



ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Acknowledgements

2024

ESF Annual Report

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Foreword

This Annual Report 2024 marks the second year of implementation of the European Science Foundation's (ESF) 2023–2028 strategy. It provides a comprehensive account of our efforts to advance high-quality research and foster collaboration across the global scientific community. Since its creation in 1974, ESF has been dedicated to offering expert, independent management and support throughout the research lifecycle.

In 2024, ESF celebrated its 50th anniversary, a milestone that highlighted five decades of catalysing collaboration, integrity, and innovation in research across Europe. This anniversary was both a tribute to our legacy and a forward-looking moment to reaffirm our commitment to advancing science that is inclusive, sustainable, and socially relevant. It underscored our ongoing responsibility to help shape the future of research with excellence, ethical responsibility, and a clear vision for addressing the challenges of our time.

Throughout the year, we also strengthened our role as a partner to the research community by advancing the implementation of our strategy through an internal consultation on the future development of ESF's operations. Our activities in 2024 were structured around four core lines of action:

- **Research Quality Assessment and Grant Evaluation:** We supported 64 competitive calls, assessed over 5,200 applications, and prepared more than 11,053 detailed reports with the expertise of our reviewers and panels.
- **Supporting and Hosting Scientific Structures and Networks:** We hosted and operated 12 scientific platforms, including 1 established for the first time this year, providing critical frameworks for collaborative innovation.
- **Management of Co-funded Research Programmes:** Through expert operational, administrative, and financial support, we ensured the seamless execution of diverse funding initiatives.
- **Strengthening EU-funded Projects:** With 27 active EU-funded projects and 2 new ones launched in 2024, ESF has reinforced its position as a key player in European scientific collaborations.

We are deeply grateful to our partners, collaborators, and dedicated team members who have made this year's achievements possible. Together, we continue to shape a future where research excellence drives global progress.

Table of contents

Acknowledgements	2
Foreword	3
2024 at a glance	6
Executive Board members	8
Member organisations	8
ESF’s Strategy: Mission and lines of action	9
Advancing high-quality research through expert, independent management and support	9
Research quality assessment and grant evaluation	10
2024 in figures	10
2024 Missions highlights	11
Partner testimonials	13
Supporting and hosting scientific structures and networks	14
New structures hosted in 2024	14
2024 Highlights in supporting and hosting scientific structures and networks	15
Association of ERC Grantees (AERG)	15
cOAlition S.....	15
Coalition for the Advancement of Research Assessment - CoARA.....	16
Committee on Radio Astronomy Frequencies (CRAF)	17
Core Technologies for Life Sciences (CTLS)	17
European Facility for Airborne Research (EUFAR)	18
European Astrobiology Institute (EAI)	18
European space science committee (ESSC).....	19
Europlanet Society.....	19
The Nuclear Physics European Collaboration Committee (NuPECC)	20
Management of co-funded research programmes	21
2024 Highlights	21
The Fight Kids Cancer programme	21
NGI Sargasso Cascade funding.....	21
CoARA Cascade funding	22

Strengthening European projects	23
New projects starting in 2024	23
BRYOMOLECULES: Uncovering the Hidden Potential of European Bryophytes for Sustainable Biotechnology.....	23
GenderSAFE: Advancing the zero-tolerance approach to gender-based violence in higher education and research in the European Research Area	24
European Space Agency.....	24
Highlights from ongoing projects	25
CRAFT-OA: Creating a Robust Accessible Federated Technology for Open Access	25
DIAMAS: Developing Institutional Open Access Publishing Models to Advance Scholarly Communication.....	25
RESIST: Regions for climate change resilience through Innovation, Science and Technology ..	27
PATTERN: Piloting open and responsible Activities and Trainings Towards the Enhancement of Researchers Networks	28
SUPPORTER: SecUring sPORTs Education thRough innovative and inclusive Gender Equality Plans	28
ASTRAIOS: Analysis of Skills, Training, Research, And Innovation Opportunities in Space.....	29
MULTIMINER: Multi-source and Multi-scale Earth observation and Novel Machine Learning Methods for Mineral Exploration and Mine Site Monitoring	29
Europlanet 2024 RI.....	30
UniSAFE - Gender-based violence and institutional responses: Building a knowledge base and operational tools to make universities and research organisations safe	30
OTTER - Outdoor Science Education for a Sustainable Future	31
WBC-RRI.NET: Responsible Research and Innovation in the Western Balkans	31
GrapheneEU CSA - Europe in the Lead	32
PASSENGER: Pilot Action for Securing a Sustainable European Next Generation of Efficient RE-free Magnets.....	32
AGROSERV: Research infrastructures services for a sustainable and resilient agriculture and agro-ecological transitions	33
ERIMOTE: Transition to digital/remote research infrastructure service provision: lessons learnt, needs and best practices	33
Conclusion	34

2024 at a glance

Grant evaluation and research assessment

- 64 competitive call evaluations supported
- 5,200 applications assessed
- 11,053 assessment reports by Expert Reviewers and Review Panel members

Scientific networks and structures

- 12 Scientific networks and structures hosted and operated
- 1 of these platforms operated for the first time in 2024

