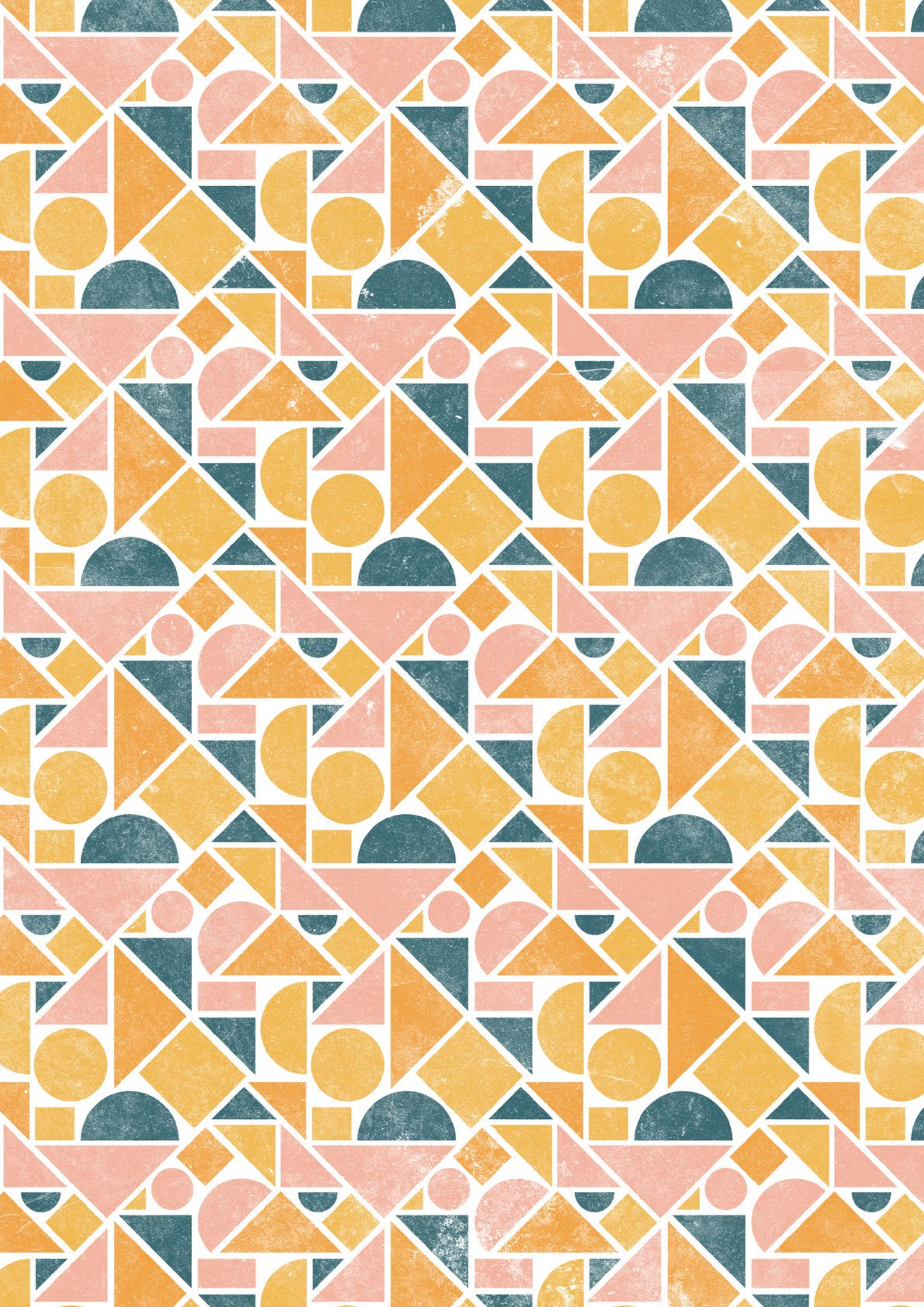




2021 Ariadne Forecast

For European Social Change
and Human Rights Funders





2021 Ariadne Forecast:

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The funders that adopt more enabling and flexible approaches will have the opportunity to create those essential enabling conditions for social innovation, and enable in civil society organisations, creativity, entrepreneurship, and an ability to seize opportunities and respond to new, unexpected threats.

Carola Carazzone | Secretary General | Assifero

Philanthropy must become courageous, step out of the box, and take responsibility to confront privilege: Who has power? Who benefits? Who makes decisions? Who are the leaders? How do we incorporate trust and solidarity? How are we supporting and giving voice to oppressed communities? How do we use our power to advocate for change in the sector? Can we be political enough? Answering those questions honestly is where the power of philanthropy lies.

Hanan Elmasu | Director - Fellowships & Awards
Mozilla Foundation

I really hope that we can build on this window of opportunity to address racial, social and economic justice issues. Grantees are finding ways to incorporate these perspectives into their work, and I hope that funders will also broaden their horizons in the sense of looking inwards at their own institutions.

Nani Jansen Reventlow | Director | Digital Freedom Fund

2021 Ariadne Forecast:

■ About Ariadne

Ariadne is a European peer-to-peer network of almost 700 individuals from 146 grantmaking organisations in 21 countries which support social change and human rights. Ariadne helps those using private resources for public good achieve more together than they can alone by linking them to other funders and providing practical tools of support. Ariadne is a programme of Global Dialogue, a registered charity (1122052) and limited company (5775827) which promotes human rights and social change by supporting innovative and collaborative philanthropy.

▼ Methodology

The Ariadne Forecast is a community created resource that draws on the Ariadne network. Ariadne participants and other friends of the network were asked six questions about trends in their field for 2021. We collected surveys and interviews from members across Europe and held online forecast meetings for funders in France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands and the UK to discuss and add to the findings. In the end we estimate that around 275 people have had the chance to contribute to the Forecast. While the meetings and discussions at them were private, the final forecast is publicly available for all, as a reflection on the current direction of the sector.

The 2021 Ariadne Forecast report was written by Julie Broome and edited by Debora Guidetti and Hannah Stevens, with support from Florent Gonthier.

Frode Sørensen designed and laid out the report: www.frodedesign.com

Ariadne thanks its members for their financial support.

Copies are available for download at www.ariadne-network.eu

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Introduction

Making predictions about 2021 seems like a foolish endeavour. 2020 subverted all of our expectations and turned our plans inside out. Ask people to share their insights into the coming year, and the most common reaction is to plead for reassurance that there will be no more surprises. 'Things have to get better, don't they?' is the refrain of early 2021. We're feeling enslaved to fate and very much not the masters and mistresses of our own destinies after a year in which the rug was pulled out from under us. There is an awareness not only of the challenges behind but also of those ahead, beyond vaccines and the end of social distancing.

As we probe a little deeper, though, what emerges is the belief that things can, indeed, get better but that we have to help make them that way. We cannot just survey the damage, rather we need to become imaginative about repairing it. We were forced to question everything in 2020, from how we manage our daily activities to how we organise our economies and how we care for our sick and elderly. Some of these issues were rarely seriously questioned before, perhaps because the status quo worked for those making the decisions or perhaps because they just felt too intractable to question. Yet the past year opened up the possibility to re-evaluate, to reimagine how our lives and societies could be structured. It has been a painful time for many, if not most, and there is undoubtedly more struggle to come as the economic impact of the pandemic comes even more sharply into focus. We can't turn away from that reality, but we can push through the cracks this crisis has exposed in the structures we built and consider new constructions, lay new foundations.

Of course, it is governments and multi-governmental institutions that are going to provide the economic stimulus packages and the large-scale funding for services needed to pull countries out of crisis and into whatever the future may hold. Philanthropy cannot compete with that, nor should it try. But philanthropy can hold the space for reimagining what that future might look like. It can support diverse and creative minds to articulate new solutions, marginalised communities to participate in the decisions that will shape their lives, and the advocacy efforts to influence the policy landscape to make change possible. The challenges ahead may be great, but philanthropy can play a role in helping us overcome them.

Sifting through the submissions for this year's Forecast, it's clear that there is a real appetite among European foundations for change. Very few people are hoping to go back to the way things were in 2019. They want, instead, to find the gems among the rubble: what positive changes have come out of the upheaval of 2020? What do we want to keep, and what do we want to do differently? People speak of some changes having been inevitable and only accelerated by the pandemic. There is no going back. So as philanthropy, let's embrace change but try to make it positive change. Let's help ensure that the future that is built is as inclusive, equitable, and green as possible. We may not be able control the future, but we hold the tools to influence it.

Best wishes,
Julie Broome
Ariadne Director

2021 Ariadne Forecast:

Global



Following an intense year spent mainly in emergency mode, European funders anticipate that their focus will now be on building back after the crisis of the pandemic, and they are looking for opportunities to create positive change and address the inequities of the past. Calls for gender, racial, and environmental justice to guide future

planning are getting louder. There are serious concerns, though, about the availability of funds and the sustainability of response mechanisms that were put in place last year. After the wild ride of 2020, will foundations be able to meet the demands for support of the recovery phase?



◆ What do you expect to be the most pressing challenge facing your grantees in 2021?

Financial uncertainty

Scarcity of funding is the number one concern on the minds of most human rights and social change funders this year. There is a general consensus that the financial uncertainty we have seen thus far is only the tip of the iceberg. In 2020, many funders loosened funding and reporting requirements, made emergency funds available, and supported direct services that they might not ordinarily fund. But these steps were a response to an immediate emergency, and now that it is clear that this will be a prolonged crisis with a lengthy recovery period, many foundations are having to assess what resources they will have available if an economic recession takes hold. There is a real risk of donor fatigue and a tightening of belts at the same moment that the real social impacts of the pandemic are starting to become more visible. The pandemic has exposed and deepened inequalities and social problems that were already present, and these will not disappear once populations are inoculated from COVID-19.

The sector mobilised more than €1.1 bn by May 2020 to respond to needs on the ground. The beginning of the emergency is over, but we are still very much in the midst of it. There will be fatigue on the part of donors. Resources are not unlimited; capacity is not unlimited.

Manager | Philanthropic Network | Belgium

Government reliance on private funds

The expectations that public authorities have of private philanthropy have also risen as a result of the outpouring of support, and there will be more pressure on philanthropy to continue to fill the gaps that governments leave. But funders question how sustainable this is and how they will be able to respond.

