



FEMYSO

FEMYSO STRATEGIC PLAN 2024–2028.

Working for a diverse, cohesive, and vibrant Europe.

Contents .

PART 1 – INTRODUCTION

Introduction	4
Methodology	5
Vision, Mission, Organisational Goals and Values	6
History: FEMYSO from 1996 till 2023	7
Context: Muslim youth and students in Europe	10
FEMYSO in the eyes of its Member Organisations	13

PART 2 – STRATEGY

Theory of Change	15
Strategic Objectives 2024-2028	16
Training	
Networking	
Visibility	
Advocacy	
Sustainability	

PART 3 – ANNEXES

Annex 1: FEMYSO's Structure and Governance	18
Annex 2: FEMYSO's Strategic Planning Process	20

Introduction

FEMYSO – The Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations is a pan-European network of 31 Muslim youth and student organisations across 21 European countries. FEMYSO's founding and history, its ongoing activities, efforts and endeavours as well as its vision and plans for the future, are all evidence to the importance of FEMYSO's existence and contributions to protecting and upholding European values and institutions such as democracy, diversity, meaningful youth participation, human rights and fundamental freedoms.

As part of FEMYSO's continuous efforts to professionalise the organisation and implement our organisational values of excellence and proactivity, the Executive Committee of 2021-2023 decided to develop a strategic 5-year plan for the organisation, with the help of the Board of Advisors, for the period of 2024-2028. The aims are three-fold:

- To provide the upcoming Executive Committees with a concise plan upon which they can build their mandate goals and departmental plans and to help them save time with these processes once they are elected into their mandate;
- To provide the membership of FEMYSO with a clear vision of where the organisation is directed to and give them the opportunity to adjust their own plans to FEMYSO's, thereby coming up with potential partnerships ahead in time;
- To communicate FEMYSO's plans over the coming 5 years to external partners and funders.



Methodology

The methodology for developing the strategic plan was based on an inclusive and participatory approach whereby FEMYSO's member organisations have been regularly consulted. From the beginning it was an important principle that the ownership of the strategy was shared between the membership and the Executive Committee. The Board of Advisors have equally been heavily involved and contributed with their valuable advice. The methodology therefore included the following steps:

- Developing a robust evaluation framework
- Data collection by interviewing Member Organisations through bilateral calls in which questions from the evaluation framework were asked
- Analysing the data collected from the MOs
- First consultation with the MOs at the Consultation Meeting in 2023
- Triangulation with the Board of Advisors
- Triangulation with the Executive Committee
- Finalising a draft by bringing together all previous work
- Final consultation with the Member Organisations
- Presentation and voting at the General Assembly in 2023

The result is a time-bound plan with the intention of achieving all the strategic objectives set out in this document, and the intention of reviewing the plan after 5 years to come with a new strategic plan for 2029-2033.

As ever, we are grateful for our volunteers and the countless hours they spend from their personal lives to contribute to FEMYSO, making the organisation's work not only a reality, but an example of high quality to Muslim organisations across Europe.

Vision, Mission, Organisational Goals and Values

Vision

A diverse, cohesive and vibrant Europe where Muslim youth are active contributors and changemakers.

Mission

To support and connect FEMYSO Member Organisations, representing European Muslim youth and fostering their potential through skill development, whilst working with partners to collectively build a better Europe for all.

Organisational Goals

- To strengthen, satisfy and empower the Member Organisations network
- To represent European Muslim youth and proactively contribute to relevant decision-making processes
- To inspire and empower European Muslim youth in order to cultivate a generation of young active citizens, building a better Europe for all

Values



Excellence



Unity



Creativity



Godliness



Proactivity

History: FEMYSO from 1996 till 2023 .

Historical background

FEMYSO was founded in 1996 following a seminar supported by the Swedish foreign ministry the year before. This was the first meeting between Muslim youth organisations across Europe which took place in Sweden in 1995, when the Foreign Ministry of Sweden in co-operation with the local Swedish Muslim Youth organisation, organised an international conference titled 'Islam in Europe'.

The participants at this conference felt the need to establish better communication between Muslim youth organisations in Europe and undertake steps towards greater cooperation and co-ordination between Muslim youth. The hope was to establish a framework that would promote positive Muslim youth contribution and civic engagement on a national and European level, initiating discussion on the European Muslim identity.

