

IMAGINE

Written by Wider Sense

PHILANTHROPY

FOR EUROPE



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# FOREWORD

The coronavirus has taught us three lessons: First, it is possible to put an economic system on hold everywhere in the world at the same time in a few weeks when the threat is assessed as serious enough. Second, people around the world are so interconnected to each other that a virus circulates around the world at breakneck speed from one person to another. Third, we are able to face global challenges, if we react in a coordinated way and in solidarity with the most affected.

One of the biggest projects of coordinated solidarity is the European project. “Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity.” These were the words of Robert Schuman presenting the Schuman Plan on 9 May 1950 – the day which we celebrate each year as Europe Day. Seventy years have passed since then, which resulted in the abolishment of borders, in the creation of the biggest common market, the Euro, a charter on fundamental rights, Erasmus – the world’s largest student exchange programme, and even Eurovision and the Champions League.

Private money for the public good plays a significant role as foundation budgets in Europe amount to €60 billion annually. The current challenges and the sense of urgency force foundations to reinvent themselves, ready to take a greater responsibility, and to enable greater European solidarity. However, philanthropy with a European purpose remains uncharted territory.

The process of European integration seems to have stopped at the doorstep of the European philanthropic sector. There is a handful of small European foundations, and there are some national foundations which engage in European exchange and collaboration or dedicate a fraction of their resources to a European programme, project or to European issues, but genuine European philanthropy is hardly exists – a niche. There is no equivalent to a European Gates Foundation. Where are the European philanthropists? Even the European Cultural Foundation (ECF), established in 1954 and Europe’s oldest European foundation with a European purpose, has been funded almost entirely by Dutch funding for more than 60 years.

What are the reasons? There are some legal and tax barriers. There are language and competence barriers. Philanthropy does not appear yet as a serious game-changer and is not visible on the political stage. As a result, the European Union (EU) does not take foundations seriously enough and why should it, given its relative irrelevance for Europe? But this can only partially explain the lack of philanthropy with a European purpose.

The main barrier seems to be the lack of European ambition, belief and purpose among philanthropists, among foundation board members, among foundation staff. Ninety-nine per cent of them are local, regional and national; some say they think globally. And this is ok. However, and while Europe has transformed so fundamentally and rapidly in the last 70 years, philanthropy has not kept pace, has not played a role beyond the local, the national, and to some extent the international.

So, something needs to be done. Building on the work of our sector, from the European Foundation Centre (EFC) and Donors and Foundations Networks in Europe (DAFNE) during the last European Day for Donors and Foundations to the last study on Civil Society published by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), we would like to open a new space to imagine a new Philanthropy for Europe and reach out to like-minded partners. Such philanthropy with a European purpose is yet to be imagined and resourced. And we know that we cannot do that alone. The Corona shock could become Europe's moment and the moment for philanthropy to commit to our common ground, Europe. And maybe the European model will be quite different from the traditional foundation model as we know it. Yes, why not.

Robert Schuman's words are far more than a symbolic reminder of the vision of a united Europe. They remain a lighthouse that offers guidance to this day, also to philanthropy. Inspired by these thoughts, the European Cultural Foundation (ECF) and the Allianz Kulturstiftung for Europe (AKS) would like to invite you, through this study, to a discussion to imagine European philanthropy for a common future.

This study has been jointly commissioned by ECF and AKS and carried out by Wider Sense, a think and do tank specialised in corporate social responsibility, philanthropy and social investment. The collaborative process has been most insightful and producing new ideas as to how to unfold the yet untapped potential of philanthropy for Europe. ECF and AKS are keen to explore ventures such as an EU-Philanthropy Matching Fund, a European Community Foundation model and a digital crowdfunding platform for Europe. We are grateful to Michael Alberg-Seberich, Managing Partner of Wider Sense for steering the study and providing valuable expert help, and to his team for its continued contribution and support. We much appreciated the effective and smooth cooperation throughout the process with Wider Sense Consultant Eva Schneider. Our sincerest thanks also go to the interviewees, who have contributed stimulating and challenging thoughts, enriched our knowledge, and informed our decisions on next steps. All are listed in the Appendix.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This explorative research provides insights into philanthropic engagement for Europe – an idea we refer to as *philanthropy with a European purpose*. Based on a literature review and 20 interviews with cultural activists, policy makers, academic experts, leading foundation staff and representatives of philanthropic umbrella organisations, researchers derived the following key findings:

- **Europe is at crossroads.** It is not only the Covid-19 crisis that reveals Europe's political, economic, social and cultural vulnerability. Rising nationalism and shrinking spaces for civil society threaten the idea of Europe as a great diversity of culture, language and history united by shared values, rights and principles.
- **Philanthropy needs to act** – internally and externally. The current Covid-19 pandemic creates momentum for a new philanthropy across Europe, a philanthropy that is political, activist and inclusive.
  - **Political:** Philanthropy must not shy away from addressing controversial issues and take an active stance in favour of European values, rights and principles.
  - **Activist:** Philanthropy builds bridges between policy makers and civil society. It listens to marginalised groups and helps make their voices heard in the public and political arena. Philanthropy takes the roles of incubator and risk-taker for innovative ideas and allows for forward-thinking, even radical, political debate about Europe.
- **Inclusive:** Philanthropy embraces all forms of civic engagement for the common good, be it through foundations, citizens' action or individual donors. In doing so, philanthropy becomes part of a movement for the idea of Europe.
- **Philanthropy with a European purpose** that strengthens the values, rights and principles associated with Europe is no longer “nice to have”. It must be an **integral part** of all philanthropic activities across Europe.
- The phrase *philanthropy with a European purpose* raises **lively discussions**, especially among people outside the philanthropic sector.
- We must recognise the **dilemma** that arises in taking a political stance while being a convener that allows for open and opposing arguments.

The paper concludes with a set of ideas about how to move *philanthropy with a European purpose* forward. These will be part of a follow-up exercise designing a high-level blueprint with concrete new instruments for philanthropy for Europe.

# SCOPE AND DESIGN

This paper explores the nature and untapped potential of *philanthropy with a European purpose*. The following observations framed this research project:

- Only a small number of foundations focus their activities on Europe and/or follow a true European mandate embedded in their legal statute.
- Many foundations consider Europe as either 1) a value frame they advocate for, or 2) a stage on which they can collaborate.
- Philanthropy in Europe may demonstrate that collaboration could positively affect certain global challenges solvable only on a transnational level.
- The current Covid-19 pandemic calls on philanthropy to react locally, nationally and transnationally. This is a chance for *philanthropy with a European purpose* to create a space for exchanging resources, experiences, arguments and solidarity.