Balancing aid provision and policy work

Small associations that work directly with vulnerable groups, such as women's associations or refugee and migrant groups, were put in the situation of providing humanitarian aid or other direct services during the pandemic that would not ordinarily be within their remit. This involved a steep learning curve and puts them in a challenging situation going forward as, with limited resources, they have to prioritise between continuing this aid provision or returning to longer-term policy work.

Those who focus on women's rights now find themselves having to deal not only with women's rights, but also with poverty, and they are obliged to develop humanitarian activities. This complicates things, because it is not easy to advocate for policy change and at the same time deliver food parcels.

Director | Private Foundation | France

Prioritising the frontlines

While some organisations that have not been involved in direct COVID-response work, and therefore have not benefited from the emergency funding made available in 2020, have been able to weather the immediate crisis due to multi-year funding, they are likely to start feeling the pinch in the next year or two as those grants come up for renewal. Whether they are seeking new grant support or public donations, organisations are going to face a communications challenge: they will be asked to connect their work to the current context. For human rights and social change organisations, some of their work may not be part of the emergency response, and they may therefore have held back from fundraising in 2020. But their work is still vital to addressing the underlying structural deficiencies that exacerbated the impact of the pandemic, and they will need to be part of the long-term solution. Organisations will need to be brave and creative in communicating their importance to the process of building back following this crisis.

The digital divide

Some organisations may also find themselves disadvantaged in the fundraising process by the fact that everything now has to be done remotely. Some groups who previously would have relied on site visits or in-person discussions about their work, especially those who lack ample capacity to communicate well in writing – and in English – may find it more challenging to gain support.

Capacity

Beyond fundraising, organisations will be challenged by the sheer scale of work to be done as societies emerge from the pandemic itself into a longer-term social and economic crisis. Funders acknowledge that existing challenges and trends have been exacerbated, sped up, and made more visible by COVID. Moreover, there is a climate crisis looming on the horizon. Many organisations are going to need considerably more capacity and require additional skills in areas such as strategic communications to be able to respond adequately to all of the challenges that lie ahead. As remote work continues, and schools in some countries remain closed, burnout and fatigue are also real risks.

Re-establishing democratic norms

In responding to the pandemic, governments have put in place laws that restrict movements and the capacity to mobilise for protest, often with little consultation or debate. Now that governments have taken these powers, some funders question how readily they will give them up once this emergency has passed. This could have a longer-term impact on the enabling environment for civil society, which was already under significant threat. The scope for abuse of technology has also increased, with more people relying on digital tools and with governments using technology to track people in the name of public health. A priority and challenge for 2021 will therefore be the reassertion and reestablishment of democratic norms. Work to hold governments to account will be essential.

The use of technology has been both the saving grace and the blight of this pandemic. We're looking at how governments are using and deploying technology and what safeguards exist. Governments don't give up powers willingly once they've taken them.
Associate | Private Foundation | UK

Closing space for civil society

Funders working in Central and Eastern Europe are particularly concerned about an increasingly hostile environment for civil society and fear that there may be new laws in Poland or Bulgaria, for example, restricting foreign funding. Police violence and surveillance are also concerns in this region. Organisations in these countries are not only facing challenges from the government but may also experience a lack of public support, which can be disheartening for them.

The rise of the political right and the rise of nationalism and surveillance and state brutality, as well as the rise of violence against women, are topics we hear a lot about in central and eastern Europe.
Programme Manager | Private Foundation | Germany

What opportunities do you see in 2021 that might help your grantees advance their work?

Collaboration

There is a greater appetite for collaboration among foundations and between foundations and other sectors after the experience of the pandemic, and there is a sense that this is finally moving beyond lip service to a real commitment to working together in a holistic and strategic way. It is now clearer than ever that the social challenges facing philanthropy – and the world at large – are so great that cooperation is necessary to have any hope of solving them.

This year has been crucial to demonstrate that social challenges are so critical and so complex that no foundation can really tackle them, not even the entire sector can tackle them. This year it has become clear to governments, to the business community, and to the philanthropic community that one needs holistic approaches. Social issues are not easy to tackle. It's not enough just to provide funding. You can't just treat social challenges as investment opportunities and hope that the problem will disappear.

Manager | Philanthropic Network | Belgium

Digital power

The experience of the pandemic has also increased awareness of digital rights and how important they are. People are now relying on technology to do everything from work, to connecting with loved ones, to schooling, and receiving medical care. This creates an opportunity to engage more people, and more funders, in the debate about the uses of technology and why we have to ensure that our human rights are also safeguarded in the deployment of technology. These issues are no longer as abstract as they once were. While some organisations lacked appropriate hardware and software at the start of the pandemic, many are now well outfitted, in part thanks to companies that made their tools available to non-profits, and this puts them in a good position at the start of 2021 to really build their online presence and services. However, they also need to have a greater understanding of the implications of this shift for data privacy and security, for example.

Racial justice

The global movement to fight anti-Black racism made a huge step forward in 2020 and demonstrated that it is possible to advance justice agendas even in times of crisis. There is a real opportunity to build on the momentum generated and make a real commitment to fighting racism. The civil society sector, including foundations, is now engaging in much more reflection about diversity and equity within the sector and the ways in which its own practices may be reinforcing inequities. The seriousness with which organisations are now approaching these questions opens a real opportunity for change across the sector.

The questions about power and equity, and particularly regarding the Black Lives Matter protests, generated a lot of interesting introspection about the role organisations play. More organisations are examining their own structures and ways of thinking about diversity and equity and recognising it as fundamental to the work that they do. We see organisations taking it much more seriously than they have before, and that's true of us as a funder as well.

Associate | Private Foundation | UK

Social movements

In general, there is a lot of optimism about the power of movements and a sense that the communities that have been built over the course of 2020, while everyone was reduced to acting very locally, will help provide an antidote to the trends of authoritarianism and populism.

2021 also brings renewed opportunities for addressing climate issues. More funders are interested in and integrating climate into their strategies, meaning that there could be more available funding for climate change-related work. COP26, postponed from 2020 to

Climate justice

2021, will be an opportunity for climate organisations to move the agenda forward, but they will need ample capacity and skills to take advantage of that moment. The leadership change in the US also provides a potential political opportunity to reengage the US in the effort to address climate change. The EU has emerged as a real leader on climate issues, which gives European organisations an opening to push for better climate policies.



How do you expect your practice as a funder to change in the next twelve months?

Core, unrestricted, long-term funding

More funders are prioritising core, unrestricted support for organisations in 2021, and some are looking at increasing the levels of general support to their grantees in the coming period. Funders are also planning to provide longer-term support to help organisations develop longer-term strategies. There will also be more funding available for seeding new networks and coalitions and for building the capacity of organisations or specific sectors of organisations.

Inclusive grantmaking

Some funders are planning to move to more participatory grantmaking models in 2021, after years of experimentation and testing. Other funders are looking at how they can decolonise their grantmaking and are looking for ways to fund groups that may not formally meet their funding criteria. Some are recommitting to being global funders and ensuring that they are accessible to as many kinds of groups from as many different places as possible.

Collaboration

Collaboration is expected to become more regularised across the philanthropic sector in 2021, building on structures that were put in place or enhanced during the pandemic. Many foundations have been exchanging information much more regularly and actively while responding to the health crisis, and this is expected to continue as resources shrink and demands grow. Collaboration will be essential to solving the social crisis before us.

In Europe we've seen that while the pandemic had financial and economic consequences, the social consequences are so huge. Collaboration is a way to create synergies and see the big picture. It has become apparent that the system was broken already; the pandemic was just a push. As a consequence, it's not enough to build back better, because we don't want to be back where we were; we have to get to the root problems in our societies.

Manager | Philanthropic Network | Belgium

Scenario thinking

The events of the past year have also highlighted the need for better planning and foresight. While it is not possible to completely predict or control the future, foundations have a growing interest in scenario thinking to help them plan for different possibilities. As we emerge from this crisis, there is the possibility that the world could drift further towards authoritarianism or that we could see a democratic renewal: foundations need to consider both possibilities and think about how to contribute towards the latter direction.

The idea behind the formulation of such scenarios is not to vote for which is the most probable, but we are interested in saying: we cannot take the luxury of acting as if the world had not changed, ignoring the possibilities that await us. Scenario thinking helps us to see the post-pandemic scenario and the potential opportunities.

Director | Private Foundation | Spain

Remote working

Funders are also anticipating that remote working is here to stay. This will have an impact on the operations of foundations as they adapt their practices and processes to this new environment. Although there is a hunger for in-person meetings and conferences following the past year of isolation, there is also a consensus that we cannot go back to the previous level of travel that was predominant in this sector. As foundations get serious about tackling

the climate crisis, they are likely to be more thoughtful and cautious about organising conferences that involve significant travel and reserving those opportunities for things that really cannot be done online.

● What issue or field of practice do you think will become more important in 2021?

Health

Health care and health equity are issues that have not traditionally been a focus for many Ariadne members but are now seen as important issues for 2021.

Deepening inequalities

Issues such as mental health and violence against women and children have been exacerbated by the pandemic and map onto existing vulnerabilities in our communities. It is clear that unemployment rates will grow, and there will be a greater demand to invest in education and skills, especially for the younger generation. The gap between countries, even within Europe, will grow larger, and there will be a need to invest in developing the skills of the next generation in southern countries, especially.

Community philanthropy

Community philanthropy and participatory approaches have been a trend for more than a decade, but during the pandemic it has become more apparent how important it is to be connected to local communities to be able to really listen to them and understand their needs. Empowering communities and people will be an important focus this year.

Racial justice

Racial justice work will also be a priority in 2021, but some funders question whether this will shift from talk to action.

We're going to see how serious everybody is about their support for racial justice work. The issues are still there. How high will it be on the agenda of funders and grantees in the coming year? We need to make sure it's not just lip service. It will be interesting to see how serious organisations are about putting the spotlight back on themselves. Is anyone really going to reflect on their power and whether they should give up power?
Director | International Fund | Netherlands

Preserving democracy, resisting the far-right

The preservation of democracy will be an important focus in 2021, and funders working in this area hope that others will be more willing to step in with support. There is a real need to keep a check on the powers governments have seized and to protect the norms and pillars of functioning democratic systems. Some funders are going beyond this to focus on resisting fascism and authoritarianism and to countering the rise of the far-right and anti-gender ideology.

