



EUROPEAN
INSTITUTE
OF PEACE

CREATING SPACE FOR PEACE IN A TROUBLED WORLD

Strategic Direction

2026 – 2028



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FOREWORD



A man in Mosul Old City, Iraq, 2024.
© Michael McEvoy for EIP

Our Strategic Direction

We aim to ensure that engagement, dialogue and crisis response contribute effectively to the achievement of Europe's core political objectives.

These include strengthening European resilience, protecting and promoting stability in its larger neighbourhood, and ensuring that Europe's capabilities are optimised to achieve political outcomes and practical results that contribute to just and lasting peace globally. We are part of the larger European peace and security architecture. Our objective is security for Europe's citizens, its partners and civilians directly impacted by violent conflict.

The number of wars and people being killed, traumatised, displaced and in need of life-saving assistance is surging. We believe that having the means to prevent and resolve conflict and to undertake effective mediation

are not just policy objectives but are urgent strategic imperatives.

Dialogue is a key element in shaping and implementing strategies to prevent and resolve armed conflict and achieve lasting security. Europe's experience, global presence, normative and diplomatic heft provide the basis for a muscular role in conflict resolution, including through the work of the Institute.

We contribute to the effectiveness and integrity of peacemaking and multilateral action at a time when it is severely challenged. Our added value is as a trusted and reliable partner able to do things that may be difficult for official actors, to move quickly and operate at multiple levels, drawing upon our extensive network of experts, advisors and partners, both on the ground and in Brussels.

Why our work matters

Conflict prevention and resolution through peaceful means are needed more than ever. Diplomacy, mediation and dialogue are not an alternative but an essential complement to defence and deterrence. They enrich strategic approaches, help mitigate the risk that Europe will be sucked into more wars, and catalyse common approaches to global threats. They are also an expression of Europe's identity.

The European Union is uniquely credentialed to advance peace and security through non-violent means. It has a long experience of war and learned many lessons as the world's biggest investor in democracy, justice, peace-building and conflict resolution.

Many people and states around the world look to Europe for leadership, increasingly alarmed by growing risks to their own security.

This comes at a time when peacemaking has been turned upside down, becoming more transactional, muscular, and visible, and increasingly personality- and interest-based. The spotlight of political and media attention moves quickly, while underlying issues that trigger and sustain conflict and suffering stubbornly persist. An essential task is to remain engaged in both high-profile and so-called forgotten conflicts, maintaining relationships that prove invaluable when crises erupt or metastasise.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the war in the Middle East and Gulf, and the assertion of the America First agenda by President Trump create both a need and the opportunity, however unwelcome, for Europe to reaffirm its role as a capable, dependable and principled agent for peace.

We are one of the means it can use to do so. With thanks to our board, funders and partners, and to our staff and advisors who make our work possible.



MICHAEL KEATING

Executive Director of the European Institute of Peace

The context in which we work: A disordered world

We live in a time of disruption and uncertainty. Threats are multiplying to peace, security and human dignity.

The threats are both long term and immediate. They include the destructive impact of trade wars, unbridled competition for energy and access to resources, growing inequality, unresolved and deep-seated grievances, accelerating ecological degradation, climate change and the breakdown of life-sustaining planetary systems.

Transformative technologies are disrupting relationships, polarising differences and undermining trust. Digitalisation and AI are transforming warfare. Drones and control of

critical supply chains and choke points are creating new asymmetric realities.

Geopolitical competition is intensifying, including between the United States and China, and within regions such as the Middle East and the Gulf, The Horn and Central Africa, South Asia and the Asia-Pacific. Arms reduction treaties are in abeyance and barriers to accessing weapons are weaker, including by illicit actors.

Many of these trends were anticipated in our [Strategic Plan 2023-25](#). The risk of further conflagration, nuclear, hybrid, space-based, autonomous and conventional, is very real.

Conflict resolution centre-staged

Conflict resolution has become a significantly higher political priority today than it was even just a few years ago. However, its political prominence risks undermining their value to people most affected by violent conflict.

