# Programme Guidelines

2026

Fondazione CSF

# Index


## The Fondazione CSF p. 4

01 **Board of Directors** p. 5

02 **Scientific Committee** p. 6

03 **Board of Auditors** p. 7

04 **Research Team and Staff** p. 8

## Programme Guidelines 2026 p. 10

05 **European Integration** p. 11

06 **Transatlantic Relations** p. 13

07 **The Mediterranean** p. 16

08 **Geopolitics & Technology** p. 19

09 **Institutional and Strategic Partnerships** p. 22

10 **Methodological Approach** p. 23

# The Fondazione CSF

The Fondazione CSF (FCSF) was established in 2000 by the Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo and the Universities of Turin, Pavia and Milan as founders and the Polytechnic of Turin as co-founder.

The Fondazione CSF is a policy-oriented think tank that promotes interdisciplinary research, information sharing, and documentation in the fields of international relations, geopolitics, and European integration, in collaboration with universities, research centres, public institutions, and private entities, both nationally and internationally.

The Foundation's registered office is in Turin (Italy), Piazza Arbarello 8 (at the Collegio Carlo Alberto Foundation). It also maintains operational offices in Rome, Via dei Montecatini 17 (at the Istituto Affari Internazionali - IAI), and in Brussels (Belgium), Résidence Palace, Rue de la Loi 155 (at the German Marshall Fund of the United States - GMF). It collaborates regularly with institutions such as the IAI, the GMF and the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR).

The Foundation's library, specialising in studies on European integration, houses approximately 14,000 volumes and an extensive newspaper archive, and is part of the Gianni Merlini European Section of the Norberto Bobbio Library.

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# Programme Guidelines 2026

The Fondazione CSF has a distinctive position in the Italian research landscape. As an advisor to the Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo, it guides its strategic focus on key issues in international relations and geopolitics, such as:

- **European Integration**
- **Transatlantic Relations**
- **The Mediterranean**
- **Geopolitics & Technology**

These are interdependent and interdisciplinary areas, within which the Fondazione CSF also carries out its dedicated research activities.








# 05. European Integration



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European integration is one of the most significant processes in the continent's modern history, aimed at creating a **more united, stable and prosperous Union**. Following the devastation of World War II, European countries chose to cooperate to prevent new conflicts and promote economic growth. The creation of the European Community, and later the European Union, led to the free movement of people, goods, services and capital, strengthening ties between Member States. Over time, this process has also fostered cooperation in areas such as foreign policy, security, and environmental protection, contributing to building a shared European identity.

**Competition with the United States** represents a **complex challenge**, but also an **opportunity** for Europe to strengthen its capabilities and define a sustainable growth strategy. The United States is a world leader in sectors such as artificial intelligence, digital technology, space industry, and online platforms. Its ability to attract talent, invest heavily in research, and develop innovative ecosystems has consolidated its dominant position. **For Europe** to foster a supportive environment for start-ups and technology companies, substantial **investment in education, digital infrastructure, and innovation policies is crucial.**

# 05. European Integration



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Moreover, competition extends beyond technology to the ability **to shape the rules of the global system**. The United States exerts significant control over major digital platforms and communication networks, influencing international standards. Europe, on the other hand, is seeking to establish a model that is respectful of privacy and civil rights, as demonstrated by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). This difference in approach can be both a strength and a challenge, as Europe strives to **balance innovation with the protection of its citizens.**

To address these challenges, Europe must continue to promote integration and **cooperation among its Member States**, invest in research and development, and create an innovation-friendly ecosystem. Only by doing so will it be able to strengthen its position on the global stage, compete with other global players, and help shape a more equitable and sustainable technological future.
The road ahead is long, but with determination and collaboration, Europe can become a key player in global innovation and technology.

# 06. Transatlantic Relations



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Transatlantic relations represent one of the fundamental pillars of contemporary geopolitics, characterised by the deep **historical, economic, and strategic ties** between the **European Union** and the **United States**. This alliance, born in the aftermath of World War II with the aim of promoting stability, security, and prosperity, has evolved over time, addressing the challenges and opportunities associated with global changes.