Digital rights

Digital rights and data will also be high on the agenda this year, especially as the EU further develops its role in regulation with the Digital Services Act, Digital Markets Act, and Data Governance Act.

Funding with a climate lens

Climate will also become a greater focus in 2021, having been somewhat side lined by the pandemic in 2020. As more non-climate focused funders start to enter this space, there is a lot of work to be done to help them integrate climate into their programmes and to find their role in the field.

There has been an awakening to the issue, but change is not yet happening at the necessary scale. Social and rights-based foundations need to find their niche and understand where the opportunities to ensure a fair and just transition are for them. The Green Deal is a pathway to social cohesion and social recovery as well as economic recovery.
Director | Private Foundation | France

◀ What political event or sequence of events do you predict will have a substantial effect on your work?

Brexit	As the Brexit transition comes to an end on 1st January 2021, with a deal negotiated in the final hours, Brexit is expected to have an impact both for the UK and the EU as each navigates the new environment.
German and Czech elections	<p>German federal elections are scheduled for the end of September 2021. With Angela Merkel stepping down, this could be an important transition not only for Germany but for the EU. With a different Chancellor in place, Germany could play a different kind of leadership role in the EU. There is some optimism that the elections could result in leadership that is more supportive of social justice and environmental issues. Some funders are also watching the German elections to see how they will be affected by the threats of misinformation/disinformation and polarisation that plagued the US elections in 2020. How these are managed and play out could be an important harbinger of what can be expected from other upcoming European elections. With that in mind, some funders are already looking ahead to the French presidential election in early 2022.</p> <p>The Czech Republic will also hold parliamentary elections in 2021. Some funders are hopeful that these could bring to power different political parties which are more open to the liberal agenda and to partnership with civil society. This could potentially change the position of the Czech Republic towards the EU. But if the elections go the other way and enable the current ruling party to consolidate their leadership, this could have a detrimental effect for civil society and the promotion of human rights.</p>
Reaching beyond our progressive circles	<p>The rise of authoritarianism remains a concern, as funders look to countries such as Hungary, Poland, and Russia. However, they also see signs of hope in the social movements that gained ground in 2020 in Poland and Belarus and potential to continue pushing back against autocratic trends. Human rights and progressive social change funders continue to acknowledge the need to build better connections to those outside of progressive circles to build influence. Climate funders see a particular opportunity to use climate as a platform for engagement with conservatives.</p>
<p>We need to continue building the network of conservatives and work with constituencies beyond the groups of progressives. We need to be shaping nonpartisan climate politics. There has always been an association of rights-based issues being leftist ones, but if members of Ariadne work on climate-related issues, they will be able to influence conservative networks with rights-based agendas.</p> <p>Director Private Foundation France</p>	
Rights and restrictions	As noted among the challenges, the restrictions that governments have put in place to deal with the pandemic and the surveillance that has been imposed on citizens remain a serious political concern in 2021. Funders will be watching to see how these laws evolve and what powers are given up as the health crisis recedes. Some funders are concerned that the rights of women and LGBTQI people could be ignored or deprioritised as governments negotiate the relaxation of restrictions.
Shift in US leadership	The change of administration in the US will be a significant factor, especially with control of the Senate shifting to the Democratic Party. This offers hope that the US may regain some of its standing as a global power promoting democracy and the rule of law; however, some funders are cautious about how much influence the US is likely to have globally and in Europe in particular in the coming years. There is a sense that both the US and European countries are likely to be more domestically focused in 2021 and that issues requiring international cooperation, such as the climate crisis, might not get the attention they deserve. Women's rights funders welcome the end of the global gag rule, a US

Rule of conditionality

restriction blocking funding to organisations that support access to abortion, repealed by the new administration in January.

At the European level, some funders are hopeful about the impact of the rule of conditionality for access to EU funds, passed in December. This could send a strong message about the EU's commitment to the rule of law and help bolster efforts to promote human rights.

What is your greatest hope for 2021, in relation to your work or philanthropy in general?

My greatest hope is that we really will come together as a society and understand that things cannot remain as they are. I hope that the approaches to social challenges will be much more systemic and holistic.

Manager | Philanthropic Network | Belgium

As we emerge from the pandemic, we hope that there is a much greater understanding of the link between climate and the social contract. Rights and social change funders are realising that climate is not "a single-issue effort" or that working on climate change is not diluting resources for social issues; while the climate community itself has realised that a technocratic approach only brings incremental change which is too slow; and a systems change approach opens opportunities for collaboration with rights-based foundations and to integrate a social perspective.

Director | Private Foundation | France

I hope we'll be more honest and vulnerable, because it's the only way we'll make progress. I hope that people will be able to learn to engage with their own blind spots and learn from them as well as from everyone around us.

Associate | Private Foundation | UK

We hope to be able to boost drivers of change both in terms of societal attitude and cultural representation in the aftermath of a shattering year during which the world as we knew it showed its limits and shortcomings.

Anonymous | Belgium

I hope that this year of crises (2020) becomes an impetus to start moving on major issues affecting everyone - climate crisis, capitalism, racism, gender discrimination, etc., as a community of funders and civil society rather than in silos as we have been functioning traditionally.

Program Director | Private Foundation | USA

2021 Ariadne Forecast:

France



In the wake of a year of crisis, socioeconomic issues are front and centre for French funders. These issues have been a growing concern for funders for years, as unemployment and homelessness have risen, but the pandemic has plunged thousands more into poverty. French foundations are grappling with how to meet immediate demands for humanitarian support

while also addressing the need for longer-term systemic change. They are simultaneously battling against a wave of disinformation that threatens efforts to bring the pandemic under control. Funders are starting to come together in solidarity to tackle these huge social issues and are encouraging new philanthropists to join in those efforts.



What do you expect to be the most pressing challenge facing your grantees in 2021?

As it has everywhere, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact in France, posing significant challenges for social change organisations. In France, there are now one million more people in extreme poverty due to COVID, resulting in an explosion in needs. The demand for food aid has increased by 20-25%, and those who were already living precariously have now been plunged into poverty. Furthermore, despite the adoption of some exceptional measures, social welfare payments in France for those under 25 years of age are limited; therefore, the cessation of economic activity in restaurants and events has deprived young people (students and others) of their livelihoods. In December 2020, an estimated 200,000 – 230,000 people stopped receiving unemployment benefits and will have to rely on the very last social safety net in France.

Funders addressing poverty are concerned about the associations and social enterprises working with these vulnerable communities, because these organisations are themselves weakened. They are facing greater demand than ever before, yet they lack funding because companies have reduced or stopped their subsidies. There are concerns that they may not have access to sufficient operating and programme funding in 2021, especially given the looming economic crisis. Funders are trying to step in to provide needed support but also remain wary about substituting support that should come from the state. Although public donations were up 20% in 2020, there are concerns that this level of public support will not be sustainable. It is also challenging for those funders who see a long-term value in supporting advocacy to change social structures but recognise that the emergency needs are so great that they will continue to be called upon to support services and aid.

Funders also have concerns about the long-term impacts of remote working on organisations, particularly among overworked staff teams dealing with challenging social issues.

Many organisations who rely on volunteers are struggling because older volunteers, who make up a large portion of the volunteering public, are homebound. This makes the logistics for services like food aid particularly challenging.

Organisations will continue to be faced with the problem of rising inequalities, and those working on issues around migration will find themselves under particular pressure. Democracy is seen to be under threat from protectionism and xenophobia.

Digitisation is an area of growing concern after a year when everything has moved online. This trend is resulting in greater social isolation as well as a growing problem of disinformation and conspiracy theories.

Violence against women and girls, which increased significantly during the pandemic, will be another challenge for organisations to address in 2021.

Addressing the climate crisis, including the degradation of biodiversity, food insecurity, and the impacts of climate migration is a priority and a challenge. Funders worry that society is unprepared to face the crisis ahead.

We are probably on the eve of a catastrophic change in the way the planet works (from a biological perspective). We are suspended above the void. Our social systems are overstretched. There is a risk of social implosion following physical and biological crises which will make life more difficult; there will be an increase in the migratory phenomenon linked to the increase of climate-related disasters, and we must prepare to organise ourselves to welcome migrants, but there are many actors who militate against that.

Chair | Private Foundation | France

What opportunities do you see in 2021 that might help your grantees advance their work?

The pandemic has brought greater attention in France to the plight of the most vulnerable and the ways in which the socio-economic system has let them down. The government is implementing a massive recovery plan, and there is now space for discussion among politicians about issues such as universal basic income, previously not on the agenda. There is a more open and frank acknowledgement in society of overlapping inequities, and particularly health and economic injustices and inequities.

The move to remote work opens up opportunities for organisations to learn to use new digital tools more effectively. Organisations are now better equipped to work online than they were at the beginning of the pandemic, and they are in a position to learn how to campaign more effectively using digital platforms, for example.

The pandemic has brought out new, younger volunteers and many citizen initiatives have popped up outside the existing structures of formal associations. These new structures can be more flexible and agile and provide a challenge to existing structures. This is an opportunity to reflect on and shape the best structures and frameworks for the future.

Some companies have embraced their social responsibility during the pandemic and started to think more about their potential social utility rather than just their value to shareholders. Companies should be encouraged to continue to see themselves as important social actors, and there are opportunities for developing better alliances between companies and associations. Philanthropy could play an important role in facilitating these relationships.

Philanthropy can develop its position vis-à-vis the public, a new public-private link, because philanthropy can be a pioneer in the shifting of public practices. For example, to change the practices of teachers and reduce inequalities; to provide rapid support for digital technology in schools; or to provide tools to teachers in critical moments such as the aftermath of the Samuel Paty assassination.

Expert | Private Foundation | France

The pandemic may have provided an opportunity for feminist organisations to advance their work. They stepped into a new role in the past year, helping address the immediate needs of vulnerable populations and increasing their visibility in communities. While feminist discourse is often dismissed in wider society, there is now a greater understanding of who feminists are and more recognition that they are working for the good of society. There may also be an opportunity to advance work to end violence against women and girls as lockdowns have brought this problem to greater public attention.

