptive to contemporary scholarly practices. These include team leadership, digital literacy, institutional citizenship – including service to the EUI and the broader academic community – and the ability to integrate diverse theoretical approaches and methods into scholarly work.

Excellence in supervision, teaching, and training

The EUI embraces supervision, teaching, and training as key domains of academic socialisation and cultural transmission, cultivating scholarly values, interdisciplinary adaptability, and professional resilience. This equips our master's students, PhD researchers, postdoctoral fellows, research fellows, faculty, and executive education participants with the



skills, networks, and confidence to navigate diverse academic and professional paths and to contribute to academia and society. Structured, reflective, and proactive supervisory and educational practices, including clear communication of expectations, regular academic guidance, and timely, substantive feedback are prerequisites to achieving a conducive learning experience.

A specific strength of the EUI in providing such a learning experience is its open, multilingual, and international academic culture, supported by its intergovernmental foundation. Supervision at the EUI aims to ensure the standard, timely completion of high-quality doctoral theses while fostering a relationship of mutual respect, trust, and academic growth between supervisors and supervisees. PhD candidates are consciously referred to as 'researchers' to signal their autonomy and full membership of the EUI academic community. The PhD research experience is characterised by independence in selecting and developing research topics, mirrored in the highly personalised learning pathways in our master's programmes and executive education.

ENGAGEMENT

At the EUI, excellence in research and education is pursued within a wider mission. Excellence generates knowledge, capabilities, and communities of practice that are most valuable when they circulate across disciplines and beyond academia. Engagement is the Institute's structured way of linking our core scholarly activities to society's challenges. It encompasses individual choice and collective capacity. Building on disciplinary and interdisciplinary achievements, the Institute and its members extend their reach through collaboration with partners. Open to bold, creative, and unconventional approaches, the EUI will also extend its reach by engaging with local and regional actors, technologists, artists, and foundations. These collaborations will harness social imagination, enrich academic inquiry, and expand the Institute's contribution to cultural, technological and social transformation.

The EUI welcomes external actors as co-creators of knowledge. Co-creation with civil society, policymakers and business needs to be carefully designed and nurtured throughout the collaborative process, from defining the issues to be addressed, to designing and facilitating communicative interactions, to follow-up activities. The generated knowledge and ideas will feed back into the work of the Institute, enriching our thinking and learning.

Co-creation of knowledge will be supported and facilitated by initiatives that serve as infrastructures for engagement: an accessible environment with dedicated resources; effective procedures and clear governance; and spaces for collaboration that foster intellectual cohesion within and across the EUI's various constituencies. By establishing these infrastructures, the Institute will reinforce its role as an independent and reflexive community at the critical intersection of academia, politics, and society – bringing together communities that in today's polarised world are too often separated.

Many other universities face the challenge of creating public value through engagement. Through co-creation initiatives, the EUI will explore innovative formats, including the experimental use of digital tools, and aspires to be a reference point for research and education, laying down a cornerstone for the future of universities in Europe and beyond.

COMMUNICATION

To sustain excellence and engagement, ideas must travel. This is the role of communication, aimed at making EUI research findable, reusable, and trusted by diverse audiences. The Institute will continue to disseminate research in accessible formats to academia, policymakers, and society. It will also help researchers in translating their scientific findings into effective pieces of communication, for example using novel approaches to engage both academic and broader audiences. A strengthened and coordinated Communications Service will provide the EUI community with the tools, training, and support needed to share their work effectively, engage with news media, and amplify the Institute's presence within and beyond Europe. Specific communication formats include a new annual flagship event (to be launched at the 50th anniversary of the EUI in May 2026) that will showcase cutting-edge research relevant to Europe's future and engage actors across disciplines, sectors, and generations; a new Memory Portal with a dynamic repository and research map that makes EUI knowledge findable, citable, and reusable; and curated interviews between external leaders and EUI researchers, packaged into video, audio, and written summaries.

The EUI will cultivate a renewed institutional identity that highlights its dual nature, both European and independent of national systems, and builds on its distinctive capacity to generate value beyond academia. This identity will reflect the Institute's role as a source of thought leadership, offering knowledge and insight that inform other institutions and society at large.



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STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The EUI's strategic priorities are built upon its three-dimensional framework of excellence, engagement, and communication. The six priorities - (1) reimagining Europe, (2) co-creation of knowledge, (3) digital transformation, (4) equity, diversity, and inclusiveness, (5) sustainability, and (6) alumni engagement – apply across the Institute, and are designed to address social, technological, and political challenges in Europe and across the globe.

