

**ERNOP Report 2019-2020 and Policy statement 2020 – 2021**

The ERNOP 2020 General Assembly was scheduled July in Montreal, but will take place online in September due to the COVID -19 pandemic.

On behalf of the ERNOP board we would like to look back since we met in Basel 2019, to discuss the policy for the years ahead and discuss the steps to be made related to the extraordinary conditions we face in Europe today.

**COVID-19 and the role of philanthropy**

The COVID-19 pandemic articulates tendencies in European countries that were present before. We see expanding government control in most countries. As long as a vaccine is not available and accessible for all Europeans this situation endures. However, in 2018 the “shrinking space of civil society organizations” already was an issue on the philanthropic research agenda’s, not only in Europe but globally. Currently, ERNOP is exploring possibilities to create an ERNOP publication related to the ongoing and planned research projects ERNOP members are working on.

To continue, the COVID-19 appeals, more than ever, to European philanthropy and the philanthropy sector to actively (re) define its role. Why? It is – and will become clear that governments are not able to manage the crises alone. They get confronted with a steep increase of populism, loss of democratic legitimacy, growing inequality, unemployment and governmental budget cuts in all policy-domains, from social security to healthcare and education. Then we have also to take account climate change and the foreseen “Green Deal” policy of the European Commission.

We repeat, governments can’t do it alone. They need help and support from committed citizens, businesses and foundations. From philanthropy, so to say. Philanthropy, - the COVID-19 pandemic, made it clear again - is one of the institutional pillars of the European Union. Whether people are living in Portugal, Spain, in Poland or Latvia they had in these days for their survival to depend upon either “family” and friends, upon facilities provided by a government or support from philanthropy and/or philanthropic institutions. Spontaneous giving, foodbanks and Caritas got a lot of media exposure.

The years ahead many services need philanthropic contributions next to diminishing governmental funding and market-income. Everywhere support foundations will be erected; fundraising will grow and new citizen-platforms will promote and gather “societal stakeholders” who will take a share in their neighborhood school, hospital or theater. To put it on a different way: philanthropy is getting weight.

On the other hand there is also reason to be keen on the negative effects of covid-19 on the philanthropy sector. Next to the refugee emergency a couple of years ago following the crisis in Syria, covid-19 has proved again that philanthropic grass-roots organizations and bottom-up innovation by volunteering and small-scale philanthropic initiatives related to finding ways to deal with the crisis were abundant. Nevertheless the impact on the organizational capacity and commitment of these ‘newbies’ on the long-term for traditional organizations is not clear.

National governments, the European Commission and the Brussels Administration will become aware of the potential of European philanthropy. But they are not very well acquainted with philanthropy nor capable to partner. Nor are they often available to provide a enabling environment that creates resilient philanthropic organizations.

### **Philanthropy in Europe study**

The ERNOP research “Philanthropy in Europe” contributes to make philanthropy of citizens, foundations, businesses and charity lotteries visible. It marks a first step in to get know each other, to meet and to reinforce each other, where possible.

To gain commitment and funding for the ERNOP “Philanthropy in Europe”- study (ERNOP-PIE) the ERNOP board followed a threefold strategy that targeted at the current institutionalized European philanthropy sector, the EC, and the EU-parliament.

### **ERNOP Presidency extended for one year**

The current term of the ERNOP board position of presidents ends 2020. However, given the exceptional circumstances related to Covid-19 and the long term relationship with European institutions and related activities, the ERNOP board proposes that the current president will serve one additional year.

### **Online activities**

Next to our ongoing efforts to realize a comprehensive study on philanthropy in Europe, the ERNOP board also realizes that much research on philanthropy has potential to contribute to the professionalization of the philanthropy sector already. Also, as many of us had to reorganize ourselves online, our online presentation skills have improved. As such, the ERNOP board aims to develop an online series that strengthens the visibility of ERNOP members and philanthropy research. All ERNOP members are very much invited to join this effort by sharing their work.

The online agenda is also closely related to our Science With and For Society (SWAFS) vision for philanthropy research. As a consequence, ERNOP aims to enlarge its constituency among non-researchers as well. After a proof of concept (pilot), taking place by the end of 2020, ERNOP will create a small staff position in 2021 for a post-doc or research-assistant that will work on the agenda, promotion, execution and follow-up of these seminars. Also co-organizing the Dublin conference (see below) will be part of the position, in close collaboration with the ERNOP Executive Director.

### **AGAPE postponed to March 2021 in Turin**

This year the institutional members of ERNOP would gather in Heidelberg for a gathering of academic research centers on philanthropy in Europe (AGAPE). Although preparations were already well underway, unfortunately the ERNOP board had to decide to cancel the gathering of October 2020. Together organized and supported by the Compagnia di San Paolo, AGAPE will now take place in March 2021 in Turin. We are grateful to our colleagues at CSI Heidelberg that they remain available to host a next AGAPE in the future.

### **ERNOP Conference 2021**

Finally, ERNOP will continue to organize its next conference that is scheduled for July 1-2 in Dublin, keeping in mind that the conference will have to be organized in an alternative (online) way.

Although the circumstances are challenging, the ERNOP board remains confident that our hosts in Ireland will be able to organize a successful conference. Theme of the conference will be: "Building Bridges in the aftermath of covid-19: Where will the Philanthropy of Today lead us Tomorrow?". We are pleased that Beth Breeze from the Centre for Philanthropy at the University of Kent has accepted the invitation to join the conference as keynote speaker. Her keynote will provide valuable insights on the role philanthropy can play in our societies today and tomorrow.