

Annual Plan 2018

The annual plan for 2018 sets out priorities and measures to further develop ARENA – Centre for European Studies within the framework of the Faculty of Social Sciences and the University of Oslo. It reflects the key priorities and objectives of the University of Oslo and the Faculty of Social Sciences. The goal of strengthening the University of Oslo's position internationally as a leading research institution is of particular importance to ARENA.

High quality and innovative research environments ensure that the University of Oslo remains competitive nationally and internationally. The Faculty of Social Sciences aims to conduct high-level research, participate in the dissemination of knowledge, and engage in public debate. These themes are also mirrored in ARENA's annual plan.

ARENA's main objective

ARENA's main objective is to remain a leading international centre for research on the political integration of Europe.

ARENA aims to do so by:

1. Conducting theoretically founded and empirically informed basic research
2. Publishing in internationally recognized peer-reviewed (high-impact) journals
3. Actively collaborating with other leading research communities through participation in externally financed projects
4. Disseminating research-based knowledge on the ever-changing and evolving European political order

Status at the start of 2018

ARENA has succeeded in securing funding for the next few years through four major projects funded by EU's Horizon 2020 (H2020) and the Research Council of Norway (NFR). ARENA has expanded its professional profile through these major projects. In addition to the H2020 projects GLOBUS (2016-2020) and PLATO (2017-2021), ARENA has also received a grant from the NFR Toppforsk program with the REFLEX project (2016-2021), and the EUREX project under the NFR DEMOS program (2016-2020). Other projects include several EU-funded networks (NORTIA, VIADUCT, TARN) and the EuroDiv project financed by the NFR.

ARENA organizes research conferences, seminars and workshops alongside the regular Tuesday Seminar series attracting scholars from Norway and abroad. ARENA researchers continue to participate in international events. In 2017, GLOBUS and its partner institutions hosted workshops on the topics of climate change, global justice, trade, development and migration. The project organized its first policy dialogue meeting in Brussels. A study trip to Delhi organized in cooperation with the GLOBUS partner O.P. Jindal Global University took place in November 2017. The European Commission has selected GLOBUS as an early success story in its interim evaluation of H2020.

ARENA coordinated the recruitment of 15 PhD researchers at nine European partner universities and hosted the kick-off conference for the PLATO MSCA-ITN project in October

2017. Planning is well underway for a series of PLATO PhD schools to be arranged in Berlin, Vienna and Cambridge in 2018.

Overall, the status at the onset of 2018 is that ARENA maintains its position as a vibrant and expanding research environment with well-integrated research activities. In 2017, ARENA increased its staff significantly including four PhD candidates and two Postdoctoral Fellows, and the size of ARENA's academic and administrative staff has never been higher. It is critical that ARENA operates optimally in order to continue to provide top-quality research, maintain high publishing levels and continue active international research collaboration. This is achieved by continual recruitment of highly qualified and active researchers and knowledgeable administrators, establishing efficient routines and ensuring a collaborative working environment.

Plans for 2018

The main emphasis will be placed on the following areas:

1. Follow-up of projects
2. Further development of research activity and long-term funding
3. Research dissemination and communication
4. Organization and infrastructure
5. Gender balance at ARENA
6. Research administration

Follow-up of projects

The core activities of ARENA are basic research and international publications. ARENA has an array of intertwined projects funded by various sources. Thus, it is a requirement that any new research projects be relevant to and strengthen ARENA's core research activities. This aim will be led by continued prioritization of activity related to the GLOBUS project (H2020), PLATO network (H2020 MSCA), EUREX (DEMOS) and REFLEX projects (Toppforsk), in addition to the EuroDiv project (Europe in Transition) which enters its final year.

Measures:

1. Activities in GLOBUS will have top priority for researchers and administration. The project will arrange workshops in Dublin and Bologna, two policy dialogue meetings in Brussels and study weeks in Russia and Brazil. The project will recruit a post-doctoral fellow. A GLOBUS educational website will also be launched.
2. Activities in PLATO will have top priority for researchers and administration. There will be three PLATO PhD schools arranged in Berlin, Vienna and Cambridge. Emphasis will be on setting up an innovative PhD training program, which includes professional development planning, soft skills, and supervision training beyond the academic component. ARENA will be prepared for the incoming of five visiting PhD candidates for three months in the fall of 2018. At the end of 2018, a midterm review meeting will be held with the European Commission; all partners and PhDs will be present.
3. Activities within the REFLEX, EUREX and EuroDiv projects will be followed up according to project plans, including workshops to be hosted in Oslo.

4. GLOBUS, PLATO, REFLEX, EUREX and EuroDiv will be provided with the necessary support from research assistants.
5. Maintain high publishing activity and its dissemination, through ARENA's Tuesday seminar, research seminars, colloquia and other measures to promote publications in leading international journals.

Further development of research activity and long-term funding

The projects awarded in 2016 do secure funding of most ARENA staff. However, new large-scale project proposals are necessary to maintain the current level of activity due to the completion of the EuroDiv project in December 2018. ARENA will continue to develop applications for externally funded projects that fit in, strengthen and develop its research profile. This entails brainstorming and developing new ideas relevant to project calls from the Research Council of Norway, EU H2020 including the European Research Council (ERC) funding schemes, and other funding sources. Opportunities for increased income will be utilized through doctoral teaching. The PLATO network opens up for this opportunity. An important premise is that the centre's research profile is maintained and that any research applications provide ARENA with sufficient research and financial benefits.