Peacemaking efforts – including mediation – are being instrumentalised in service of national or narrowly defined security and business interests, rather than fostering genuine and sustainable peace.

The America First agenda has centre-staged peacemaking while prioritising the use of force as a means of achieving geopolitical objectives. It has given licence to other states' willingness to follow suit, downgrading the effectiveness of international law. This is increasingly evident at a time when the norms, institutions and agreements that have underpinned diplomacy, collective security, international relations, humanitarian law and human rights for 80 years are unravelling. These developments are a jolt for Europeans, many having long benefited

from consensual and accountable governance and predictable global relationships. Russia's aggression in Ukraine and hybrid warfare operations put Europe on the front line. This has resulted both in unprecedented action and unity in the EU but also surfaced the limits of global solidarity and international law.

Europeans are struggling to digest the implications of unapologetic disregard for international law, including by long-standing allies, by assaults on liberal democracy and hostility towards the European Union. Europe is responding to growing security threats by prioritising investment in its own defence and deterrence capabilities, in societal resilience and the stability of its larger neighbourhood, and by diversifying international partnerships.

Our work complements these objectives, contributing to the strategic imperative of effective conflict prevention, resolution and mediation. This is good for Europe and good for the world.



The Institute's Board of Governors and Senior Management Team, Helsinki, Finland, 2025. ©European Institute of Peace

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ABOUT THE STRATEGIC DIRECTION

*This **Strategic Direction** sets out what we do, where, and how we create conditions for a safer and more peaceful world.*

***About the Institute** presents our core identity and the added value we bring to Europe and the world.*

***Making It Happen** consists of a selection of activities to illustrate the breadth of our work since our inception.*

***Strategy** is the core of this Strategic Direction and sets out our vision, mission and strategic objectives that will guide our work in the next three years and beyond.*

***Structure** provides information about the Institute's governance, funding, and people.*

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE

WHO WE ARE, WHAT WE DO AND WHY



The Institute's President Helga-Maria Schmid (left) and Executive Director Michael Keating (centre) at Munich Security Conference, 2025.
© Munich Security Conference

The Institute was established in 2014 as a resource and centre of competence in mediation and dialogue for Europe and its partners. Registered as a not-for-profit body in Belgium, it is headquartered in Brussels with a network of senior advisors and partners around the world. We are unique in combining the advantages of being legally independent, allowing us to move swiftly and do things that official players may find difficult, while being closely connected to the European Union and to European states, seven of which serve on our Board. Drawing upon the values that inspired the creation of the European Union, we aim to support a strategic approach by Europe to its own as well as others' peace and security.

We are motivated by the conviction that our work yields practical benefits both for populations at risk and for Europe's security, global reach and reputation. We respond to requests from countries and parties affected by conflict, from European states and the EU, and from partners. We cooperate with others to avoid overlap, forum shopping by parties to conflict, and to ensure that capacities are optimised.

We explore political pathways out of violent conflict, by taking steps to avert crises and catalyse initiatives that yield tangible benefits. We take responsible risks for peace, do things that may be difficult for official actors, including reaching out to parties to conflict, no matter how objectionable to many they may be, and to those that have greatest influence over them. In doing so, we surface their motives and preoccupations, their common and divergent interests, the basis upon which they are willing to pursue non-violent solutions, both in the short and longer term.