The research was qualitative and explorative. We conducted qualitative interviews with 20 representatives selected by the project team from the academic, political and philanthropic/civil society sectors<sup>1</sup> across Europe, complemented by a literature review.<sup>2</sup> Given the non-randomised selection of interviewees, the research is not representative. Four key questions guided researchers:

- What is the meaning of *philanthropy with a European purpose*?
- What is the current state of such philanthropy?
- What barriers exist?
- What the key drivers?

## STARTING DEFINITION OF TERMS

*Philanthropy with a European purpose* has no current common definition. To describe this ecosystem, we have used the following terms:

- **Philanthropy** is broadly defined as “private action or the use of private resources for public purpose. The term can refer to any act of giving, whether the gift is money, time, or expertise.”<sup>3</sup> For the scope of this research, *philanthropy* means all forms of private action for the public good, ranging from collective structures like social movements to legally established organisations like foundations that are grounded in democracy and human rights.
- **Europe** refers to a multitude of constructions, meanings, histories and geographies. “Europe is not a given and cannot be reduced to an institutional arrangement (the EU).”<sup>4</sup> Thus, we reflect four approaches towards Europe in this paper:
  1. Geography – Europe as a geographic landscape, a continent,
  2. History – Europe as a space of a diverse but common history,
  3. Mindset – Europe as a space that acknowledges democracy and human rights as a basis of living together,
  - and 4. Politics – Europe as a space of the supranational European Union (EU).
- A **purpose** is set up as an end that a person or a group of people wants to attain. It is an intention rooted in meaning.

Thus, our first working definition for *philanthropy with a European purpose* denotes forms of local, national, and transnational philanthropic giving that are enacted within the geography of Europe and contribute to strengthening European heritage and its future.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The body of research analysing the landscape of European philanthropy is small but growing.<sup>5</sup> In the publication *Giving in Europe* (2017), the first study measuring philanthropy in Europe, former European Council President Herman van Rompuy unequivocally said, “There would be no Europe without philanthropy.”<sup>6</sup>

The book *Philanthropy in Europe – A rich past and promising future* (2008) depicted the great diversity and development of philanthropy. According to the authors, *philanthropy with a European purpose* had until then played a marginal role, as reflected in their description of the European Cultural Foundation (ECF) as the “oldest, if not the only, pan-European foundation.”<sup>7</sup> Other actors have entered the arena, such as Allianz Kulturstiftung and European Climate Foundation, yet the number of foundations with a formal mandate to strengthen the European idea remains relatively small.

Since the failure of the European Commission’s proposal for the European Foundation Statute in late 2014, organisations have advocated for a common legal framework on transnational giving.<sup>8</sup> The *European Philanthropy Manifesto* (2019) issued by the European Foundation Centre (EFC) and Donors and Foundations Networks in Europe (DAFNE) called on European policy makers “to work towards a Single Market for Philanthropy that includes a better recognition of philanthropy in EU legislation as well as at the national level, supports cross-border philanthropy across the EU, and decreases today’s barriers for philanthropy to leverage the impact of donors’ and foundations’ spending of private resources for public good.”<sup>9</sup>

Other writers addressed external barriers to transnational giving.<sup>10</sup> Said Breen, “[M]any of the difficulties experienced by foundations seeking to operate across member state borders in the European Union persist today. These fiscal and legal barriers are a result of incompatible national laws that impose separate regulatory requirements on philanthropic organisations.”<sup>11</sup>

Philanthropy has been contested throughout history, as a growing body of recent

literature shows.<sup>12</sup> In 2018, American author Anand Giridharadas argued that philanthropy further entrenches growing social inequities in our societies,<sup>13</sup> while author and Stanford political science and philosophy Professor Rob Reich advocated for rethinking philanthropy on the basis of social justice and democracy.<sup>14</sup> German sociologist Frank Adloff regularly points towards the lack of transparency in foundations.<sup>15</sup>

Today, in 2020, parts of the philanthropic community consider Europe increasingly relevant to their work. In its latest forecast, human rights funders network Ariadne identified the need to protect the European model of cooperation and mutual understanding against the repression of civil society and fundamental rights as a pressing challenge for philanthropy.<sup>16</sup>

The current Covid-19 crisis has reinforced the sense of community within the European philanthropic sector. In a recent post, lawyer Alberto Alemanno argued that emergency responses need to be accountable and transparent, and philanthropy needs to show that rhetoric fits the reality of grant making and strengthens the donor-grantee relationship. “Yet,” he said, “Covid-19 provides a welcome opportunity to rethink the historically difficult relationship between donors and grantees, in particular their respective and reciprocal accountability.”<sup>17</sup> More than 186 European philanthropic organisations signed a joint statement expressing their commitment to providing flexible support to civil society partners. “We stand together in European solidarity.”<sup>18</sup> An EFC member survey on Covid-19 revealed a growing “[g]eneral interest in finding a collaborative way to fund and/or exchange ideas, information, and good practices.”<sup>19</sup>

The crisis has underlined the urgent need for collaborative and transnational philanthropic activities with a European scope. An example is the recent *Call for the Creation of a European Foundation for the Prevention of Environmental and Health Crisis (June 2020)* issued by 76 scientists from 16 European countries. According to the authors, the

current times urge us to “preserve the common ground that prevails in Europe, one that makes the majority of its citizens proud: based in social solidarity, political democracy and concern for the public good.”<sup>20</sup> They suggest that a foundation endowed with an initial capital of €20 billion offered by donors from each of the 27 EU countries could contribute to this purpose.

*Philanthropy with a European purpose* has been a neglected research topic – likely

due to its niche yet complex character and data scarcity. Furthermore, we are seeing ongoing intellectual debate on philanthropy’s legitimacy overall, which *philanthropy with a European purpose* must reflect. Concurrent public debate on defending rights and values across Europe emphasises the significance of the field today and raises a question: How can philanthropy strengthen its voice in this conversation? The interviews (below) provide insights into how this may be done.

# INTERVIEW INSIGHTS: KEY FINDINGS

This section summarises key findings from 20 stakeholder interviews representing a variety of voices in the ecosystem of *philanthropy with a European purpose*: cultural activists, policy makers, academic experts, leading foundation staff and representatives of philanthropic umbrella organisations. Interviews were structured around three main exploratory areas relevant to *philanthropy with a European purpose*:

- **The concept: Potential meanings of the term**
- **The present: Its current state, barriers and drivers**
- **The future: Scenarios for *philanthropy with a European purpose* in 2030**

show that it is a controversial term – within and outside the philanthropic sector. Interviews revealed that *philanthropy with a European purpose* is characterised by three distinct but interrelated layers: A political, a mindset-driven and an organisational dimension. (1) The political dimension relates to the connectedness of *philanthropy with a European purpose* to the politics and governance of the European continent. (2) The mindset dimension refers to the goals of *philanthropy with a European purpose* – to strengthen, protect, and actively defend a certain set of values, rights and principles. (3) The organisational dimension shows how philanthropic institutions can embed European purpose in their structures and processes.