REIMAGINING EUROPE

Rooted in the understanding that 'Europe' is an evolving concept – at once an aspiration, a challenge, and a legacy – the EUI takes Europe both as an object of study and as a vantage point from which to engage with global transformations. In an era marked by climate change, demographic shifts, technological transformations, geopolitical realignments, and debates over democracy and the rule of law, "Reimagining Europe" becomes an intellectual and institutional ambition that is reflective of the EUI's mandate under Article 2 of its Convention.

Reimagining Europe involves rigorous, interdisciplinary research on Europe's societies, economies, politics, laws, and governance, grounded in historical awareness and global interdependence. Such research is sustained by the interpretative, reflective, and critical practices of the social sciences and humanities, each of which plays a constitutive role in producing knowledge, explanations, reconstructions, and interpretations that treat past experiences as a field for interrogating how Europe's institutions, ideas, social orders, and cultural practices operate. The [EUI Widening Europe Programme](#) exemplifies this approach.

"Reimagining Europe" is an overarching, non-exhaustive research agenda that lies at the heart of the EUI's intellectual project and mandate. Its four Research Horizons reinforce our ongoing commitment to curiosity-driven scientific inquiry. These interdisciplinary Research Horizons are:

1. Social foundations of sustainable prosperity:

Demographic shifts; climate and ecological crises; global and regional trade and migration flows; and structural technological changes are redefining what it means for individuals and societies to prosper. This horizon examines how social and economic models, laws, and institutions in Europe and elsewhere have evolved over the centuries, and will continue to do so, to maintain or increase well-being, social fairness, equality, and sustainable development.

2. Knowledge, power and trust in digital society:

Technological innovation, digitalisation, and AI are reconfiguring expertise, transforming knowledge creation, and promising sizable productivity gains. They also present ethical dilemmas and risk amplifying inequalities and exclusion. This horizon explores how societies harness these digital and other technological possibilities while preserving informational integrity, critical epistemologies, and democratic knowledge communities. It situates present challenges within the longer histories of knowledge, communication, and the information revolutions in Europe and the wider world.

3. Geopolitics of security and governance:

Geopolitical realignments are transforming global power dynamics and the international legal, political, and economic order. This horizon examines what has caused these shifts and how the EU, NATO, and other supranational bodies have responded, navigated, and (re)shaped the terrain of international security and global governance throughout their complex histories. It pays special attention to different 'security communities' created through sovereignty-sharing arrangements in Europe and beyond and to what these have meant for individuals, collectivities, and the evolving historical narratives of protection, conflict, and cooperation.

4. Resilient democracies:

Polarisation, disinformation, and the rise of authoritarian parties and governments have repeatedly tested the viability of liberal-democratic political systems. This horizon examines, across time and space, how and why democratic processes, human rights, the rule of law, and academic freedom are recurrently undermined, as well as how they could be strengthened through institution-building, civic education and participation, and innovative deliberative mechanisms that enhance legitimacy and responsiveness in increasingly diverse and interdependent societies.

The Research Horizons were identified through consultation with all academic units as areas of synergy that can function as flexible frameworks to encourage collaboration, enhance internal and external visibility of research collectives, and connect ideas across disciplines. These Horizons will continue to respect the academic freedom and the spontaneous creativity that drives the EUI's research excellence.

Building on the experience of the interdisciplinary research clusters (introduced by the Strategy 2019-2024), the Institute will establish hubs that strengthen and support collaborative research, partnership, and effective communication. These hubs will build communities inspired by the Research Horizons and other key issues of interest to the EUI community; partner across academia, politics, and society at large; mobilise alumni networks; and promote Open Science.



This strategic priority will be supported by:

- strengthening interdisciplinary collaborations across academic units, including a participatory start-of-the-academic-year event and an AI-powered research map to dynamically represent scholars' research interests;
- establishing hubs around the Research Horizons or other key issues, facilitating collaboration among academic units, and engagement with external partners and alumni, including through targeted fellowship programmes within the Institute for advanced studies;
- producing relevant research while maintaining methodological rigour, critical intellectual thinking, and academic independence, and leveraging our increasingly streamlined EUI-led coherent executive education activities as one such research-policy interplay;
- establishing a transversal research forum on "Reimagining Europe" that coordinates the activities of the initiatives under the oversight of the Research Council, with interested PhD researchers playing a central role, by co-shaping research agendas and working groups and providing regular feedback for improvements.