◆ How do you expect your practice as a funder to change in the next twelve months?

Continuing a shift that was accelerated by the start of the pandemic in 2020, more foundations are expected to give long-term core support in 2021 and make this a central part of their approach, and they are committed to being more flexible. It remains to be seen whether this trend will continue beyond the pandemic; if there are many foundations who have not yet relaxed their funding conditions, there is at least some movement towards greater flexibility. Alongside such core support, some funders are also trying to ensure their partners have the skills and access they need to be effective.

We help NGOs with operational support so they can be financially secure and have the space/time to devote to identifying needs, through independent analysis. But we also support and accompany them in their communication and advocacy, especially if they depend on state subsidies, so that their demands will be heard by institutions.

Research Manager | Private Foundation | France

Some funders are also prioritising support to those organisations that are involved in advocacy or that play a networking role and can help facilitate collective action. Funders themselves are also planning to exercise their role as convenors.

Convening and connecting is a well-developed role at our foundation; not so much in terms of offering skills development, but rather putting actors in touch with each other or with other foundations. This is a strong trend that has accelerated.

Expert | Private Foundation | France

For the immediate future, though perhaps not as a long-term trend, some foundations are not bringing on new partners but rather working more deeply with their existing ones. They are working with these partners in a very collaborative way and seeking to ensure that they have the resources and skills to survive this period.

In spring 2020, many French funders responded to the pandemic with emergency support, but it is unclear whether that will be sustained through 2021. Some foundations are already starting to withdraw from certain fields or reduce their contributions, seeing an economic crisis on the horizon. Nonetheless, some foundations recognise that more emergency funding may be necessary, especially in light of the rise of poverty over the past year, and some are even planning to increase their support to organisations.

Our foundation will increase the subsidies distributed over the next year by 30%, using the reserves established up to now because we believe that this is a pivotal year; there will be an explosion in needs, but also a need to strengthen associative structures and social enterprises that risk failing.

Expert | Private Foundation | France

In light of the scale of the challenges and the prospect of shrinking resources, there is a growing appetite for collaboration among funders.

What is going to change is that we will work more in partnership. We are identifying more structural problems with greater needs, so we will work on these on a longer-term basis, offering a longer-term vision to our grantees, and play as a team with other foundations.

President | Private Foundation | France

Funders are struggling with the balance between the short-term, emergency needs and the need for long-term, systemic solutions. Some funders are prioritising structural, intersectional approaches and trying to develop a long-term vision while also meeting urgent needs.

There is a fertile tension between short-term urgent needs, the sense of urgency to act, and the long-term political vision needed to get to the root causes of the problems. Foundations need to be more flexible in considering their partners' requirements so they can bring a systemic solution and act on both the short- and long-term.

Director General | Private Foundation | France

As funders are thinking more about structural issues such as inequalities, there is also more critical self-reflection happening within philanthropy. Some funders are thinking about how to ensure that philanthropy works for positive social change and that it is not contributing to inequality. This is a question of legitimacy and the perception of philanthropy, but it also goes to the heart of philanthropy's purpose. These are questions that foundations may have to grapple with more deeply as they consider the root causes of inequality in their efforts to build back following the pandemic.

In a context of growing individual wealth and inequality, there is a problem with philanthropy when it is used by rich people for their own purposes. How can we ensure that our role is consistent with support of social change? Some American philanthropists have bigger financial leverage than some states.

Director General | Private Foundation | France

As is the case in so many countries, French foundations are also getting to grips with the changes that the pandemic has brought to their operations. They have had to manage rapid response grantmaking while working at home, and 2021 is expected to bring more adjustments as foundations try to tailor their programmes to the new environment and conduct strategy processes remotely. Some foundations have also found, though, that they are able to bring together their grantees more easily by using online platforms and that participation is better than when they previously convened physical meetings. Online gatherings facilitate participation by those outside of Paris, for example. They are therefore thinking about how to integrate both online and physical meetings into their work going forward.

▲ What issue or field of practice do you think will become more important in 2021?

In anticipation of disruptions brought on by the climate crisis, energy issues are expected to become even more important in 2021. Similarly, environmental protection and highlighting the link between the environment and the economy will become more important.

The protection of democracy from populist and authoritarian trends, which has been an issue of concern for funders for a number of years, is expected to continue to be a priority in 2021. Funders are thinking about issues like media literacy, critical thinking, and countering hate messages. Some funders are also thinking about how democratic practices can be encouraged and strengthened at the local level and reflecting on the relationship between the urban and the rural and centralised and de-centralised processes. There is an appetite for experimentation.

The reflection on democracy regionally (where we can experiment with alternative models without the acquiescence of the central authorities) is linked to the issue of polarisation and to new forms of social and solidarity economy (including forms of local currencies, for example).

Chair | Private Foundation | France

Loneliness is expected to be a major issue in 2021, having already emerged as a serious social problem in 2020 as a result of COVID restrictions. Education and equity will also be important issues in 2021. Digitisation is an issue increasingly on the minds of funders, with a focus on how to ensure technology is working for the benefit of people and protecting them. As in other countries, French foundations are becoming more focused on how to mobilise people and to better include beneficiaries in initiatives that concern them. In the current context, this may mean more digital organising, but there are some questions around who could be left behind in the shift online.

The global crisis brought on by the coronavirus pandemic has pushed us further into a digital world, and changes in behaviour are likely to have lasting effects when the economy starts to pick up. But not everyone is ready to embrace a more digitised existence. As a consequence, the crisis has also exposed the wide chasm between the connected and the unconnected, revealing just how far behind many are on digital uptake.

Programme Manager | Corporate Foundation | France

Some funders are hopeful that the social crisis we have all experienced will motivate new actors with resources to become more involved in philanthropy, while others are concerned that some philanthropists could become more focused on national issues and lose their focus on international solidarity.

Collaboration, among civil society organisations, but also between civil society and public authorities, is predicted to become even more important going forward. Some funders are also looking beyond collaboration to processes of co-construction, recognising that in a context of significant social challenges and dwindling resources, deeper coordination will be required.

What political event or sequence of events do you predict will have a substantial effect on your work?

The health crisis itself remains an important political event in 2021. Public authorities are struggling to maintain control over the public narrative and to combat the rise of fake news and conspiracy theories around the pandemic. This will be an ongoing challenge this year. France will be holding presidential elections in 2022, and the campaign cycle is expected to begin already in 2021. As the election draws nearer, some funders are concerned that the country could become increasingly polarised and that in the wake of the pandemic there could be support for populist leaders.

In France, we will enter the sequence of the 2022 presidential election so there will be a risk of political polarisation and a sort of hardening of political discourse that we are already seeing following the terror attacks. There is a risk of a popular vote of no confidence in the power in place because of the social crisis; there could be favourable ground for populist movements claiming a strong leader or a national preference.

General Delegate | Private Foundation | France

The question of radical Islam versus secularism in France remains a very divisive debate that could be instrumentalised in the context of election campaigning.

Some funders wonder whether 2021 will be the year that police violence and racism come to the fore in France, as controversy mounts over a bill to regulate the dissemination of images of the police in operation. There is hope that the experience of the yellow vests has helped bring this issue more into the public consciousness and that there could be greater will and pressure to address it.

The violence against the yellow vests, of which many white people were also victims, made the majority of the population realise that police violence is real, that it is a question of justice for all, and not "a problem of thugs".

Director | Private Foundation | France

The postponement of the Beijing +25 Paris forum to June 2021 means that the opportunity flagged last year for raising the issue of women's rights is still on the horizon for 2021. The French state has announced that it wants to put more money towards women's issues globally, and women's rights funders are pressuring the government to live up to this statement while also organising public events that will highlight the contributions and struggles of women in society.

The fight against homelessness may get a boost in 2021, as the European Commission has been charged with addressing homelessness, following a resolution by the European Parliament on the eradication of homelessness by 2030. The European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, Nicolas Schmitt, wants to lead a European framework for integrated national strategies to fight against homelessness. France will hold the presidency of the European Council during the first half of 2022 and could play a positive role.

● What is your greatest hope for 2021, in relation to your work or philanthropy in general?

May this deep crisis of humanity serve to initiate a turn, rather than cause us to run into the wall. This could bring a reflection on the destruction of the planet, and a reflection on human relationships, on wellbeing, and self-care.

Director | Private Foundation | France

We see more and stronger criticisms of philanthropy (especially in the Anglo-Saxon world), some more constructive or established than others. For example, critiques of philanthropy as a tool that diverts money that should be used by the state, harsher criticisms of the foundations of multinationals, as well as more conspiratorial criticisms. Philanthropy will need to grasp the constructive elements of these critiques.

Chair | Private Foundation | France

How can we work better together? The questions of human and soft skills are very important; the abilities to empathise, to collaborate, to function with difference, to consider the human factor, and to bring people on board are essential. Mobilising collective intelligence comes through building trust.

Expert | Private Foundation | France

Those who have significant means of action are realising their interdependence with others and with nature, and they will want to get involved in philanthropy. I hope we can effectively support them to do that.

General Delegate | Private Foundation | France

Without a doubt my hope is that donors give unrestricted grants for longer periods and reduce the investment of time and energy for grantees to access funding.

