

Call for Papers

European Research Network on Philanthropy

Philanthropy by the people, for the people?

The roles, organizations, and motivations of philanthropy in contemporary democracies and social structures

12th International Conference, September 25-26, 2025

University of Heidelberg, Germany

Under pressure, many things become fluid. While, for a brief period, it appeared that external threats unified people in our democracies to rally around the flag, it soon became evident that societal divides grew sharper, fostering less tolerance for alternatives. Examples abound in how our societies grapple with the aftermath of events like Covid, and more recently, those concerning Ukraine and Israel. Furthermore, there are ongoing challenges related to climate, the environment, and the cost of living. In this dynamic, philanthropy emerges as a significant player. Philanthropic initiatives have the potential to bring diverse societal groups together and foster social cohesion. European democratic values such as freedom of thought, speech, expression, and organization are increasingly receiving support from philanthropic sources. However, it is also important to acknowledge that philanthropy is sometimes perceived as a contributor to societal divisions, as various groups make use of philanthropy to bolster their conflicting viewpoints. Moreover, philanthropy itself is scrutinized, seen both as a means to complement public service delivery and as a tool to influence or even oppose democratic policy outcomes.

How does philanthropy bolster democracy and social cohesion? What motivates philanthropists, whether large or small, individual or institutional, to engage in activities that influence policymaking? How do different societal groups engage in philanthropy to advocate for their interests, and what are the implications of these actions for democratic pluralism and deliberative democracy? To what extent does the distribution of wealth in European societies shape the nature and impact of philanthropy, and how does this distribution influence perceptions of philanthropy's role in democratic processes and outcomes?

Against the backdrop of these crises and developments, we invite paper contributors to reflect on and share their work concerning the various roles philanthropy, in its diverse forms, can play in contemporary (European) democratic processes and its relationship to social cohesion. What measures are necessary to harness philanthropy as a tool for promoting stronger and more resilient societies? How does philanthropy evolve and play out among different societal groups and charitable objectives? To what degree does this evolution vary based on individual, organizational, or national contexts?

Let us collectively build and cultivate our understanding of philanthropy. Join us as we explore how philanthropy, in all its manifestations, influences and is shaped by our past, present, and potential future democracies.

Hosted by the Centre for Social Investment at the Max Weber Institute for Sociology in the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences of Heidelberg University, the conference will welcome scholars from all disciplines and practitioners of philanthropy who share a commitment to discussing the purpose and practice of philanthropy in the contemporary era and generating new inquiries into its future development. The conference will also provide participants with insights into philanthropic practices in Europe, particularly within the context of Germany.

Presenters are invited to speak to these conference themes and also to the following (non-exclusive) related areas:

- Altruism and generosity
- Alternative forms of philanthropy
- Bequests and intergenerational transfers
- Cross-border giving
- Comparative cross-country studies of philanthropy
- Corporate philanthropy and CSR
- Cross-sector collaboration with for profit organizations and government
- Diaspora and community philanthropy
- Donor motivations, concerns and advisory needs
- Economics of philanthropy
- Efficacy, efficiency and performance evaluation
- Emerging philanthropy (philanthropies)
- European philanthropy (or philanthropies)
- Family philanthropy
- Fundraising strategies and practices
- Foundation roles and strategies
- Governance of foundations
- High net worth philanthropy
- Impact, outcomes and outputs of philanthropy
- Legal, fiscal and regulatory issues in philanthropy
- Methodology for philanthropy research
- Morality and ethics of giving
- New frontiers and innovation in philanthropy
- Philanthropy and democracy
- Philanthropy and advocacy
- Private and public foundations
- Roles of philanthropy
- SDGs and philanthropy
- Social innovation, crowdfunding and philanthropy
- Social entrepreneurship and philanthropy
- Strategies for philanthropy
- Theories of giving and volunteering
- Venture philanthropy, social investment
- Volunteering, giving time

Target Audience

ERNOP welcomes participation from researchers in all academic disciplines, as well as professionals from and working with the philanthropy sector – including non-profit executives and staff, foundation staff and board members, consultants, and policymakers.

Requirements and Procedure

Individual contributions

For individual presentations at the ERNOP Conference 2025, submissions of a short abstract is required. Please submit your abstract [here](#).

- Abstracts should be about 2500 characters long (spaces, punctuation and title included. Authors, affiliations and keywords not included).
- Abstracts do not have a set structure. However, an outline of the research questions, methods, data sources, and a brief description of the results is highly appreciated.

Panel contributions

For panel contributions at the ERNOP Conference 2025, submission of a short proposal is required. Please submit your proposal [here](#).

Submission Deadlines

Abstracts: May 10, 2025

Notification of acceptance: June 10, 2025

Full papers: September 7, 2025

Practical issues and further information

Date of the conference: September 25th-26th, 2025

Venue: University of Heidelberg, Germany

PhD Students and Retirees Rate: € 299 (early bird), € 349 (regular)

Participants from non-profits with an annual turnover of < 500.000 EUR € 299 (early bird), € 349 (regular)

Scholars and medium sized non-profits (< 1.000.000 EUR) € 399 (early bird), € 449 (regular)

Other categories (non profit representatives with an annual turnover of € 1.000.000 > / public and commercial sector): € 499 (early bird), € 549 (regular)

Early Bird Rate ends: June 17, 2025

More information and registration: www.ernop.eu/conference2025.

The ERNOP team looks forward to receiving your submissions and welcoming you to Heidelberg!