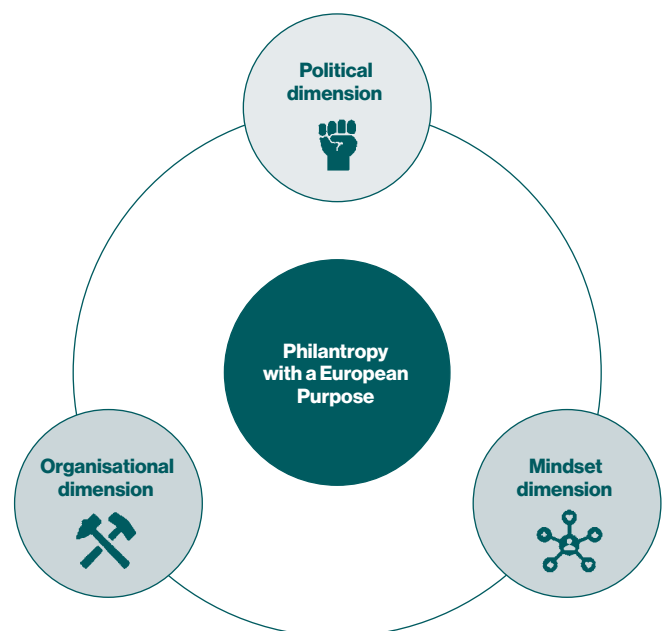
The varied degree to which philanthropic actors adhere to these three dimensions reflects the complexity and diversity of the field. Nevertheless, our researchers propose a shared understanding of *philanthropy with a European purpose* at the end of this chapter.

## THE CONCEPT

Our conversations started with a seemingly simple question: “What is the meaning of *philanthropy with a European purpose*?” Responses

### Philanthropy with a European purpose...

- ... is a political cause.
- ... strengthens, protects and defends a certain set of values, rights and principles.
- ... is incorporated to various degrees in philanthropic organisations.



## 1. THE POLITICAL DIMENSION

Interview partners perceive *philanthropy with a European purpose* as a political cause. It deals with policies and governance on the European continent through specific values, rights and principles. Therefore, *philanthropy with a European purpose* contributes to the core idea of European integration: to build bridges across nationalities, languages and cultural differences. *Philanthropy with a European purpose* thus becomes an enabler for a European community.

As one academic put it, “For me, *philanthropy with a European purpose* means mobilising energies and resources in the third sector with an objective that goes beyond national borders. Even more, it is linked to the overall political aims of the European project, which is to bring people together.”

A foundation representative described philanthropy’s contribution to the “European dream” beyond promoting the political project of Europe as follows: “We have created collaboration at a European level, called European Union, but it also goes beyond. This collaboration in itself is something we perceive as a good thing. We invest in this collaboration, either in the further development of it or [in] defence of it. There are a lot of activities that we as a foundation do to work on this European dream so that one day this continent will even further collaborate, instead of falling apart in pieces. All these investments, grants, or activities I would call European purpose.”

### A CONTROVERSIAL CAUSE

Some feared the term is so political that it risks philanthropic actors being misjudged as institution-serving lobbyists: “[M]y fear is that it could be understood as privately funding pro-EU propaganda. I don’t think an abstract idea of Europe is a public good in which philanthropy should be uncritically investing in.” This statement reflects the position that the reason for strengthening the political project of Europe needs to be closely linked to values, rights and principles. “We are invested in Europe not because it is European, but because it focuses on the right things. It is not the flag, but the content and values. To me, Europe is a geographic space

that offers great opportunities to advance the cause of open society.”

One interviewee applied a radical political vision to the term: “European purpose”: to create a European republic. However, they said, philanthropy has no role to play in this context because it is the state’s duty to translate structural change into policies and law: “If we are talking about a functioning EU, philanthropy does nothing. You may promote European citizens or European understanding or cultural intertwinement. I have nothing against this. But if we want to have a functioning EU system, it’s about structure and states and not about philanthropy.”

Conversations revealed not only that European purpose is a political cause, but that the role of philanthropy itself is in question. Interviewees outside the philanthropic sector in particular voiced criticism.

For some, the mere association with anything “political” was a negative quality. Researchers heard more than once the classic criticisms of philanthropy as a vehicle for tax evasion or a competitor to the state.<sup>21</sup> These interviewees voiced such opinions as, “Philanthropy has a bad reputation in left-wing circles. In the discussion about charity and philanthropy, one has a moral and structural reservation. The state should get the money and redistribute it,” and, “Philanthropy is [removing] the roof over society that is the state and taxes, then saying ‘OK, we will make resilient societies and when it rains in, we will give you a rain jacket.’ And that’s philanthropy. [...] I remember a time when things were funded by the state and not foundations. It is a structural problem that [looks like] a societal development.”

These statements resonate with the critical debate about philanthropy discussed in the literature review. Philanthropic organisations need to critically reflect on transparency, accountability and strengthening cross-sector partnerships to keep their social licence to operate.

## 2. THE MINDSET DIMENSION

A foundation representative depicted their understanding of *philanthropy with a European purpose* as, “A philanthropy that supports European values, such as human rights, rule



of law and freedom of speech. Out of solidarity, it goes into areas and provides support where help is needed most.”

Thus, *philanthropy with a European purpose* aims to strengthen and protect a specific mindset historically related to and characterised by those fundamental rights, principles and values that have shaped the idea of Europe and its integration process since World War II: freedom, tolerance, solidarity, diversity, collaboration, human rights, rule of law and democracy.

#### ARTICLE 2 OF THE TREATY ON EUROPEAN UNION

“The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.”

Source: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/treaty/teu\\_2012/art\\_2/oj](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/treaty/teu_2012/art_2/oj)

#### A SHARED BUT NOT EXCLUSIVELY EUROPEAN MINDSET

As we asked for specific values connected to a European purpose, the notion of values itself was viewed critically by many. Interviewees said values tend to be fuzzy, abstract and non-binding: “Values are basically worth nothing if they do not materialise in law,” and, “If you go into detail, you see how differently they are interpreted and then it becomes tricky.”

Further, values may be seen as exclusive entities. In effect, the defence of certain values that one may regard as rightful and good automatically excludes those who do not share them. Still, interviewees tend to mention liberal rights and principles when asked about values characterising *philanthropy with a European purpose*:

“I think that we Europeans, also we as European foundations, should be aware of our assets, of our culture: the freedom of speech, the freedom of thought, the power of diversity, the fruits of the Enlightenment. We should cherish our culture and the aligned comparative advantages. In addition to this, I feel strongly that Europe is more than coal and steel and one currency. It’s actually culture that can unite us, it’s our common past, our common

heritage, which we can turn into our advantage [...]”

These values are part of our heritage but not exclusive to Europe.”

In contrast, others deny that certain values are connected to Europe and once more demonstrate the controversial nature of this research project: “Values are the same for all activities of any kind. There are no specific values regarding the European question.”

