

Corporate Philanthropy in Europe: €21.5 Billion — and What It Reveals

Evidence from ERNOP's pan-European giving study on where corporate philanthropy is strong, where it is fragmented, and how the landscape is shifting

Based on: Philanthropy in Europe (ERNOP, 2026). Edited by Barry Hoolwerf & Johan Vamstad. Data covers 20 European countries, 2022. Lower-bound estimates throughout.

European Corporate Philanthropy: The First Cross-National Benchmark

ERNOP's Philanthropy in Europe is the most comprehensive mapping of philanthropic giving across Europe, covering 20 countries with consistent methodology. For corporate practitioners, it provides — for the first time — a common framework for understanding where corporate philanthropy stands relative to other sources, how it varies across markets, and what trends are shaping it.



The Scale: Third-Largest Source, But the Most Volatile

At €21.5 billion, corporate philanthropy is the third-largest source of giving in Europe — behind individuals (€52bn) but ahead of foundations (€20.6bn). The report is frank, however, that corporate data is among the weakest of the five sources. Many countries rely on tax records that only capture declared, deductible donations, or on irregular surveys of limited coverage. The €21.5bn figure is almost certainly a substantial undercount.

Why corporate giving is harder to measure than it looks

Tax records only capture donations where firms claim a deduction. In France, this covers 142,500 corporations — about 6% of all businesses. Smaller firms, firms in countries with limited tax incentives, and firms giving through in-kind or sponsorship channels are largely invisible in the data. Italy's most recent corporate giving survey covered only 116 medium and large companies and was conducted in 2020. Croatia records fewer than 1,000 corporate donations per year in tax data.

Geographic Distribution: Extreme Concentration

The geographic distribution of corporate philanthropy in Europe is stark. Germany accounts for €9.35bn — 43% of the European total. The Netherlands (€1.75bn) outgives Italy (€567m) and Spain (€1.2bn) despite being a fraction of their size. This reflects genuine differences in corporate culture, tax incentive design, and the role of sector organisations — but also differences in data quality. Croatia, Romania, and Slovakia have near-zero recorded corporate giving, which understates reality.

- **Netherlands:** The most methodologically robust corporate giving data in Europe, based on a biennial survey (Corporate Giving in the Netherlands Survey). In 2022, 31% of for-profit organisations reported making charitable contributions. Sports and recreation received the largest share (20%), followed by health (17%).
- **France:** Tax data provides detailed picture — 142,500 corporations, total €2.65bn declared. International aid leads (32% of categorised donations), followed by corporate foundations (29%). Only covers declared, deductible donations.
- **Germany:** €9.35bn but significant methodological uncertainty — multiple data sources with different definitions, irregular collection. A Ukraine-related surge of over €1bn in 2022 inflates the figure.
- **UK:** FTSE 100 corporate giving has been declining as a share of pre-tax profits since 2016 in real terms, while remaining broadly stable in nominal value. Data coverage is very limited beyond the largest companies.

Cause Patterns: What European Corporations Actually Fund

Cause priorities for corporate giving vary considerably by country — more so than for individual or foundation giving. There is no single "European" corporate giving profile.

Country	Leading cause	Notable feature
Netherlands	Sports & recreation (20%)	Health second (17%); environment lowest (6%)
France	International aid (32%)	Corporate foundations receive 29% — structural channel
Germany	Shifting to climate & health	Away from sports & education; ESG framing evident
Belgium / Slovakia	Sports dominant	Different from Western European pattern
Austria	Social services	SME giving prevalent but largely informal and unmeasured

ESG, Corporate Foundations, and Structural Change

The report identifies a structural shift in several markets: corporate philanthropy is increasingly organised through dedicated corporate foundations and framed within ESG and SDG language. This is most visible in Germany, Ireland, Hungary, and Poland — but is not yet a pan-European trend.

- **Corporate foundations are growing as a channel.** In Germany and Poland, legal and fiscal frameworks incentivise firms to route donations through dedicated foundations. This creates more strategic, longer-term giving — but also blurs the boundary between corporate and foundation philanthropy in the data.
- **ESG alignment is opening new cause areas.** Climate, biodiversity, and health are emerging in corporate giving portfolios in Germany and several other markets, replacing traditional sports and culture sponsorships. This aligns with broader ESG reporting requirements under CSRD.

- **Volatility remains a core challenge.** Corporate giving is concentrated among a small number of large donors. One matching campaign or emergency response can shift national totals significantly. Portugal's corporate giving was disrupted by COVID-19; Sweden's was inflated by a major real estate company's Ukraine matching programme in 2022.
- **SME giving exists but is largely informal and unmeasured.** Austria and Belgium provide limited evidence of significant informal giving among small businesses. This is a genuine gap in European philanthropy data — but should not be assumed to represent a structured opportunity without further research.

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