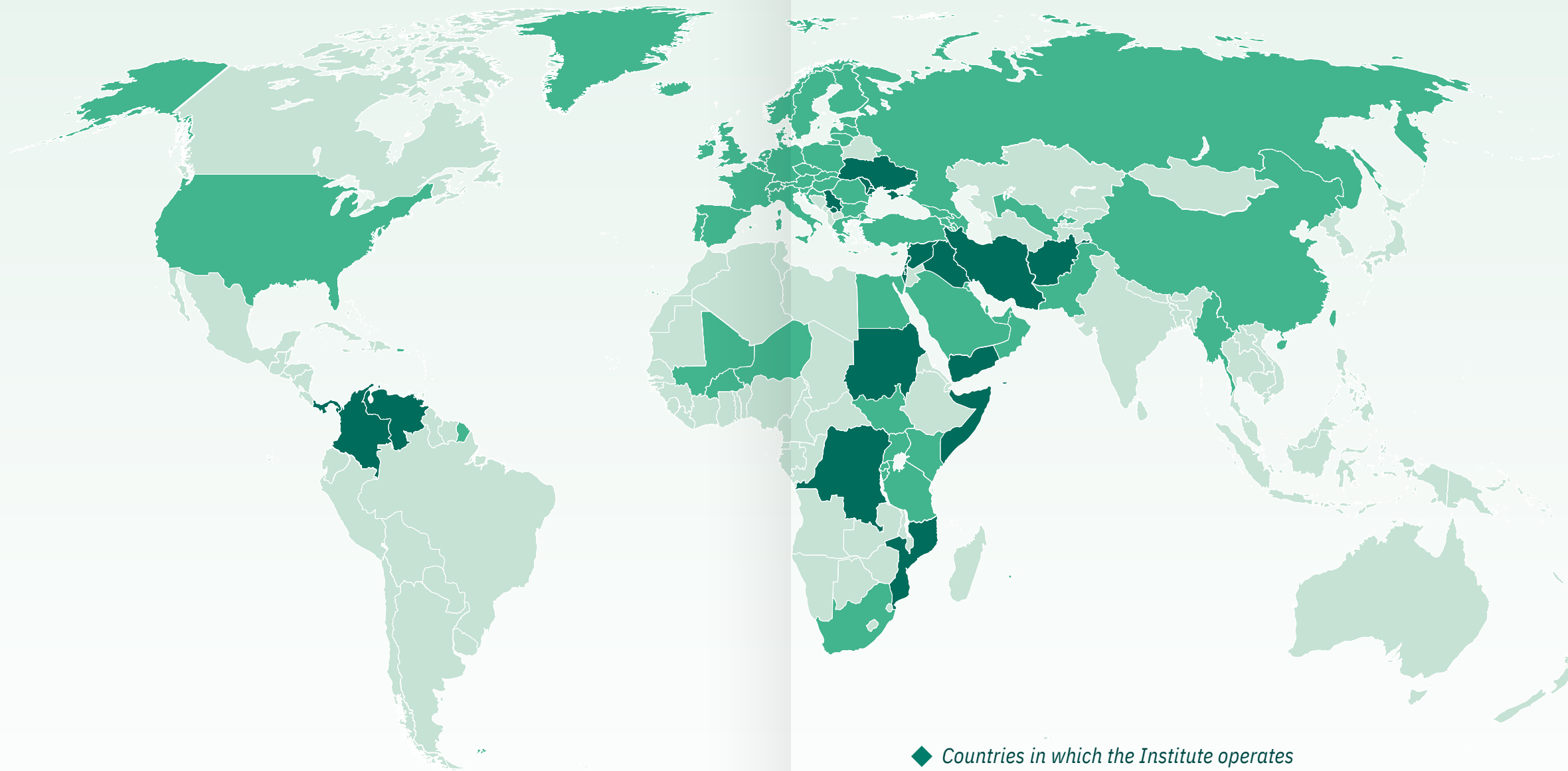
As of April 2026, the Institute has over 30 ongoing initiatives worldwide, the majority clustered in three regions: Europe's Eastern Neighbourhood; the broader Middle East; and sub-Saharan Africa. Here we facilitate dialogues between adversaries and conflict parties; prepare them for negotiations; strengthen the agency of non-political actors to influence political processes; and encourage investment in long term peace dividends.

To improve prospects for peace, we facilitate dialogue between adversaries and conflict parties; prepare them for negotiations; strengthen the agency of non-political actors and victims of conflict to influence political processes; and encourage investment in long term peace dividends. We do so by drawing upon our global network of experts and partners, mediation competence and European support.