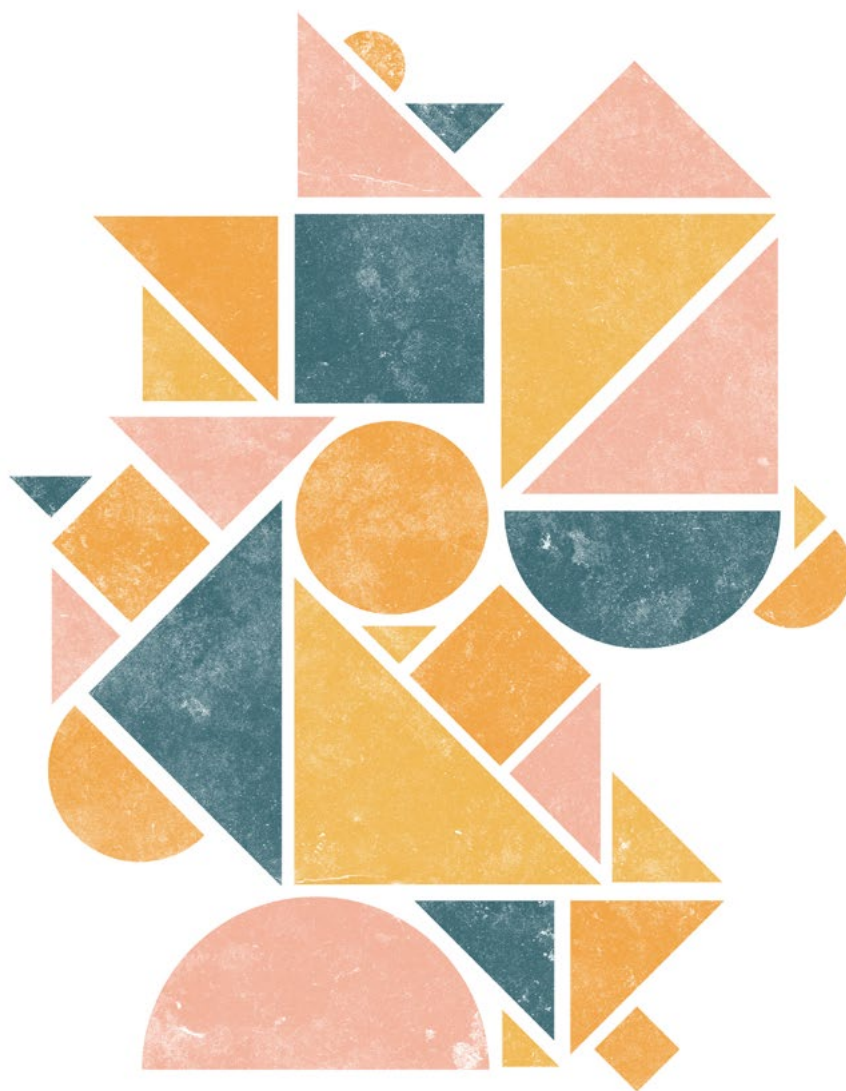
Philanthropy Advisor | France

I hope that the hard, painful work of 2020 that exposed our connectivity, our need for one another, while also exposing our tremendous global and national inequities and their violent impacts on large segments of society, will provide the vocabulary and will to reconceptualise social and public policies to be more human- and more equity-focused.

Programme Manager | Corporate Foundation | France

2021 Ariadne Forecast:

Germany



Threats to civic space, and in particular the regulation of public interest organisations, have been an issue of concern for German funders for a number of years, and these worries remain as they try to address the impacts of the COVID pandemic. Like funders across Europe, they

are trying to keep the civil society sector afloat despite limited resources and are keeping an eye to future challenges such as the climate crisis while doing so. 2021 could be a year that more German foundations embrace progressive causes and promote social change.



What do you expect to be the most pressing challenge facing your grantees in 2021?

In Germany, as in other countries, the greatest challenge is expected to be the limited availability of funding. Some foundations have reduced their budgets for 2021 or have reallocated their funding, leaving some organisations struggling. Public resources for social issues such as social inclusion or culture are also expected to decline. Even for those groups that are receiving state subsidies, it is often not enough, and some organisations may have to cut jobs to survive. Small and medium-sized organisations, in particular, are starved for cash, though they are often the groups that have the most significant impact in communities. In the meantime, organisations are struggling to deal with issues like the mental health of their staff and the shift to remote work. Foundations are trying to support their grantees through this difficult time, but even they feel that there are limits to what they can do.

As a foundation we created a response fund through which we helped organisations that found themselves in dire straits because of the pandemic. But, like state support, this fund can't last for long – it's only a bridge.

Senior Manager | Corporate Foundation | Germany

In this context, funding for human rights issues, especially, is expected to suffer, as even private funds are being diverted to humanitarian aid and to direct service provision. Some funders are asking how private foundations and the state can work better together to ensure that needs are met, and human rights not neglected.

Violence against women and girls has increased significantly during the past year, creating a challenge for women's organisations. While the topic of interpersonal violence and violence against women and girls is much more in the public eye now, it remains to be seen what the response will be and whether it will lead to greater action to end this problem.

Ethnic and racial discrimination is another problem that gained more prominence in the past year as a result of the global Black Lives Matter protests. The problem is not limited to anti-Black racism, however: in a recent study in Germany, 63% of Roma and Sinti said that they feel discriminated against, and many school-age respondents reported that they had experienced violence. Funders are questioning how they can help shift attitudes to end the cycles that link discrimination, low levels of education, and poor socioeconomic status.

Polarisation is a prominent concern for German funders, whether they are working in Germany or Europe more broadly. There is a feeling that polarisation is rising in western democracies and the accelerated shift to digital platforms as a result of the pandemic has only exacerbated this trend. It is more difficult than ever to reach outside of one's own bubble and influence or have an exchange with others.

It's now even harder for grantees to work outside of their echo chambers and closed networks. With the continuation of the lockdown, the situation deteriorated because digital/online work is now becoming the norm from school-age children upwards. There is no bridging of the online spaces. It's a problem if you can't reach groups outside your bubble or your focus area.

Vice-President | Corporate Foundation | Germany

Funders are also concerned about the longer-term impact of the restrictions imposed by governments to stop the spread of COVID. In Germany, compliance with such measures has been relatively high, which is positive from a public health perspective, but some funders are concerned that the bypassing of parliament to enact such restrictions could be a dangerous precedent.

What opportunities do you see in 2021 that might help your grantees advance their work?

Collaboration among funders grew during 2020 and is expected to continue to develop in 2021. This is an opportunity to make limited resources go further. Similarly, there are more networks and alliances among grantee organisations, who are working together to try to address the challenges brought on by the pandemic.

Some funders also identified a sense of solidarity among groups and in society more broadly and greater recognition of the interconnectedness of different issues.

I see rising solidarity, and a clearer focus on the strengthening of women's and human rights and the rights of marginalised groups more generally. I also see that despite the fear of unemployment there is a sense of solidarity, as if people are more aware if they belong to a privileged group and are willing to share their privileges and redistribute resources. That's an opportunity I see, but perhaps it's also a hope.

Programme Manager | Hybrid Foundation | Germany

Calls for unrestricted support to organisations have become louder and stronger in the past year as foundations have responded to the pandemic. More foundations shifted to the model of core, unrestricted support to help their grantees adapt to the initial crisis, and this could help demonstrate the value of such support and potentially become a longer-term trend. The shift to more inclusive and participatory models of grantmaking also got a boost from the events of the past year, and there is a sense that funders are more serious about listening to voices that they have not traditionally heard. Some funders are also encouraging their colleagues and peers to take a more self-critical approach and to be willing to learn from things that go wrong.

It's better to learn from mistakes than to sweep them under the rug.

Managing Director | Private Foundation | Germany

The pandemic has also created an opportunity to strengthen the digital capacity of organisations, including their digital communications. It has forced groups to find new ways of connecting, being together, and having discussions, and there has been a lot of creativity in the ways that people have found to develop ideas and projects together. This opens up new opportunities for political networking and strengthening the work for human rights in general. There are target groups, such as the elderly, for example, that previously were not digitally engaged but have now become so. However, some funders also point out that there remains a significant digital divide between organisations, with some not making the switch to digital operations or programming as easily.

Some funders are hopeful that there is now more awareness of the importance of work on racism and racist violence and that this could translate into more funding for such work, including funding for journalistic reporting of racist hate crimes.

How do you expect your practice as a funder to change in the next twelve months?

Some funders expect that the loosening of conditions for grantmaking and easing of restrictions on funds will continue during 2021. They are expecting to give more unrestricted funding as well as longer-term funding and to support more capacity-building for their grantees.

We should think beyond project funding, towards process funding, focusing on the end goal, and working together with our partners on strategies and what they need to get there. These changes started as an emergency coping strategy, but they will be implemented more and more across the foundation.

Vice-President | Corporate Foundation | Germany

Funders are calling upon one another to put more emphasis on strengthening movements and initiatives so that they can do their work effectively. There should be more focus on sustainable activism, collective resilience, and transformative community organising as funders aim to empower organisations to achieve their longer-term goals.

Other funders are experimenting with more participatory approaches, to their grantmaking and in some cases to all of their processes and operations. They are taking this moment to really take stock of the whole foundation and question how it could be more inclusive.

We are thinking about not only the grantmaking programme and grantmaking process, but all of the processes. Where is participation lacking? Where does it make sense, and in which ways? How do we want it? And looking at all the consequences of being more participatory: What's the amount of time to take decisions, etc?

Programme Manager | Hybrid Foundation | Germany

The focus on inclusivity also extends to a greater awareness of the importance of diversity in the philanthropic sector. There is a growing recognition that foundations themselves need to be more diverse in order to have a stronger social impact.

Foundations are still mostly led by people who are white, heterosexual, academic, and non-disabled. Diversity is necessary within foundations too. We are actively trying to become more diverse as a team.

Managing Director | Private Foundation | Germany

Some funders are also thinking more consciously about how to bring their grantmaking and investment strategies together so that they reinforce one another.

While some foundations anticipate that they will increase the amount of funding that they make available for emergency response to COVID and all the challenges it brings, others are preparing themselves to make do with less and thinking about how they can be more strategic with reduced funds. Some funders are planning to concentrate on a smaller number of organisations but to provide those groups with more funds and longer-term grants.

Partly as a result of the pandemic and all it revealed about the frailties of our current economic system, and the vulnerabilities that system has created among certain groups of people, some funders are thinking more about how to support the transformation towards a more circular and sustainable social market economy. This kind of transformation is expected to become even more important as the world seeks to address the climate crisis, which has been somewhat overshadowed by the pandemic but remains as a longer-term threat.

► What issue or field of practice do you think will become more important in 2021?

Polarisation is expected to be a growing concern in 2021, resulting in a need for more focus on social cohesion. This is an issue that funders believe will be important regardless of what part of the world they work in, especially as negotiations around how countries need to adapt to address climate change become more and more pressing.

The result of US elections should be a warning for us. You cannot get social change if you can't include the majority.