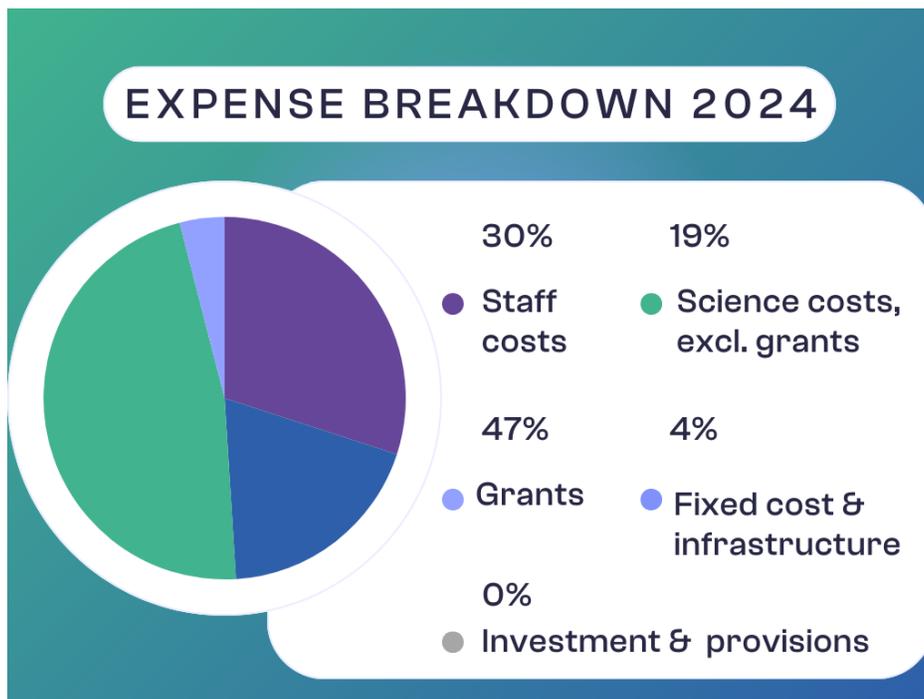
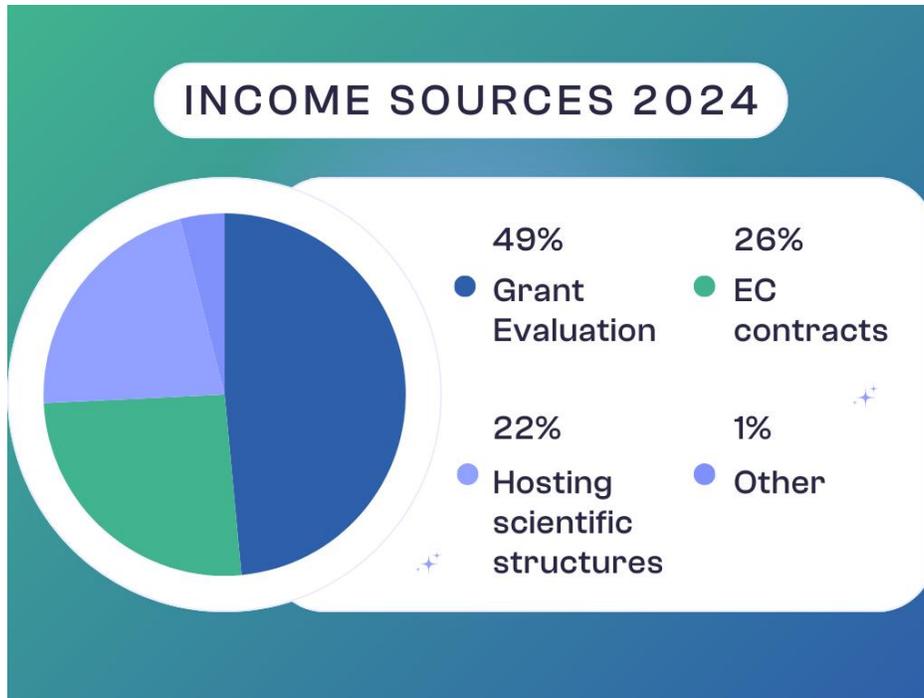
EU-funded projects

- 27 EU-funded projects in progress
- 3 contracts with the European Space Agency
- 2 new projects started in 2024

Staff members

- 53 staff members: 15% increase since 2023.

Financial overview



Executive Board members

- **Véronique Halloin, president**
Fund for Scientific Research (FNRS)
- **Eva Pacheva, vice-president**
Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
- **Andreea Monnat, Acting Secretary General/CEO**
Luxembourg National Research Fund (FNR)

Member organisations

BELGIUM	Fund for Scientific Research (FNRS)	Associate member
BULGARIA	Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS)	Full member
FRANCE	Core Technologies for Life Sciences (CTLS)	Associate member
FRANCE	French Research Institute for Exploitation of the Sea (Ifremer)	Associate member
HUNGARY	Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA)	Associate member
LUXEMBOURG	Luxembourg National Research Fund (FNR)	Full member
ROMANIA	National Council for Scientific Research (CNCS)	Associate member
SERBIA	Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts	Associate member
TURKEY	The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK)	Associate member

ESF's Strategy: Mission and lines of action

Advancing high-quality research through expert, independent management and support

ESF is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation committed to advancing high-quality research across Europe and beyond since 1974. As a global connector of research stakeholders, ESF offers expert, independent management and expert support throughout the entire research lifecycle—from conception and implementation to evaluation, sustainability, and impact.

Operating across diverse scientific networks, funding programs, and EU-funded projects, we specialise in research assessment, grant evaluation, and comprehensive support activities—spanning scientific, operational, communication, administrative, and financial management.

Driven by a dynamic, highly skilled, and international team, ESF is dedicated to fostering innovative solutions to enhance the impact of research worldwide.

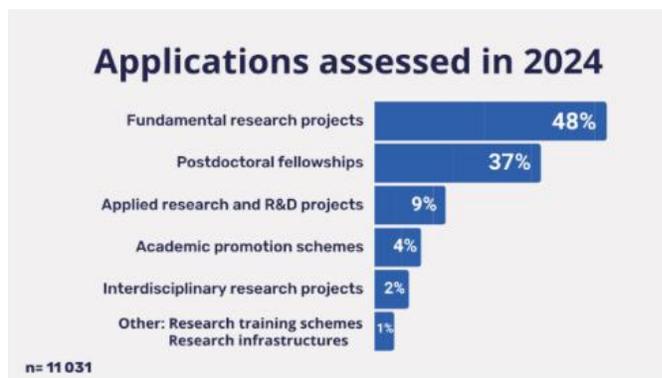
Research quality assessment and grant evaluation

We ensure independent research assessment and grant evaluation in line with international standards.

Supporting research funders, universities and programmes in identifying the best research is one of our key priorities. Leveraging our extensive College of over 10,500 Expert Reviewers, this includes carrying out independent scientific assessment of research proposals, fellowship applications and promotion of researchers, resulting in the provision of quality- controlled assessment reports and/or ranking lists.

2024 in figures

In 2024, ESF successfully supported the evaluation of more than **60 competitive research funding calls**, assessing **5 000+ applications** and **delivering 11 000+ expert assessments reports**. Significantly, 58% of these assessments were carried out by members of the ESF Community of Experts.



2024 Missions highlights



3,000+ applications reviewed for FWO (Belgium)

As part of our long-term partnership with the [Research Foundation Flanders \(FWO\)](#), ESF supported the evaluation of applications in Strategic Basic Research, Applied Biomedical Research, Fundamental research, Postdoctoral Fellowships, and FWO Bilateral Research Cooperation projects with Brazil and China. In total, ESF provided external expert assessments for 3 000+ FWO applications.



Advancing AI & Quantum Research with ARIS (Slovenia)

ESF provided external assessments to the [Slovenian Research Innovation Agency \(ARIS\)](#) in the framework of their “Gravity Programme” which funded top researchers in the fields of artificial intelligence, semiconductors, language and quantum technologies.



Collaborating with VLIR on inter-university high-impact projects (Belgium)

ESF delivered a full-scale evaluation of the assessment of [iBOF applications](#) for the Flemish Interuniversity Council (VLIR). The evaluation process included **external reviews**, **applicant rebuttals**, and **panel interviews** to identify consortia of top researchers capable of boosting Flanders’ scientific leadership.