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MAKING IT HAPPEN

SOME EXAMPLES OF DELIVERY



- ◆ Countries in which the Institute operates
- ◆ Countries with whom the Institute engages in broader Regional Dialogues

► **THE FOLLOWING EXAMPLES
PROVIDE A SNAPSHOT OF SELECTED
INITIATIVES THAT ARE ONGOING
AS OF EARLY 2026.**

Building conditions for peace in Ukraine

We provide advice to the Ukrainian government and European partners in developing national and regional policies that address some of the war's most complex and politically sensitive topics, including the wider implications for European security.



The abandoned Polissya hotel in Pripyat, Ukraine, 2024.
© European Institute of Peace



Group discussion during an environmental peacemaking community dialogue in Yemen, 2023. © Nazeah Mohammed



People searching through the rubble of a collapsed building, Idlib, Syria.
© Khaled Akacha

Convening the Gulf Regional Dialogue

We facilitate dialogue among the six Gulf Cooperation Council countries, Iran, and Iraq, in a format we adapt to the evolving needs. Renewed conflict makes this both more challenging and relevant as a means to inform official efforts to maintain regional relations and scope for future cooperation.

Addressing regional instability in the Great Lakes Region

We establish channels and facilitate dialogue between cross-border armed groups and governments in the Great Lakes region in order to broker concrete deals on disarmament and repatriation, while strengthening regional commitment and conflict resolution framework.

Supporting countries in their accession to the European Path

We advise select states in the European Neighborhood on their political strategy. We facilitate dialogue among state and civil society actors to defuse political and social tensions linked to European integration and enlargement processes.

Strengthening local governance efforts for reconciliation and stability in Syria

We support local actors to play an effective and inclusive role in community recovery, resilience, and post-conflict stabilisation. Our work to promote stability and prevent a return to violence in Syria is implemented through partnerships in a number of cities. We focus on addressing local tensions, facilitating peaceful return and reintegration of refugees and IDPs and building stronger and more accountable local governance.

Supporting European strategic alignment

We support aligned European responses to specific crises by creating access, sharing insights and options for engagement. Among other activities, our *'European Conversations'* encourage coordinated European approaches and initiatives to resolve conflict and advance sustainable peace in specific settings.

Building political consensus

We support sustained engagement between authorities and opposition groups in several regions on divergent as well as common interests, objectives and grievances, with a view to preventing violence, enabling dialogue and political transition.

Establishing back-channel communication lines

Working with governments, regional partners, and European actors, we establish and facilitate confidential backchannels for the de-escalation of tensions and dialogue on sensitive and security concerns.

Organising trilateral dialogues on conflict prevention between Europe - China - USA

We facilitate a high-powered, Track 2 dialogue between well-connected American, Chinese and European actors on conflict prevention, management and resolution. Issues include strategic stability, economic security, and specific crises and conflicts.



Participants in a workshop for young peacemakers organised by the Institute together with the European Parliament, 2024. © *European Institute of Peace*



Ukrainian couple reuniting during the war, Makariv, Ukraine, 2022. © *Dmitry Zvolnskiy*



Consortium meeting with Elman Peace Centre and Africa's Voices Foundation in Mogadishu, Somalia, 2023. © *European Institute of Peace*



A delegation of the High Level Working Group on the Environmental Consequences of the War visits the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, Pripjat, Ukraine, 2024. © *European Institute of Peace*

Enabling women's meaningful participation

We identify and address context-specific and conflict-sensitive barriers to women's participation in peace processes. We create entry points for women and support gender-responsive processes that move beyond tokenism and advance sustainable outcomes.

Supporting Palestinian dialogue on pathways towards peace in the Middle East

We facilitate and support local and international dialogue processes to achieve peaceful political solutions. This includes working with politicians, experts, and practitioners on intra-Palestinian dialogue to strengthen Palestinian agency, state building, and governance capacity. We support multilateral efforts to maintain a political horizon and create and build opportunities for progress towards a political settlement.

Facilitating political dialogues in Yemen

We facilitate dialogue among southern Yemeni political groups to help manage tensions and identify common interests, while also supporting discrete communication channels with northern actors to lay the groundwork for a national-level peace process. We work with our national partners to develop a collaborative base for resolving climate and natural resource challenges.