To sum up, interviewees often referred to the fundamental rights and principles enshrined in the EU treaties when asked about European values. Based on the interviews, to promote and defend this set of values, rights and principles could be regarded as the goal of *philanthropy with a European purpose*. Culture is one crucial avenue to advance European purpose across the continent.

### 3. THE ORGANISATIONAL DIMENSION

Conversations showed that philanthropic institutions may embed the idea of Europe to different degrees in their organisational structures.

As Rien van Gendt argues, “In terms of the definition, it ranges from really a European mission to content issues that can be inspired and driven by an international experience in Europe. There is a whole continuum between those two extremes.”

#### FROM MISSION-BASED TO FUNCTIONAL APPROACHES

Organisations that have incorporated Europe in their legal statute follow a mission-based approach to *philanthropy with a European purpose*. Taking a closer look at the European philanthropic sector, the number of institutions that, for example, have a formal mandate related to Europe reflected in their foundation statute is relatively small.

Nevertheless, many philanthropic institutions advance their specific fields of activity transnationally. This functional approach to *philanthropy with a European purpose* is grounded in a belief in learning from each other and manifests itself in collaborative organisations like the Network of European Foundations (NEF), which facilitates cross-border and cross-sector projects in the

areas of social inclusion, democracy and international development. Cross-border exchange also contributes to building a sense of community: “You get inspired by seeing what happens in other countries and do it yourself. We are located in Eastern Europe and feel like a part of a bigger picture.”

European thinking not only can relate to transnational ways of giving but can also play an important role in shaping philanthropic action locally: “It is more a mental approach than a practical cross-border collaboration. While planning all our projects, we always start from a European analysis of the issue, then we come to the national, to the regional, and finally the local issue. This helps us to understand how these local issues are connected to the European level. This approach can also be achieved through local editions of a European programme, which works as an ‘umbrella initiative’, applied to different territories by the local philanthropic institutions.”

*Philanthropy with a European purpose* thus proves its local dimension: By looking at and learning from European examples, local philanthropy can improve substantially. The approach naturally weaves European thinking into an organisation’s culture: “A number of foundations that do not label themselves as European foundations have exchange programmes, work across borders in Europe, or are inspired by what happens in Europe. Once you do this, you have started a trajectory that could become increasingly more European, in the formal sense of the word.”

All this reflects the organisational dimension of the European purpose in regard to philanthropy. Besides “learning from each other,” philanthropy’s convener role, the networking role, and the infrastructure supporter role can play out as strategic functions on the European level.

#### 4. TOWARDS A SHARED UNDERSTANDING

*Philanthropy with a European purpose* can thus be defined as follows:

*Philanthropy with a European purpose* means all forms of philanthropic giving that aim at protecting and strengthening the values, rights and principles associated with Europe across

all European countries: human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

It is not a pro- or anti-lobbyist force for European political institutions. It collaborates with these supranational bodies as it also does with local and national government. It is no exclusive “club” of civil society in the realm of Europe but is enacted by a diversity of actors and alliances.

Nevertheless, *Philanthropy with a European purpose* necessitates long-term political action. It is both global, regional and local in its reach. It advocates at the national and supranational level for the protection of European values, rights and principles. It is a convener for deliberation about Europe on the local and civic levels through grant making and operational work in all fields of society. It builds bridges across national borders and between civil society and the political sphere related to the European idea.

*Philanthropy with a European purpose* is collaborative. It is actively engaged in transnational, cross-sector and interdisciplinary partnerships and mirrors the diversity of Europe. Collaboration is regarded as a value in itself because it breaks down silo mentalities, creates networks, fosters mutual understanding and unleashes collective impact.

To this end, philanthropy could assume the following enabling functions:

- **Laboratory for new forms of transnational collaboration advocating for European causes**
- **Supporter of policy work in think tanks on a variety of topics at supranational and national levels**
- **Activist for critical and radical thinking about the future of Europe**
- **Convener of citizen deliberation on Europe on a local and regional level**
- **Enabler of exchange across cultures and sectors through various platforms**



## THE PRESENT

In exploring the current ecosystem of *philanthropy with a European purpose*, interviews revealed that such philanthropy comprises a small community of dedicated philanthropic organisations – but recent developments are highlighting the urgency for increasing engagement. This section sets forth (1) Europe’s vulnerabilities, (2) external and internal barriers to improvements, and (3) the crucial drivers for change: fostering exchange along concrete goals and action and building spaces for deliberation.

### 1. EUROPE IS VULNERABLE

Overall, interviewees believe *philanthropy with a European purpose* is not a priority for the philanthropic sector in Europe. On the contrary, it is a niche in which few actors are known and potential has not been measured. They said:

“Foundations that have Europe in their formal mission are very limited, very, very limited. Let’s say I know more foundations with an international purpose than with a European purpose. And some foundations that say they have a European purpose are doing so because they find having an international programme (with different languages, currencies, cultures) too complex. But it is not an intentional choice in favour of Europe.”

“*[Philanthropy with a European purpose]* is a mini community. Plus, there are national funders that have an interest in supporting European projects. I know 15-20 foundations you can always ask if there is something European happening.”

“On a scale from 1 (no awareness on Europe) to 10 (totally clear about the European dimension), the philanthropic sector is at 2-3.”

The motivations to engage in *philanthropy with a European purpose* mirror the complexity and diversity of the field itself. While some organisations pursue a formally binding European mission, others engage in transnational collaboration for purely functional reasons. Several network structures and giving vehicles exist to facilitate and strengthen transnational cooperation among philanthropic actors.

#### CIVITATES

*Civitates, a philanthropic initiative for democracy and solidarity in Europe, provides funding for civil society actors to come together, revitalize public discourse, and ensure all voices are heard. The fund also provides capacity development and networking opportunities to its grantee partners. Civitates is hosted by the Network of European Foundations and began in 2018, thanks to support from 16 foundations that provided a starting budget of 4.1 million euro (2018-2020).*

Source: <https://civitates-eu.org/>

#### TIEPOLO EXCHANGE PROGRAMME

*The Tailor-made International Exchange Programme Offering Learning Opportunities is a one-on-one exchange programme offered by the European Foundation Centre. Individual foundation staff can develop their skills by working with a designated peer in another European foundation for two to five days.*

Source: <https://www.efc.be/peer-learning/exchange-programmes/tiepolo/>

Though not a priority now, strengthening philanthropy that promotes and defends European values, rights and principles beyond merely functional cooperation is seen as an urgent need. The idea of Europe as an entity is increasingly under attack, as indicated by Brexit, rising support for nationalist or populist political forces, and the so-called “shrinking spaces”<sup>22</sup> of civil society. As some interviewees stated, philanthropy therefore needs to step up to defend the values, rights, and principles enshrined in the Treaty on European Union, Article 2 (see p. 15).