Early-Career Support: University of Milano (Italy)

ESF supported [University of Milano](#) in the evaluation of the call [My First SEED Grant](#) to support early-career researchers working at the University, delivering over **150 expert reviews** and managing the online application platform to help early-career researchers get their first independent funding.



€90M R&I Programme for VAIA (Slovakia)

ESF supported the “Transformation and Innovation Consortia” programme call of the **Slovakian Research and Innovation Authority (VAIA)** – a major national programme to strengthen Slovakia’s R&I environment by linking public and private actors with top international institutions.



World Bank supported innovation programmes in Uzbekistan

ESF supported [MUNIS](#), a project implemented jointly by the World bank and the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation of the Republic of Uzbekistan to enable the development of the country’s innovation system. ESF provided over 300 external assessments for the [MUNIS Research Commercialization Program \(RCP\)](#) and [MUNIS Business Investment in Research & Development Program \(BIRD\)](#).



Evaluation of research projects for the CARIPARO Foundation (Italy)

ESF involved more than 100 international expert reviewers in the assessment of research project proposals submitted under the Foundation’s programmes: [Scientific Excellence](#) & [Pediatric Research](#), supporting the Foundation’s strategies priorities.



Evaluation of post-doctoral fellowships for the "NanoBio4Can" MSCA Cofund (Turkey)

ESF supported the [Sabanci University Nanotechnology Research and Application Center \(Turkey\)](#) in assessing the post-doctoral applications under the [NanoBio4Can MSCA Cofund](#) programme. ESF provided 120 expert assessment reports, involving reviewers in academia and industry.



Supporting the evaluation of DNS-related projects for ICANN (USA)

ESF partnered with the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) to support the evaluation of applications received within the first cycle of [the ICANN Grant Program](#). The Program funds innovative projects aligned with ICANN’s mission to ensure a stable, secure Internet. ESF led a two-stage evaluation process, involving expert reviews and panels, resulting in the assessment of 130+ applications and nearly 400 evaluations.

Partner testimonials



“ESF’s involvement was a game-changer. It allowed us to launch FIGHT KIDS CANCER without having to create a whole new legal entity, which saved time while simplifying the process. Paediatric cancer is a small research area, and managing Col is always a challenge. ESF’s independent selection procedure, combined with their effective Col management, has been essential in maintaining the integrity of our calls and ensuring that the best projects are funded”

Delphine Heenen

Co-founder of Fight Kids Cancer Programme & Director of KickCancer Foundation



“We are very pleased with ESF’s support, which has strengthened the Foundation’s review process by engaging highly qualified, independent experts. What I value most about ESF’s research grant evaluation support is its ability to identify the right academic expertise while ensuring both the competence and independence of the reviewers, all within an efficient and transparent process. Our partnership with ESF has enabled us to significantly improve our own selection process in terms of timing, quality, rigor, and objectivity”

Philippe Trainar, Director

SCOR Foundation for Science

Supporting and hosting scientific structures and networks

ESF serves as a vital hub for scientific collaboration by providing a home for the operations of various scientific networks, coalitions, committees, and associations. Our role goes beyond mere hosting; we create an environment where these entities can thrive and maximise their impact on the research landscape.

Throughout 2024, ESF has provided tailored secretariat services, from general administration to coordination of activities, communication support, as well as financial and contract management, allowing these entities to concentrate on their core activities and make a significant impact. From space sciences and radio-astronomy frequencies to nuclear physics and Open Access, ESF has been at the forefront of fostering collaboration and driving advancements in these domains.

New structures hosted in 2024

GRIOS, the Global Research Initiative on Open Science



Global
Research
Initiative on
Open Science

GRIOS, the Global Research Initiative on Open Science, aims to review the existing evidence and ongoing research on Open Science and provide stakeholders with in-depth analysis of the state of the art of our knowledge on Open Science. This will enable

fundors, research organisations, and policymakers to increase the efficiency and maximize the impact of their Open Science strategies. In addition, GRIOS aims to identify important knowledge gaps and federate the global research-on-Open Science communities around a common research programme. GRIOS is focusing on meta-level knowledge, which is currently lacking in the global Open Science community.

ESF hosts the GRIOS office, including coordination and communication activities.

Find more: <https://www.grios.org/>

2024 Highlights in supporting and hosting scientific structures and networks

Association of ERC Grantees (AERG)



The Association of ERC Grantees (AERG) amplifies the voice of ERC grant holders, fostering a science-based community, advocating for excellent, bottom-up, and frontier science funding, and promoting the societal benefits of funding fundamental, high-risk, high-gain scientific research.

In 2024, ESF provided comprehensive support for the Board activities, event organisation, member relations, and communication. In particular, ESF assisted AERG with in-person, online, and hybrid events across Europe, coordinating high-profile guests, while advising on technical aspects to ensure seamless event execution.

ESF also supported the launch of new initiatives, including Special Interest Groups. In addition, ESF enhanced AERG's visibility and outreach through communication, aiming to attract new members and expand AERG's influence.

Find out more: <https://aerg.eu/>

cOAlition S



cOAlition S is an international consortium of research funders launched in 2018 to implement Plan S, an initiative for Open Access publishing. The cOAlition S is hosted and administered by ESF.

In 2024, cOAlition S advanced its mission to create a responsible, equitable, and fully Open Access scholarly publishing ecosystem. Building on the results of Plan S, the consortium commissioned two major studies: an independent review of Plan S, published in October, which highlighted its success in promoting immediate Open Access and recommended continued collaboration beyond 2025; and a research community consultation on the "Towards Responsible Publishing" proposal, published in June, which confirmed broad support for innovative, author-led publishing practices while emphasizing the need for global collaboration in recognition and reward systems. These studies informed cOAlition S's new post-2025 strategy, approved in principle by the Leaders Group in October 2024.

The coalition also focused on equity in scholarly publishing. A globally fair pricing framework was published in July to guide equitable contributions by readers and producers based on means, while multi-stakeholder initiatives explored alternatives to article processing charges (APCs) to ensure inclusive participation. cOAlition S continued to support Diamond Open Access, community-driven and non-commercial publishing models, including the successful organization of the Second Global

Diamond OA Summit in South Africa in December 2024 and the establishment of the European Diamond Capacity Hub, providing services and a gateway for publishers, service providers, and technology partners.