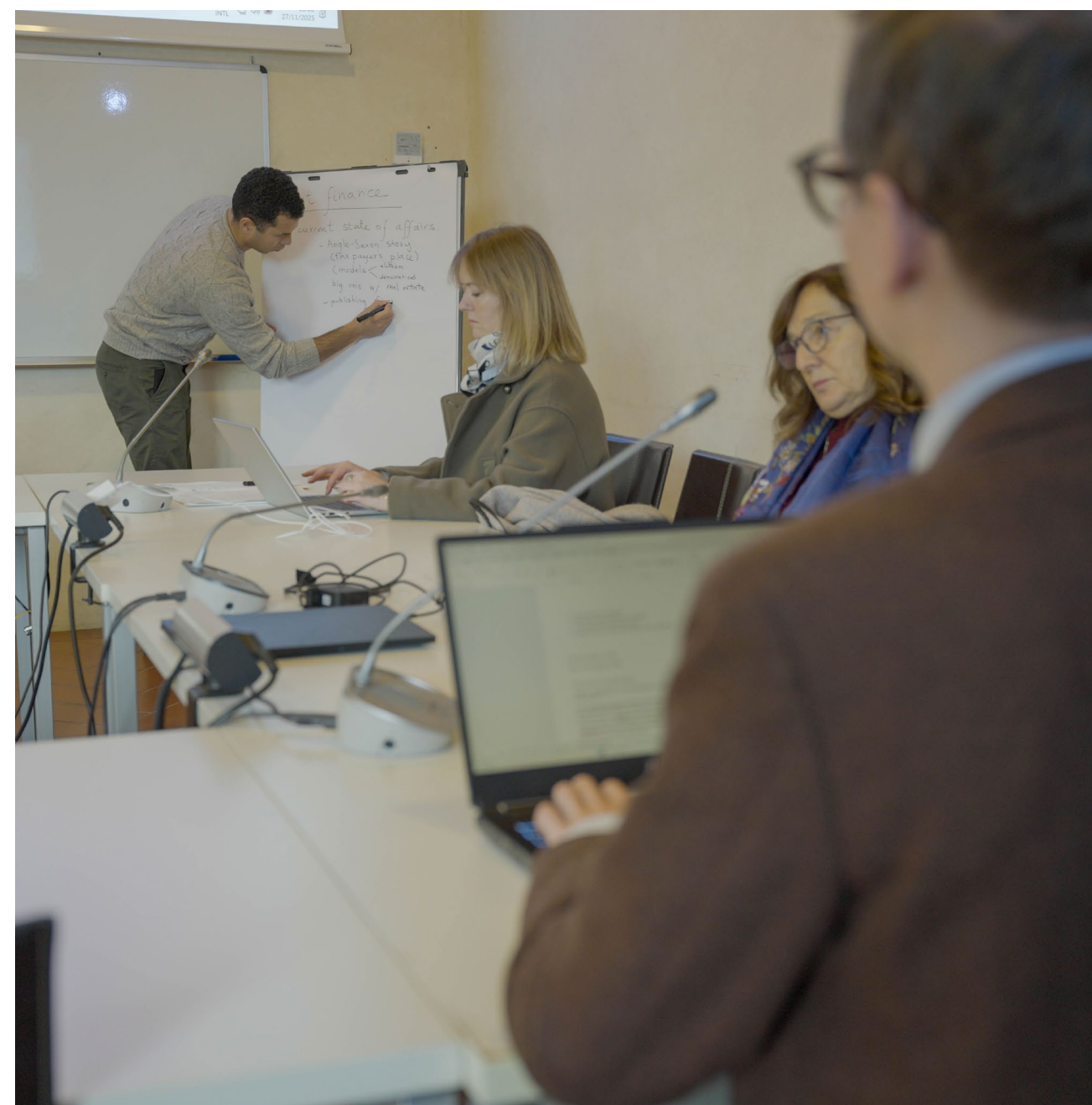
CO-CREATION OF KNOWLEDGE

Co-creation of knowledge transforms engagement into a genuine bi-directional relationship, as defined above (Part I.2). To make co-creation a central feature of the EUI's engagement, the Institute will establish dedicated strategic initiatives. Given the EUI's unique role in postgraduate education, researchers and students will be invited to help shape these initiatives and participate throughout. Examples of such initiatives include:

- The **Science–Policy Interface** fosters a structured and trusted space where evidence and decision-making intersect. Through curated dialogues, a matchmaking ecosystem for expertise, and the professionalisation of knowledge 'translators', it turns episodic outreach into continuous collaboration that shapes research questions and renders policy challenges analytically tractable.
- The **EU Security Initiative** connects confidential knowledge co-creation with high-level European security fora to refresh the continent's strategic thinking. With its Florence Security Forum, targeted policy dialogues, a cross-EUI research network, and a fellowship programme, it channels scholarly insight into actionable options for a credible EU security posture.
- The **Tech Hub** centres technology as a subject-matter for the social sciences and humanities. It will experiment with new technologies and methodologies for effective transversal and interdisciplinary collaboration on technology research at the EUI, also offering opportunities to researchers to engage in related research. It will invite technologists, engineers, natural scientists, policymakers, and social actors to imagine and co-design alternative technological trajectories for Europe and the world. An initial focus will be on creating the conditions for democratic technological sovereignty by imagining and designing new digital infrastructures for the future European public sphere.
- The **Open Lab** is a space that encourages experimentation across disciplines, sectors and generations. At its core is a fellowship programme that convenes trios of scholars, artists, and civic actors around curated themes. In collaboration with the EUI community, including researchers, and local actors, they craft artefacts and experiences aimed at providing orientation to society at large. An evolving, digital as well as physical, 'Museum for the Future' will serve as both an accessible archive and a public platform of the Open Lab.
- Drawing on the EUI's intergovernmental foundation and pan-European network, the **Future of Universities** initiative convenes scholars and

civic actors to design the academic infrastructure needed for a more just and prosperous Europe. Through interdisciplinary collaboration and prefigurative politics, this initiative moves beyond conventional debates to identify real challenges, imagine alternatives to traditional models, and build communities of practice that test and implement new approaches to higher education and research.

These and other initiatives conceived in the coming years will be supported by a transversal facilitation team for design, fundraising, implementation, and learning. The initiatives will create reflective and agile spaces that lower barriers to collaboration, consolidate experimentation, and transform pilot projects into institutional infrastructures.



DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

As a strategic priority, the EUI's digital transformation turns technological changes and challenges into advantages. Drawing on knowledge generated from the Research Horizon 'Knowledge, power, and trust in digital society' and related initiatives (e.g. the Tech Hub), we will build shared, AI-ready infrastructures and treat digital tools as both enablers of scholarship and administration, as well as objects of inquiry. In doing so, we will protect intellectual freedom and autonomy, steward EUI knowledge, and preserve openness, accountability, and integrity. As a convener of European universities, we will turn analysis into practice, advancing research, pedagogy, and institutional standards for higher education in a digital–AI era.

The EUI will:

- develop, with the support of the Library and Historical Archives of the EU, a Memory Portal, combining a durable repository and an AI-mapping tool making EUI knowledge visible, discoverable, and usable, both internally and externally;
- develop digital infrastructures for individual and collaborative research by facilitating research data management and sharing, AI model creation and fine-tuning in consideration of both potential benefits and risks of this technology, and interdisciplinary exchange via dedicated communication and dissemination platforms in pursuit of Open Science;
- enhance digital literacy across faculty, PhD researchers, and professional staff, including the development of a sandbox for understanding uses of AI in social science and humanities research;
- integrate innovative digital methods in research, supervision, teaching, and training, leveraging the Scholars' Hub, a resource designed to support EUI scholars at every stage of their academic journey.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSIVENESS

The EUI commits to fostering a diverse and inclusive community whose members can respectfully disagree with one another. Equity, diversity, and inclusiveness (EDI) enhance excellence by broadening perspectives. Strategic actions include:

- strengthening policies, practices, and physical environment to increase participation and representation across gender, nationality, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, disability, socio-economic status, career stage, and their combinations;
- embedding EDI principles and safeguards against harassment in all academic, administrative, and engagement activities;
- ensuring equitable access to recruitment, promotion, funding, and participation; in particular, addressing national PhD funding and social welfare inequalities and creating pathways for high-potential candidates lacking prior access to advanced training, thereby enhancing diversity across the institution;
- supporting structures that foster EDI as well as recurrently monitoring and publicly reporting progress using evidence-based indicators to guide improvements.



SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is both an operational and intellectual priority, ensuring the EUI contributes to a greener and more resilient Europe. The EUI will foster a culture of long-term responsibility and a commitment to the common good. In addition to actions relevant in other priorities, the EUI will seek to become an academic leader in sustainability by:

- reducing the Institute's carbon footprint and promoting resource efficiency, also considering the impact of digital and AI technologies;
- implementing green infrastructure and sustainable operational practices;
- promoting sustainability into research and teaching agendas;
- reflecting on the relationship between the Institute's strategic orientation and wider European policy frameworks and international environmental commitments.

ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

The EUI's first structured approach to alumni engagement, covering an urgent gap, will strengthen its institutional memory, social reach, and international networks. The Institute recognises alumni as vital partners in engagement and enhancing institutional reputation. Key actions include:

- expanding alumni networks, with an Alumni Mapping Tool for mentorship, research collaboration, and policy outreach;
- engaging alumni in institutional governance
- and strategic consultations;
- leveraging alumni expertise in public scholarship, teaching, executive education, and fundraising;
- celebrating alumni achievements and integrating their insights into research for greater social impact;
- developing a community of alumni ambassadors and regional chapters to increase the Institute's visibility and funding opportunities in Europe and beyond.



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ENABLERS

Enablers support the Institute's framework and strategic priorities, ensuring adaptability and ongoing learning, efficiency, and resilience. They provide the structures, tools, and culture necessary for creativity, collaboration, and accountability. This keeps the EUI principled where we must be and flexible where we should be. Building on the Strategy 2019-2024, this Strategy features the enablers of agile administration and working culture, partnerships, funding, and quality assurance. By embedding these enablers across the Institute, the EUI community will be empowered to turn ambition into action. In this way, the Institute protects its independence and its unique foundation while preserving its capacity to seize opportunities and meet challenges in a dynamic European environment and beyond.

AGILE ADMINISTRATION AND WORKING CULTURE

The EUI recognises the importance of aligning administrative actions to academic needs while ensuring accountability and service quality. Actions include:

- streamlining administrative processes, recognising time-saving adaptations, supported by digitalisation as well as innovative and responsible AI tools;
- encouraging decentralisation, co-designing solutions with scholars and administration, experimentation, transparency, open communication, and continuous feedback;
- enhancing EUI-wide dialogue and participatory working culture, in an environment where hard questions are discussed rigorously, respectfully, and productively;
- practising collaborative leadership with individual accountability and transparency, and regularly reviewing rules and policies;
- strengthening the role of representatives of constituencies in governance and consultation.

PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships can facilitate research impact, enhance social engagement, expand funding opportunities, and increase global visibility. The EUI will:

- strengthen strategic collaborations with leading universities (including technical universities), research centres, and think tanks, in Europe, the global south, and worldwide;
- engage with national and European institutions to support evidence-based policymaking, also developing a flexible and effective Brussels presence;
- partner with foundations, NGOs, and international organisations to translate research into action;
- foster alumni networks for collaboration, mentorship, fundraising, and outreach.



FUNDING

The funding approach, which was developed through thoughtful debate and incorporates a wide range of perspectives, enables the EUI to maintain its independence and integrity, support research excellence, and invest in innovation. This requires diversified funding sources, including public and private funding. The EUI will:

- build financial resilience to withstand external uncertainties;
- protect academic freedom; respect, protect and fulfil human and labour rights, international humanitarian law, and international criminal law;
- limit the potential abuse of dual-use knowledge, knowledge security risks, and environmental impacts;
- strengthen European institutional support while seeking competitive research grants;
- develop philanthropic partnerships and donor networks;
- improve a funding framework based on transparency, inclusivity and representation, accountability, and proportionality.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

Quality assurance (QA) ensures the quality of the EUI's research, teaching, and training through continuous improvement aligned with environmental, social and governance (ESG) standards. Strong internal QA processes already exist, especially in research and doctoral programmes, supported by cyclical external assessment.

Key measures include:

- formalising external QA through accreditation of master programmes to ensure degree recognition and accountability;
- strengthening institutional QA support, including consistent programme design, pedagogical support, and recruitment of educational expertise;
- working toward a future Teaching and Learning Centre within the Scholars' Hub.

