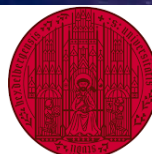ERNOP Pre-Conference

Safe Spaces for Philanthropy

PRELIMINARY PROGRAM

ERNOP.EU

European Research Network on Philanthropy

UNIVERSITÄT
HEIDELBERG
ZUKUNFT
SEIT 1386

In collaboration with

Philea | Philanthropy Europe Association

This event is hosted by

UNIVERSITÄT HEIDELBERG ZUKUNFT SEIT 1386

CSI | UNIVERSITÄT HEIDELBERG ZUKUNFT SEIT 1386

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Location:
University of Heidelberg, Neue Universität, Grabengasse 1, Heidelberg

Date:
September 24, 2025

Time:
12.00-17.15

Costs and requirements
Free, but your involvement is appreciated through (associated) ERNOP membership
Participation in the ERNOP Research Conference is not required

Registration
Preferably by July 15, and first come, first serve.
Registration closes August 18
Register Here

Capacity
50 participants

Welcome to the ERNOP Safe Spaces for Philanthropy 2025

In a time when **academic and philanthropic freedom** face increasing pressure, the need for **safe spaces -** where open, honest, and trust-based exchanges can take place - has never been more essential. Safe Spaces for Philanthropy provides an environment where practitioners, academics, and policymakers can engage in meaningful discussions, free from bias, conflict, or external constraints. This initiative is not just about dialogue; it is about creating a foundation for **learning, reflection, and actionable change** in the philanthropic sector and to address topics that sometimes create intense debates. Let us discuss, disagree and compete with arguments, and not be silent and shy away from topics and may cause disagreement and discomfort.

Safe spaces offer a unique opportunity to bring together different perspectives, allowing us to address the complex challenges that philanthropy faces today. The conversations held here go beyond theoretical discussions; they are grounded in real experiences, dilemmas, and strategic decision-making. The knowledge generated in these sessions does not remain within these walls but is carried forward through **Policy and Practice Papers**, published in Voluntary Sector Review. These papers translate the insights from our discussions into concrete guidance that can support practitioners and policymakers in shaping the future of philanthropy. We are happy to collaborate with Philea to ensure that the conversations find their ways into the field.

At a time when the ability to **question, challenge, and innovate** is at risk, we must actively defend the spaces that allow for intellectual and professional exchange. Safe Spaces for Philanthropy is one such platform, fostering **critical thinking, informed decision-making, and the development of more resilient philanthropic practices**.

I encourage you to contribute openly, challenge assumptions, and engage deeply with your peers from academia and philanthropy. Your insights and experiences are vital— not just for today's discussions, but for shaping the broader conversation about philanthropy's role in society.

Barry Hoolwerf
 ERNOP Executive Director

Chairwoman

Fozia Irfan is the Director of Impact and Influence at BBC Children in Need, specialising in equitable funding distribution and investment for young people, and is also Chair of 360Giving. In the UK, She was awarded the national 'Rising Star CEO' award by the National Charity Times and voted one of the 25 Most Influential Charity Leaders in the sector. Fozia set up the groundbreaking Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Coalition of foundations, leading 15 major national foundations in the implementation of more effective and equitable grantmaking strategies.
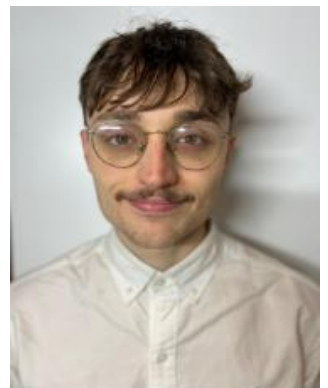
Speakers' bio

Ane Grubb is a Senior Adviser at the VELUX FOUNDATION (Denmark), within the Social Initiatives Program. She holds a PhD in Sociology and previously served as an Assistant Professor at Aalborg University. Her expertise lies in voluntary social work, inequality in volunteering, and civic engagement. Ane has guest-edited an issue on inequality in volunteering in VOLUNTAS and has published in leading journals such as Public Management Review and Journal of Social Policy. She focuses on cross-sector collaboration and initiatives that support vulnerable citizens and promote inclusive social development.

Gabriella Civico is the Director of CEV and a leading advocate for volunteering policies in Europe. Originally from the UK, she has lived in Spain, Portugal, and Belgium, where she became a citizen. She holds degrees in Social Policy and Education (University of Surrey) and E-learning (University of Hull). Gabriella has played a central role in shaping EU volunteer mobility policies and civil society engagement. She is also the President of Civil Society Europe and represents CEV in the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) Liaison Group.