Building resilience against climate change in Somalia

We work to strengthen cooperation between federal and state institutions on environmental governance, providing technical support and engaging civil society and international actors. We facilitate dialogue to ensure that climate adaptation builds trust and incentivises peacebuilding efforts.



Woman presenting a group discussion as part of an environmental peacemaking community dialogue in Al-Mahrah, Yemen, 2024.
© Nazeah Mohammed for EIP

Fisherman from Mocha on the coast of Taiz, Yemen, 2023.
© Nazeah Mohammed for EIP

Facilitating Track 1.5 level dialogues

We create space for discreet engagement between official actors within and across regions on threats and interests, particularly when relations are tense and at risk of further deterioration. We enhance mutual understanding and explore the scope for practical confidence-building measures, notably with European support and engagement.

Supporting civil society working towards Kosovo-Serbia normalisation

We support the EU's efforts in the Belgrade-Pristina normalisation Dialogue. We offer technical advice and work with civil society to facilitate cooperation between communities to improve the implementation of existing agreements and to nurture a more conducive environment for normalisation.

Implementing a binational approach that supports a Venezuelan-led transition while preventing regional spillover into Colombia

We work to create the conditions and incentives for a Venezuelan-led process that prioritises dialogue, institutional reform, and gradual democratisation. In parallel, in partnership with Colombia's Office of the High Commissioner for Peace and local authorities, we advance national and territorial peace efforts, including negotiations with armed groups whose dynamics are closely intertwined with developments in Venezuela.

Addressing the security challenges of the camps in Northeast Syria

For many years, we catalysed coordinated approaches for the repatriation, rehabilitation and reintegration of individuals – notably third country nationals, including children and women – residing in displacement camps and detention facilities in Northeast Syria.



Awwam, the great temple of Marib, Yemen, dedicated to the moon god, Almaqah.
© Nazeah Mohammed for EIP

STRATEGY

MISSION, VISION AND OBJECTIVES

***Our vision** is a world in which grievances, insecurities and injustices are addressed through dialogue, political processes and investment in positive peace.*

***Our mission** is to strengthen the security of Europe's citizens, its partners and those directly affected by violence by improving the prospects of lasting peace. We do this by engaging parties to conflict and people most at risk to create opportunities that prevent and resolve conflict, and to ensure that negotiations and political processes are well informed and prepared with a view to achieving just and sustainable outcomes.*

***Our objectives** are to implement initiatives which lead to tangible outcomes while demonstrating that peaceful tools for conflict resolution are practical and cost-effective ways to improve security and advance sustainable peace.*

Strategic objective 1



We will improve prospects for peace by engaging those shaping or affected by conflict, creating opportunities for sustainable, action-oriented dialogue and agreements that last.

▶ ACT EARLY

Use our access to key players to respond to emerging crises which could escalate into violent conflict, pre-emptively and as they erupt, with initiatives to manage and mitigate risks.

▶ CONNECT CONVERSATIONS

Engage hard-to-reach conflict actors, influential groups and people, regardless of their affiliation, to enable quiet diplomacy and backchannels, bringing them closer towards non-violent ways of pursuing their objectives.

▶ CREATE CONFIDENTIAL SPACES

Catalyse and facilitate political and social dialogues, as well as mediation processes involving participants beyond the usual suspects, to ensure agency, surface interests and needs, reconcile positions and reduce insecurity.

▶ PRIORITISE INCLUSION, SUSTAINABILITY AND RIGHTS

Integrate key policy priorities including environmental sustainability, gender inclusivity and socio-economic development into our initiatives.

▶ SUPPORT OUR PARTNERS

Respond to demands for mediation and process support from formal and informal stakeholders, to think through and implement strategic, creative, and inclusive approaches to sustainable peace.

Strategic objective 2



We will work to strengthen Europe's geopolitical reach and security through its ability to prevent, manage and resolve conflict and crises, partnering with the EU and actors across the continent.

▶ EXPAND REACH AND ACCESS

Facilitate European engagement with and access to otherwise inaccessible actors.