Following this conference, in June 1996 a meeting was held in Leicester, the UK. This meeting consisted of nineteen Muslim youth and student organisations across Europe. This meeting created strong bonds between those present and resulted in the official launch of the Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations (FEMYSO).

In 2000, FEMYSO's office in Brussels was established, and the year after, FEMYSO was selected to be on the Council of Europe's Advisory Council on Youth for the first time – marking the start of a 20+ year-long fruitful cooperation between FEMYSO and the Council of Europe, and the first of seven mandates on the Advisory Council on Youth. Throughout these years, FEMYSO organised multiple trainings, campaigns and activities supporting, training, representing and bringing together young Europeans of all faiths and backgrounds to cooperated with one another.



Why Muslim youth and student organisations joined and remained part of FEMYSO

As part of the evaluation conducted for this strategic plan, we asked MOs why their organisations are part of FEMYSO.

Alignment

- To the vision, mission and goals of FEMYSO
- By fitting the criteria of becoming a member
- Sharing the same vision and mission

Network

- Being the sole representative voice in a country, it felt natural to be part of a pan-European network
 - Access to FEMYSO's broad network and connecting to other MOs

Historic precedent

- Maintaining historic relationship and benefits from FEMYSO to Muslim youth in own country
- Continuation of the historically set membership and country representation
- Recommendation by other trusted organisation

Services

- Access to FEMYSO services, such as training, networking and development opportunities
 - Learning from FEMYSO's practices such as the GA
 - Develop youth in own country with FEMYSO's help and expertise

Change

- Being part of change by being involved in FEMYSO's decision-making bodies
- Being more active in active citizenship and representative initiatives through FEMYSO at European level
- Contributing to th

We are diverse .

We are cohesive .

We are vibrant .

We are campaigning .

We are networking .

We are training .

We are representing .

We are muslims .

We are  | **FEMYSO**

Context:

Muslim youth and students in Europe

The lives of young Muslims in Europe are complex and multifaceted. We are living in a time of great change and opportunity, our home Europe is becoming increasingly diverse, and young Muslims are playing an increasingly important role in society. We are also seeing a growing number of young Muslims who are successful in education, business, the media, politics, and find themselves prominent civic roles. However, we also see a counter current emerging which seeks to exclude and marginalise Muslims, with narratives and policies gaining mainstream prominence which call for a secularisation of our religious practices and customs before acceptance is granted by some.

This contextual review delves into their realities and hurdles young Muslims confront, and the opportunities they hold, all within the framework of FEMYSO's perspective.

The realities we face

The realities of young Muslims in Europe are a tapestry consisting of diversity, struggle, and aspiration towards success. Societal shifts, rapid globalisation, and technological advancements have generated an environment where cultural, religious, and ideological differences intersect. This complexity often leads to a sense of ambivalence in identity and belonging, as young Muslims navigate the delicate balance between preserving their cultural heritage and integrating into European societies.

The fusion of cultures, ideologies, and religious backgrounds has led to a nuanced identity that embodies both cultural heritage and European identity. However, this fusion often places them in the crosshairs of identity crises, accentuated by external perceptions and internal expectations. Discrimination, socio-economic disparities, and limited access to opportunities paint a multifaceted reality that FEMYSO is committed to addressing.

The challenges Muslim youth are facing

Balancing faith, cultural identity, and societal expectations can be overwhelming, and can even lead to a sense of isolation and marginalisation. The challenges faced by Muslim youth in Europe are both diverse and profound, spanning from issues of identity and belonging to systemic discrimination and mental health struggles. The impact of these challenges extends beyond individual experiences, affecting the broader makeup of society. As these young individuals navigate these hurdles, it is imperative that they receive support from their communities, governments, and democratic representatives.

One of the foremost challenges that Muslim youth in Europe grapple with is balancing the intricate equation between their religious and cultural identities, set against the backdrop of their European upbringing. This delicate balancing act can often lead to identity crises, as these youth strive to harmonise their faith with the demands of modernity. Negotiating between the values and expectations of the elder generation and the cultural influences of their European peers can result in a sense of displacement and confusion.

Shrinking civic space and the difficulty of organising

Civic space refers to the arena in which individuals and groups can freely express their ideas, assemble, and engage in public discourse without fear of repression or discrimination. Unfortunately, in recent years, this space has been gradually shrinking for many communities, including young Muslims in Europe.

