

Towards ERNOP's 20th Anniversary

Exploring and charting the path(s) ahead

The European Research Network on Philanthropy (ERNOP) is a community of individuals and institutions interested in the diverse facets of philanthropy: from research and education, to practice and policy. Since its founding in 2008, ERNOP has grown into an internationally recognised network that focuses on the advancement, co-ordination, and promotion of knowledge and understanding of, for, and by philanthropy. As ERNOP is about to enter and celebrate its 20th anniversary in 2028, it seems timely to take stock of where we are, reflect on the successes and experiences to-date, and consider and chart the path(s) ahead: What are our shared hopes, plans, and vision for ERNOP? How are we going to achieve these? What is going to be our strategy?

As a starting point for these conversations, the board reached out to, and consulted with, stakeholders over the last couple of months. This took the form of individual interviews with institutional representatives, and a survey that was circulated to all members. The aim was:

- to take stock of where ERNOP is and how it is perceived,
- to get a better understanding of what has worked/is working well, and what people appreciate about ERNOP, as well as,
- to identify opportunities and areas for learning and development, and explore future opportunities and avenues for ERNOP.

Broadly speaking, the results were very encouraging and positive. Responses show that ERNOP is highly valued by its members for the unique focus on European philanthropy and the diverse networking opportunities that it provides, that ERNOP offers an open and inclusive environment that bridges disciplines as well as career stages and that reaches across policy and practice. Furthermore, the responsive nature in which the network continues to innovate and support opportunities for knowledge-mobilisation, professional development, and wider collaborative opportunities is also very welcome. At the same time, however, a number of wider questions that our community needs to reflect on were identified. These pointed to a need for a clearer positioning amongst the growing ecosystem of alternative networks, questions of further improving our communication, visibility, and outreach activities, and ways for better supporting collaborative and comparative research while avoiding potential 'initiative overload' and managing resource constraints. Further information on these findings will be provided at AGAPE.

Looking across all of the insights gained, there are three overarching themes that provide important starting points for our future vision. We would thus like to explore these in more detail at AGAPE:

- The Identity and Positioning of ERNOP,
- ERNOP's Community and Collaborations,
- ERNOP's Impact and Dissemination.

To this end, the morning session on the 12th of September is dedicated to discussing these issues, initially in small sets of participants as part of a 'Walk in the Park', before coming together to collect and reflect on the insights that these starting conversations have led to. To maximise the input for, and output from, these conversational opportunities, we would like to ask every participant to think about, and prepare their thoughts and ideas on, the following themes and questions:

Theme 1: Identity and Positioning

Key Questions:

1. How can ERNOP strengthen its unique position as a European philanthropy research network while engaging with global perspectives?
2. What should be the balance between academic rigour and practical relevance in ERNOP's activities?
3. How should ERNOP approach philanthropy? Should we continue to take a broad, overarching focus, or specialise in certain areas?

Theme 2: Community and Collaboration

Key Questions:

1. How can ERNOP enhance networking and collaboration opportunities, especially for new and early-career members?
2. What strategies could improve inclusivity and diversity within ERNOP's membership and activities?
3. How should ERNOP balance different types of events and activities to best serve its community, both across in-person and digital engagement opportunities?

Theme 3: Impact and Dissemination

Key Questions:

1. How can ERNOP improve the dissemination and impact of its research, both within academia and for practitioners?
2. What publication strategies should ERNOP focus on (e.g. should ERNOP develop its own journal)?
3. What role should ERNOP play in facilitating data collection and sharing across Europe?

Cross-Cutting Considerations

For each theme, please also consider:

1. Governance and Structure: How might different structural or governance changes (e.g. the establishment of special interest groups) affect this area?
2. Resource Allocation: What are the resource implications of potential strategies in this area, and how can these be addressed in a realistic and feasible manner?
3. Technological Infrastructure: How can digital tools be leveraged to support goals in this area? What tools should be considered?

As the goal of these discussions is to generate concrete ideas and recommendations for ERNOP's future strategy, everybody is encouraged to think creatively while considering practical implications and ERNOP's core mission.