Ongoing operational projects included running the Rights Retention Strategy, development and management of the Journal Checker Tool and Journal Comparison Service, supporting transformative journals transitioning to full Open Access, and participation in EC projects such as DIAMAS, CRAFT-OA, Palomera, and OA-Advance. These efforts collectively reinforced cOAlition S's leadership in shaping a more transparent, equitable, and sustainable scholarly communication system.

Find out more: <https://www.coalition-s.org/>

Coalition for the Advancement of Research Assessment - CoARA



Hosted by ESF - elected as its secretariat - since December 2022, CoARA is a global initiative focused on improving research assessment. CoARA's vision is that the assessment of research, researchers and research organisations recognises the diverse outputs, practices and activities that maximise the quality and impact of research. This requires assessments primarily based on qualitative judgement, for which peer review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators. Each CoARA member is expected to implement an action plan towards changing their practices following the ten commitments establishing a common direction for research assessment reform and listed in the [Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment](#). The Coalition has been set to facilitate information and sharing of practices and eventually help members to reach their objectives.

In 2024, ESF continued to provide secretariat support to the coalition, enabling the expansion and consolidation of its National Chapters and Working Groups. This foundation allowed CoARA to strengthen internal exchanges, support member organisations in implementing the coalition's commitments, and enhance global engagement. By June 2024, CoARA counted 646 members and 735 signatories from 50 countries, including the US, Australia, Nigeria, and other Global South nations.

Key achievements during the period included the successful launch of the CoARA Boost project and its Cascade Funding Programme, and supporting the organisation of a range of public events such as the in Helsinki and ERA Action 3 event in Brussels.

CoARA also expanded its policy impact, being referenced in major national and European research policy documents, including REF and the new ERC evaluation guidelines. The Secretariat facilitated the collection and analysis of 130 action plans, harmonised the work of the 13 Working Groups and 16 National Chapters – with the first National Chapters Exchange Forum and Working Group Co-

Chairs Forum, introduced geographical balancing mechanisms in governance, and successfully managed CoARA's first cascade funding round, selecting 25 projects.

Through these efforts, CoARA strengthened global trust, enhanced knowledge sharing, and positioned itself as a responsive and influential actor in the research assessment reform landscape, being referenced in major national and European research policy documents.

Find out more: www.coara.org

Committee on Radio Astronomy Frequencies (CRAF)



The Committee on Radio Astronomy Frequencies (CRAF), hosted by ESF since 1988, plays a pivotal role in safeguarding radio frequencies for European radio astronomy observatories and research institutes.

In 2024, ESF continued to deliver both operational and strategic support to the Committee on Radio Astronomy Frequencies (CRAF). CRAF organized its work through specialized teams focusing on satellite systems, mobile communications, and geodetic observations, supported by regular coordination meetings and weekly management discussions on major spectrum issues. Members contributed actively to international (ITU-R), European (CEPT/ECC), and national spectrum management processes, preparing compatibility studies and regulatory input. Key efforts addressed emerging challenges such as 5G coexistence, automotive radar, wireless power transfer, and interference from growing satellite constellations, resulting in significant outputs including ECC Reports 363 and 364 and contributions to new ITU-R material.

CRAF also carried out technical measurement campaigns, notably LOFAR observations of Starlink satellites, which underscored persistent interference concerns and informed mitigation strategies. The group hosted a second workshop on satellite mega-constellations at Effelsberg and participated in major scientific gatherings such as the IAU General Assembly 2024. Meanwhile, the Geodetic Observations team advanced a proposal for a WRC-2031 agenda item on VGOS, highlighting its essential role in Earth orientation and global reference frames. Overall, CRAF strengthened collaboration between scientists and regulators to protect radio astronomy within an increasingly crowded spectrum.

Find out more: www.craf.eu/

Core Technologies for Life Sciences (CTLS)



CTLS is a networking non-profit association that brings together scientists, technical and administrative staff working across the world in core facilities, research infrastructures and other shared resource laboratories. It provides a platform for networking, discussion on emerging technologies

and exchange information on best practices. It also supports the career development of members throughout their careers.

In 2024, ESF continued its partnership with CTLS, providing essential services to support the organization's operations. This included membership management, financial consulting, and adapting the membership payment process for European partners. ESF also supports website management to strengthen CTLS's digital presence. Additionally, ESF facilitates general administrative and operational activities, ensuring that CTLS can deliver user-friendly and efficient services to its members.

Find out more: www.ctls-org.eu/

European Facility for Airborne Research (EUFAR)



EUFAR (European Facility for Airborne Research) is an association established in 2018 as a follow-up to a European Commission-funded research network. It aims to support and promote airborne research by providing access to national research aircraft and instruments for scientists across Europe.

In 2024, ESF continued to provide comprehensive support to EUFAR (European Facility for Airborne Research), delivering essential services across online, in-person, and hybrid activities. ESF provided full secretariat support for governance, ensuring the smooth functioning of the General Assembly and executive operations. The collaboration also included maintaining EUFAR's website and social media platforms, keeping the organisation's digital presence current and user-friendly, as well as managing key financial responsibilities such as accounting, expense reimbursement, membership fee collection, and presentation of financial statements for approval.

ESF further supported EUFAR strategically in research funding applications. This included coordination of a work package on long-term sustainability and governance in a collaborative EC grant proposal for a new airborne research infrastructure, and guidance for EUFAR members participating in proposals. Through these combined efforts, ESF has reinforced EUFAR's operational efficiency, visibility, and strategic development within the European and global airborne research community.

Find out more: www.eufar.net/

European Astrobiology Institute (EAI)



The EAI is a consortium of European research and higher education institutions and organisations, as well as other stakeholders, aiming to carry out research, training, outreach and dissemination activities in astrobiology in a comprehensive and coordinated manner, thereby securing a leading

role for the European Research Area in the field. Alongside the financial and administrative management of the EAI and its management committees, ESF also supports its communication activities, including event organisation.

Alongside its ongoing administrative role, in 2024 ESF assisted in the preparation of the General Assembly held in June 2024 and coordinated the Institute's Summer Schools and conferences in Tartu, Nördlingen, and Kiruna. The EAI YouTube channel, managed by ESF, reached 1,000 subscribers and 100 published videos. In addition, ESF completed a full update of the EAI website, enhancing usability and enabling working group leaders to manage their own pages, while also starting preparation for BEACON 2025 and an additional Summer School.

Find out more: www.europeanastrobiology.eu/

European space science committee (ESSC)



The ESSC strives to be Europe's reference body for independent expertise on matters of space science, acting as a representative voice of the European space science community and promoting international cooperation in the field.