From both an economic and a political perspective, Europe and the United States share **fundamental values** such as **democracy**, **human rights**, and the **rule of law**. However, cultural differences, national priorities, and **emerging global challenges** have often tested this alliance. Cooperation extends across multiple areas, including international security, counter-terrorism, crisis management, and, increasingly, technological development and innovation.

**Technological progress** has become a major area of both **collaboration** and **competition** across the Atlantic. The United States is a world leader in artificial intelligence, digital platforms, biotechnology, and

# 06. Transatlantic Relations



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the space industry. Major US technology companies, such as Google, Apple, Microsoft and SpaceX, play a **dominant role globally**, influencing not only the economy but also international standards and policies.

Europe, for its part, has made significant progress in innovation, investing in research and development and launching initiatives such as Horizon Europe. However, it often finds itself lagging behind the United States in terms of attracting talent and capital, and developing innovative ecosystems. EU-US cooperation in technology is reflected in **joint research agreements**, knowledge exchange, and initiatives aimed at regulating major digital platforms while protecting privacy and citizens' rights.

However, this collaboration is developing against a backdrop of growing global geopolitical competition. **China**, with its expansive economic and technological strategy, represents a **significant challenge** for both sides of the Atlantic. The race for innovation, digital leadership, and military superiority is intertwined with trade tensions and disputes over human rights, digital sovereignty, and cybersecurity.

# 06. Transatlantic Relations



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In this scenario, transatlantic relations play a **crucial role** in defining the **rules of the global game**. The United States seeks to maintain its leadership through strategic alliances such as NATO, and trade and technology agreements with Europe. Europe, on the other hand, is striving to maintain an autonomous position, promoting a model of development that is more respectful of privacy, sustainability, and civil rights.

Global geopolitical competition is also unfolding through the race for emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, 5G, cybersecurity, and space technologies. The ability to dominate these areas will determine the future balance of global power. **Cooperation between the EU and the US** can be a source of stability and shared progress, in line with the common values that have historically characterised transatlantic relations.

# 07. The Mediterranean




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The Mediterranean region has always been a crossroads of cultures, economies, and strategic routes, playing a **central role** in the global geopolitical landscape. Connecting Europe, Africa, and Asia, this region is rich in natural resources, ancient history, and has a unique cultural heritage, yet at the same time faces complex challenges related to stability, security, and economic development.

**Euro-Mediterranean policies** were developed by the European Union with the aim of promoting cooperation, stability, and sustainable development in the region. Programmes such as the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), launched in 2008, aim to strengthen ties between EU Member States and Mediterranean partner countries by **promoting political dialogue**, **economic cooperation**, **resource management**, and the **fight against common threats** such as terrorism and drug trafficking.

The Mediterranean's economic development is closely linked to its ability to attract investment, improve infrastructure, and promote innovation. However, many countries in the region face challenges of poverty,

# 07. The Mediterranean




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unemployment, and political instability, which hinder progress. The EU has sought to support these countries through **assistance programmes**, trade agreements, and regional integration initiatives, with a particular focus on promoting renewable energy and sustainable technologies.

**Cooperation in the field of security and stability** is essential to prevent conflicts and ensure an environment conducive to development. The Mediterranean region is often the scene of geopolitical tensions, armed conflicts, and migration crises. The presence of international actors such as the United States, Russia, and Middle Eastern powers contributes to the complexity of the situation. Through **peacekeeping missions** and **diplomatic agreements**, the **EU seeks to promote dialogue** and peaceful resolution of disputes, while strengthening the defence capabilities of partner countries.

Technological development is crucial to the future of the Mediterranean. Digital innovation, renewable energy, smart cities, and smart infrastructure are tools to improve the quality of life, promote economic growth and strengthen the resilience of  Mediterrenean societies.

# 07. The Mediterranean




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Cooperation between European and Mediterranean universities, research centres, and businesses can accelerate this transition, creating opportunities for jobs and sustainable development.