▶ COMBINE THE TRACKS, STRENGTHEN PRACTICE

Undertake mediation and dialogue initiatives together with European partners, identify and optimise opportunities, and bring in expertise underpinned by evidence and comparative experience.

▶ UPGRADE THE PEACE PROMOTION TOOLBOX

Situate conflict prevention, mediation and dialogue as key tools in the EU's management of security challenges and geopolitical crises.

▶ PROMOTE VALUE-BASED PEACE PROCESSES

Our work will reflect Europe's commitments to human dignity, democracy, accountability, equality and justice.



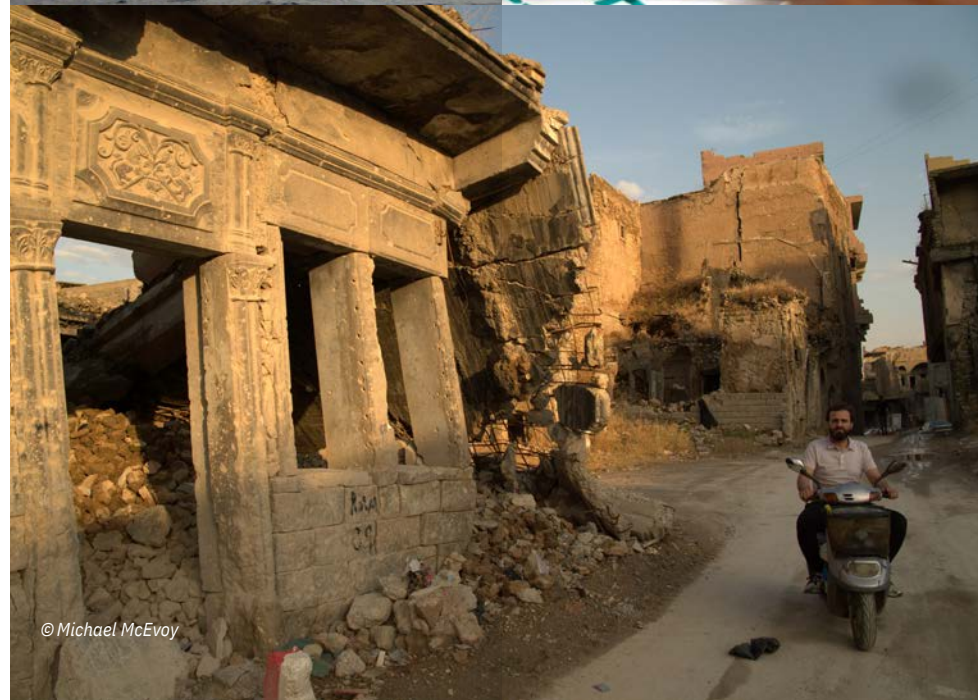
© Nazeah Mohammed



© Gerd Altmann



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© Michael McEvoy

Strategic objective 3



We will continue to grow sustainably.

▶ TELL THE STORY

Strengthen monitoring, evaluation, and communication of our work both for conflict affected communities, donors and other key external audiences.

▶ FOSTER A MOTIVATED AND INCLUSIVE TEAM

Actively promote a diverse workforce with equal opportunities for all, attract and retain high-quality staff and advisors, and support them to perform.

▶ CONSOLIDATE AND DIVERSIFY FUNDING SOURCES

Increasing predictability, sources, and flexibility of donor funding.

▶ EXCEL OPERATIONALLY

Continuously improve policies and systems to ensure effective use of resources and support the growth of the Institute in a rapidly changing environment.



STRUCTURE

The European Institute of Peace is registered as a not-for-profit body in Belgium. Its work is overseen by a Board of Governors nominated by the European States that are members of the Institute.

Donations are received through membership fees from European states and project grants from national governments, the European Union, other international organisations, and foundations.



HELGA-MARIA SCHMID
President of the Board
of Governors

Governance

The Institute's Board of Governors plays a supporting and guiding role in our work, allowing us to achieve our core mission in alignment with our vision and values. They also provide the Institute with invaluable unrestricted funding.