Vice-President | Corporate Foundation | Germany

Some funders highlight the need to communicate compelling and engaging narratives to strengthen democracy as opposed to just responding to the messages put out by those with anti-democratic tendencies. There is a strong sense that more needs to be done to bridge the divides between groups of people, whether it be an urban/rural or north/south divide. Common goals or values need to be identified if work to address inequalities, including racism and gender discrimination, is to be successful. Some funders will be focused on building alliances to help combat hatred.

☾ What political event or sequence of events do you predict will have a substantial effect on your work?

There will be federal elections to the Bundestag in September, as well as elections in six Bundesländer. Angela Merkel will also step back from leadership of the Christian Democratic Union, which could mark a significant change for Germany, both domestically and in its international role.

Foundations are waiting to see whether there will be any government support to civil society organisations in the context of coronavirus measures. The Green Party submitted an application to the Bundestag for a rescue package for civil society, as bailout measures were aimed solely at businesses. No support package has been made available thus far, but some funders would like to see the federal elections used as an opportunity to strengthen the call for such measures.

German funders also remain concerned about the treatment of civil society organisations that have been deemed political actors, thereby falling afoul of charitable law, because of their activism. There is a call for further clarification of what constitutes political action and for reform of the tax code to better facilitate support of groups that engage in advocacy work. The current tax code inhibits democratic engagement, because it does not recognise advocacy for social change or human rights as being in the public interest. Some funders would like to see Germany play a more positive role at the European level; when it unduly restricts civil society at the national level, it sends an unhelpful message to other EU states.

Germany is important in the EU. It's a rich country and should be a role model for dealing with its own civil society, in contrast to Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, but also Spain and France. It needs to develop a good and progressive law in the next four years.

Department Director | Private Foundation | Germany

The Green parties in Germany and France are trying to promote laws to strengthen civil society, which some funders see as a potential opportunity. Overall, though, funders remain concerned about the limited space for activism across Europe, especially Central and Eastern Europe, and the ways in which protest and activism are being further restricted by the pandemic. The situation for women and girls in some countries has become increasingly difficult during the pandemic, not only because of the rise in domestic violence and the control exerted over women in some households, but also because of the unequal burdens placed on them by home working and home schooling.

The Conference on the Future of Europe is a potential point of leverage for funders. The conference is envisioned as a two-year process that will look at the medium- to long-term future of the EU and what reforms should be made to its policies and institutions. Some funders see this as a unique chance to build citizen participation and bridge between European institutions and citizen institutions. It's also an opportunity to engage with a much wider range of actors.

Brexit is also a concern for 2021, not only because of its potential economic and trade impacts but also because it could set a precedent for others considering an exit from the EU.

◆ What is your greatest hope for 2021, in relation to your work or philanthropy in general?

I hope that we manage to build a Europe that permanently involves citizen participation and organised civil society and bridges the gap between people and institutions. I would love to see a strong Europe emerge but also an inclusive Europe.

Senior Manager | Corporate Foundation | Germany

I hope that structural and institutional racism – and in Germany I would call it fascism – are taken under control and fought. My hope is that the far-right structures are not only made visible and observable but that they are taken seriously enough that real action is taken.

Programme Manager | Hybrid Foundation | Germany

Government can deliver if it is urged to do so: the German government put more than €1tn towards the COVID crisis; philanthropy can't pretend to compete with state money. Philanthropy has to rethink its own role: think about what is possible and what is not and think beyond money to networks, advice, expertise on policy making. If we have or want a strong, active government, philanthropy needs to rethink its own role for the future. We need to learn well from the lessons of this year.

Vice-President | Corporate Foundation | Germany

I hope that the number of foundations in Germany that fund progressive movements and social justice work with significant amounts will grow; there is a particularly urgent need for more funding for feminist movement building and for foundations to apply a gender lens to their work (both operational and grantmaking).

Anonymous | Germany

As Kamala Harris said (quoting John Lewis), 'Democracy is not a state. It is an act.' I hope to see more people taking action for democracy.

Managing Director | Private Foundation | Germany

2021 Ariadne Forecast:

Italy



Italian philanthropy responded quickly to the pandemic in 2020, bringing new life to debates about the best grantmaking practices to sustain civil society into the future. Will the shift to greater flexibility become a longer-term trend, or will funders revert to more traditional practices when the crisis is over? Foundations are also trying to

establish the best role for themselves as public funds prove insufficient to meet social needs. The years ahead will be challenging for Italian civil society, and foundations are trying to help their partners prepare for the challenges down the line.



What do you expect to be the most pressing challenge facing your grantees in 2021?

In Italy, as elsewhere, foundations are looking beyond the immediate health crisis and worrying about the looming economic crisis and its potential impact on families and social structures. Poverty is a growing challenge that social change organisations and funders will need to address. The demands upon both the public purse and foundations are expected to increase, but funders are concerned about whether the resources will be there to meet the needs. Some funders are also thinking about how to approach economic recovery in a way that is inclusive and that addresses underlying inequalities, including not leaving rural or suburban areas behind. However, they are also concerned that organisations are going to be faced with developing a cohesive approach while operating in emergency mode and without the luxury of long-term planning.

The consequences of the pandemic in terms of widened inequalities, increased poverty, and greater social divides and marginalisation are already appalling and risk becoming even more detrimental with climate change. Civil society organisations will have to work in an even more complex environment, with different tools, building new alliances. This is the time when investments in social cohesion and in ideas to bring about social change, starting from younger generations, will make the difference.
Head of Programme | Private Foundation | Italy

The situation of civil society organisations, especially those working with the most vulnerable and marginalised, will be made even more difficult by the lack of political openings to advocate for change.

The constant lack of dialogue at the political level is a challenge. There is no way to lobby and defend the sector and its beneficiaries, who are the most disadvantaged groups in society. Governments show neither medium nor long-term vision.
Family Foundation | Italy

While EU funds offer some hope for organisations affected by the pandemic, they are expected to privilege certain issues over others and are only accessible for large, institutionalised organisations, meaning the vast majority of civil society groups in Italy would be excluded. Furthermore, social enterprises are struggling because the market that sustains their work is no longer there.

The coming period could be a question of survival for many organisations, with estimates that up to 50% of non-profits may not survive this crisis, and funders are concerned that it will be a challenge for all organisations to look beyond the pandemic to the future and adapt their work to a new context. Some funders are calling upon the civil society sector to take this moment to ask itself hard questions and address some of the weaknesses that have been identified in the sector for some time, including the fragmentation between and

duplication of organisations. The future of the sector may require groups to come together and work in a more coherent and cohesive way, given the limited availability of resources. Of course, this kind of planning requires support, too, and funders may need to support organisations to do this kind of thinking and coordinating. Some foundations have already started bringing their grantees together to help them develop joint approaches.

We started a new strategy in 2020: bringing together different organisations to optimise skills, resources, and know-how. We are overcoming barriers and co-planning, involving both the public and private companies, for the benefit of the community. In this way we are fighting new forms of poverty and strengthening home care for the elderly and sick people, and we are building an academy for the work of disabled people. 2021 will be the testing ground for the high-functioning territorial system that we are trying to achieve.

Private Foundation | Italy

The practices of foundations themselves remain a challenge for civil society organisations in Italy, as many foundations continue to provide predominantly or exclusively project funding. In March 2020, 800 philanthropic foundations in the United States and 186 in Europe (including 45 Italian foundations) publicly took action to change their project-based funding practices and flexibly support the resilience, capacity, and creativity of non-profit organisations. In the coming months, it will be a matter of choosing whether to consolidate this change in the financing method or return to the old practice.

Civil society organisations are also struggling with the demands of working remotely due to COVID restrictions. Many groups work directly with beneficiaries who do not have access to technology or who are not digitally literate, and it is a challenge for them to provide services to these beneficiaries in the absence of face-to-face meetings. Organisations are having to rethink their programmes and find new ways of supporting people.

Educational inequality is a particular challenge that worries some Italian funders. Not only will a generation of children have a gap in their education, the effects of which are yet to be seen, but children from poorer backgrounds will have suffered the most from school closures. There are growing gaps between those with the means to access online learning and receive parental support with education and those who are less fortunate. In a system that is already beset by a high early school-leaving rate, the pandemic could have devastating consequences for the futures of school-age children.

What opportunities do you see in 2021 that might help your grantees advance their work?

The crisis of the pandemic provides an opportunity to reflect on the social and economic structures that contributed to it. This is a chance to consider what sort of broad-scale social changes are necessary and to 'build back better' following this crisis.

We have 60 years behind us, from the second post-war period to today, in which we have not looked at the consequences of the capitalist system. After COVID we cannot ignore the distortions of the system.

Director | Research Foundation | Italy

The pandemic also brought forth new types of donors in Italy. During the first wave, new private funders, including corporates, played an important role in helping to meet social needs in the country. There is an opportunity to try to retain and cultivate these new actors as

part of the philanthropic landscape in Italy. Community foundations are also an important tool whose potential has not been fully tapped. There is an opportunity for foundations to strengthen and build upon their local roots as society rebuilds following the pandemic. There are also opportunities for the civil society sector to reorganise itself and even contribute to tackling the disparities across different regions of Italy.

The sudden shock of the lockdown led to a large-scale forced feasibility experiment that prompted some NGOs here in Southern Italy to question the possibility of offering remote work as an opportunity for the recovery of skilled labour. The “brain drain” to the urban centres of the North to make a career is no longer taken for granted; maintaining physical residence in the South or in more peripheral areas allows an improvement in the quality of life for the worker in question and maintenance of Southern social capital. This opens up new, interesting scenarios.

Director | Private Foundation | Italy

Many Italian funders see opportunity for greater collaboration, both among foundations and between foundations and other private stakeholder and public bodies. Some hope that the recent ruling of the Constitutional Court on Article 55 of the Third Sector Code, validating the legitimacy of collaboration as co-programming and co-project planning between the public and the third sector, will encourage a new type of alliance between philanthropic bodies and the public administration.

In a country where collaboration between institutions and philanthropic bodies has so far been characterized by very little mutual knowledge and many implicit stereotypes on both sides - on the one hand, consideration of the philanthropic body as an ATM to which one can request ex-post to plug welfare holes when in difficulty, on the other hand experimentation in autonomy and turnkey delivery of a successful project to be scaled by the public body - the hope is that 2021 will usher in a new era of public-private relationships for which we will need new skills and operating methods, starting from within the governance and leadership of our own organisations.