The rise of restrictive policies, surveillance measures, and the erosion of fundamental freedoms have collectively contributed to this dangerous phenomenon. These restrictions can hinder the ability of young Muslims to voice our concerns, advocate for our rights, and participate actively in shaping the societies we call home. As we strive to contribute positively to our communities, a shrinking civic space and difficulties in organising have emerged as significant hurdles. FEMYSO prioritises the support to young Muslims in their efforts to organise and mobilise. We actively focus on providing training to overcome some of these barriers and offset some of the challenges in a strategic manner.

Islamophobia and defamation

The most pervasive challenge faced by young Muslims in Europe is Islamophobia. Prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory behaviours perpetuate a hostile environment that undermines their sense of security and belonging. The prevalence of Islamophobic incidents, both online and offline, fosters feelings of isolation and marginalisation, hindering their social, educational, and economic opportunities. This discrimination is often fuelled by misconceptions, media sensationalism, and political rhetoric. Islamophobia perpetuates harmful stereotypes that paint an inaccurate and skewed picture of Islam and its followers, with Muslim youth unfairly burdened with the weight of these stereotypes.

Defamation remains a core challenge to the work of young Muslims on local, national and on a European level. Muslim youth organisations are often characterised as being part of mythical superstructures and global movements which control them. However, as shown in a recent investigative article by European Investigative Collaborations and The New Yorker, it has been proven that there is a wider Islamophobia industry fed by money from foreign entities, paid to journalists, politicians and researchers, to spread Islamophobic smear campaigns to discredit Muslim organisations such as FEMYSO and our membership. FEMYSO has called for the truth for many years and has also worked closely with the very institutions who should have stood by us to bring out this truth.

The opportunities of Muslim youth

In the face of these challenges, young Muslims are demonstrating remarkable resilience and resourcefulness. They are exploring alternative avenues to engage with their communities and create change. Strengthening partnerships with like-minded organisations, collaborating across religious and cultural boundaries, and forging alliances with partners have amplified efforts and led to success. Some of the areas of collaboration and opportunities to be explored as mentioned by our Member Organisations is in the art and sports space, as well as the growing number of successful businesses amongst European Muslim youth.

By fostering inclusive dialogues, advocating for civil liberties, and advocating for policies that protect the rights of all citizens, a more open and equitable civic space can be cultivated. Furthermore, investing in mentorship programs, leadership development, and media literacy initiatives – as FEMYSO has been doing since 1996 – can empower young Muslims to navigate these challenges and seize opportunities to shape their societies positively. FEMYSO is committed to bringing a significant change in the lives of European Muslim youth together with its Member Organisations and partners.

Conclusion

This document presents a roadmap that acknowledges the realities, confronts the challenges, and seeks to provide strategy to harness the potential of young Muslims and our organisations in Europe. With a comprehensive approach encompassing training, advocacy, enhanced visibility, networking and sustainability. By channelling experiences into avenues of change, FEMYSO envisions a Europe where young Muslims are not only heard and understood but also play an instrumental role in shaping vibrant, diverse and cohesive communities.

FEMYSO in the eyes of its Member Organisations

Strengths:

Visibility in the EU:

FEMYSO's reputation as the leading voice of Muslim youth allows us to be represented and to be present in the EU. We have gained more recognition as an organisation and institutional access.

Network:

Being part of an international network has brought us many benefits. By networking with other MOs, we learned a lot and our motivation as well as creativity increased. FEMYSO has created a sense of community in which we feel stronger and more supported.

Leadership development:

As a result of FEMYSO's high-quality trainings, many young leaders have developed with the necessary confidence and skills to lead their communities and support Muslim youth in other countries.

Weaknesses:

Communication:

Lack of a proper overview of all FEMYSO events as well as of other MOs. Timing of informing of events needs to be longer. We are in need of an overview of what is happening to adjust our calendars accordingly.

Practical follow-up:

Often ideas at trainings do not become tangible projects implemented afterwards. FEMYSO can do more follow-up for these ideas to become tangible as they have a lot of potential for positive impact.

Facilitated engagement:

There is a lack in facilitated networking and engagement between MOs. Each MO does its own thing and meets only at GAs and at the CMs. FEMYSO should do more to encourage inter-MO interactions as there is a lot that we can learn from each other and do together.





