

ROBERT SCHUMAN CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES

Strategic Plan, 2026 - 2030

Creating cutting-edge interdisciplinary research
on the major challenges facing Europe.

MAY 2025



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Preface

The world is evolving at a pace not seen since the early 1970s or the early 1990s. The acceleration of climate change, the retreat of globalisation, the rise of authoritarianism, and the spread of violent conflict create new and important challenges for Europe. The digital and green transition take place alongside efforts to strengthen economic innovation and resilience, push back against distraction and disinformation, protect freedom and privacy, manage migration and dislocation, and restore peace and stability. The weakening of multilateral institutions, the volatility of democratic electorates, and the breakdown of the transatlantic partnership make those challenges harder to address.

The European solution is to work together, to promote new ideas, build new partnerships, develop new technologies, and forge new institutions. A fast-changing environment creates opportunities as well as challenges. The cure for uncertainty is a mix of imagination, reason, and method. The research university exists to help bring these elements together. But a university cannot succeed in unlocking opportunities or addressing challenges in isolation. Imagination, reason, and method must be embedded in social action.

The European University Institute (EUI) was created in the early 1970s to strengthen academic training in the social sciences and humanities to foster that type of socially embedded creative innovation. The Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies (RSCAS) was launched twenty years later to reinforce the EUI's engagement with European policymakers and other stakeholders in the public and private sectors. This new period of change comes with a renewed commitment to focus excellence in research and creativity on efforts to push back against uncertainty. As major research universities come under unprecedented attack, this renewed commitment underscores the importance of the EUI's social embeddedness. That commitment is strategic for Europe.

Robert Schuman Centre establishment.
Roy Jenkins and Max Kohnstamm, the first president of the EUI, during the First Conference Jean Monnet, 20 October, 1993.



The purpose of this strategy is to show how the RSCAS contributes to that wider effort to connect work done at the EUI with stakeholders in the public and private sectors, as well as the broader public, in order to strengthen the European project. This strategy should be read alongside the RSCAS *Research Agenda* and in light of its annual report of activities. The goal of this strategy is not to repeat the information provided in those documents, but to show how they reflect a plan of action.

This document was prepared with input from all major groups at the RSCAS and in close consultation with colleagues from across the European University Institute as part of the EUI strategic review. That consultation took place in a series of dedicated meetings, bilateral encounters, and written contributions made in February 2025, using a formula developed by the previous RSCAS Director, Brigid Laffan, for the creation of the last strategy document.

The difference in this iteration was our ability to apply insights from the newly adopted ‘Vision of a Future EUI’. The conversations we had not only helped us better to understand the unique characteristics of the RSCAS as a community but also gave us important space to reflect on how we contribute to the wider mission of the EUI as a research university. Active involvement of all parts of the RSCAS sparked creativity as well as self-reflection in this process. We came away with a sense of hope and opportunity that feels all too rare in increasingly challenging times.

Many outside voices also contributed to this deliberation, including those with long ties to the RSCAS community. Special thanks go to the members of the Robert Schuman Centre’s Advisory Board for their generous support, advice, and guidance. We also benefited from the strong example provided by the Florence School of Transnational Governance, which recently undertook a similar exercise.



State of Play

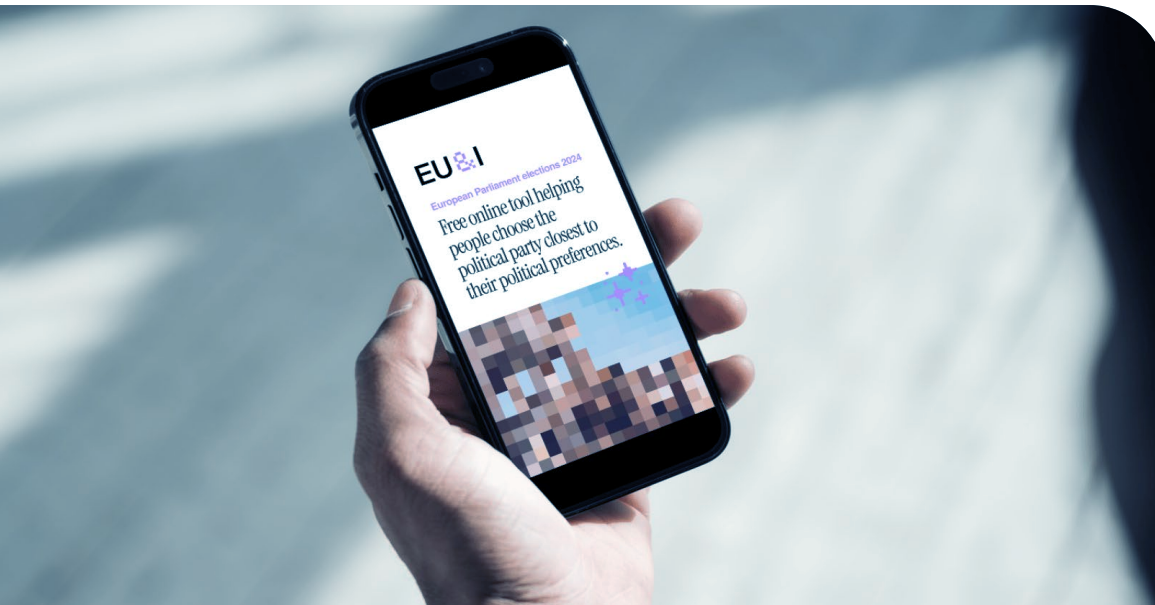
The High Council of the European University Institute (EUI) founded the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies (RSCAS) in 1993 with the goal to foster cutting-edge, interdisciplinary, policy-relevant research to complement the work of the EUI departments of Economics, History and Civilisation, Law, and Social and Political Sciences. The unique contribution of the RSCAS was to build out a large-scale, externally funded research programme addressing the main challenges facing the newly established European Union and its member states. Under the leadership of Yves Mény, the RSCAS started with a small cohort of post-doctoral and doctoral researchers and handful of ideas about what to do next. Mény's experiment quickly proved a success.