Secretary General | Philanthropic Network | Italy

The rediscovery of the high value of collaboration can be the antidote against individualism, and, on the political level, against populism, in Italy and around the world.

Family Foundation | Italy

Digital technology, if harnessed well, also offers new opportunities for addressing social needs. It also opens up new paths for civil society organisations to engage people in their work.

● How do you expect your practice as a funder to change in the next twelve months?

There is an active debate among Italian funders around the question of whether it is better to give long-term institutional support to organisations or to support projects. Many funders have relaxed their funding requirements as a result of the pandemic and started providing core support. They see that organisations need to have a certain level of flexibility to be able to respond to the emerging needs in society and to become a real catalyst for social change. These funders also do not want to burden organisations with bureaucratic reporting requirements during a time when they are overwhelmed by demands from their beneficiaries. However, others predict that this is a short-term trend and that a focus on being able to demonstrate the impact of funding will drive many foundations back to

supporting primarily projects. The mobilisation of foundations to respond to the needs of the crisis in 2020 has brought this debate to the fore, but it is unclear whether or how it will be settled in 2021.

Especially for those grantees with whom we have a proven record of partnership and trust, it will be even more important to provide funding for the mission and strategic objectives of the organisation, rather than just specific projects. In this period of great uncertainty, this type of general operational support becomes increasingly valuable to allow grantees to face the opportunities that emerge and strengthen themselves at all levels.

Family Foundation | Italy

We would like to be a little less bureaucratic in our reporting requirements; the impact generated by projects does not change if you are a little less detail oriented.

Director | Corporate Foundation | Italy

For a period, it was only about project support to avoid letting the institution sit on inefficiencies; then we realised that partners had become “project makers” with high indirect costs, and now we are back to offering lump sum or institutional financing. A new season opens and for a few years we will mostly talk about long-term and core support, and in time we will go back to doing some more projects with the hope that the more negative extremes will be avoided.

Secretary General | Private Foundation | Italy

In a context of great scarcity of resources, relying only on the objective quality of the counterpart is not enough in the face of demand from tens of thousands of organisations. Having the opportunity to finance only a hundred, if you ask, as all administrations in the world do, to present a project proposal, it is easier to compare the quality, establish a ranking and select effectively.

Director | Private Foundation | Italy

Some foundations are planning to invest more in building the capacity of the organisations that they support as a way of investing in the sustainability of these groups. Rather than helping to just keep them afloat, they would like to help them thrive and become more strategic so that they will be in a better position to raise additional resources elsewhere. This might include support for developing their capacities in communications, fundraising, or programme development. One foundation is offering an online learning platform to its grantees to help them access training opportunities during the pandemic. Some funders consider that providing such holistic support to organisations is important not only for those specific organisations but for the country as a whole.

In a country like Italy where very few organisations manage to access European funds, if philanthropic bodies are not investing in the capacity building of these organisations, the risk is that our country, and in particular the most vulnerable people, will remain at the margins of the important opportunities for human and sustainable development offered by Europe for the 2021-2027 period.

Secretary General | Philanthropic Network | Italy

Italian foundations are now focusing more on their investment strategies and how they align with their programmatic aims. This could be a shift that gains traction as foundations decide how to move forward following the pandemic.

Nowadays, it is unsustainable to have an investment policy which is incoherent with the larger foundation’s mission. Of course, we need to take care to have an adequate return on investment, or to maintain the real value of our assets, but we also need to be accountable in terms of whether our endowment is invested consistently with our institutional activity. This crisis has taught us that everything is connected, so we cannot work in silos.

Secretary General | Private Foundation | Italy

More foundations are engaging with digital tools and supporting their partners to do the same. They are helping organisations to make use of these tools to work effectively in a remote environment, but also trying to build awareness of how to manage sensitive data in a safe and secure way. They are also experimenting with how to build and maintain relationships and networks virtually.

Our practice, like everyone's, has shifted online in the support and monitoring of funded projects, training opportunities, etc. We believe we will need to strengthen and consolidate ways of building communities of practice online.

Family Foundation | Italy

Some funders are also considering how philanthropy could better support and learn from academic research into the impacts of different social interventions across Europe. They are looking for new and innovating ideas for addressing the challenges with which Italian society is grappling.

2021 is not a future to be built according to pre-existing models, but according to new models which need to be co-created.

Director | Research Foundation | Italy

Collaboration is also a key theme for Italian funders as they enter 2021, with many thinking about how they can work together with their peers more effectively to address the scale of the challenges before them, in both urban and rural areas. This is not only about co-funding, but about actively working across sectors to build the future.

The foundation must become an operational partner, not a subject that provides resources. It should be a pole of attraction and innovation, a place to think and implement projects with the help of other non-profit organisations, public bodies, and even private companies.

Private Foundation | Italy

Funders also anticipate that they will focus more on the local and community level as they try to support people through the current crisis and into the future. They will try to build networks and coordination among local efforts while still tending to specific local needs.

What issue or field of practice do you think will become more important in 2021?

Addressing the fragilities brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic will be a key priority in 2021. Funders will be focused on issues such as poverty reduction, local welfare systems, social housing, and employment. It will be especially important to support the most vulnerable by helping them with employment opportunities, and one foundation is thinking about how to create peer networks to support vulnerable people in new jobs.

Education is an important focus for 2021, including training in the use of digital technology for educational purposes and balancing of online and offline learning. The digital divide between students with the technology to access online learning and those without it will also need to be addressed. Young people need help to plan their futures in light of the economic and social disruptions their generation is experiencing. Foundations plan to invest more in schools, skills training, and incentives to keep young people in education.

Digitisation is expected to be an issue more broadly, as even the foundation sector needs to better equip itself to function in a more virtual context. Some funders hope that 2021 will be a time for Italian foundations to become more digitally literate and also to start to take on the social aspects of digitisation as a programmatic focus.

The pandemic has created an opportunity to promote the importance of science and scientific methods. There is a need to communicate the value of science more effectively and to educate people to better evaluate scientific claims.

Climate and the environment are also predicted to be priority issues in 2021. The pandemic has heightened awareness of the environmental impacts of unchecked growth, and this new public consciousness, together with the EU Green New Deal, provides an opportunity to advance an environmental agenda. There are concerns that the political mobilisation for such an agenda is not yet present in Italy, but some funders feel this is the moment to support the emergence of such a movement.

Ursula von der Leyen inaugurates the Green New Deal, but in Italy there exists no political party seeking a pro- or pan-European approach to social and environmental issues. A green, progressive and pro-European left with a young / innovative reformist design is missing in Italy. Granting foundations must invest in the design of a possible, green globalist alternative that takes welfare and development into account. If we do not seize the moment in the next 3 years, we will miss an important opportunity.

Director | Research Foundation | Italy

We would like to promote a vision of the climate issue as a social issue and not "merely" an environmental one. An issue which impacts all spheres of life and all the missions of any philanthropic foundation.

Secretary General | Philanthropic Network | Italy

Violence against women is an issue of growing concern among Italian foundations with the rise of domestic and interpersonal violence during lockdowns. Mental health is also now a critical issue ripe for greater foundation support.

Funders are also concerned about the progressive reduction of individual freedoms as a result of the public health restrictions put in place to address the pandemic. There is a renewed interest in protecting democracy and ensuring that this loss of liberties does not extend beyond the pandemic.

■ What political event or sequence of events do you predict will have a substantial effect on your work?

The provision of a vaccine and the subsequent lifting of restrictions on movement and provision of services is first and foremost on the minds of Italian funders. In addition, the recovery measures that the government takes will have a significant impact on the social needs and challenges going forward. Whether or not such measures include support to the non-profit sector will be especially important for foundations. Funders are also hoping that as the government is able to look beyond the COVID emergency, questions around reform of the third sector will be agreed and clarified.

There will be mayoral elections in some municipalities in Italy in 2021, which could affect the work of local funders. Regional, presidential, and parliamentary elections will be taking place in 2022 and 2023, and some people are already looking ahead to those events and analysing how they could shape the coming years. A new budget law for 2021 is expected to decrease the tax burden on foundations in Italy, meaning they should have more resources available for disbursement.

On the international level, Italy will be hosting the G20 for the first time in history in 2021. This could be an opportunity for Italian funders to look beyond domestic and regional issues and take a global perspective.

Climate is high on the political agenda for 2021, with the COP26 to take place in the UK. Some funders are waiting to see what the orientation of the incoming US administration will be towards the climate agreements and how this will affect international negotiations.

The NextGeneration EU stimulus package, intended to help repair the economic and social damage caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, could also be very important for Italy and Italian foundations. There is a risk, however, that marginal populations, including Roma and other ethnic minorities as well as rural populations, could be left out of such investment packages, because they may lack the capacity to be able to apply for them. Therefore, there is a role for foundations both to help support them to take advantage of these funding opportunities and to provide alternative funding when they are left out.

What is your greatest hope for 2021, in relation to your work or philanthropy in general?

The great hope, at this time, is that vaccination works, and the plague of the new millennium is eradicated as soon as possible.

Family Foundation | Italy

We are about to experience an extremely rich moment of opportunity. Italy is a country which needs rebuilding in terms of citizenship, in the sense of *civitas*, and adherence to the civic sense. Greater engagement with the European Union is a pathway for rebuilding civic participation. The integrated system of culture, education, university, and research must not be seen in isolation from the employment world. These two worlds must act in concert.

Director | Research Foundation | Italy

In 2020, there has been a burst of activity; the EU has done more in a year than in the last twenty. As it was in the post-war period, and as it is now, let's hope it will work with a greater focus on sustainability.

Secretary General | Private Foundation | Italy

I hope that those who govern at national and European levels realise that the question of social and civil rights is central to the economic and civil development of the country and of Europe. Without equity there is no development: it has been the fundamental characteristic of Europe and it must continue to be so.

Director | Private Foundation | Italy

We are living in an unrepeatable historical moment, a point of no return. The pandemic has offered us a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for a generation: a powerful experience of collective empathy. For the first time in history after the epochal transformation triggered by globalisation and new technologies, we live - not in the abstract but on our skin - the meaning of humanity's interconnection and interdependence and indivisibility with the planet. The hope is that we really manage not to waste this opportunity. Everyone is a changemaker.