ESF's ongoing support to the ESSC includes secretariat services to its Chair and five panels, and active participation in both physical and remote meetings. 2024 highlights included the successful celebration of the ESSC's 50th anniversary in April 2024, featuring a custom planetarium show and the launch of a new visual identity, alongside the Committee's expansion onto LinkedIn. ESF also organised key panel meetings in Milan, Toulouse, and Paris, and supported major initiatives with ESA, including the preparation of a high-quality brochure for policymakers on Earth Observation breakthroughs, and the coordination of an ad hoc working group on spacecraft re-entry and atmospheric impact. Through workshops with ESA, CNES, NASA, NOAA, the European Commission, and academic experts, ESSC advanced international collaboration on these issues. In September, the ESSC Chair and Scientific Secretary met with the ESA Director General, resulting in ESA's decision to more than double its financial contribution to the Committee, further recognising the ESSC's vital role in shaping Europe's space sciences agenda.

Find out more: www.essc.esf.org/

Europlanet Society



The Europlanet Society promotes the advancement of European planetary science and related fields for the benefit of the community.

ESF supported the Europlanet Society by managing its finances, organisational activities, digital platforms, and communications. Following the establishment of the Europlanet Association as a

legal entity in Belgium in 2023, ESF completed the transfer of all assets and activities to the new structure in July 2024, marking the successful transition of the Society into its independent governance framework.

Find out more: www.europlanet.org

The Nuclear Physics European Collaboration Committee (NuPECC)



NuPECC aims at developing the strategy for European cooperation in nuclear science by supporting collaborative ventures between research groups within Europe and promoting nuclear physics and its trans-disciplinary use in applications for societal benefit.

In 2024, ESF continued to host and support the Nuclear Physics European Collaboration Committee (NuPECC), which develops the strategy for European cooperation in nuclear science and promotes its transdisciplinary applications for societal benefit. Major events in 2024 included the election of Eberhard Widmann as the new Chair, the 109th NuPECC annual meeting and the approval and official presentation of the NuPECC Long Range Plan 2024, unveiled in Brussels in November 2024. Prepared with ESF's support, the Plan was published in both print and online formats and provides a comprehensive roadmap for the field's scientific and strategic priorities.

A new call for 2025 conference support was launched, with applications received for ten conferences, four schools, and the upcoming JENAS 2025 symposium. NuPECC also advanced its collaboration with ECFA and APPEC through the joint JENAS initiative on computing, with working groups preparing White Papers on key challenges in data and infrastructure. Preparations went underway for the 3rd JENAS Symposium, planned in April 2025 at the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory (Harwell, UK), bringing together Europe's particle, astroparticle, and nuclear physics communities.

Find out more: www.nupecc.org

Management of co-funded research programmes

One of ESF's recent developments has been to develop its capacity to fully manage and operate competitive research programmes funded by external sources, including cascade funding. This includes framing calls for proposals and organising the competitive call, assessment of the proposals, as well as the post-award phases, such as signing the grant agreements on behalf of the funders, processing payments and monitoring projects and their outcomes.

2024 Highlights

The Fight Kids Cancer programme



ESF manages the Fight Kids Cancer programme, in partnership with and on behalf of its five funding organisations: Imagine for Margo (France), Fondatioun Kriibskrank Kanner (Luxembourg), KickCancer (Belgium), CRIS (Spain/UK) and KIKA (the Netherlands). Fight Kids Cancer is a collaborative research programme supporting academic research for paediatric cancers, providing 10M€ funding per year.

In 2024, ESF managed the programme's 4th call for projects dedicated to brain cancers, resulting in the submission of 22 full proposals and 9 projects selected (including 2 clinical trials (CT) and 7 translational research (TR) projects). The 5th call for projects (open call) ran from September to December 2024, leading to 39 TR proposals and 12 CT proposals. In 2024 ESF also managed 30 ongoing projects, as well as the new FKC Innovation Award, which granted 1 million € (250k €/year over 4 years) to a mid-career researcher.

Find out more: <https://www.esf.org/fight-kids-cancer/>

NGI Sargasso Cascade funding



NGI Sargasso is an EU-funded project with a mission to catalyse transatlantic collaboration on the development and experimentation of new ideas, implementation of prototypes, and contribution to standards and open-source communities on technology trends with the potential to reshape tomorrow's NGI technologies and services. Operating from January 2023 – December 2025, the project is to run five open calls for proposals, attracting +300 EU + US and/or Canada teams working on emerging topics for the Next Generation Internet, and will support up to 96 projects that will be benefited from both equity-free funding and capacity building services in a 9-month programme. ESF manages its calls for proposals.

In 2024, the project finalised four open calls and launched the fifth and final call in September 2024. To date, €646,500 has been distributed to grantees, representing 13% of the total funding planned over the three-year project duration. ESF has engaged extensively with US and Canadian entities and government representatives.

Managing the large-scale cascade funding required ESF to develop an efficient pipeline for contracts and payments. The SmartSimple platform was completed and will streamline tracking grantees' milestones and payments. End of 2024, ESF focused on managing ongoing projects, validating the second Open Call final reports, and handling Sub-Grant Agreement signatures and onboarding for the 4th and 5th Open Call beneficiaries.

Find out more: www.ngisargasso.eu/

CoARA Cascade funding



In 2024 ESF managed [CoARA Boost](#)'s first Cascade Funding Programme, aiming to support institutions in their efforts to implement their commitment to advance the reform of research assessment, as well as related practices within their organisation. This first call resulted in the funding of 25 projects focused on enhancing institutional change and targeting pilot and exchange-of-knowledge initiatives. As such, it encouraged and supported research organisations to investigate and test what research assessment reforms would efficiently work 'in real life'.

The coalition's secretariat team at ESF managed the entire process of the call, including its evaluation and implementation, supporting the framework design, evaluators, and applicants all the way.

Find out more: <https://www.coara.org/coara-boost-cascade-funding/first-call-cascade-funding/>

Strengthening European projects

Addressing complex societal challenges through European framework projects is one of ESF's key lines of action. ESF contributes with its expertise in multiple fields, from social science projects related to inclusivity and gender equality, ethics, open science - to materials, scientific infrastructure services, NGI, and spatial sciences. Our activities span from coordinating and managing projects, to communication, dissemination, and community outreach, and ad hoc expertise support.

From proposal preparation to project reporting, in 2024 ESF was involved in 20+ EC-funded projects within the Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe programmes, as a coordinator, communication lead or task lead.

In 2024,

- 2 new projects were launched
- 27 projects were ongoing

New projects starting in 2024

BRYOMOLECULES: Uncovering the Hidden Potential of European Bryophytes for Sustainable Biotechnology



September 2024 – August 2027

This EC-funded Research and Innovation Action project started on 1 September 2024. Over the course of three years, it will develop methods and technology to produce industry-relevant bioactive compounds from European *bryophytes* plants. ESF is the task leader partner for Dissemination and Communication. As such, the team entirely built the project official website and visual identity and was involved in the establishment of the project online presence to raise awareness on the project objectives and relevance. ESF also provides project management support as well as tasks coordination within the consortium.