FEMYSO

Theory of Change

Opportunity
Challenge

FEMYSO
Members

Islamophobia

Vision

*A diverse, cohesive and vibrant Europe
where Muslim youth are active contributors
and changemakers.*

Shrinking
civic space

Sustainability

Community-building

Visibility

Advocacy

Interfaith

Training

Network

Defamation

Volunteers

Executive
Committee

Member
Organisations

Board of
Advisors

Strategic Objectives 2024-2028



Training

To identify, develop, and implement high-quality training programs aimed at empowering and upskilling our network and Member Organisations.



Networking

To enhance and foster a collaborative community through more networking opportunities for Member Organisations to learn from each other and to cultivate strong relationships.



Visibility

To grow a trusted brand reputation through the implementation of innovative and creative communication strategies to effectively convey FEMYSO's values and celebrate the valuable contributions of European Muslim youth.



Advocacy

To consolidate and expand key partnerships at an institutional level to effectively represent and advocate for European Muslim youth whilst contributing to a flourishing civic space.



Sustainability

To establish a holistic approach to achieve sustainable organisational growth through strategic initiatives for impactful fundraising, process efficiency, and ethical values enhancement.

Training



Objective

To identify, develop, and implement high-quality training programs aimed at empowering and upskilling our network and Member Organisations.

Working Areas

1. Needs assessment
2. Continuous curriculum adaptation
3. Trainer's development
4. Tailored trainings to Member Organisations
5. External training opportunities
6. Accessibility and inclusivity
7. Quality assurance

Description

In the pursuit of strengthening its training initiatives, one of FEMYSO's primary goals over the next five years is to create and implement high-quality training programs that empower its network and Member Organisations (MOs). Central to this objective is the systematic identification of training needs through comprehensive needs assessments. Continuous curriculum adaptation ensures that these programs remain responsive to evolving challenges, while the development of proficient trainers equips the organisation to deliver high-quality content. Tailored training sessions, specifically designed for Member Organisations, enhance the relevance and impact of the training. Collaborations with external experts and institutions provide diverse learning opportunities. Furthermore, FEMYSO places a strong emphasis on accessibility and inclusivity, ensuring that training is available to everyone. Rigorous quality assurance measures underpin this objective, guaranteeing the effectiveness and excellence of the training programs within FEMYSO.

Networking



Objective

To enhance and foster a collaborative community through more networking opportunities for Member Organisations to learn from each other and to cultivate strong relationships.

Working Areas

1. Alumni community
2. Peer-to-peer learning
3. Information sharing platform
4. Networking events and conferences
5. Collaborative projects and campaigns

Description

FEMYSO's second objective for the next five years is to foster a collaborative community by providing increased networking opportunities for Member Organisations (MOs). At the core of this objective peer-to-peer learning initiatives to encourage the exchange of knowledge and shared experiences among MOs. An innovative information-sharing platform will facilitate communication and collaboration, enabling MOs to learn from each other's successes and challenges. In addition, the alumni community will be fostered to endure connections among past participants. Additionally, FEMYSO will host networking events and conferences, serving as platforms for MOs to connect, forge partnerships, and deepen their relationships. Collaborative projects and campaigns will be encouraged to harness the collective strength of MOs and amplify their impact.



Objective

To grow a trusted brand reputation through the implementation of innovative and creative communication strategies to effectively convey FEMYSO's values and celebrate the valuable contributions of European Muslim youth.

Working Areas

1. Compelling brand story development
2. Social impact showcasing
3. Monitor and develop online presence
4. Impact assessment through data driven results and metrics
5. Collaboration with influencers and partners

Description

FEMYSO's third objective for the upcoming five years centers on growing a trusted brand reputation through the implementation of innovative and creative communication strategies. Central to this objective is the development of a compelling brand story that effectively conveys the organisation's values and mission. FEMYSO aims to showcase its social impact, emphasising the transformative contributions of European Muslim youth. A focus on monitoring and developing its online presence ensures consistent engagement with the target audience. FEMYSO plans to assess its impact rigorously through data-driven results and metrics, ensuring the organisation's efforts align with its objectives and resonate with its stakeholders. Additionally, FEMYSO seeks to collaborate with influencers and partners to amplify its messaging, extend its reach, and establish its position as a trusted advocate for the European Muslim youth community.



