

Annual Plan 2022 - 2024 – 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: 2021-11-22]

ARENA'S PURPOSE AND VISION

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

ARENA's core purpose is to provide *excellent 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 and have long-term effects on research and in society. 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.

¹ *Administrasjonsreglement ved ARENA Senter for europaforskning*, vedtatt av fakultetsstyret 27.9.2019.

PRIORITISED GOALS AND MEASURES 2022-2024

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

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 (attach to the Annual Plan).

[Evaluation Nov 2022: We did specify and pursue a plan for the RCN calls in Feb 2022, including information to staff, communication with researchers aiming for the calls and a seminar discussing draft application proposals. However, we did not formally put in on paper. We have not (yet) done so for 2023, due to the shift on the senior research advisor position. Suggestion: Keep measure.]

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

Measures:

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

[Evaluation Nov 2022: We worked on this during 2021 and 2022, including staff meetings and writing a report on ARENA's interdisciplinary profile. We found e.g. that although ARENA tilts heavily towards political science, almost all of ARENA's projects have components including more than one academic discipline and we regularly publish work in journals from other disciplines. Our calls for positions emphasize European Studies as an interdisciplinary social science field. Suggestion: Drop measure.]

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

Measures:

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

[Evaluation Nov 2022: This has not been focused on, although mentioned in discussions of measures following the work environment survey (ARK). More can be done here, especially as several new younger researchers are coming in. Suggestion: Keep measure.]

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)

[Evaluation Nov 2022: We have discussed publication strategies and output at staff meetings in both 2021 and 2022. The publication strategy is attached to the Annual Plan and will continue to be pursued. Suggestion: Drop measure]

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

Measures:

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

[Evaluation Nov 2022: We have not completed this measure, in part due to changes in staff and subsequent lack of capacity. Suggestion: Keep measure]

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

[Evaluation Nov 2022: The Director has had conversations with the responsible people at the political science department about Postdocs and PhD fellows' teaching. Teaching may be available depending on the needs of the department and it will be allocated on a case-by-case basis. We can do more in this area, for instance wrt guiding PhD fellows about available opportunities. Suggestion: Keep measure]

- investigate the possibility of developing a teaching portfolio within the area of further education (EVU)

[Evaluation Nov 2022: We put some effort into investigating these opportunities in 2021 and 2022. One conclusion from this investigation was that although there are several good reasons to engage in EVU (practice relevance, increased understanding of the implications of EU/EEA law at the grass root level, etc) the economic side is less encouraging. Economically this will be an even affair at best. The idea to engage in EVU has been put on ice for the time being due to lack of capacity at ARENA. Suggestion: Drop measure]

- seek support for developing an interdisciplinary and internationally competitive Master program in European Studies

[Evaluation Nov 2022: The Director put extensive effort into explaining the upsides of such a program to the Faculty leadership during 2021 and 2022. These efforts have so far been completely unsuccessful. Nevertheless, this is an important strategic long-term goal for ARENA. Suggestion: Keep measure]

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.

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:

- develop and specify ARENA's research funding strategy

[Evaluation Nov 2022: We have started working on a research funding strategy, but the work was paused due to change in personnel. The strategy should include a) analysis of the funding sources landscape, ARENA's historical experience with different sources (experiences for research, economy and administration), and process routines for working with applications, b) priorities (sources, processes). We will take up this work again now that the new Senior Research Advisor has started. Efforts have been made to collect, update and discuss administrative routines for cooperation and information flow, working methods and routines for storage and sharing. Suggestion: Keep measure]

- prioritise applications within the Horizon Europe program

[Evaluation Nov 2022: We have prioritised partner roles in thematic Horizon calls. We were very successful with our Horizon applications in 2022. This will continue to be a priority in the coming years, but it's not clear we need a specific measure in the Annual Plan (rather in the Research funding strategy). Suggestion: Drop measure]

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 and individual grants such as ERC and Unga Forsk)

[Evaluation Nov 2022: We had one Ung Forsk application in 2021, but none in 2022. Two applications for MSCA Post-doctoral fellowships have been submitted in September 2022, and one

application for a MSCA Doctoral Network will be resubmitted in November. We have not had any ERC starting grants in the last two years. This is an important recruitment channel and should continue to be a priority. Suggestion: Keep measure]

- make use of project based part time affiliations to recruit new staff

[Evaluation Nov 2022: We have made several such recruitments in 2022. This will continue to use this measure in the coming years, but its not clear we need a specific measure in the Annual Plan. Suggestion: Drop measure]

- announce new permanent position(s) when economy allows

[Evaluation Nov 2022: We have made one such announcement in November 2022. This will continue to be a priority in the coming years. Suggestion: Keep measure.]

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

[Evaluation Nov 2022: We succeeded in achieving a strong commitment from the Faculty Board in 2022. Our relationship with the Faculty will continue to be an important priority in the coming years, but its not clear we need a specific measure in the Annual Plan. Suggestion: Drop measure]