Find out more: <https://bryomolecules.eu/>

GenderSAFE: Advancing the zero-tolerance approach to gender-based violence in higher education and research in the European Research Area

 **GenderSAFE** March 2024 – February 2027

Building on the research and tools developed in the [UniSAFE](#) project, GenderSAFE supports research and higher education institutions in establishing safe, inclusive and respectful environments by developing and implementing efficient and comprehensive policies. Its approach includes capacity-building initiatives, mutual learning and exchange, and the creation of tools to monitor and evaluate policies at institutional and national levels. It further promotes the uptake of a zero-tolerance stance towards gender-based violence, reinforcing institutions' efforts to advance gender equality and ensure a culture of safety and respect. ESF is the coordinator of the project and leads its communications work package.

In its capacity as communication lead, the ESF team set up the communication tools– including a visual identity, website, stationary templates, standard presentation PPT, leaflets, promotional video, and developed a comprehensive communication and dissemination strategy.

In its first year, following the publication of a Zero-Tolerance Code of Conduct published by the European Commission, GenderSAFE released [a public pledge](#) urging higher education institutions, research organisations, and all ERA stakeholders to commit to the zero-tolerance approach and take a bold stand against any form of gender-based violence. The project also successfully launched its Community of Practice (CoP) of ~ 90 individuals involved in addressing gender-based violence in academia and research, with ESF responsible for establishing an online platform connecting these stakeholders across Europe.

Find out more : <https://gendersafe.eu>

European Space Agency



ESF started two contracts with ESA in September 2024. ESF organised the ESA Exploration Science Workshop in Warsaw, Poland, with 250 scientists involved in field of human and robotic exploration. In addition, ESF conducted three planetary protection studies for ESA to review planetary protection requirements for the exploration of icy worlds, the biological impact of sample return on Earth biosphere and assess contamination risks associated with the exploration of the Moon. Each study gathered a group of experts that met for two workshops over the year.

Find out more: <https://www.esa.int/>

Highlights from ongoing projects

OPEN ACCESS PROJECTS

CRAFT-OA: Creating a Robust Accessible Federated Technology for Open Access

CRAFT-OA

January 2023 - December 2025



The CRAFT-OA project aims to strengthen the Diamond Open Access (OA) publishing landscape by improving its technical and organisational infrastructure. Over 36 months, it will enhance journal platforms, build communities of practice, increase visibility for Diamond OA, and integrate it with European data infrastructures like EOSC. The 23 partners from 14 European countries focus on sustainable development, delivering tools, training, and services to support institutional publishing in science and society.

Find out more: www.craft-oa.eu/

DIAMAS: Developing Institutional Open Access Publishing Models to Advance Scholarly Communication



September 2022 - August 2025

The DIAMAS project addresses challenges in institutional Open Access publishing by mapping providers in 25 European countries and developing a European Quality Standard for Institutional Publishing. It will professionalise and align institutional publishing, creating a registry, training resources, and financial models. DIAMAS also promotes inclusion, multilingualism, and financial sustainability. Over three years, it aims to establish a high-quality, sustainable Open Access ecosystem in the European Research Area, co-created with diverse stakeholders.

Find out more: www.diamasproject.eu/

PALOMERA: Policy Alignment of Open Access Monographs in the European Research Area



January 2023 - December 2024

PALOMERA addresses the lack of focus on open access for academic books in open science policies. It investigates barriers to open access across disciplines, languages, and geographies in the European Research Area. Using studies, surveys, and interviews, it will provide evidence-based recommendations for funders and institutions to align policies. PALOMERA aims to accelerate open access for books, promoting open science across disciplines by engaging stakeholders in inclusive co-creation and validation processes. Find out more: www.operas-eu.org/projects/palomera/

INCLUSIVE SCIENCE

ENFIELD: European Lighthouse to Manifest Trustworthy and Green AI



September 2023 - August 2026

ENFIELD is set to establish a distinctive European Center of Excellence focused on advancing fundamental research in Adaptive, Green, Human-Centric, and Trustworthy AI. The initiative seeks to elevate research within key sectors like healthcare, energy, manufacturing, and space by attracting top talents, technologies, and resources from leading research and industry entities in Europe. By conducting high-level research aligned with industry challenges, ENFIELD aims to strengthen the EU's competitive position in AI, generating significant socio-economic impact for European citizens and businesses.

In 2024, ESF led the task of integrating ethics and gender equality across the ENFIELD project, ensuring alignment of the project's scope, objectives, and activities with ethical standards and principles of diversity and inclusion. As part of its role in Project Management and Coordination, ESF engaged all project work packages and contributed directly to key deliverables.

ESF finalised the Ethics & Gender Equality Framework, including gender indicators and KPIs developed through bilateral meetings with project partners. This framework, together with the accompanying GE/Ethics Guidelines and Checklists, was disseminated to the 30 partners as a core strategic project document. The team implemented the framework through the development of Self-Assessment Guidelines for the Ethical Development of AI, equipping researchers with practical tools to consider the ethical dimensions of their work, and a first gender equality data collection campaign among the consortium.

Find out more: www.enfield-project.eu/

MOBI-TWIN: TWIN TRANSITION AND CHANGING PATTERNS OF SPATIAL MOBILITY: A REGIONAL APPROACH

June 2023 – May 2026



MOBI-TWIN is an EU project funded under the Horizon Europe Research and Innovation Programme, with 9 partners. MOBI-TWIN aims to understand the evolving factors influencing spatial mobility within the context of significant global transitions, focusing on the green and digital transition, referred to as the Twin Transition. The project explores how these global transformations influence the attractiveness of different regions, consequently affecting people's mobility choices.

In 2024, ESF led a work package on Stakeholder Engagement and Open Policy Discussion while contributing to the assessment of spatial mobility in European regions. This included developing

scenarios to assess the effects of changing spatial mobility patterns on EU regions and aligning the project's scope and activities with societal values through Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) principles.

ESF implemented RRI across the project, focusing on gender equality, open science, public engagement, ethics, and governance, to ensure that outcomes, outputs, and impacts address societal needs. Activities included multi-stakeholder dialogues and targeted workshops, such as a workshop on Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement and Citizen Science.

Find out more: <https://mobi-twin-project.eu/>

RESIST: Regions for climate change resilience through Innovation, Science and Technology



January 2023 – December 2027

RESIST is a five-year EU-funded project that has emerged from the need to make regions more resilient to climate change. The project will adopt a new practical framework in which climate adaptation pathways will be tested in four leading EU regions and transferred to eight twinned regions through mutual-learning activities and immersive digital twins.

