

## Annual Plan 2021 - 2023 – ARENA Centre for European Studies

ARENA – Centre for European Studies is a multidisciplinary research centre at the University of Oslo studying the direction, dynamics and sustainability of the evolving European political order. The Annual Plan sets out ARENA's main goals and priorities in the medium term. It provides a basis for the continuing development of the Centre, in line with the principles and regulatory frameworks of the University of Oslo. The Annual Plan is decided by ARENA's Board and reviewed annually for a rolling three-year period. [Last revision: xxxx-xx-xx]

### ARENA'S PURPOSE AND VISION

ARENA shall be a leading academic environment on political integration, transformation and cooperation in Europe.<sup>1</sup>

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

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

Besides its core purpose of research excellence, ARENA shall be *a leading hub for informed public debate on the transformation of the European political order*. Since ARENA started its activities in 1994, European political, economic, social and legal integration has deepened, both within the European Union (EU) and between Norway and the EU. The societal issues that Norwegians care most about – including welfare, climate, migration, security, trade, human rights – are to an increasing extent determined by decisions made in Europe. ARENA responds to the need in Norway for an easily accessible reservoir of research-based knowledge useful for navigating the changing European landscape.

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<sup>1</sup> Administrasjonsreglement ved ARENA Senter for europaforskning, vedtatt av fakultetsstyret 27.9.2019.

## **PRIORITISED GOALS AND MEASURES 2021-2023**

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

### **Research**

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

ARENA's specific research agenda should be evolving based on the creative ideas of its researchers and along with the developing European political order. It should be continuously evaluated, with the overall vision in mind of providing innovative and credible answers to significant questions relating to the evolving multilevel European political order. Substantively, ARENA's research in the last years has focussed on four key themes: A European democratic order, the EU's executive order, expertise and knowledge and European foreign and security policy.

The combination of normative and positive theory, methodologically sound research designs, and an interdisciplinary profile should be distinctive features of ARENA's research.

**Priority:** *Develop ARENA's research agenda.*

*Measures:*

- discuss ARENA's research agenda at the common staff and board seminar in September 2021
- introduce an annual project-ideas seminar that corresponds timewise with the NFR application schedule
- stimulate a culture of ongoing discussions about which research themes that ARENA can and should engage in at formal (seminars, staff meetings, etc) and informal (lunches, etc) venues.

**Priority:** *Strengthen ARENA's procedures for developing new projects.*

*Measures:*

- specify and pursue a plan for working with project ideas and applications, including timelines, guidelines to project leaders and seminars to support ideas and applications.

**Priority:** *Specify and reinforce ARENA's interdisciplinary profile*

*Measures:*

- clarify ARENA's interdisciplinary profile
- evaluate status and identify goals and measures

**Priority:** *Stimulate inspiring and useful discussions of ongoing research*

*Measures:*

- develop the Tuesday and Research in Progress seminars
- encourage an open, generous and unpretentious seminar culture ('you don't fail, you learn')

## **Dissemination and outreach**

ARENA should disseminate research and research-based knowledge in ways that amplifies its impact in the scholarly community and among students, practitioners and the general public. ARENA's staff has since long published research at a highly competitive level.

**Priority:** *Publish an increasing share of our research in high-impact outlets*

*Measures:*

- Specify and pursue a publication strategy for ARENA (attach to the Annual Plan)

**Priority:** *Reinforce ARENA's communication activities and profile*

*Measures:*

- Specify and pursue a communication strategy for ARENA (attach to the Annual Plan)

## **Teaching**

ARENA's staff contributes to teaching at the UiO and elsewhere, primarily at the PhD and Masters level. There are good reasons for striving to increase ARENA's engagement in teaching: ARENA's

research is enriched from the meeting between scholars and students. We have important knowledge to contribute that is high in demand, relating to the evolving European political order and Norway's relation to Europe. Interdisciplinary research programs are attractive to students. Teaching opportunities are attractive to ARENA's staff, both for intrinsic motivational reasons and for future career prospects in academia.

**Priority:** *Develop a high-quality teaching portfolio*

*Measures:*

- facilitate for ARENA's staff to contribute to the existing educational programs at UiO
- investigate the possibility of developing a teaching portfolio within the area of further education (EVU)
- seek support for developing an interdisciplinary and internationally competitive Master program in European Studies

## **Organisation**

ARENA shall have an organisation that is well suited for fulfilling our purpose, including a competent and content staff, a viable economic model and a stable position as an independent research centre within the Faculty of Social Sciences. We shall provide a stimulating, collaborative, welcoming and open work environment during and after the pandemic. ARENA's staff shall be informed and involved in the organizational business of the Centre.

ARENA's staff has been reduced in the last years. The financial model of the Faculty of Social Sciences implies that all employees at ARENA are in effect externally funded, and therefore need to contribute to the future funding of their own position. The model includes strong incentives for prioritising EU funding, because of the built-in financial reward (RBO) from the University attached to such funds. ARENA is well placed to take advantage of these incentives due to our competences and experiences in managing EU-funded programs.

**Priority:** *Secure funding to expand ARENA's level of activity*

*Measures:*

- specify a research funding strategy
- prioritise applications within the new Horizon Europe program

**Priority:** *Secure long-term recruitment of research staff competent of leading new research projects*

*Measures:*

- support and recruit emerging top-level scholars (e.g. through collaborative projects, individual grants such as ERC and Unga Forsk)
- make use of project based part time affiliations
- announce new permanent position(s) when economy allows

**Priority:** *Consolidate ARENA's position as an independent research centre at the Faculty of Social Sciences*

*Measures:*

- seek a stable commitment from the Faculty of Social Sciences as to the future status of ARENA