However, the **Mediterranean region** is also at the centre of **growing global geopolitical competition**. Powers such as the United States, China, Russia, and the Gulf countries are seeking to expand their influence through strategic investments, trade agreements, and military presence. China, with its *Belt and Road Initiative*, is strengthening infrastructure and connections between Asia and Europe across the Mediterranean, while Russia aims to consolidate its influence in certain key areas.

In this context, **Europe must strengthen its presence** and policies in the Mediterranean, promoting a **sustainable**, inclusive and human rights-respecting **development model**, with a broader vision of the Indo-Mediterranean region as a macroeconomic, technological, political, and diplomatic hub.

# 08. Geopolitics & Technology



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Contemporary geopolitics is profoundly shaped by **technological evolution**, which is **redefining power dynamics** between nations and creating new challenges and opportunities. In an increasingly interconnected world, economic development, international cooperation, and competition among major global players are intertwined in a complex landscape in which technology plays a central role.

One of the most significant aspects of this transformation is the race for innovation in **cybersecurity**. As cyber threats grow, countries are investing heavily in **digital defence systems** to protect critical infrastructure such as energy grids, financial systems, communication networks, and public services. The vulnerability of these structures can have devastating consequences, making the development of advanced cyber defence technologies and rapid response capabilities a top priority. Competition among states is also evident in the race for **artificial intelligence technologies**, which represent the future of security, economy, and defence.

# 08. Geopolitics & Technology



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**Energy** is another strategic sector where a highly significant geopolitical game is being played out. The transition to renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and hydrogen is changing traditional power balances, reducing dependence on fossil fuels, and creating **new development opportunities**. However, the management of energy resources and the control of supply infrastructures remain sources of tension between nations, particularly in resource-rich regions such as the Middle East, the North Sea, and parts of East Asia. **Energy security** has become a **cornerstone** of national sovereignty strategies and **international alliances**.

**Space** represents another crucial area in global **geopolitical competition**. The exploration and use of Earth and lunar orbits have become strategic goals for major powers, which are investing in satellites for communication, observation, and navigation. The **militarisation of space**, through **satellite defence systems** and **space-based weapons**, raises ethical and security issues, as control over these technologies can significantly impact military and technological dominance.

# 08. Geopolitics & Technology



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**Protecting strategic infrastructure** has become a top priority for governments globally. Energy grids, communication systems, transportation networks, and military facilities must all be protected from external attacks, sabotage, or accidental failures.

In this context, **international cooperation** is essential **to address common challenges** such as resource management, combating cyberterrorism, and protecting critical infrastructure. Multilateral organisations and intergovernmental agreements aim to **establish common rules for the peaceful use of space**, cybersecurity governance, and the protection of energy resources. However, competition between major powers often puts this cooperation to the test, with tensions threatening to escalate into open conflict or a new digital cold war.

# 09. Institutional and Strategic Partnerships

**Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo**.
An international philanthropic foundation, committed to innovation and the promotion of individual and community values, with the aim of fostering cultural, social, and economic development of local communities

**Istituto Affari Internazionali**. A private think tank founded in 1965 by Altiero Spinelli. It promotes awareness of international politics and contributes to the advancement of European integration and multilateral cooperation.

The **European Council on Foreign Relations** (ECFR). An international think tank that conducts cutting-edge, independent research on European foreign and security policies and promotes an informed debate about Europe's role in the world.

**The German Marshall Fund of the United States** (GMF). A non-partisan organisation that advances the transatlantic partnership to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

# 10. Methodological Approach

### 1. OPENNESS



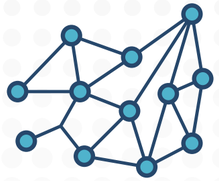
Wide perspectives to capture the evolving dynamics of the international context.

### 2. EVIDENCE-BASED



A non-ideological, evidence-based approach.

### 3. PARTNERSHIPS



Strengthening partnerships in the implementation of projects.

Fondazione CSF

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# International studies contributing to the understanding of global challenges.




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