In 2024, ESF actively developed guidelines and workshops to promote shared knowledge on gender equality and ethics across its projects. Between July and October, ESF conducted data-gathering campaigns to assess partners' current practices, identify needs, and recommend improvements. The collected insights were compiled into reports and informed the tailored implementation of the Ethics & Gender Equality Frameworks, shaping the approach for future data collection rounds in 2025.

Additionally, ESF completed the collection of contributions and updated the Data Management Plan and began drafting a set of Intellectual Property (IP) guidelines in collaboration with two partners. These guidelines aim to support partners in addressing ethics, IPR, and gender equality considerations at each stage of their projects. In November 2024, ESF presented the results of the 2024 data-gathering campaign, providing recommendations to enhance practices and ensure effective implementation of the Frameworks.

Find out more: www.resist-project.eu

PATTERN: Piloting open and responsible Activities and Trainings Towards the Enhancement of Researchers Networks



January 2023 - June 2026

PATTERN's general aim is to promote the practice of Open and Responsible Research and Innovation (Open RRI) by developing and piloting training activities for researchers at all stages of their careers. These activities will strengthen their transferable skills, empowering Higher Education Institutions and research organisations to embrace a transformative process. This process will improve the excellence of the science conducted, the capacity within the European Research Area (ERA) to tackle societal challenges and the interaction between science and society.

ESF supported the recording and editing of the first policy podcast, which builds on the results of policy mapping at three levels: EU, national, and institutional. The podcast also promoted the First PATTERN Policy Brief led by ESF and was largely disseminated to stakeholders.

Find out more: www.pattern-openresearch.eu/

SUPPORTER: SecUring sPORTs Education thRough innovative and inclusive Gender Equality Plans



April 2023 - September 2025

SUPPORTER seeks to advance inclusive gender equality in eight partner sports higher-education institutions from Central and Eastern Europe. With tailored training and mentoring mechanisms provided by expert partners, these organisations design intersectional, innovative, inclusive, and impactful Gender Equality Plans (4I-GEPs), adapted to their context, and explicitly addressing gender-based violence - including sexual harassment. ESF is coordinating this project and leading the communication and dissemination activities.

In 2024, ESF supported SUPPORTER partners in implementing their institutional roadmaps, including local outreach events to raise awareness of gender equality in sports. Two training modules and five mutual learning workshops were organised, including a dedicated workshop on gender-based violence in sports and higher education and on planning the sustainability of roadmap actions.

As part of a webinar series on gender equality with six other Horizon Europe projects, the ESF team organised an online event on “Embedding inclusivity in communication” on behalf of SUPPORTER, and participated in conferences to present findings on intersectionality in sports and related challenges.

Find out more: www.supporter-project.eu

SPACE CLUSTER

ASTRAIOS: Analysis of Skills, Training, Research, And Innovation Opportunities in Space



January 2023 – December 2025

The ASTRAIOS project maps space education across the EU-27 to align curricula with industry needs. It examines educational offerings, costs, and socio-economic factors. The project also analyses future trends, identifying skills needed for innovation and competitiveness in the space sector. Outputs include actionable recommendations, promotional materials for space careers, and educational resources for Copernicus and Galileo. These efforts aim to strengthen alignment between European space education and industry demands. ESF is the project coordinator and leads the project management work package.

In 2024, ESF produced four key deliverables for the project, including three guiding documents and a report based on the programmatic commitments of both European-level and national space agencies across the EU-27 and the UK. The report provides an overview of future trends and challenges for the European space sector over the next 10–15 years, with a particular focus on future skills needs. The ESF coordination team was also responsible for the final project output summarising the project findings for policymakers and other relevant stakeholders. The project reached its midway point in June 2024, marked by a midterm review meeting hosted by ESF.

Find out more: www.astraios.eu/

MULTIMINER: Multi-source and Multi-scale Earth observation and Novel Machine Learning Methods for Mineral Exploration and Mine Site Monitoring



January 2023 - June 2026

The MultiMiner project advances Earth observation and machine learning techniques for mineral exploration and mine site monitoring. It integrates diverse data sources, including Copernicus, commercial satellites, and in situ data, to support mining life cycles with minimal ground truthing. Focusing on critical raw materials, it enhances EU autonomy in raw material supply while reducing environmental impact. Demonstrated at four EU sites, the project involves 12 partners from six countries, representing diverse geological and mining contexts.

ESF leads the work package on Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation, ensuring timely, effective, and informative communication of the project results.

In 2024, ESF established the project website and social media presence, engaged stakeholders, and produced communication materials for clustering events attended by project partners. ESF also

developed the European Sustainable Mining & Innovation Network (ESMIN), bringing together five sister projects funded by the European Commission. ESF also cultivated connections with new scientific communities in earth observation, geology, and mining to enable participation in future projects.

Find out more: www.multiminer.eu/

Europlanet 2024 RI


 February 2020 – July 2024

Europlanet 2024 Research Infrastructure (RI) provides the pan-EU infrastructure needed to address the major scientific and technological challenges facing modern planetary science and strengthen Europe's position at the forefront of space exploration, involving 53 beneficiaries from both industry and academic sectors. It provides free access to the world's largest collection of planetary simulation and analysis facilities, data services and tools, a ground-based observational network and programme of community support activities. ESF is responsible for call evaluations in the project and supports the coordinator.

In 2024, ESF managed the evaluation of proposals for the Transnational Access programme and contributed to project management, sustainability and global collaborations activities. The project ended in July 2024.

Find out more: www.europlanet.org/europlanet-2024-ri/

INCLUSIVE SCIENCE CLUSTER

UniSAFE - Gender-based violence and institutional responses: Building a knowledge base and operational tools to make universities and research organisations safe


 February 2021- January 2024

UniSAFE aims to produce in-depth knowledge on gender-based violence and sexual harassment in research organisations and higher education institutions, and to translate this research into operational tools for higher education and research organisations. ESF's Role: Project coordinator & communication work package lead.

The UniSAFE project successfully concluded in January 2024, achieving its goal of producing in-depth knowledge on gender-based violence and sexual harassment in research organisations and higher education institutions. The project translated this knowledge into practical operational tools and recommendations to help universities and research organisations create safer environments, openly available at www.unisafe-toolkit.eu. **Find out more:** <https://unisafe-gbv.eu>

OTTER - Outdoor Science Education for a Sustainable Future



September 2021 – February 2024

OTTER aims to enhance the understanding of Education Outside the Classroom (EOC) methods and pedagogies to acquire transferable skills and scientific knowledge, mainly in the field of environmental sustainability, and to increase scientific citizenship within Europe. OTTER's long-term goal is to provide a quality insurance framework and practical recommendations for assessment methods in education outside the classroom leading to guidelines for accreditation of non-formal education in Europe. ESF led the tasks for developing accreditation guidelines and ensuring knowledge dissemination and exploitation.