Some thirty years and four directors later, in February 2025, the RSCAS has 15 full-time faculty, 69 part-time professors, and 89 academic staff. It hosts 45 fellows across five different fellowship programmes, with another 120 visiting fellows rounding out the community. It benefits from the dedication of 62 administrative staff, including 7 trainees. This community manages nearly 70 different research projects and generates just under €17 million in external funding to support research activities which are predominantly carried out across its two schools, four centres, and two major research programmes. The work of the RSCAS continues to address the main challenges facing Europe – which remains its principal contribution to the EUI – but the scope of its activity has expanded significantly.

Along the way, the RSCAS has developed a strong reputation for its academic research, interdisciplinary focus, and policy relevance. RSCAS research publications make up just over 40 percent of the output recorded in the EUI's Cadmus database.

Group Photo Welcome
Fellows, 2024.





EU&I advice application, 2024.

Its fellowship programmes have created a vast network of contacts across Europe, many of whom return to take up faculty appointments or to participate in the RSCAS' ongoing research. Its training activities engage thousands of professionals working in the private sector, in EU institutions, or with national competent authorities. Its events bring together thousands of participants for in-person meetings and tens of thousands online. And its voting advice application, EU&I, has helped millions of European voters make informed choices ahead of national and European elections.

The success of the RSCAS is only possible because of the supportive environment created by the EUI and the unique collaboration that the RSCAS fosters between academics and administrators and across different areas of activity. The EUI is a community bursting with new ideas both in terms of questions to answer and methods or techniques to use in research. That creativity comes not only from the four traditional departments with their expert faculty and doctoral researchers, but also from the Florence School of Transnational Governance (STG) with its rich community of faculty and fellows, policy engagement, executive training, and Master of Arts students.

The challenge for the RSCAS is to foster, sustain, adapt, and add to the large volume of activity it houses across continuously evolving research and policy

agendas, a rapidly changing environment for research communication and engagement, an increasingly competitive external funding landscape, and a constant turnover in academic staff from project assistants to senior professors. To succeed in this challenge, academics and administrators have developed an inclusive research culture that involves ongoing professional development for all members of the community and within which insight, inspiration, and innovation can and is expected to come from all sides.

This ‘Strategic Plan’ sets out the goals for the next five years together with the means to achieve those goals while reinforcing our inclusive research culture and building on the many important achievements the RSCAS has made over the past three decades. In doing so, the ‘Strategic Plan’ describes who the RSCAS is as a research community, what that community wants to achieve within the wider vision for the EUI, how people inside and outside the RSCAS can assess the community’s progress in achieving those objectives, and where we expect the RSCAS to find itself when a new director takes up the pen on a strategy to tackle the challenges that come next.



Yves Mény lecture,
2024.

Research Programmes of the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies

Global Governance Programme

The Global Governance Programme addresses global challenges through interdisciplinary research on global law and economics, international relations and security, global citizenship, global governance, knowledge-based policy-making, and Southeastern Europe in an interconnected world.

European Governance and Politics Programme

The European Governance and Politics Programme researches the restructuring of European politics and governance, analysing integration and disintegration dynamics by fostering academic research, hosting databases, and engaging a global network of scholars through funded projects, events, and conferences.

Migration Policy Centre

From policymaking to public debate, migration affects societies in complex and far-reaching ways. The Migration Policy Centre provides research, expertise, and data on global migration to deepen understanding and drive better policy decisions.

Florence School of Regulation

The Florence School of Regulation fosters independent discussion and knowledge exchange to enhance European regulation and policy through research, training, and events in the fields of energy, climate, transport, and water & waste.



Villa
Schifanoia,
RSCAS
headquarters

Florence School of Banking and Finance

The Florence School of Banking and Finance is a European hub uniting policymakers, practitioners, and academics to foster a common regulatory culture while offering training, policy dialogue, and research with a global perspective.

Centre for a Digital Society

The Centre for a Digital Society fosters public debate on the impact of digitalisation on markets and democracy while advising decision-makers through high-quality independent policy-oriented research, events, and executive training.

Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom

The Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom is a research and training centre that aims to develop innovative and relevant lines of research on media freedom and pluralism in Europe and beyond, and to provide knowledge support to the international, European and national policy and rulemaking processes.

Centre for Judicial Cooperation

The Centre for Judicial Cooperation has built a network of judges, lawyers, and scholars to foster collaboration and knowledge exchange on judicial interaction through research, policy initiatives, workshops, and conferences.

Mission

The mission of the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies reflects the three dimensions of the ‘Vision of a Future EUI’ adopted by the High Council in December 2024:

The mission of the RSCAS is to collect and create cutting-edge academic research and make that accessible and relevant to stakeholders in the public and private sector as they seek to tackle the major challenges facing Europe.

This mission is how the RSCAS complements the work done in the four EUI departments and at the STG. It is also how the RSCAS remains faithful to the motivations for which it was founded as an academic unit of the European University Institute. In turn, the success and distinctiveness of the RSCAS hangs on its close relations with the rest of the EUI.

The first part of the mission statement refers to the need for ‘excellence in research, teaching, and training.’ When members of the RSCAS *collect and create cutting-edge academic research*, they do so with the intention of building on the best existing scholarship and working with the brightest minds available both in Europe and elsewhere.



That is why the size of the RSCAS academic community is so critical to its mission, why the RSCAS attracts fellows from institutions the world over, why it provides a home for so many visiting fellows, and why it hosts events for large and small audiences, both in person and online.

The only way to know that research is cutting edge, is through constant engagement with top scholars, researchers, and analysts either through consortia, workshops, and seminars, or through peer-reviewed publication. When teams working inside the RSCAS lead that engagement, they do more than just convene conversations. They position the EUI as a point of orientation for other major academic institutions and the societies they serve.

Much of this work focuses on efforts to think boldly about how to deepen the European project, probing European values and ambitions as they are woven into its social and political fabric. Work done on migration and citizenship is a good example, given the importance of those issues in contemporary political debate. So is work on media pluralism and press freedom, or the integrated approach to European elections that bridges academic research and societal impact through the development of the EU&I voting advice application. Tackling such issues is vital to the future of the Europe. As RSCAS team members take the lead in these debates, they also lead in related conversations in other parts of the globe.