As of April 2026, the Board comprises eight members representing European States: Belgium, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden. The President of the Board is **Helga-Maria Schmid**, former Secretary General of OSCE and EEAS.

During each five-year term, the European Parliament nominates five Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) as advisors to the Institute, representing different political groups. This creates opportunities for us to maintain parliamentary focus on threats and opportunities, to contribute to briefings and to benefit from their advice on maintaining political support for dialogue and mediation.

The Institute's MEP Advisors in 2026 are Sebastião Bugalho (Portugal, EPP); Nela Riehl (Germany, Greens/EFA); Cecilia Strada (Italy, S&D); Michał Szczerba (Poland, EPP); and Hilde Vautmans (Belgium, Renew Europe).



MICHAEL KEATING
Executive Director

STINE LEHMANN-LARSEN
Deputy Executive Director
and Director of Programmes

ANGELO CASERTA
Chief Operating Officer
and Treasurer

Our people

With approximately 40 staff headquartered in Brussels and a network of **over 100 senior advisors and experts around the world**, we are able to mobilise any geographical, technical and thematic expertise to achieve our programme objectives, often in partnership with local as well as international partners. Our network includes individuals that have held senior political, mediation and diplomatic positions along with subject matter experts – for example legal, security, military, humanitarian and academic.

► SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

The Institute is run by a Senior Management Team, chaired by the Executive Director, responsible for strategic direction, programme oversight and implementation, operations including human resource and financial management, outreach and communication.

SENIOR ADVISORS

As of April 2026, these are the Senior Advisors working with the Institute to advance our mission. Their knowledge, expertise, and professional networks are an invaluable contribution to our peace work.



LUC CHOUNET-CAMBAS

Mediation and peace process practitioner, advising EU institutions, UN agencies and international NGOs.

SAID DJINNIT

Former African Union Peace and Security Commissioner, former UNSG's Special Envoy for the Great Lakes, former UNSG's Special Representative for West Africa.

MARIE FORESTIER

Senior policy advisor on Syria, analyst and researcher focused on conflict resolution in the Middle East.

EAMON GILMORE

Former European Union Special Representative for Human Rights, former Irish Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade.

MARTIN GRIFFITHS

Former UN Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, former Special Envoy of the UNSG for Yemen, former Executive Director of EIP.



BJÖRN KÜHNE

Conflict resolution and crisis management specialist, worked for the EU and OSCE in the Middle East, South Caucasus and the Balkans.

THANOS PETOURIS

Consultant and researcher with more than 20 years of experience on Yemen.

SENAD ŠABOVIĆ

Peacebuilding and democratisation expert, formerly Head of Political Affairs and Communications at the OSCE Mission in Kosovo.

PAUL SEILS

Lawyer, former Vice President of the International Center for Transitional Justice and former Director of Peace Practice and Innovation at the Institute.

ROBERT SERRY

Former Dutch Ambassador and UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process.



URKO AIARTZA AZURTZA

Human rights lawyer and mediation expert. Former Senator in Spain.

KATE ALMQUIST KNOPF

Former USAID Assistant Administrator for Africa and former director of the Africa Center for Strategic Studies.

HISHAM AL-OMEISY

Conflict analyst and public affairs specialist, formerly worked for the US State Department, UNDP, and Coral Group.

STEVE BROOKING

British diplomat and former senior UN official, long-time UN interlocutor with the Taliban and advisor on Afghanistan.

CATE BUCHANAN

Peace promotion and mediation specialist; conflict and political analyst; peace process coach and advisor, focusing on Myanmar, South and Southeast Asia.



PRISCILLA HAYNER

Peace negotiations expert, former United Nations Senior Mediation Advisor.

NICHOLAS JONES

Former UK diplomat with extensive experience in the Middle East, core member of the UK negotiating team for the JCPOA with Iran.

ANDREW LOKEN

Corporate change and mediation consultant, working in Venezuela for more than 12 years.