The project concluded with the OTTER Hub's final online event on 31 January 2024 and the "Beyond the Classroom: Rethinking STEAM Education" conference in Brussels on 15 February 2024. These events brought together educators, experts, and stakeholders to share best practices, discuss challenges, and promote the integration of EOC approaches in formal and non-formal education. The project outcomes, including practical guidelines, resources, and a Learning Platform, remain available to support educators in implementing EOC and STEAM education initiatives.

Find out more: www.otter-project.eu

WBC-RRI.NET: Responsible Research and Innovation in the Western Balkans



March 2021 – February 2024

The overall aim of WBC-RRI.NET is to foster the application of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) principles at the territorial level in Western Balkan Countries (WBCs), to promote a multi-level steering R&I governance framework. ESF led the Evaluation work package and the task on international exchanges and synergies.

The WBC-RRI.NET project concluded in February 2024. A key outcome of the project is the establishment of the Association for Responsible Research, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship, aimed at sustaining RRI efforts in the region. The project's legacy includes policy briefs and reports that continue to guide RRI integration in the Western Balkans.

Find out more: www.wbc-rri.net

MATERIAL SCIENCES CLUSTER

GrapheneEU CSA - Europe in the Lead



October 2023 – September 2026

The project represents the continuation in Horizon Europe of the Graphene Flagship initiative, in which ESF has been involved since its inception in 2023. ESF namely leads a work package on “European and international alignment”.

In 2024, ESF led the implementation of the Association Mechanism for the Graphene Flagship (GF), coordinating applications, evaluations, and communications with candidates and new associated members. ESF actively facilitated interactions between partners and associated members and promoted the mechanism to potential candidates.

ESF also managed collaboration with FLAG-ERA, supporting stronger connections between the graphene and 2D materials community and relevant stakeholders. As part of this effort, ESF established a network of National and Thematic Representatives (nNTR), comprising distinguished members of the European graphene and 2D materials community. The nNTR network facilitates contacts with national and regional stakeholders, including funding agencies, research infrastructures, and research communities.

In addition, ESF advanced international collaborations by identifying opportunities with non-EU countries and supporting existing partnerships. Notably, an International Workshop with the United Arab Emirates was held during Graphene Week 2024.

Find out more: www.graphene-flagship.eu/materials/news/europe-in-the-lead/

PASSENGER: Pilot Action for Securing a Sustainable European Next Generation of Efficient RE-free Magnets



May 2021 – April 2025

The PASSENGER project is developing an innovative way to produce permanent magnets without rare-earth materials and is piloting the new magnets in one of the most crucial fields for the European green economy: the electromobility sector. ESF leads a work package on Dissemination, Communication, and Integration.

In 2024, ESF actively supervised the communication and dissemination activities, monitoring progress and coordinating tasks. ESF maintained a strong online presence for PASSENGER, regularly updating the project website with news and blog posts, sharing informative content on social media, and engaging the community via Zenodo. To promote the project’s outcomes to the public, ESF prepared and released six PASSENGER factsheets. ESF also contributed to outreach and engagement activities, including delivering a lecture at Lycée des Pontonniers during the French Science Week 2024 to highlight the technological, societal, economic, and environmental relevance

of PASSENGER. Furthermore, ESF represented PASSENGER at Raw Materials Week 2024 in Brussels during an exclusive clustering event organized by EC DG-GROW. ESF also supported the second PASSENGER stakeholders' workshop, contributing to programme development and presenting the "Sustainable CRMs4EU" group, which stemmed from ESF-led efforts to promote clustering activities with related EU projects.

Find out more: www.passenger-project.eu

RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE CLUSTER

AGROSERV: Research infrastructures services for a sustainable and resilient agriculture and agro-ecological transitions



September 2022 – August 2027

ESF has been actively engaged in Transnational Access (TNA) management for the AGROSERV project. In this context, ESF managed the evaluation of two TNA calls submitted by researchers. Drawing on its extensive experience in grant evaluation, ESF also played a role in defining the evaluation principles, criteria, and scoring grid, as well as setting up the evaluation panels for full proposals.

Over the course of the project, AGROSERV plans to distribute €9 million through these access projects, making it one of the largest grant evaluation initiatives coordinated by ESF.

Find out more: www.agroserv.eu/

ERIMOTE: Transition to digital/remote research infrastructure service provision: lessons learnt, needs and best practices



June 2022 – November 2024

ESF led the Communication and Outreach work package (WP5), playing a central role in the development of the Green Paper, the project's main outcome. Through WP5, ESF collaborated closely with other work packages to enhance the overall communication strategy. This cross-functional collaboration demonstrates ESF's expertise in project management, strategic communication, and consortium coordination, all crucial for the successful achievement of project goals.

The project officially concluded in November 2024 and received a very positive final review

Find out more: www.erimote.eu/

Conclusion

As we close the ESF Annual Report 2024, we reflect on a year of impactful engagement, strategic growth, and purposeful action across the research and innovation landscape. Building on the foundations laid in previous years, 2024 has enabled us to strengthen our role as a trusted partner, delivering services and expertise that advance research excellence, equity, and societal relevance.

This year also marks a milestone in ESF's history: the celebration of our 50th anniversary. For half a century, ESF has been at the forefront of fostering collaboration, innovation, and excellence in the global research community. This anniversary inspires us to honour our legacy while looking forward to the opportunities and challenges ahead.

In 2024, ESF has been deeply involved in numerous initiatives: supporting scholarly publishing reforms, fostering gender equality and ethics integration, and enabling strategic operations for scientific societies. Our efforts in dissemination, communication, and stakeholder engagement have amplified the reach and impact of these projects, while our leadership in grant evaluation and funding management has ensured the effective allocation of resources across multiple European and international programs.

The achievements highlighted in this report demonstrate ESF's unwavering commitment to the research community. They also reflect our continuous dedication to fostering collaboration, innovation, and responsible research practices that benefit science and society alike.

Looking ahead, we approach 2025 with a sense of purpose and ambition, building on the successes of 2024 and half a century of achievements to further strengthen our partnerships, expand our networks, and advance our mission of promoting research excellence. Together with our stakeholders, we will continue to ensure that ESF's contribution to science, innovation, and policy remains as vital and transformative as ever.

We thank our partners, collaborators, and the wider research community for your trust and support as we continue this journey.