Such curiosity-driven, problem-centred research is inherently interdisciplinary insofar as real-world challenges rarely fall neatly into disciplinary categories. Nevertheless, it is important

for RSCAS team members to be able to assess the quality of disciplinary as well as interdisciplinary research. It is also vital that they subject their own work to review from disciplinary as well as interdisciplinary scholars. Leading the conversation depends upon earning the trust of multiple communities. Judging from the numbers who attend RSCAS, that trust runs deep.

The research agenda of the RSCAS is organic, and stems from the long-term interests of our academic community. The Research Agenda as a reporting document is dynamic and reflects the major issues of the day. Every two years, scholars at the EUI set out seven major challenges facing Europe and ask what research done at the RSCAS can tell us about how those challenges can best be addressed. In doing so, the Research Agenda shows how a long-term commitment to fundamental research provides essential insight on a fast-changing global environment.



In turn, RSCAS team members share best practice across disciplinary backgrounds and different generations of scholarship. As participants in an institute for advanced studies, RSCAS team members engage in a continuous process of mutual support and self-improvement both to ensure that they remain at the leading edge of the conversation and to equip themselves and their colleagues with the skills necessary for academics to get up to speed on existing projects when they join the community or to re-enter the job market once their time at the RSCAS is over. All parts of the RSCAS community play important roles in smoothing the transition that comes with the evolution of the academic team. The enduring success of the Global Citizenship Observatory is a powerful illustration.

The second part of the mission statement refers to how members of the RSCAS ‘engage with the world and co-create knowledge.’ The guiding belief, reinforced by decades of experience, is that all academic research – even the most fundamental – is ‘relevant’ to stakeholders beyond the academy when viewed from the right perspective.

More often than not, that perspective comes from the stakeholders themselves. Hence, when RSCAS team members *make cutting-edge academic research accessible and relevant to stakeholders in the public and private sector*, they necessarily face a three-fold challenge. They identify who those stakeholders are in reference to any given area of research. They engage with those stakeholders in a common language and on the basis of mutual trust and respect in order to learn more about their needs and interests. And they shape, amend, or reconsider academic analysis in light of the insight they gain from this engagement, including non-academic evaluations of the quality or ‘cutting-edge’ character of academic research.

This pattern of identification and engagement with stakeholders requires input and innovation from all parts of the RSCAS community and across the EUI. It also requires close collaboration between academics and administrators with the professional skills necessary to initiate, shape, facilitate, and maintain that engagement. The excellence that comes from the first part of the mission statement is only a downpayment



on what has evolved into a long-term, continuous, iterative dialogue between RSCAS team members and thought leaders or decisionmakers in government, industry, and civil society. Here good examples are the close partnership between the Florence School of Regulation and the community responsible for the supervision of networked industries – think electricity and gas, but also water, transport, postage, etc. – or the Florence School of Banking and Finance and the community responsible for overseeing the many different parts of the financial sector.

Such dialogue can only take place on the basis of the kind of trust and understanding that builds up slowly over time and can easily lapse as a result of change or distraction. Here again, the close cooperation between academic and administrative staff is crucial to success and the thousands of participants who join RSCAS events on an annual basis is demonstration of how widely this engagement runs.

The third part of the mission statement reflects on the ability of the RSCAS to ‘resonate beyond the confines of academia without losing its depth.’ The task here is two-fold. The RSCAS not only tackles *the major challenges facing Europe* but also explains why and how the challenges we address have ‘major’ significance to an audience that is less easily identified than the private- and public-sector stakeholders who make up our principal constituencies.

The RSCAS addresses this two-fold obligation by studying Europe and European society as a living partner and not just as a research subject.

RSCAS team members are deeply involved in their work and recognise its importance. Such involvement does not undermine their research activity or replace it with political activism. Instead, it empowers all parts of the community to take pride in the contribution they make to addressing real problems in ways that create public value.

The commitment of the RSCAS community is a first step to a more effective strategy for communicating the value of the work we do to a wider audience and to inspiring a broader appreciation of the role of research and education in society. The work done in the ‘EMU Lab’ or by the European Governance and Politics Programme are good illustrations, but there are excellent examples across the Global Governance Programme and within the Centre for a Digital Society.

The next steps come from translating that commitment into language and formats that will find a wide audience. Again, the successful collaboration between academic and administrative staff is crucial.



The competition for popular attention is fierce, and even the most brilliant insight to the world's most pressing problem must be communicated effectively to have an impact either on policy or on public opinion. Only professional skill can make it possible to hit both targets at once. The RSCAS possesses the necessary combination of elements to make that happen.

As a result, the RSCAS can pull members of that broader community into more consistent patterns of engagement – lifting them from this third dimension of the 'vision of a future EU' into something suggested at the end of the second dimension: 'We go to the broader public, and bring the broader public in.' A centre for advanced studies does not need to be an ivory tower to push out the frontiers of knowledge. On the contrary, success comes from the boldness and inspiration derived from broader public engagement.

The European Festival of Journalism and Media Literacy – 'Voices' – illustrates how research into media and press freedom can resonate for a wider audience. When that festival launched in Florence in March 2024, more than 1300 participants from across the city and surrounding communities attended sessions tackling subjects ranging from the safety of journalists and the challenges facing mainstream media, to threat of disinformation and the role of artificial intelligence. A second festival held in Zagreb in 2025 was even better attended.





RSCAS administrative staff,
2024.

Value Added

The Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies adds value by creating a supportive environment for two different kinds of scholarly activity, the quiet contemplation most often associated with centres for advanced study and large-scale, externally funded, multi-annual research projects. The academic leadership comes from a mix of research chairs focusing on energy, finance, migration, citizenship, macro-economic governance, democratic politics, and the global economy, and joint chairs representing the departments of Economics, History, Law, and Sociology and Political Science. In turn, those scholars draw support from a professional administration, they engage with a large community of part-time professors, research fellows, and early career researchers, and they come together to create a resilient and diversi-

fied financial organisation. This combination of factors not only makes it possible for the RSCAS to foster new lines of research in areas of major importance, but also to innovate in new modes of research practice and communication.