Jack O'Neill is a Data Officer at Philea, specializing in data analytics and digital transformation. He holds a master's degree in Information Systems and has worked on digital transformation projects with Deloitte. His work focuses on enhancing the accuracy and accessibility of philanthropy-related data through data science and AI. Jack also leads a Data Science & AI community of practice, fostering discussions on digital maturity, AI applications, and emerging trends in the philanthropic sector.
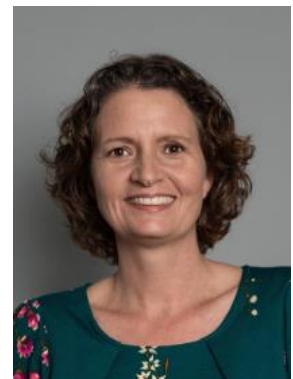
Lucia Gomez is an Assistant Professor specializing in artificial intelligence applications for philanthropy, finance, and business. She is affiliated with the Bern University of Applied Sciences and the University of Geneva and partners with non-academic organizations to drive impact. Her research focuses on transparency, ecosystem optimization, and technology-enabled philanthropy. A strong advocate for open data, science, and technology, Lucia works on AI-driven solutions that enhance the effectiveness of philanthropic initiatives.

Mårten Palmefors is a Senior Analyst at Giva Sverige, where he monitors trends in charitable giving in Sweden. His work focuses on analyzing donor behaviors and the factors influencing giving patterns to provide Giva Sverige's member organizations with valuable insights. By identifying key shifts in philanthropic behavior, Mårten supports the sector in adapting to emerging challenges and opportunities.

Pamala Wiepking is the Stead Family Chair in International Philanthropy at the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy and Professor at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. A founding member of ERNOP, she specializes in cross-national and interdisciplinary philanthropy research. Her publications span journals such as Social Forces and Voluntas, and she co-edited The Palgrave Handbook of Global Philanthropy, winner of the ARNOVA Virginia A. Hodgkinson Research Book Prize. She also co-edited The Fundraising Reader in 2023. Pamala's research focuses on creating more generous, equitable, and just societies.

Philine van Overbeeke is a Research Fellow at the Gradel Institute of Charity, New College, specializing in volunteer management and the nonprofit sector. She holds a BSc in Business Administration, an MSc in Global Business & Sustainability, and a PhD in Management from Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University. Her research explores volunteer value creation, focusing on the dynamics between volunteers and paid staff. She places particular emphasis on Service Learning, Corporate Volunteering, and Volunteer Tourism, aiming to bridge academia and practice.

Tine De Bock is an Assistant Professor of Marketing at KU Leuven (Belgium) with a PhD in Applied Economic Sciences from Ghent University. Her research focuses on nonprofit marketing and fundraising, including donors' ethical perceptions, the ethics of face-to-face fundraising, and consumer charitable giving at the checkout. She investigates how ethical considerations shape donor behavior and philanthropy engagement, contributing to a deeper understanding of nonprofit sustainability.
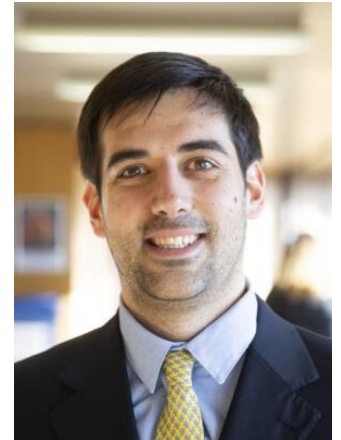
Tobias Jung is the director and founder of the Centre for the Study of Philanthropy & Public Good, Scotland's first research centre dedicated to the growing field of philanthropy studies. Alongside exploring philanthropy's different expressions and traditions, his research focuses particularly on the nature and roles of philanthropic foundations and trusts. He is the President of the European Research Network on Philanthropy (ERNOP).

Lesley Alborough is a philanthropy practitioner and scholar focused on justice-oriented gifting and knowledge exchange between the third and research sectors. With 25 years of experience, she helps philanthropies and fundraisers develop equitable funding approaches. Her expertise spans labor, power dynamics, and decision-making in resourcing these sectors. Her research explores how philanthropic practices affect justice and equity, promoting collaborative knowledge and participatory resource distribution. She holds a PhD in Social Policy/Sociology and an MSc in Global Development Management.

Giuseppe Ugazio is the Edmond de Rothschild Associate Professor in Behavioral Philanthropy at the Geneva Finance Research Institute. He holds doctorates in Philosophy and Neuroeconomics from the University of Zurich. As a behavioral scientist, he studies the neuro-psychological mechanisms driving social behavior. Using experimental methods, he investigates the affective, cognitive, and control systems behind decision-making. His research focuses on how these mechanisms interact and influence philanthropic choices. He is also developing AI tools to uncover motivations for prosocial behavior, particularly the role of emotions and moral values.