“Even we, as a European foundation with a European mission, were taking Europe for granted [...] until 10 years ago. [...] The concept of a united Europe is challenged by geographical, cultural, and mental boundaries. Therefore, it becomes an important issue to push for effective European programmes.”

“We have to fight for the rights we lose. The gap between one small part of Europe and others is a huge challenge for all of us.”

#### PHILANTHROPY MUST WALK THE WALK

Most feel philanthropy must take a political stance. Even though the philanthropic ecosystem for a European purpose is small, those

active in the sector for more than 20 years acknowledged a rise: “Since 1995, more foundations are responsive towards Europe and numerous new foundations [have] emerged,” one said. But mere existence is not enough. “The picture is ambivalent. Engagement, especially in culture, has increased. However, true commitment to Europe is often only lip service,” criticised one.

In the context of rising nationalism, interviewees said, philanthropy must create avenues for political debate and show its commitment to the European idea not in dogmatic defence of the status quo, but in promoting open and critical debate. “How can we develop counter-strategies that work?” one asked. “The public sphere functions via a certain degree of polarization. When one pole is taken out, the discussion is pulled in one direction. Someone must organise poles; parties can’t always [be permitted to] do that. Other actors, like philanthropy, are needed.”

#### PHILANTHROPY MUST DARE TO SEIZE OPPORTUNITIES FROM COVID-19

Interviewees see the pandemic as having boosted Europeans’ sense of community. “The common experience of lockdown. A lack of trust in governments. Europe is no longer incontestable.” “It is usually the most vulnerable who suffers from a crisis, which makes systemic problems more evident,” said another.

The crisis could become a catalyst for significant progress in the near future: “If we can form coalitions around certain activity areas in the current situation, out of that could emerge a European purpose. You have to show that you can deliver,” said one subject. Others said, “Covid-19 gives us interesting insights into how cross-border and solidarity thinking is accelerating, and I hope it will last. It is an opportunity.” “It is a missed opportunity if we do not sit together to combine efforts now. It is better than sitting together afterwards to review which measures were helpful.” “Early consideration must be given to what happens after the crisis. How can we prevent shrinking spaces due to the restriction of basic rights? How can civil society be involved in this thinking process? This is where philanthropic actors must play an active role and provide resources.”

And perhaps the strongest and most widely shared sentiment: “We are not in normal times. It’s the time to dare something. Philanthropy should dare and explore how to get political.”

Although philanthropic organisations in Europe set up immediate emergency responses to the virus,<sup>23</sup> the crisis highlights once more the challenge for Europe to connect the global with the local. “We have to focus on our local communities without losing the global perspective.” Here are examples illustrating how *philanthropy with a European purpose* has already been implemented to meet urgent needs locally and globally:

#### UNITUS EUROPE – EUROPEAN PHILANTHROPY AND SOCIAL INVESTING IMPACT HUB

*Unitus Europe is an informal alliance of European philanthropy and social investing networks striving to align their diverse efforts during the Covid-19 crisis. An open online space is for sharing information, resources, and good practices, gaining new insights through peer learning, and identifying opportunities on the demand-and-supply side of philanthropy in Europe.*

Source: <https://unituseurope.org/>

#### EU STAFF COVID-19 SOLIDARITY RESPONSE

*In early 2020, staff members of several EU institutions initiated a fund to support charities offering medical and food aid in Spain and northern Italy. The focus for now is to show European solidarity and to distribute help quickly where needed. The fund, managed by King Baudouin Foundation (Belgium), has raised over 150,000 euros and made its first grants.*

Source: <https://www.kbs-frb.be/en/Newsroom/Press-releases/2020/20200514AJEUstaffCOVID>

## 2. EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL BARRIERS

Even though *philanthropy with a European purpose* is gaining traction, external and internal barriers constrict it to a niche. External barriers relate to structural reasons outside the philanthropic sector. Internal barriers refer to characteristics of philanthropy in Europe and its associated organisations. We spoke with interviewees about the potential for philanthropic organisations, especially foundations, to incorporate a European mentality in their operation.

EXTERNAL BARRIERS:  
EUROPEAN POLITICS DOES NOT  
SEE PHILANTHROPY AS A PARTNER

Interviews suggest that philanthropy in Europe is not yet visible on the European political stage. Thus, the potential of public-philanthropic collaboration is wide open and yet untapped. “The EU does not recognise philanthropy as a major actor who can deliver on the ground,” and, therefore, “EU instruments never factor philanthropy as a partner. As a result, there is a lack of incentives built in the EU machinery to look for synergies,” said a researcher associated with the EU. A philanthropy network representative confirmed this observation: “It doesn’t pay off that philanthropy has not been very visible on the political stage.” This lack of visibility explains to many interviewees the missing shared framework for transnational philanthropic giving in Europe.

At the same time, most interviewees said legal structures are not the most significant barriers. “In my view, inadequate regulatory conditions are pretended reasons,” said one; another shared, “Those legal and fiscal aspects are for me more the back-office problems that, at the end of the day, can be handled.” Many interviewees mentioned missing data needed to better understand the sector and limitations due to the sector’s small size (e.g., as compared to the United States).<sup>24</sup> Most foundations, too, are rather small and focus their giving regionally or locally; promoting Europe, at first glance, seems not to play an important role.<sup>25</sup>

INTERNAL BARRIERS:  
PHILANTHROPY IS ILL-EQUIPPED  
TO THINK AND ACT EUROPEAN

Many interviewees identified the governance of foundations as the main obstacle for boosting *philanthropy with a European purpose*. Cross-border collaboration is considered one of the most important features of *philanthropy with a European purpose* – “You need to work in collaboration, otherwise it doesn’t make sense and you don’t have the knowledge of other countries. That is what we do all the time” – yet governing bodies do not often favour collaborative projects with a European scope. Why? “It is more difficult for boards to defend European projects. Either you have a

board that is European in its thinking or you do not. Most are not.”

Financial considerations create barriers, too. First, Europe is not a priority for current (individual) donors, which means it is not a fundraising priority for organisations. One said, “Only a few of our several hundred donors have had a European interest. It is often a generational issue: Donors mostly above 60 want to donate for social causes. This is changing with generations, [but] for the time being, it is what it is.”

Second, foundations are risk-averse. Even though they have resources to support innovative and radical ideas, foundations often shy away from addressing a controversial and political topic because, “When you enter such a battle like the European debate, the risk of failure is much higher.” To actively engage in the European idea means committing to a long-term cause. However, foundation support is often provided for not more than three years and is granted to a specific project, not an organisation. “We would need to see a shift from 3-year funding to 10-15 years,” said one. “The project-oriented mantra dominated not only arts and culture on the European level. The obsession with growth created all this inequality in which we live today,” said another. From a third, “Many issues are being funded that are practically impossible to disagree with. Leaders of philanthropic organisations avoid exposure, which makes them susceptible to public criticism.”