The RSCAS fosters an inclusive research community through embedded decentralisation and team building. The central administration of the RSCAS consists of small team of functional team leaders supported by an administrative staff that is also responsible for supporting the joint faculty, managing the named or visiting research fellowship programmes, and organizing events. The rest of the administration is organised in functional teams to provide professional supervision and development, but remains embedded in the different schools, centres, and programmes that manage large research projects. In this way, administrators and academics work closely together to achieve

project- or programme-specific objectives while at the same time benefiting from the opportunity for functional specialisation and mutual support across the RSCAS community.

The integration of administrative expertise in the design and execution of large-scale research projects is a powerful form of interdisciplinarity. Working together, academics and administrators develop new ways to collect, analyse, and curate data, organise larger research teams involving academics in multiple institutions, present and disseminate research findings, and translate that research into policy-relevant insight and engagement. The results can be seen across the research process from the preparation of project proposals through the iterative engagement with stakeholders outside academia, to the origination of new lines of inquiry. The critical ingredient is to preserve enough bandwidth for all parties – academics and administrators – to reflect upon and deliberate over how they work together and where there is space for innovation or improvement.

Self-reflection is an essential part of the professional development on both sides of the RSCAS community. The permanent and part-time faculty, together the named and visiting fellows, are all research professionals who choose to spend a limited amount of time at the RSCAS as a centre for advanced studies to explore new ideas and ways of doing research, to forge new partnerships both within and across disciplines, to learn new techniques, and to engage with stakeholders beyond the academy. Together, they constitute the thought leadership of the RSCAS as a centre for advanced studies. But they are hardly alone in that endeavour. The RSCAS has the largest collection of post-doctoral researchers in the EUI and so has both the opportunity to benefit from their analytical insights and methodological prowess and the obligation to help prepare those scholars to face the job market once their time at the RSCAS has ended.

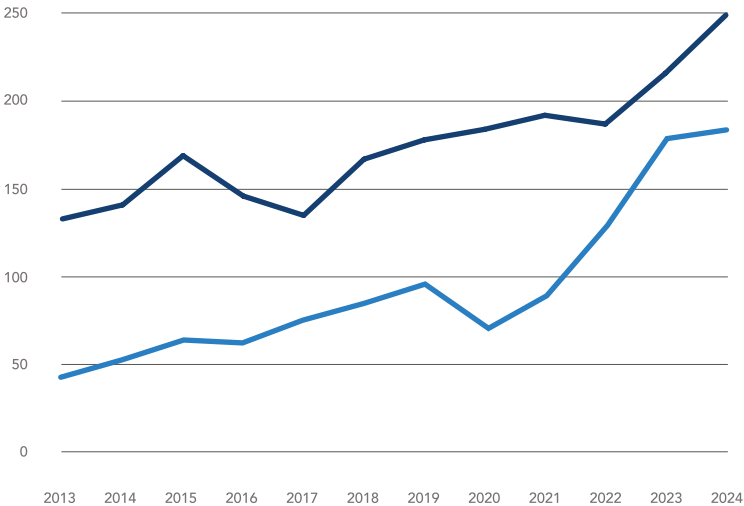
Staff and Fellows Overview

Staff
(academic and administrative)

Data as of 1 September each year

Fellows

Data for the academic year starting
1 September



This large collection of scholars constitutes another important source of value added both for the EUI and for research institutions across Europe. The experience those scholars take away relates not just to the insights they develop in tackling a particular problem, but also the skills they acquire in originating, implementing, and managing large-scale projects. When they move onto other institutions, these early career researchers bring a broad portfolio of skills necessary to attract and manage externally funded research teams along with them. Academics and administrative staff contribute in different and yet equally important ways to that professional development, just as they stand to benefit from the critical insights that these post-doctoral researchers can bring to bear on the process as well as the content of their research.

The same logic applies within the administration. Administrative staff share insights gleaned from work on one project or programme with colleagues working in other areas through their functional teams. This process is new – the administrative reorganisation initiated in spring 2022 is only just nearing completion – but it shows considerable promise. The team-based organisation also offers greater opportunities for career development within the RSCAS community, which is now large enough to support the inclusion of junior administrative staff and to encourage specialisation within different functional areas. The success of this new hierarchical structure hinges on the openness of team leaders – meaning both academic directors within the schools, centres and programmes, and team leaders

in the functional groups that cut across them – to embrace input from all members of the community.

The challenge of managing large-scale research programmes is to ensure business continuity across funding rounds and to match the obligation to finance long-term administrative or academic contracts with short-term funding opportunities. Part of this challenge can be met in purely financial terms. The RSCAS benefits from core funding that allows it to match external grant requirements and contribute to the financing of central services.

This promotion of an inclusive research culture extends to ensure both equity and diversity. The RSCAS community has done much to raise awareness through initiatives to highlight the role of women in studying energy and climate or finance, for example. It also works closely with the History and Civilisation department to host the annual Ursula Hirschmann lecture. But ensuring diversity in an inclusive research culture means looking beyond academics and focusing on the interface between research and administration. Recent initiatives by administrative colleagues to highlight best practice in peer institutions play an important role in strengthening our culture of innovation and extend to all categories of privilege.

This core funding gives the RSCAS the financial ‘leverage’ (or co-financing) to bring in large-scale research grants. But core funding is only one part of the matrix. The RSCAS maintains business continuity by encouraging the diversification of funding streams insofar as that is possible within the different units, and by layering project funding over time and, implicitly, across programmes, schools, projects and initiatives.

This financial layering and diversification can only address part of the challenge. The RSCAS also needs a critical mass to achieve sustainability across a wide variety of initiatives. The decentralised units have a high degree of financial responsibility for the success of their different projects. This financial decentralisation makes it necessary for the RSCAS to work with the directors of the different schools, centres, and programmes to adjust the matching between funding streams and administrative or academic composition. It is common for both academic and administrative team members who start in one part of the RSCAS to move their activity elsewhere depending upon the possibilities that such movement generates. The overlap between

decentralised embeddedness and functional team building makes it easier to make these adjustments in ways that ensure continuity without creating unnecessary disruption.