REFIK HODŽIĆ

Writer and journalist, former Spokesman and Outreach Coordinator for Bosnia and Herzegovina for the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia.

HILDE F. JOHNSON

Former SRSR and Head of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and former Minister of International Development of Norway.



ANNIKA SÖDER

Former OSCE Representative to South Caucasus, former State Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, former EIP Board President.

HARRY VERHOEVEN

Geopolitics and political economy expert, former Senior Political Counsellor, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

PATRICK DE VRIES

Dutch diplomat, former political advisor to the EU Police Mission in Afghanistan.

MATT WALDMAN

Former advisor to the United Nations envoys for Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia and Yemen.

HESHAM YOUSSEF

Egyptian diplomat, former Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian, Cultural, and Social Affairs at the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Finance and support

The Institute's operating income has steadily increased since its establishment in 2014, reaching €12 million in 2025. Moving forward, the Institute aims to welcome new board members and diversify its partnerships including with the private sector.

In 2025, a Friends of the European Institute of Peace fund was established in cooperation with the King Baudoin Foundation. This fund allows individuals and organisations to make direct donations to the Institute, supporting our activities globally.

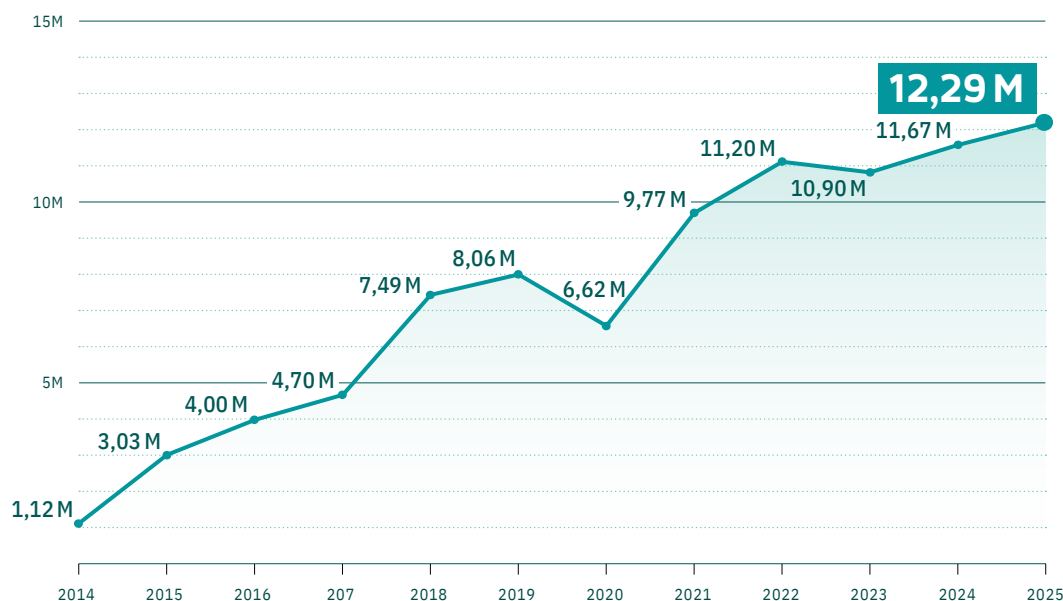
In the 2026-2028 period, further measures will be taken to strengthen governance, accountability and resource mobilisation, and our Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning system, including the development of an analytical framework.

In 2025, a Friends of the European Institute of Peace fund was established in cooperation with the King Baudoin Foundation. This fund allows individuals and organisations to make direct donations to the Institute, supporting our activities globally.



Support our work with a donation

OPERATIONAL BUDGET (IN €)



The Institute in numbers

Since our inception in 2014

125

projects implemented

41 personnel and 39 Senior Advisors representing 27 nationalities

As of 2026, implementing projects in 29 countries

7 European States and

5 MEP Advisors on the Board of Governors

31 events organised in 2025



20 of which were dialogues

12,400 followers on X

66,506 followers on LinkedIn a 15% increase from 2024





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Front Cover: A couple in Mosul Old City, Iraq, 2024.
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