Public criticism affects their reputation, too, and some foundations feel transnational giving opens their reputations up to unfavourable scrutiny. As one leader said, “Foundations are scared to be depicted as political and as an external interferer. In a climate of growing authoritarian attacks against critical civil society, they fear governmental attacks that could depict them as a foreign agent.”

Missing language skills is a barrier, as with the subject who admitted, “It is a real problem, but it will be overcome in the future. Only a few board members, officers, and others speak English. Therefore, communication with people from other European countries cannot take place.”

An interviewee also described a dilemma created by the voluntary nature of civic action and philanthropic engagement.

While philanthropy and partners can easily reach out to and involve audiences with similar beliefs, attitudes and interests, they seem to struggle to enter debate with people who do not embrace European values, rights and principles:

“If you want resilient European citizens who are more or less in favour of a common understanding of European culture, then the question is, Do you reach out to people who are with [far-right leaders] Salvini and Le Pen? Do you go to neo-Nazis in the East? There is a real question of who talks to whom these days. I am fearful that because philanthropy has basically a principle of voluntarism, not much can be done about it.”

### 3. CRUCIAL DRIVERS FOR PHILANTHROPY WITH A EUROPEAN PURPOSE

To engage in *philanthropy with a European purpose* means acknowledging the limitations facing philanthropy in Europe. Nevertheless, philanthropic actors are able to address organisational barriers, incorporate a European mentality in their activities and advocate for a common legal framework that facilitates transnational collaborative projects and public-philanthropic partnerships.

To actively engage in the field, philanthropic organisations need to create venues for cross-border exchange and unite around a common interest – crucial drivers for *philanthropy with a European purpose*.

As one foundation representative described it, “To me, being truly European as a philanthropic institution, one needs to experience Europe.” Thus, cross-border exchange is crucial not only at the operational level, but also among staff. This can be achieved through diversified leadership and staff, staff exchange programmes and relevant networking events. Many interviewees acknowledged the importance of such opportunities: “We invest in infrastructure. The main reason is networking, to get to know the actors. Otherwise the group would always stay the same.”

To be successful, cross-border collaboration among philanthropic organisations must be grounded in a common interest and precise goals. Said an interviewee, “If you don’t have a common interest, don’t start. What are

we going to do together? When it comes to concrete steps, you need to be precise and break it down. This requires pragmatism. Civitates emerged from its idealistic viewpoint, but if we hadn’t broken it down to concrete topics, it never would have worked.”

As these comments suggest, *philanthropy with a European purpose* is about building bridges not only within the philanthropic sector, but most importantly between people and the seemingly intangible idea of Europe: “We need tools and ways to encourage people to experience Europe, so they feel European belonging and European citizenship as well as what Europe can do,” a subject said.

This entails connecting the local, national and supranational spheres. Research suggests this could be achieved by encouraging local and collective forms of philanthropy, like community foundations and giving circles, to engage in *philanthropy with a European purpose*. “The biggest success [...] was the concept of community foundations: Link citizens to their community,” said a subject. The ecosystem would be more inclusive and diversify.

As this analysis has shown, building bridges also means creating spaces for deliberation. *Philanthropy with a European purpose* will thrive if philanthropic organisations dare to provide venues for all voices to debate the idea of Europe.



## THE FUTURE

**What could philanthropy with a European purpose look like in 2030? We have developed two scenarios informed by our research. They are built on a reference frame of existing scenarios for a post-Corona world developed by the innovation consultancy SOMMERRUST.<sup>26</sup>**

**In projecting a future for philanthropy with a European purpose, we cannot start from the assumption of “business as usual.” The Covid-19 pandemic is global and its effects will impact all parts of societies for years to come. Interviewees observed that societies in Europe and around the globe have become more volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous.<sup>27</sup> In this context, philanthropy must constantly reflect on its actions and adjust to the changing environment: “I think there will be pressure for philanthropy to look at systemic issues (education, health, climate change, etc.),” said a subject. “Foundations need to reconsider their own priorities.”**

### 1. THE VIRAL SPIRAL VS. EUROPEAN PURPOSE

Excerpt of original 2030 scenario (by aforementioned SOMMERRUST):

*“Initial measures to fight the virus around the world were often harsh, but not implemented effectively. When the virus finally seemed to be defeated after several new waves of outbreaks, it left behind a crippled global economy that was kept alive only by huge stimulus packages. Soon, the first scandals got uncovered: Several companies and rich individuals had misappropriated state money or taken advantage of the crisis. Violent protests erupted. [...] In the political arena, the virus of populism and finger-pointing spread. Extremist parties won one election in Europe after the other and made government formation increasingly difficult. Conflicts between EU member states escalated over the allocation of EU funds for struggling economies. During the so-called ‘EUxodus’ until 2024, several EU member states left the union.”<sup>28</sup>*

### SCENARIO AS APPLIED TO PHILANTHROPY WITH A EUROPEAN PURPOSE

Due to the weak economy, public spending and investments in healthcare and social infrastructure is low. The remaining 20 EU member states argue about the appropriate distribution of budgets, which have shrunk considerably. Distrust in national and supra-national political institutions is high among European populations.

The role of the philanthropic sector to support and protect the public good is now more important than ever, not only in those states that have left the EU. In many European countries, philanthropic institutions have united to defend and strengthen fundamental rights and to compensate for state failures. However, collaborations involving weakened civil society organisations in education, healthcare and housing have negatively affected philanthropic giving. Moreover, as public resources are limited, philanthropy has come under attack for holding back money that should be given directly to the state. To counter this distrust, transparency and dialogue with citizens have become philanthropy’s most important assets.

As philanthropic institutions must focus more than ever on supporting local social infrastructures, the importance of *philanthropy with a European purpose* wanes. Transnational funding is not feasible due to harsh bureaucratic and legal restrictions imposed by nationalist governments across Europe. Still, a group of foundations has set up a small but strong *philanthropic network with a European purpose* exploring alternative forms of support.

Before Covid-19, *philanthropy with a European purpose* fostered the collaborative support of civil society infrastructure and the free exchange of knowledge related to human rights and democracy. Because of the pandemic, the bold idea of European integration has reduced to preserving diversity, tolerance and dialogue among European societies.