The RSCAS receives a significant part of its external funding from European institutions through the Horizon Europe programme and other funding instruments. Private foundations also play a role in supporting individual research projects and wider efforts at institution building. The recently launched African School of Regulation, for example, benefited from the generous support of the Rockefeller Foundation. The RSCAS also benefits from private sector donations both for the sponsorship of research streams hosted in specific centres or programmes and to support the development of specialised training courses in areas ranging from the energy and climate to banking and finance. The RSCAS is careful to handle private sector support in a manner that ensures academic independence, eliminates conflicts of interest, and minimises reputational risk.



The great advantage that this combination of an inclusive research culture, a commitment to professional development, and an administrative structure that ensures business continuity lies in the capacity of the RSCAS to foster innovation. The RSCAS is both an incubator and a sandbox – developing new ideas, generating new resources, and experimenting with new modes of practice all at the same time. That innovation can take place through seed funding and guidance in the development of new lines of research within the different units.

Success requires determination. The Florence School of Banking and Finance needed to build a track record of six years' achievement before it could be considered a viable partner for DG Reform or the European Central Bank. But it can also take place through the development of new techniques for research practice, communication, and engagement. The RSCAS was the first academic unit to integrate multimedia into its communication and training efforts.

A platform for debating ethical dilemmas in policymaking developed within the Migration Policy Centre illustrates this creativity. Cutting-edge research and evidence are required to understand the inevitable trade-offs when problems deny simple solutions or reveal fundamental conflicts over the goals for policy.

It was also the first to hire a full-time multimedia officer, strengthening the professionalisation of its ability to deliver these services. That investment made it possible for the Florence School of Regulation to take the lead on the remote and asynchronous delivery of executive education and training at the EUI. It also made it possible for the RSCAS to build on techniques and practices developed within the FSR to adapt the whole range of its activities to the social distancing required during the pandemic.



This agility is a consistent feature of the close interaction between academic and administrative staff. The RSCAS fosters complementarities that are not often found in other parts of the academy. Academics learn the entrepreneurial instincts and the practical requirements for managing large-scale research projects; administrative staff learn how to recognise and cultivate the key elements in the research process, and how to make sure that the underlying value of academic research finds the widest possible audience. In that sense, the RSCAS is a laboratory for the future of the research university as outlined in the ‘vision for the future EUI’.

The joint chairs with the four departments play an important role in shaping the RSCAS as a laboratory for collaborative research. Their individual research agendas are a major source of inspiration. Their direct engagement in the work done in the schools, centres, programmes, initiatives, and projects provides both intellectual leadership and quality assurance. The joint chairs also provide an essential link to the doctoral research community, helping to draw doctoral researchers into RSCAS activities both during their dissertation research and after those researchers complete their doctorates.

The partnership with the Florence School of Transnational Governance plays a similar role in sparking innovation. The RSCAS and the STG collaborate in the development of new forms of executive education, their faculties work together on parallel and complementary research programmes like those related to climate or press freedom, and the two institutions coordinate in their engagement with stakeholders in the private sector and policy

community. And while the two institutions remain different in terms of their focus and contributions to the EUI, they share best practice in community building and intellectual entrepreneurship.

An important sign of achievement is the success of RSCAS professors in winning support from the European Research Council (ERC) for their individual projects. In the past five years, RSCAS faculty have won ERC grants to work on affective polarisation, memories of financial crisis, blockchain governance, the structure of world politics, and the changing nature of the global economy. This success both attracts talent and contributes to capacity building. Three of the current joint chairs brought ERC projects with them – in history, economics, and political economy – as did two of the research chairs – in migration and citizenship. Reciprocally, two more junior scholars working at the RSCAS have won ERC projects that they used to negotiate permanent positions at other institutions.



Strategy, 2026-2030

The goal we have for the next five years is to build upon these existing strengths. This is a bold ambition insofar as it pushes back against the conventional wisdom that growth is the measure of success. All living entities grow within limits. The successful ones recognise when those limits are reached and how to pivot from ‘growth’ for its own sake to fulfil other strategic objectives.

Having recently gone through a major growth phase, the RSCAS is at such a turning point – even if only from a short-to-medium term perspective. The average external funding of the RSCAS was €16.6 million in the period from 2022 to 2024 versus an average of €9.9 million the three years prior. The number of part-time professors has grown by 50 percent since August

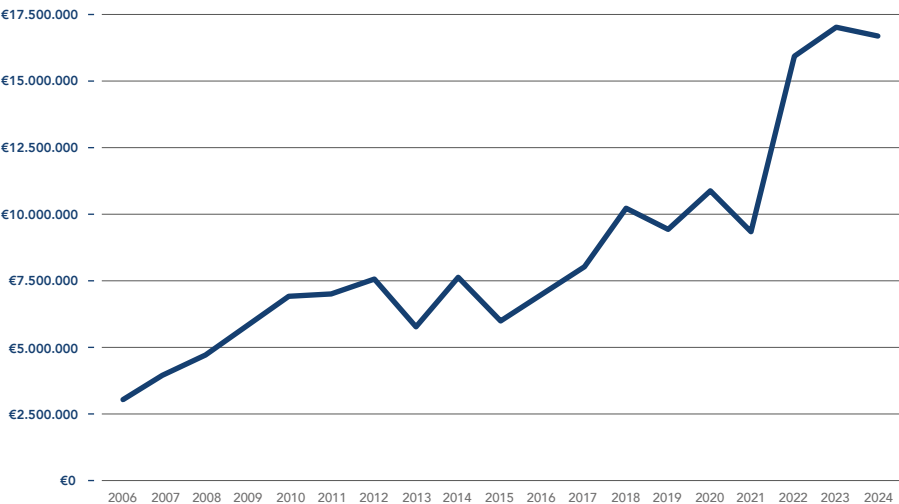
2021; the number of staff working in administrative roles increased by a smaller amount, but they have been given greater opportunities for skills training and professional development to help in managing the fast pace of growth. This expansion has been good for the EUI as well as for the RSCAS.

The value of overheads generated has increased from just over €1.5 million in 2021 to roughly €3 million in 2024. The value of taxes paid on their salary by this community to the EUI has increased as well. But such rapid growth needs consolidation to lay solid foundations to address future challenges. This is particularly true given the tight funding conditions facing the university sector both in Europe and elsewhere.