Measures:

1. ARENA will prioritize applications that have long-term funding potential. Coordinator projects will be assessed according to capacity, and ARENA will prioritize a H2020 coordinator proposal to be submitted in March 2018.
2. Priority will be given to a proposal to the Europe in Transition should there be a new call in 2018.
3. Focus will remain on ERC applications, and ARENA aims to send at least one application to each of the calls for Starting Grants, Consolidator Grant and Advanced Grants.
4. The application calendar of relevant external funding sources will be regularly updated by the administration and announced to relevant researchers.
5. An analysis of previous years' unsuccessful project proposal will be undertaken, and conclusions presented to the staff.

Research dissemination and communication

Dissemination of knowledge-based research is a central part of ARENA's activities. The new communication officer in place from 1 November 2017 will establish a communication strategy. In addition to scientific publications, ARENA also focuses on other forms of outreach such as news articles, opinion articles and other contributions to the media and external and internal events, as well as maintaining a dynamic website and social media profiles. The centre regularly reaches out to user groups (e.g. government ministries and organizations) through newsletters and research seminars.

Measures:

1. The communication officer will develop a communication strategy in collaboration with the center management and involving the staff.
2. ARENA's electronic newsletter is published at least four times per year.
3. GLOBUS and PLATO issue their own external and internal newsletters prepared by the respective project managers.
4. ARENA's website is the most important channel of communication for the center. Special focus will be placed on producing research news (mainly on the ARENA/SV/UiO website and other external sites).
5. Extra resources will be put in place for maintaining GLOBUS and PLATO websites, which are hosted at uio.no.
6. Regular meetings held between the centre management and the communication officer for planning and prioritizing research news.
7. Ensure regular publishing in ARENA's working paper series, as well as the project series of TARN and GLOBUS.
8. ARENA maintains focus on Open Access, especially through archiving publications in DUO, to increase visibility and citations. Information and guidelines to staff will continue and funds for open access publishing will be included in all project applications.
9. ARENA's annual report will be published in April/May and distributed to government ministries, relevant organizations, research groups, and other user groups as part of maintaining ARENA's standing as the key EU research centre in Norway.
10. An ARENA lecture is planned for 2018 dependent on funding from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Organization and Infrastructure

ARENA recruited a number of new staff in 2017. Guidelines for the reception of new employees (with particular emphasis on international staff) will be followed. This includes participation in seminars and conferences and new research projects. Guest researchers have always been welcomed at ARENA, but from now on only those directly involved in ARENA research projects will be prioritized. This is due to the shortage of office space.

In order to maintain productive research groups and secure new funding, ARENA strives to retain its active and knowledgeable employees to the extent that finances allow. Emphasis is on a conducive working environment, active research groups, and high quality publications and the further development of research interests and activities. Researchers are offered administrative support and research assistance, and when applicable the work duties of the PhD candidates.

Measures:

1. Performance assessment interviews will put weight on publications and the development of research funding proposals. An attractive research environment will be a theme for these interviews as well as for other dialogues among employees and the leadership.

2. All the research staff are involved in one or more research groups. The organization and involvement of the centre's research groups in ARENA's overall strategy will be a possible theme at the next staff seminar.
3. Two staff meetings and one staff seminar will be held in 2018.
4. Guest researchers will continue to be well integrated in the centre's activities.
5. A long-term solution to the office space constraints will be a key focus in 2018. Most employees are offered their own office space as far as it is possible. Double offices have been introduced for all PhD fellows and part-time employees as well as guest researchers due to the shortage of office space. The administration is working with the Faculty of Social Sciences to address this problem.

Gender Balance

At ARENA there is a total of 15 men and 16 women (November 2017). Among the researchers, there are seven men and three women at the Professor level, five men and six women who are Researchers/Postdoctoral Fellows and three men and seven women who are PhD candidates. There are two men and three women in the administration as well as two female research assistants. Although ARENA currently has more female than male members at the level of PhD candidates and postdocs/junior researchers, this balance is reversed at senior level. To promote more female researchers at the senior level, ARENA will focus efforts on promoting young female researchers.

Measures:

1. Female researchers are given individual follow-up, competence building and guidance to ensure career progression.
2. Female researchers are prioritized to attend the career building courses offered at the University of Oslo.
3. ARENA ensures that female postdoctoral fellows apply to the University of Oslo mentoring program.
4. Emphasis will be placed on academic independence that in the longer run will qualify female researchers for senior positions by having them take central positions in supervising PhD candidates resulting in senior authorships. This point is also relevant for all the junior staff.
5. All female junior researchers should be trained to write applications and encouraged to attend research management training.

Research administration

Administrative capacity has been increased in line with the workload of several large research projects (the coordination of GLOBUS and PLATO in particular require two full administrative positions). In addition, application proposals require good administrative support and follow-up if ARENA is to continue delivering high quality applications. Any reduced service level in periods where ongoing projects or proposals are prioritized, is compensated by the utilization of work duties of the PhD candidates, and through ensuring high capacity of research assistants.

Funds for research management will be included in all research applications to maintain ARENA's administrative capacity and high level of expertise, however, due to the non-competitive wage level of Norwegian administrators in a European perspective, ARENA is prepared to fund research administrators in part with own funds. ARENA's administration will continue to focus on strengthening research administration associated with external funding. Administrative routines are being standardized and centralized at the Faculty of Social Sciences and the University of Oslo central administration thereby possibly alleviating some of the work at ARENA.

Measures:

1. Weekly meetings among the administrative staff for planning, prioritizing, and collaborating on assignments, especially during periods of heavier workload (i.e. reporting or application deadlines or larger external events). ARENA's research administration aims to be a flexible and cohesive body.
2. Active participation in the Faculty's FANE research network and other relevant networks at the Faculty, University of Oslo and external organizations.
3. Funds for research administration are included in all larger research applications.
4. An administrative seminar will take place in the first half of 2018 and a comprehensive work plan for the year will be made.
5. Competence development will be offered to all administrative staff with particular emphasis on courses aimed at improving research support.