## 2. SOLIDARITY RULES! CATALYSTS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

Excerpt of original scenario (by aforementioned SOMMERRUST):

*“Luckily, the worst case in terms of corona deaths and economic consequences has not materialized. However, prolonged social distancing and continued cautionary measures for gatherings take their toll: Many, especially younger people, develop mental problems like anxiety or loneliness. With constant news about the high risk of contagion, close physical contact starts to feel threatening for an increasing number of people. At the same time, the desire to do good reaches a new level. ‘Fridays for Future’ got temporarily thwarted by the crisis but is now refuelled by the desire for solidarity and purpose that unites the younger generation. An even broader social movement for international solidarity and sustainability has emerged [...] Over time, the new zeitgeist for solidarity has taken root in the political mainstream. Large corporate social responsibility programmes dramatically increased in significance, while several companies suffered from boycotts and mass resignations after they violated the increasingly strict moral code of the late 2020s. By the year 2028, ‘public shaming due to a moral fail’ had become the number-one personal fear – ahead of ‘getting a fatal illness.’ The EU has meanwhile been transformed into a ‘value union’ that represents the new European mindset on the international stage.”<sup>29</sup>*

### SCENARIO AS APPLIED TO PHILANTHROPY WITH A EUROPEAN PURPOSE:

In 2030, the world has entered a new epoch. A new meaning has been given to the abbreviation “BC” – “Before Corona” and “After Corona” illustrate the fundamental change of behaviour and mindset since the first coronavirus outbreak in 2019.

Philanthropy in Europe has changed fundamentally, too. As voluntary work has become a social norm, the number and size of civil society organisations have risen significantly. Participatory, collective, and bottom-up organisational structures like social movements, giving circles and community foundations are important voices in the philanthropic

and civil society ecosystem. These visible new actors boost philanthropy to the political arena by addressing topics such as racism, inequality and diversity. Still, some criticise philanthropy for a lack of democratic legitimacy and excessive political influence. Generally, however, people positively credit philanthropy for contributing to society’s good.

*Philanthropy with a European purpose* has become commonplace in all European countries. Transnational giving is as normal as local giving, thanks to a common legal framework implemented by the EU in dialogue with civil society representatives. The framework also obliges philanthropic institutions to contribute at least 1% of their annual budget to a European purpose fund. This fund, managed by a rotating team of philanthropic and other civil society organisations, advocates for protecting European citizenship by funding research and provides resources for local projects that promote European values. In doing so, philanthropy helps create open spaces for deliberation in and about Europe.

# CONCLUSION

This study is an exploration. We took the risk of delving into a conceptual idea and learned that “philanthropy” and “Europe” are contested terms. We learned that these concepts are equally under attack. We also learned that *philanthropy with a European purpose* is associated with high expectations for a peaceful, collaborative way we can all live together today and in the future.

Based on our research, we set forth a definition of *philanthropy with a European purpose* as comprising all forms of philanthropic giving that aim to protect and strengthen a specific idea of Europe. These are the values, rights and principles associated with Europe across the continent: human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights – as well as with practices of philanthropy that can be derived.

The interviews show that *philanthropy with a European purpose* as so defined can evolve into a philanthropic culture characterised by transparency, diversity, collaboration and the facilitation of a European civil society. It postulates a philanthropy that takes a stand, does not shy away from policy and embraces activism by artists, engaged citizens and new social movements as important levers of change.

Activism in philanthropy may come in many forms: funding policy research, being an advocate, convener and facilitator, supporting individuals or engaging in public debate. It is a philanthropy that encompasses more risk but also more chances for positive social

change. This kind of philanthropy is not new, but, as interviewees observed very diplomatically, philanthropy may have become complacent to the circumstances we live in and the dilemmas we face.

More European perspective on transnational giving and charity law overall would help this kind of philanthropy develop. Still, these formal barriers, even so explicitly explored in the interviews, were not seen as the number-one challenge.

It would be wrong to turn this kind of philanthropy in one of avowal, belief or domination. Several interviewees noted that not everything European can be unequivocally characterised as right or good. *Philanthropy with a European purpose* needs to enable the deliberation of the tense and existential questions this continental community faces. The one example mentioned repeatedly in the interviews was how open and inclusive Europe is towards the women, men and children coming to this continent as refugees or migrants. Though these are trying questions, they are essential for further developing our idea of Europe and the legitimacy of philanthropy.

We suggest that *philanthropy with a European purpose* lives up to the human rights and democracy principles associated with Europe. It allows for debate and development of these principles. Covid-19, climate change, growing inequities and populism are urgent threats to the way philanthropy operates in Europe.

Now is the time to act for what is best not just for Europe, but for people everywhere.

## WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Based on the research presented here, the teams of the European Cultural Foundation and of the Allianz Kulturstiftung got together and discussed further measures to push a philanthropy with a European purpose. This discussion and reflection resulted in the following suggestions:

### IDEA 1

**EU-Philanthropy Matching Fund which pools EU and foundation resources into a joint European Flagship Fund (EFF). A win-win initiative in which funds are re-distributed to genuine European (solidarity) projects. Proposal: Allocate 1% of the €60 billion annual budget of foundations to projects for Europe → €600 million of philanthropic investment to go to initiatives that strengthen values, rights and principles associated with Europe.**

### IDEA 2

**European Community Foundation, a foundation created by citizens for citizens in Europe. Taking inspiration from the 800 community foundations in Europe but working on challenges and solutions that are European, build a community of change. As foundations in which European citizens have a stake and become shareholders, it shapes Europe through the promotion of citizens engagement with European causes and the strengthening of civil society in Europe.**

### IDEA 3

**Digital Crowdfunding Platform for Europe for individual donors who want to make a difference and invest in Europe while promoting a safe, just, unified and inclusive European space. This kind of European platform would enable anyone to join a donor community, support European projects or causes they're passionate about, and provide private money for the generation of new ideas and projects for Europe. A platform with in-built story-telling and social sharing features to reach millions of Europeans.**

### IDEA 4

**High-level blue-print for a new philanthropic mechanism for Europe building on the lessons learned and results of the Wider Sense study. Such work would explore and test in multi-stakeholder settings the three above-mentioned models for philanthropy with a European purpose. More generally, expand knowledge about philanthropy with a European purpose by funding quantitative and qualitative research.**

To conclude, to meet today's extraordinary global challenges we need an imaginative, adaptive, agile, accountable and trustworthy European framework in which public and philanthropic partners can come together, chart new instruments, scale their work and have a greater impact. Truly public-philanthropic partnerships for Europe can provide the necessary investments to overcome the crisis and build a future-oriented society that addresses the effects of the global pandemic and strengthens Europe's capacity to be resilient and unified. *Philanthropy with a European purpose* requires out-of-the-box thinking, probably a new organisational model but for sure its own resources. ECF and AKS are committed to working on both, in the most open and inclusive way.



# ENDNOTES

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# APPENDICES

CHECKLIST

LIST OF INTERVIEW PARTNERS

REFERENCES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## CHECKLIST

## ACTIONS TO MOVE PHILANTHROPY TOWARDS A EUROPEAN PURPOSE

## BE EUROPEAN

Open governing bodies for transnational, inter-sector and interdisciplinary cooperation.

**Aspiration:** Foundations with an endowment of at least €200 million have one board member from another EU country.

## BE DIVERSE

Include a broad range of backgrounds, mindsets and beyond in your staff, governance and grantees.