We must do more with what we have, rather than striving for continuous expansion. To do so, we will strengthen the RSCAS as a centre for advanced studies along the lines set out in the vision for the future EUI. That means getting

Schuman Centre
External Funds
2006-2024

External Funding
(according to EUI
Annual Accounts)



the greatest insights from the work we are already doing, deepening and widening our engagement with stakeholder communities, enhancing our ability to respond to a fast-changing research and policy agenda, further diversifying our sources of research funding to enhance financial resilience, and consolidating the inclusiveness of our research culture to benefit from the insights and efficiencies that such consolidation promises.

The RSCAS has impressive energies being focused on specific projects. The different units are world leaders in their own domains. Now is the time to harvest the value we can add by bringing the different areas of inquiry together both across units in the RSCAS and with colleagues in the departments or the STG. Recent efforts to create an 'EMU Lab' or to bridge the work of the Centre for a Digital Society and the EUI's digital cluster are good illustrations. So is the collaborative work done with the STG in the domain of executive education and training. But there is much more that can be accomplished by creating meaningful opportunities for engagement among colleagues within the RSCAS and across the EUI. We identify major initiatives in industrial policy, transatlantic relations, engagement with Brussels, and inclusion of doctoral researchers below, but this focus on synergies encompasses continuous awareness and community building as well.

That promotion of synergies across existing lines of work can help deepen our engagement with stakeholders outside the academy at the

same time. We have loyal external stakeholder communities in each of those areas where the RSCAS has established a world class reputation. As we create synergies across those groups internally, we will communicate that possibility for wider engagement with our stakeholder

Many of the staff who worked in administrative roles prior to this growth phase were employed by the RSCAS on temporary 'academic' contracts. By shifting them to administrative roles as part of a wider reorganisation, the RSCAS took on greater responsibility for their continuity of employment. This made it possible to professionalise their opportunities for skills and career development. It also reduced the headcount for academic staff, which means that the true growth in the research community is greater than reported above. That reorganisation started in 2022 and is still in progress. All signs are that it will lay the foundations for more resilient growth once consolidated.



communities as well. In turn, those stakeholders can help us identify opportunities for synergistic work that we might not have imagined.

Conversations with (then) DG Reform are a good illustration. That engagement started with the Florence School of Banking and Finance, but rapidly spread to the Florence School of Regulation, and promises to extend to other units as well. Conversations with the Joint Research Centre and the European Parliament show similar promise.

By strengthening synergies and deepening engagement, we strive to make the RSCAS more responsive to a rapidly changing research environment as well as a rapidly evolving economic, social, political, and security context. Such responsiveness should not come at the expense of the role of the RSCAS as a centre for advanced study. The large-scale, externally funded research projects at the core of RSCAS activity necessarily unfold over long periods of time and so create insights that think tanks or consultancies cannot match. Such large-scale, multi-annual, externally funded projects also build on personal research agendas that have unfolded over decades for the principal investigators involved. Those insights are the primary source of our value added. The challenge is not just – or even necessarily – to start new projects to address new concerns; it is to harness existing research insights to new purposes. This dynamic repurposing requires a high level of awareness about what work is being done and how that work might be connected across the RSCAS and made available to new communities of stakehold-

ers, including the public. That high level of awareness is achieved through systematic conversations with the academics and administrators running the many schools, centres, programmes, and initiatives that already exist.

Greater responsiveness to the fast-changing research and policy agenda creates new opportunities to draw support from those stakeholders interested in investing academic discovery. This insight lay at the origins of the RSCAS. In the early 1990s, policymakers at the European level began to question the value in financing

The EMU Lab is an initiative of the Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa Chair and the Pierre Werner Chair, and involves participants from across the EUI in an effort to reevaluate the architecture of Europe's economic and monetary union in light of present day conditions in Europe and the global economy. The goal is to identify avenues for research and policy innovation that could foster greater stability, growth, equity, and resilience in Europe's economy and society.



EMU-Lab launch event, 2024.

a common research university when national institutions also required resources. The creation of the RSCAS showed the unique capacity of the EUI to put academic research into practice. Rather than cutting back on the EUI's core funding, European policymakers added to it. Now is a time to drive the same message home for thought leaders in public foundations, industry, or private philanthropy. The goal is to underscore the advantages that come from the process of continuous engagement between world-class academic researchers and stakeholders in the public and private sectors. In attracting their support, we can not only increase the resilience of the RSCAS as a centre for advanced study – and, in line with the new vision, the EUI as a research university – but also strengthen our existing research agenda and lay the foundations for new lines of inquiry.

During the last strategic planning period the RSCAS undertook a major reform of its administrative structures. It also cultivated new areas of activity and retired programmes for which it lacked sufficient leadership or funding. That curation of existing activity will necessarily

continue to redirect attention toward the strengthening of our inclusive research culture to generate greater innovation and professional development across the RSCAS community. As we complete that consolidation, we will focus on using the new administrative structure as effectively as possible to promote the professional development of our academic and administrative personnel.

The Global Initiative on the Future of the Internet (GIFI) launched in 2023 to provide research and policy support is a good illustration of this kind of synergy. Early exchanges with the Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom (CMPF) created opportunities for journalists and media practitioners from the Global South to receive GIFI fellowships to participate in the annual CMPF summer school. In addition, the Internet Accountability Index developed by the GIFI team integrates data and research generated by other RSCAS initiatives, such as the Digital Trade Integration Project.



CMPF SummerSchool, 2024.

Strategic Commitments

This set of objectives comes from a clear-eyed assessment of the world around us and a difficult set of choices about how we can best complete the mission of the RSCAS and contribute to the vision for the EUI. We live in an era of great uncertainty and constrained resources. We also face the challenges that come from impressive internal growth. Now is the time to make the RSCAS more agile and yet also more resilient. This requires us – and has already required us – to make strategic commitments. Such commitments determine how we achieve our objectives. They also reflect a tradition of best practice and a set of enduring principles that define the RSCAS as a community.

A first commitment is to strengthen our procedures for bringing new members into our community and for maintaining contact with them after they leave. The goal is to ensure that everyone is aware of the possibilities that each new member represents. If we are to strengthen synergies across existing research programmes, people who join should know what activities are already underway, both in the form of long-standing programmes and in terms of new initiatives. They also should know more about other members of the community, meaning what they worked on in the past as well as what interests them now. They should know how to communicate their own interests and abilities. And they should know how to remain part of the conversation. Moreover, this applies to all members of the community, from those who spend their entire careers at the RSCAS to

those who attend a single event. This commitment to awareness will never be perfect, but it should be a priority.