Beyond Safe Spaces for Philanthropy: Policy and Practice Papers

The discussions within **Safe Spaces for Philanthropy** do not end when the event concludes. They form the foundation for Policy and Practice Papers, published in Voluntary Sector Review, ensuring that the insights shared during these sessions contribute to shaping policy and improving practice in philanthropy. These papers capture the complexities of the sector, translating reflections and experiences into meaningful guidance for those leading, managing, and supporting philanthropic initiatives.

Unlike traditional academic articles, Policy and Practice Papers focus on **real-world application**. They do not merely analyze issues but provide practical recommendations grounded in evidence and experience. Each paper explores a pressing policy challenge or emerging trend, examining its significance within the philanthropic sector. The analysis is supported by relevant research, case studies, and examples from practice, ensuring that the discussion is both informed and actionable. Rather than remaining abstract, these papers draw on lived experiences to highlight key lessons and insights that can inform decision-making.

The role of Safe Spaces participants is essential in shaping these publications. Through open and reflective conversations, they bring forward real challenges, dilemmas, and innovations from their work. These discussions surface common struggles and opportunities, providing a rich foundation for the Policy and Practice Papers. By identifying what works, where tensions arise, and how obstacles might be overcome, participants directly contribute to creating knowledge that extends beyond the event itself.

Each paper not only outlines the challenges discussed but also considers their broader implications for philanthropy. It reflects on the ways in which policies and practices might evolve to better serve the sector and provides practical recommendations that practitioners and policymakers can use in their work. The ultimate goal is to ensure that knowledge is not only shared but also applied—helping to bridge the gap between research and practice.

By engaging in Safe Spaces, participants are part of a process that extends far beyond the immediate conversation. Their contributions shape publications that inform policy, enhance practice, and help the philanthropic sector navigate its most pressing challenges. Through this initiative, the knowledge generated in Safe Spaces continues to have an impact long after the discussions have ended, reaching a wider audience and influencing the way philanthropy operates in the future.

Program

12.00 – 13.00   Registration

13.00 – 13.05   Welcome

13.05 – 14.00   Plenary Campfire Session

Trust as the Foundation of Philanthropy

Trust is essential in philanthropy. In a sector that is relatively small and highly interconnected, trust underpins relationships between foundations, fundraising organizations, and volunteer-driven initiatives. At the same time, philanthropy often faces skepticism from other sectors, particularly from different political ideologies, making it even more important to establish credibility and mutual understanding.

While trust enables collaboration and collective impact, it is not always a given. What does it take to build and sustain trust in philanthropy? Can trust be systematically fostered, or does it ultimately depend on personal relationships among key stakeholders? And how can trust be maintained in an environment where accountability and scrutiny are ever-present, even so within the philanthropy sector itself?

This session, designed as an intimate campfire conversation, brings together three perspectives: an academic expert on trust in philanthropy, a representative from the foundation sector, and a speaker from the voluntary or nonprofit field. Together, they will explore both the necessity and the challenges of trust in philanthropy. We invite all participants to ask the questions or share their experiences through a moderated discussion.

Finally, to bridge the discussion into practice, we will conclude by inviting a moderator from each 'Safe Spaces for Philanthropy' sessions to join the conversation. They will reflect on how trust plays a role in their discussions, creating a natural transition into the sessions that follow.

14.00 – 14.30   Ice Breaker

14.30 – 15:45   Safe Spaces for Philanthropy

Justice Philanthropy

Moderated by Tobias Jung (University of St Andrews) & Lesley Alborough (Wellcome Trust)

This session delves into the interplay between philanthropy and justice, challenging the notion that justice—in all its forms—is reserved for a select group of philanthropic organisations. Using recent research and practical examples, the session investigates how philanthropic practices can align with broader justice goals, including social, environmental, and economic dimensions, addressing systemic inequities and empowering communities.

Democratizing Grantmaking through Trust-Based Approaches While Ensuring Accountability

Moderated by Pamala Wiepking (IU-Indianapolis/VU Amsterdam) & Ane Grubb (Velux Foundation)

This session explores the potential of Trust-Based Philanthropy practices such as multiyear unrestricted funding, increased transparency and alleviating burdensome grant application and reporting requirements as transformative approaches to address systemic challenges in grantmaking and civil society engagement. Anchored in robust academic research and grounded in practical experiences, the session examines how Trust-Based Philanthropy can mitigate the negative effects of short-term project funding, such as grantee exhaustion, the nonprofit starvation cycle, and mission drift, while ensuring accountability to stakeholders.