Objective

To consolidate and expand key partnerships at an institutional level to effectively represent and advocate for European Muslim youth whilst contributing to a flourishing civic space.

Working Areas

1. Partnership development
2. Dismantling misleading narratives on Muslims
3. Addressing multi-faceted challenges
4. Advocate for youth and student rights
5. Countering Islamophobia
6. Enhancing representation and civic participation

Description

In the pursuit of its fourth objective for the next five years, FEMYSO aims to consolidate and expand key partnerships at an institutional level. This strategic objective is driven by the organisation's commitment to effectively represent and advocate for European Muslim youth while actively contributing to the cultivation of a thriving civic space. To achieve this goal, FEMYSO will focus on the development of partnerships, fostering collaborative relationships with institutions that share its vision. Additionally, the organisation will be dedicated to dismantling misleading narratives surrounding Muslims, addressing the multi-faceted challenges faced by Muslim youth, advocating for the rights of students and young people, countering Islamophobia, and promoting enhanced representation and civic participation. These multifaceted efforts will empower European Muslim youth, enabling them to assert their voices, rights, and contributions within the broader European context.



Objective

To grow a trusted brand reputation through the implementation of innovative and creative communication strategies to effectively convey FEMYSO's values and celebrate the valuable contributions of European Muslim youth.

Working Areas

1. Diversify funding sources
2. Donor care and cultivation
3. Earned income ventures
4. Partnerships and collaborations
5. Talent management and engagement
6. Performance management
7. Risk assessment and governance
8. Implementing a robust financial protocol
9. Culture of continuous learning and improvement
10. Harmonising communal ethos

Description

FEMYSO's fifth strategic objective for the next five years centers on establishing a holistic approach for sustainable organisational growth. This approach encompasses a series of strategic initiatives designed to fortify the organisation's foundations. To secure the necessary resources for its mission, FEMYSO will diversify its funding sources, ensuring financial stability through innovative approaches such as earned income ventures. Additionally, the organisation will prioritise donor care and cultivation, building lasting relationships with supporters. Collaborations and partnerships will be sought to amplify the impact of FEMYSO initiatives. To ensure a robust internal structure, FEMYSO will emphasise talent management and engagement, fostering a culture of dedication and commitment among its volunteers. Performance management will be implemented to maintain high standards and accountability. FEMYSO will conduct regular risk assessments and governance reviews to safeguard its operations. In line with its commitment to transparency and excellence, FEMYSO will implement a robust financial protocol, promoting integrity and ethical values. It will also nurture a culture of continuous learning and improvement, regularly assessing and enhancing its programs and operations. Finally, FEMYSO will harmonise its communal ethos, reinforcing its shared values and fostering a strong sense of unity among its stakeholders. These strategic initiatives collectively form the cornerstone of FEMYSO's organisational sustainability approach for the next five years.



Annex 1:

FEMYSO's Structure and Governance

Structure

FEMYSO is an international non-profit NGO (AISBL) registered in Belgium. Our EU Transparency number is 292913016962-90. FEMYSO is not a political or ideological party or movement, nor is it linked to any political or ideological party, group or movement and has proven throughout the years that our sole objective is to work for a diverse, cohesive and vibrant Europe together with our partners and our membership.

FEMYSO consists of its 31 Member Organisations, the General Assembly, the Executive Committee and the Board of Advisors.

The General Assembly (GA)

The General Assembly, comprising all 31 Member Organisations, meets every year. At this meeting, the Executive Committee presents its annual financial and activity reports. A new Executive Committee is elected every two years directly by the Member Organisations at the General Assembly. The Executive Committee, headed by the President, is responsible for defining and implementing the work plan and the day-to-day management of the organisation.