The second commitment is to focus on ‘competitiveness’ in the way former Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi frames it in his 2024 report to the European Commission. The goal is to get more insight or value from the same intellectual, administrative, and financial effort – total factor productivity growth. Greater awareness is only part of the challenge. Competitiveness can be achieved through critical reflection, and by focusing on how we can get the most out of our ways of working together, sharing insights and best practice across the decentralised units of the RSCAS while creating effective forums for engaging in intellectual exchange. This is a necessary

The Knowledge, Governance, and Transformations research area provides a good illustration of how work at the RSCAS evolves. That research area started with an ‘open access data gateway’ designed to provide policy makers with information about how we live in our globalised societies. Over time, that effort expanded to explore the interaction between knowledge, evidence, data and governance. It also grew to encompass the use of qualitative and quantitative techniques for evidence-informed policymaking, data-driven innovation, and future-oriented analysis – with wide application within the policy community both in Europe and abroad.

complement to efforts to strengthen synergies across research initiatives and deepen engagement with stakeholders. It is also essential to ensure we remain responsive to changes in the wider research and policy agenda. Importantly, such reflection requires that we emphasise patterns of work that leave time for thought about process as well as substance; how we do research and engagement deserves as much attention as what we research and communicate.

A third commitment is to broaden the sense of what former Finnish President Sauli Niinistö refers to as ‘strategic responsibility’ in a separate 2024 report to the European Commission. The goal is to ensure that each member of the community accepts personal responsibility in looking out for their own wellbeing as well as the performance of the rest. Academic research is an isolated endeavour and yet it is also a collective effort. When each part of the community takes the time to appreciate what others are doing, they can anticipate those areas

that require revision, reconsideration, reorganisation, or support. They are also able to spot opportunities for strengthening and improvement both in their own work and elsewhere. And they can look out for ways to address institutional, normative, or traditional forms of inequity that inhibit creative interaction. This form of engagement is not meant to subtract from the role of individual curiosity or creativity; it is meant to deepen the resilience of the social and institutional environment within which such curiosity or creativity finds expression. It is also vital to consolidate the inclusiveness of our research culture.

A fourth commitment is to lengthen the time horizon for planning our communication and engagement. The goal is to ‘produce’ these activities like a film or theatre performance. The RSCAS specialises in imagining and implementing large-scale, externally funded, multi-year research programmes. As part of that process, we generate research findings, events,

RSCAS Joint sessions of Workshop, 2024.



and communications in the achievement of pre-arranged deliverables and objectives. We also develop other means of engagement in the form of dialogues, briefings, and training activities. These elements are all marked on a Gantt chart long before the project is approved for funding. The issue is how they are delivered.

Emphasizing ‘production’ in the artistic sense ensures that all aspects of this agenda come together in an integrated manner, and that all parts of the team understand how the media, the message, the messenger, and the audience are interconnected. It also ensures that the outputs of the process are recorded and stored in ways that can be readily accessed in case of unexpected future needs. This way we can be sure to get more impact from the research and communications outputs we create. This curation of processes and outputs is particularly important given the constant turnover in academic staff and the constraints that turnover implies on institutional memory. By emphasizing production, we not only reinforce the inclusive research culture of our community but also preserve examples of good practice for future members of the RSCAS to learn from and build upon. We also gain the greatest advantage from those externally funded communications officers, multimedia personnel, and course designers embedded in the different RSCAS schools, centres, and programmes.

Initiatives

The near-term objectives and strategic commitments create space for important new initiatives designed to respond to major developments in

the wider policy agenda, strengthen the engagement of early career researchers, develop new opportunities to work closely with the doctoral research community both directly and through engagement with external stakeholders, and underscore the policy-relevance of our work to stakeholders beyond the academy. These initiatives do not require new financial resources; sufficient funding already exists. What they do require is the active involvement of the RSCAS community in strengthening its engagement with the rest of the EUI and with Europe.

The appointment of an RSCAS Professor whose research agenda centres on the interaction between industrial policy and trade policy is a priority. This chair would respond directly to the call laid out in the Draghi report to reimagine the functioning of the European Union’s internal market and external commercial policy and so focus squarely on the ‘competitiveness’ agenda that is at the heart of the work program for the new European Commission.

These initiatives are only part of the innovation we have under way or in planning. Such projects have already started and need more time and energy to achieve their potential. These projects include a research initiative on [Southeastern Europe](#) that has gained significant traction over the past three years. They also include initiatives to strengthen work on agriculture, capital markets union, conflict and intervention, culture, gender, security, and water – just to name a few.

This would not constitute a new line of research. Rather it would reflect a continuation of existing interests and a consolidation of the EUI's reputation for excellence. Such a chair would build on the foundations laid by Bernard Hoekman during his leadership of the global economy research area within the Global Governance Programme, and it would connect with the work being done in the Law department on the changing landscape for international trade and investment law. It would also connect with work being done at the STG on the transformation of the global economy and, via the interaction of industrial policy and trade policy with fiscal policy, with the work being done in and around the 'EMU Lab' related to macroeconomic governance and the financing of European public goods.

Promoting our work on Europe and the European Union is a second priority. The Global Governance Programme hosts research programmes, projects, and initiatives on issues related to European governance and politics, external relations, European enlargement, threats to EU security, and political developments in southeastern Europe. By bringing these different research areas together within the European Governance and Politics Programme (EGPP), we will be able to raise the profile of original research done on Europe within the RSCAS and across the EUI. This consolidation will coincide with a restructuring of the governance of the EGPP and it will take place alongside the inauguration of a high-level annual lecture on Europe to coincide with the EGPP annual conference to be named after former RSCAS Director Brigid Laffan, who founded

the EGPP in 2018. This set of initiatives will culminate in the appointment of a successor to Daniele Caramani as Ernst B. Haas Professor of European Politics and Governance.