**Aspiration:** Foundations with staff implement diversity management concepts and reflect the makeup of their target groups.

## BE CONNECTED

Become part of networks and partnerships with civil society organisations, politics, business and research; leverage resources on a European level.

**Aspiration:** A strong European philanthropic support infrastructure uses the legal framework for transnational giving, is a partner to European institutions, advocates for philanthropy overall and supports the infrastructure of a European civil society and culture.

## BE BOLD

Dare to leave your comfort zone; take part in political discourse and take an active political stance in support of the idea of Europe.

**Aspiration:** An annual “think space” for the philanthropy community to convene on the future of Europe, especially the role of civil society.

## BE PRAGMATIC

Recognise that Europe is an ideal ground for implementing key levers of change in philanthropy (convening, learning from others, etc.).

**Aspiration:** Strengthened collaboration and knowledge exchange on the European level of philanthropy.

## BE DELIBERATE

Create spaces for discussing and experiencing Europe locally and regionally.

**Aspiration:** Philanthropy as convener, facilitator and main financier to enable deliberative forums for citizens across Europe. Experiences and learnings of peers available through a European Philanthropy data hub and What Works Centres.

## BE LOUD

Continue to advocate for an enabling regulatory framework to facilitate cross-border projects

**Aspiration:** A Single Market for philanthropy in Europe by 2030.

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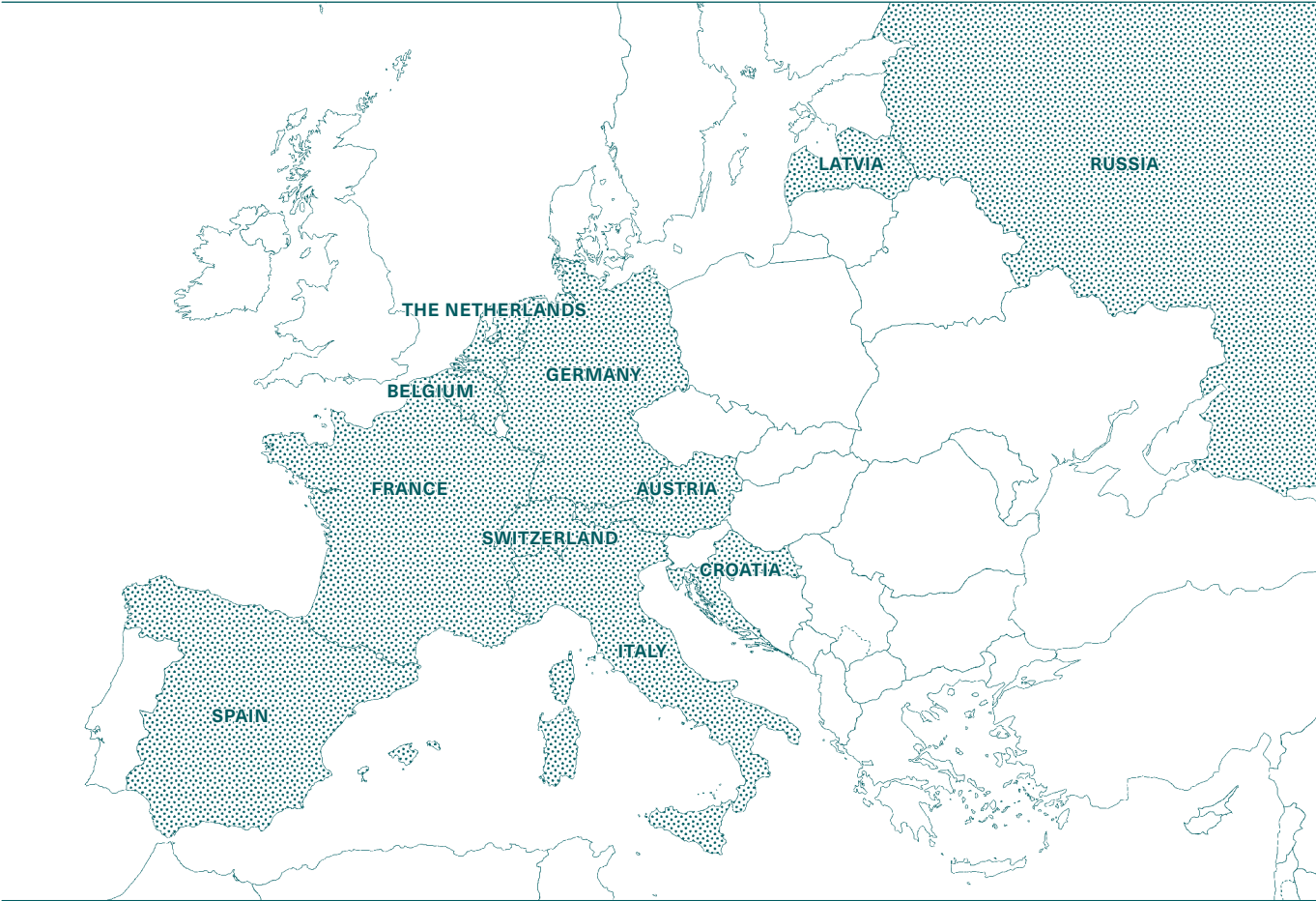
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**THE INTERVIEWEES LIVE OR WORK IN THE FOLLOWING COUNTRIES**





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### ABOUT EUROPEAN CULTURAL FOUNDATION

The European Cultural Foundation is an independent foundation promoting a European sentiment through developing and supporting cultural initiatives that let us share, experience and imagine Europe. We do this by providing grants, building communities, offering incubator programmes and online platforms, doing advocacy from the local to the European level, giving awards, organising events and challenges, publishing books and building alliances. The foundation office in Amsterdam brings together 13 nationalities working for a Europe that is open, inclusive, democratic and creative.

### ABOUT ALLIANZ KULTURSTIFTUNG

The Allianz Kulturstiftung is a not-for-profit cultural foundation for Europe. The aim of the Foundation is to strengthen cohesion in Europe using the tools of art and culture. As a promoter of social change, the Foundation is geared towards achieving impact and it operates independently. The head office is located in Berlin and the organisation plays an operational role as well as providing funding. The Foundation is committed to translocal art and culture projects in Europe and the Mediterranean region. Over the coming years, it will focus its strategic work on the following thematic areas. It will promote an open society while adopting a decentralised approach

to Europe and driving forward digitalisation for the common good.

### ABOUT WIDER SENSE

Wider Sense advises foundations, companies and the public sector on philanthropy, corporate social responsibility and social investments. Together with our clients, we shape social change in key topics such as social justice, education, democracy, human rights and sustainability. We have a passion for the philanthropic sector. With an international reach and our multidisciplinary team, we have collaborated with over 100 clients on projects in over 30 countries.

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