Participants will delve into the dilemmas related to fostering trust-based relationships while maintaining transparency and accountability in a sector increasingly scrutinized for its funding-driven dynamics and power imbalances. The discussion will highlight the tensions between relationship-building and operational constraints, including long-term resource allocation, exit strategies and power imbalances.

From Fragmentation to Collaboration: Data Sharing in Philanthropy

Moderated by Jack O'Neill (Philea), Lucia Gomez (University of Geneva) & Giuseppe Ugazio (University of Geneva)

In this roundtable discussion, we will explore conditions and practical steps for philanthropic organizations and researchers to begin exchanging data about philanthropic giving, funding gaps, and best practices in a collaborative, yet secure, manner. Recognising that data is often fragmented and scattered across academic articles and reports by philanthropic organisations, we will discuss how the field and researchers can start by sharing high-level, aggregated data through standardised dashboards or templates, focusing on areas such as funding priorities, geographic impact, and thematic focus. We'll also address key concerns around privacy and control, ensuring that sensitive data can be shared in an anonymised or aggregated form. The conversation will also discuss how pilot initiatives could help build trust and demonstrate the value of data sharing for identifying funding gaps, avoiding duplication, and improving decision-making.

What Volunteerism Does: Its Effects on Individuals, Organizations, and Society

Moderated by Gabriella Civico (Centre for European Volunteering) & Philine van Overbeeke (University of Oxford)

IThis session explores the impact of volunteerism on individuals, recipients, organisations and society as a whole. Participants will dive into key questions: How does volunteering benefit the volunteer, the people they serve, and the wider community? And what role do volunteer organizations play in maximizing this impact? And how can funders effectively support these efforts? Through sharing academic research insights and real-world examples, attendees will gain deeper insights into the challenges and opportunities within the volunteer sector. The session will also highlight innovative strategies, best practices, and emerging trends to strengthen and sustain impactful volunteer initiatives.

Rethinking Face-to-Face Fundraising: Challenges, Insights, and a Way Forward for Nonprofits

Moderated by Mårten Palmefors (Giva Sverige) & Tine De Bock (KU Leuven)

Face-to-face (F2F) fundraising remains a widely used method for nonprofits to engage donors, yet its effectiveness is increasingly questioned. While personal interaction can foster meaningful connections, nonprofits report rising donor fatigue, lower donation values, and high cancellation rates. Additionally, concerns about pressure, transparency, and donor experience have led some organizations to discontinue F2F fundraising altogether.

This research explores the perspectives of nonprofit practitioners overseeing F2F campaigns, shedding light on the key challenges they encounter and their motivations for either continuing or abandoning this approach. By linking these insights to conceptual frameworks, we aim to contextualize the future of F2F fundraising and identify strategies for improving donor retention and engagement. Our findings contribute to a broader discussion on the sustainability of F2F fundraising and provide actionable recommendations for nonprofits navigating an evolving philanthropic landscape.

15.45 – 16.15   Coffee Break and Networking

16.15 – 17.00   Reflections and Knowledge Harvesting

Based on the conversations in the Safe Spaces, session moderators engage in a conversation on key take aways and learnings with a focus on implications for theory and practice.

About the European Research Network on Philanthropy (ERNOP)

The **European Research Network on Philanthropy (ERNOP)** is the leading network for philanthropy research in Europe. Founded in 2008, ERNOP brings together **over 250 researchers from 25 countries**, all dedicated to advancing knowledge about philanthropy's role in society. Our members explore a wide range of topics, from donor behavior and nonprofit governance to social innovation and impact measurement.

At ERNOP, we believe that **strong connections between research and practice** are essential for the future of philanthropy. That's why we don't just study philanthropy—we actively engage with practitioners, policymakers, and funders to ensure that research findings contribute to real-world solutions. Through collaborations with key European organizations such as **Philea, Impact Europe, EFA, and CEV**, we bring academic insights into the heart of philanthropy's decision-making spaces.

Our **biennial ERNOP conference** is Europe's leading academic gathering on philanthropy research, providing a space where scholars and professionals can exchange ideas, debate trends, and build new collaborations. Beyond the conference, ERNOP fosters knowledge-sharing through the ERNOP Science and Society Series and ERNOP Research Notes, ensuring that research remains accessible and relevant to those working in the field.

By participating in **Safe Spaces for Philanthropy**, you are joining an important dialogue that connects academic expertise with the realities of philanthropic work. The discussions here are not just conversations—they are shaping the future of philanthropy, influencing policy, and driving change. ERNOP invites you to be part of this exchange, where research and practice come together to build a stronger, more impactful philanthropic sector.

More information about ERNOP and the work of its members can be found at www.ernop.eu .