Strengthening understanding of the transatlantic relationship is a third priority. This is less a new initiative than a re-engagement with past efforts. The partnership between Europe and the United States has been a cornerstone for peace, prosperity, and innovation for both sides of the Atlantic. The implications of both recent and longstanding developments in that relationship will impact all parts of our research agenda. The necessary response is to invest greater resources into understanding political and economic developments in Europe and the United States, including what those developments mean for our common future. The RSCAS is well-positioned to make that investment. We have a strong existing programme on 'Europe in the World' (currently located within the Global Governance Programme), deep partnerships with universities in on both sides of the Atlantic focusing on the transatlantic relationship, close ties with major think tanks in Brussels (EUISS), London (IISS), New York (Council on Foreign Relations), and Washington (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace) to facilitate engagement with the transatlantic foreign policy community. The RSCAS can also leverage existing connections with researchers and policymakers working at the U.S. Congress, the European Parliament, and the North Atlantic Parliamentary Assembly. By bringing this work together within the European Governance and Politics Programme, we can create strong synergies with

other EUI initiatives in European security. We can also lay the foundations for the re-creation of an RSCAS chair in transatlantic relations.

A fourth initiative would be to institutionalise a biennial joint session of workshops hosted by the RSCAS to create an opportunity to bring together senior and early career researchers from inside and outside the EUI on themes of common interest for a celebration of mutual exchange. This week-long set of parallel workshops creates a unique opportunity to strengthen the research culture of the RSCAS while raising awareness both within and across different initiatives, programmes, centres, and schools. It also provides space for plenary events to highlight lifetime achievement and to promote new research agendas. It provides alumni with a chance to reengage with the EUI – and to connect with the RSCAS – on an intellectual and personal level, reinforcing old bonds while creating new ones. And since such workshops often result in collective publications in the form of edited volumes or special issues of journals, they also create the chance to highlight the cutting-edge research produced at the EUI by academics based across Europe. The RSCAS celebrated its 30th anniversary with a joint session of workshops that succeeded in bringing more than 150 scholars together from different career stages, institutions, and countries to tackle some of the most pressing challenges Europe faces. By repeating that experiment every other year, we can expand the reputation of the EUI for its continuous engagement in interdisciplinary research.

Strengthening connections between the RSCAS and the doctoral research community

working on the European Union is a fifth initiative. The RSCAS currently sponsors a bottom-up working group on political economy, with the goal of strengthening interdisciplinary work by creating a forum where doctoral researchers from any department can share insights with one-another either through the presentation of their own work, through presentations made by faculty, fellows, or other early career researchers, or by bringing in outside speakers. Doctoral researchers lead this political economy working group with support from the RSCAS, and it has been a tremendous success. The goal is to match that offering with another bottom-up working group focused on the European Union. Such a group existed in the past, but it struggled to retain engagement within the doctoral research community given the many alternative venues for presenting research. Nevertheless, a recent survey of researchers at the EUI reveals that the interest in having such a group remains strong, and so does the desire among doctoral researchers to lead such an initiative. The RSCAS is excited to support that activity in parallel to the existing political economy working group as a venue for focusing attention within the doctoral research community on the major issues facing Europe.

A final initiative is to raise the profile of the RSCAS and the EUI in Brussels through consistent and targeted engagement with other universities, research centres, agencies, and think tanks, to highlight the contribution that methodical, systematic, academic research can make to fast moving policy conversations. By working closely with these partners, we will be able more effectively to connect with

European institutions and policymakers. The EUI already has extensive partnerships within and around the Brussels-based policy community. Those partners are eager to include insights from scholars based at the EUI. In the recent past, we have worked with, among others, Egmont, CEPS, Bruegel, BELSPO, Carnegie Europe, European Parliament DGs EPRS and IPOL, TEPSA, JRC, EUISS, the Brussels School of Government, and the ULB. The creation of a new external relations service presents an opportunity to use such partnerships more effectively in deepening contact

with our alumni community and other stakeholders. The reorganisation of the communications service makes it easier to strengthen the resonance of work done at the EUI in the European policy conversation.



Charting Europe's Digital Future –
Event at Carnegie Europe, Brussels 2025

Self-Evaluation

The challenge in matching this set of objectives with the strategic commitments we have made is to come up with indicators for progress. It is not enough to identify a direction of travel; we need to know how far and how fast we are moving. That measurement of progress is complicated by the qualitative nature of the strategy. We can come up with indicators for the strength of synergies, the depth of engagement, the scale of responsiveness, and the intensity of inclusiveness, but they are unlikely to be as intuitive as the number of events, the share of publications, the size of the community, or the amount of external funding. The temptation to look under the lamppost is strong even when we know that is not where the keys lay.

The first step is to identify which of our existing key performance indicators are biased toward growth without accounting for externalities or unintended consequences. Then we need to think about whether those externalities or unintended consequences can be used to our advantage, how long we can absorb them without facing disruption or discontinuity, and when the cost of further growth is not worth the effort or risk it involves. This exercise is important to understand what we are seeing under the lamppost and to lay the foundation for looking beyond.

The second step is to set up a parallel set of indicators and case studies that we can use to capture those elements we hope to measure directly when assessing progress in the achievement of our objectives. This is precisely the

kind of research endeavour that we have trained to tackle as social scientists only the gaze is reverted to focus on how we work together. This is also where our inclusive research community promises to reveal its greatest advantages because everyone in our community has expertise and insight to offer in coming up with ways to measure, illustrate, or document where we have made progress and where we require greater effort.

The co-creation of new performance indicators does not have to happen all at once and should take place alongside efforts to implement this strategy within the normal course of doing the business of the RSCAS. We can agree on the general direction of travel at the start of this process, and fold new indicators into our regular reporting as and when they are ready for use. That reporting will start almost immediately with the five-yearly self-assessment scheduled for 2026. The plan is to come together as a community in the autumn of 2027 using the method we used in coming up with this strategy to make an initial review of progress made and, if necessary, course correct. By that time, we should have a thorough review of existing performance indicators and a suite of complementary indicators to use in guiding our discussions.

This self-assessment will necessarily run alongside a further alignment of this strategy to the objectives and commitments set by the EUI. Once that EUI strategy is in place, the RSCAS will need to develop an implementation plan to ensure the vision for the future EUI adopted by the High Council in December 2024 comes to life.



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