Executive Committee (ExCo)

The ExCo is the main administrative body of the Association and has all the powers to manage the Association. The ExCo is answerable to the GA and must present a written activity report and financial report to the GA each year. ExCo members hold their positions in personal capacity. The current roles of the Executive Committee are as follows:

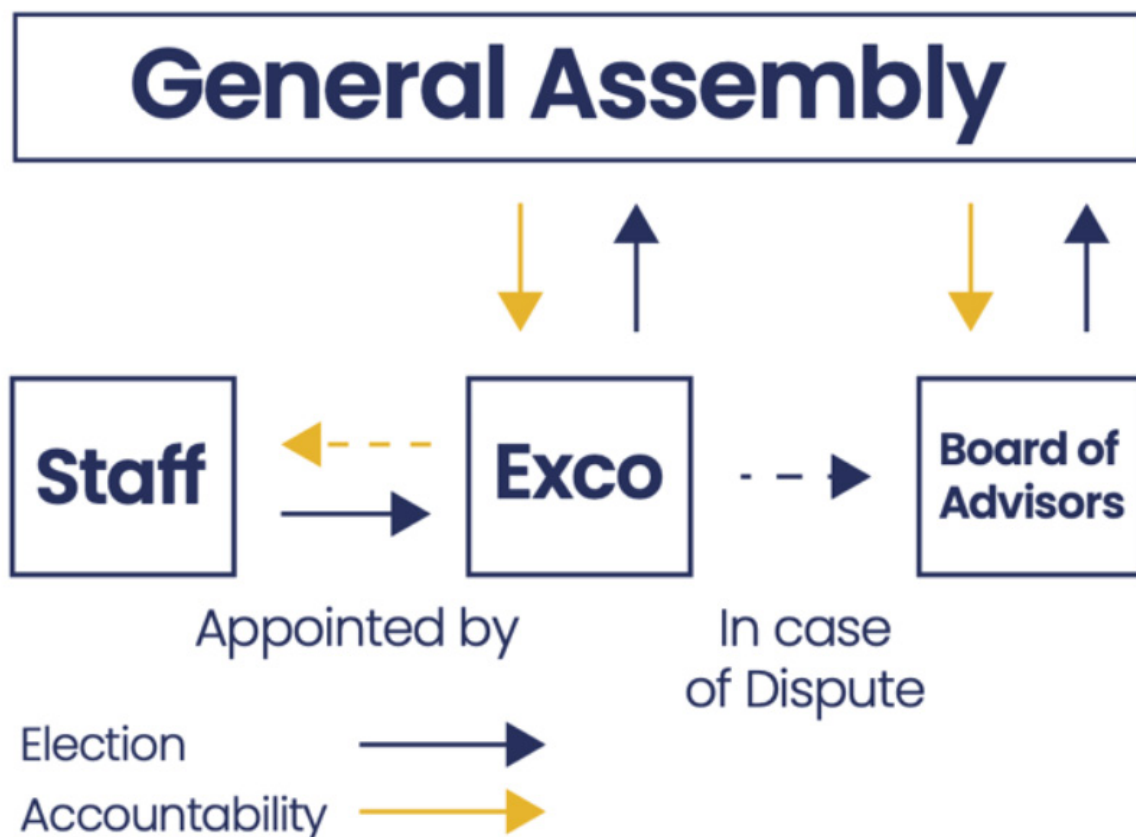
- President
- General Secretary
- Head of Finance
- Head of Internal Development
- Head of Fundraising
- Head of Communications and Marketing
- Head of Media
- Head of Campaigns
- Head of Member Organisations Relations
- Head of Services
- Head of Training

The functions of members of the Executive are voluntary. However, expenses spent in the exercise of their duties are expected to be reimbursed upon presentation of invoices and receipts. Certain tasks or missions assigned to the ExCo or members of the Association may be remunerated.

The different departments of FEMYSO rely heavily on the invaluable work of their team members. Our volunteers are a key part of the organisation's running and delivery. Each ExCo heads a department of volunteers and is responsible for their performance and wellbeing, in coordination with the Head of Internal Development

The Board of Advisors (BoA)

The Board of Advisors are elected at the General Assembly to serve a 3-year term. The Board advises the Executive Committee on matters of strategy, policy and vision. The Board has an advisory, and not an executive role. The purpose of the board is to support the Association in a holistic manner, in order to provide advice to solve problems or explore new opportunities by stimulating robust, high-quality conversations.



Annex 2:

FEMYSO's Strategic Planning Process





Linking Library
empowered by
the Council of Europe

Building a Library
empowered by
the Council of Europe

AN EYE21 DEL...ION BY
FEMY SO



FEMYSO

Forum of European Muslim Youth and
Student Organisations

Working for a diverse, cohesive, and vibrant Europe.

@femyso



femyso.org

Rue Archimède 50 1000 Brussels, Belgium