Secretary General | Philanthropic Network | Italy

My greatest hopes are 1) that this crisis won't be wasted, that useful tools will be conceived from it to lay the foundations for a cultural, political and economic renaissance; and 2) that philanthropy will play a key role in stimulating debates and bringing new alliances that focus on the healthy development of democracy and all that goes with it.

Family Foundation | Italy

2021 Ariadne Forecast:

The Netherlands



As they come to terms with the financial impacts of the pandemic, Dutch funders are focused on helping their partners come through this crisis while also keeping an eye on the challenges that lie ahead. They are providing both financial and non-financial support to their partners and experimenting with more inclusive funding

practices. Despite the bleak financial outlook for foundations in the coming year, the sector is showing creativity and collaboration in the face of adversity. Will these efforts be enough to bring civil society organisations safely through a time of crisis?



What do you expect to be the most pressing challenges facing your grantees in 2021?

The biggest challenge facing organisations in The Netherlands, as in other countries, is the uncertainty over future funding. Many funders mobilised in 2020 to make emergency grants and have been funding more direct service provision than in the past, but it is as yet unclear how long that will be sustained. Some emergency funds will be coming to an end, and foundations are facing the prospect of shrinking budgets in 2021 because of the economic impacts of the pandemic. The demand on organisations, however, is only growing as unemployment (or underemployment) rises and the number of people in need increases. Some funders expressed frustration with debates in philanthropic circles about whether to fund services or not, given the scale of the needs.

I hear the debate about whether to fund direct provision of services or advocacy towards the state, but who benefits from us questioning our grant-making if we're not doing more? We need to act now and give out more money, including making more of the assets of the endowed foundations available for support. The people facing the real challenges are not the people sitting in our circles. We should keep listening and responding to movements' needs.

Senior Programme Officer | Private Foundation | Netherlands

There are also concerns that the worst financial impacts are still to come. While some organisations have survived this year as the result of multi-year grants, they may experience a loss of income in the coming years as foundations reduce their giving following a drop in their investment income. This is a particular risk as funders transition out of emergency mode. As national governments and the EU prepare economic packages to help countries recover from the effects of the pandemic, some funders are concerned that this creates the potential for a rise in corruption and financial mismanagement. EU investment in Hungary, which was subsequently co-opted by a right-wing government, is for some a cautionary tale as we move into a period of economic bailout.

Some funders highlighted the short-term nature of philanthropic approaches as a particular challenge. While foundations are reacting to the COVID-19 pandemic, they have lost a longer-term perspective on the challenges that lie ahead. Issues like climate change, for example, hang on the horizon and are likely to have deeper consequences and require even greater adaptation, yet most funders lack a long-term vision or strategy for dealing with that.

Political polarisation remains a challenge and, if anything, has been strengthened by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has spurred the spread of disinformation, which was already present but has now increased and is being facilitated by the greater digitalisation of society. The relationship between disinformation and polarisation is now much clearer in Europe than it was before. Digitalisation has also brought challenges to democratic rights and principles, which funders are still trying to understand and address.

Funders are also concerned about the longer-term impact of the pandemic on democracy. State surveillance has been increased on the basis of public health control. While restrictions on movement and protest have been in place, laws and policies have continued to be passed, often with little consultation, leaving some funders concerned about democratic oversight.

◆ What opportunities do you see in 2021 that might help your grantees advance their work?

Movements have demonstrated their power in 2020, and funders are hopeful that these gains can be consolidated and advanced in 2021. The global movement to fight anti-Black racism has shown that it is possible to advance justice agendas even in times of crisis. Funders are more aware of such movements now and committed to try new things and fund movements.

Activism has now moved online, as well, which brings new opportunities for participation. Even in the philanthropic space, the shift online presents positive opportunities.

Participation can be approached differently, as there are new opportunities to participate in, and increased accessibility of, decision-making spaces. For example, visa restrictions and financial barriers that limited participation in physical convenings are lowered for online meetings. So, the willingness to do more online is a trend that will remain.

Senior Programme Officer | Private Foundation | Netherlands

The future of the office itself is a question on the mind of some funders after the experience of 2020. With so many people working from home, new systems have now been put in place to accommodate remote working. So, what will offices look like in the future? There is an opportunity to re-think the workplace and design a hybrid of digital and physical interactions.

Active citizenship received a boost in 2020 thanks to the pandemic, and this is a trend also set to continue. The pandemic made people realise how important relations with others are and how important knowing people in your neighbourhood is; there is now more value placed on these local social networks. The pandemic has underlined the importance of active citizenship as a way to bridge socio-cultural divides. The challenge for foundations and civil society now is to link these informal networks for citizen engagement with the more professional charitable sector.

Potential opportunity lies in the fact that more foundations are offering capacity-building and help for measuring impact, seeking to strengthen the 'organisational power' of grantees. Funder collaboration is also growing and developing, with more engagement in pooled funds, for example. This provides a potential opportunity to work together towards tackling bigger systemic problems.

The trend towards greater funder collaboration is a positive development as the societal challenges are so big that we need strategic collaboration to face them.

Director of Programmes | Private Foundation | Netherlands

Funders' growing awareness and understanding of digital issues, and particularly disinformation, is an opportunity to be seized in 2021. Funders with more experience in this area are pleased to see that interest in these issues is no longer limited to digital rights or free expression organisations but that the intersections with other social and human rights issues are being better understood. There is an increased willingness among funders to work together to tackle problems like disinformation, and this is welcomed by those funders already in this space.

◀ How do you expect your practice as a funder to change in the next twelve months?

In previous Forecasts, funders have noted a growing interest in participatory grantmaking approaches. In 2021, some funders will be taking more concrete steps to shift their grantmaking to participatory models after a few years of experimentation. They are developing approaches based on the needs of the beneficiaries and working more closely with beneficiaries to learn more about what they want rather than designing interventions solely within the foundation. However, some funders note that while they will be led by beneficiaries, there remains an important role for professional expertise and guidance to help these communities to achieve their goals.

This entails dialogue and reciprocity, equality in the relationship, combining the knowledge of the beneficiaries with the professionalism of the grantees brings them further. Just doing what beneficiaries want is not enough: professionals know how best to provide that help. The “what to do” should be decided by beneficiaries, the “how” can be advised by experts.

Head of Communications | Corporate Foundation | Netherlands

Some funders anticipate offering more capacity-building and assistance with impact measurement, including more tailored offers of support. They plan to share their learnings publicly, so that it will be accessible to grantees. There is an opportunity to help grantees use this moment of transition as a chance to strengthen their organisational capabilities.

While many funders across Europe noted a trend towards more relaxed funding and reporting requirements, some Dutch funders reported that there are still few opportunities for unrestricted grants in the Netherlands. Reporting obligations have also not decreased, contributing to the high workloads of many civil society organisations during a time of crisis. Some funders have called for more attention to the long-term impact of funding rather than short-term project cycles.

How can we contribute to lasting change? We need more focus, more multi-year grantmaking, more capacity building, funding plus approaches and new means of support.

Regional Manager | Private Foundation | Netherlands

Those foundations that were able to respond very flexibly in 2020 are asking how they can maintain that flexibility into the future. They worry that things will quickly revert back to business as usual, but with less money. Unfortunately, many funders anticipate that they will be working with smaller budgets next year and will need to reduce the levels of giving to some organisations and end some partnerships. This raises questions about how to do this in a responsible way that minimises harm as much as possible. This may also result in some short-term thinking as funders consider how to get through the coming period. While some foundations are dipping into their capital to maintain funding levels, rather than relying just on a percentage of returns, this is a very small minority. Most foundations remain cautious about decreasing their endowments.

Questions around the legitimacy and perception of philanthropy are expected to become more pressing in 2021. Funders look to the experience of George Soros and see that sometimes philanthropy can have unintended consequences for both the funder and those receiving support. This discussion is coming up in the Netherlands and foundations are considering how they should respond. Boards are becoming more diverse, and as noted, more foundations are moving towards participatory practices, but more steps may be needed to bolster the legitimacy of foundations in the public view.

Inclusion is high on the agenda for funders who are concerned about growing polarisation, with plans for local initiatives to build connections close to home between people with different socio-cultural backgrounds. There is an interest in promoting change at small scale, but in many places by building more relationships at the local level. More large foundations are now working at the local level and some have created local entities. There will also be a greater focus on cross-cutting issues.

Funders are also focused on helping civil society overcome the digital challenges they face. Some organisations have already been active in thinking about the impacts of technology, but some are still learning how their areas of interest are shaped by technology. There is a growing effort to bring more funders into dialogue around these issues and a perceived opening to advance conversations around the digitisation of society and its impact on democratic space.

What issue or field of practice do you think will become more important in 2021?

In light of the disinformation campaigns around the pandemic in 2020, there is a need to restore trust in public authorities and in science. This is an area that could see increased funding and connects to an interest in funding efforts to combat polarisation.

Raising awareness of the threats to democratic rights and principles in the digital context will become more important in 2021. While these threats are present across a wide range of organisations and institutions, there could, for example, be more support for organisations promoting algorithmic accountability, journalists investigating the impact of algorithmic decision-making on many aspects of our private and public lives, and efforts to help journalists and civil society organisations to become more skilled in applying machine learning to the research and analysis of big data sets.

Inequality in education will be an important topic in 2021, as the pandemic has increased the divide between students from different backgrounds. It has become clearer that which schools people attend impact their opportunities in life, yet few Dutch foundations work on this issue.

Safeguarding is also of growing importance. While many foundations only deal with incidents as they arise, some funders are calling for a longer-term approach.

The European Green Deal provides an opening to focus more on promoting a zero-pollution circular economy.

As government support for businesses and workers starts to taper off, there is likely to be more need for support around issues such as poverty, loneliness, and unemployment.

What political event or sequence of events do you predict will have a significant effect on your work?

Measures to address COVID-19 will continue to be felt in 2021, both in terms of the restrictions on movements and gatherings and through the economic implications. Taxes could increase in order to support the measures taken to support business through the crisis.

There will be national elections in the Netherlands in March 2021, and funders are concerned about the potential impact of the election on civic space.

The largest political party, the liberals, explicitly included in their manifesto the proposal to limit the opportunity for foundations to use strategic litigation and the idea of restricting the direct impact of international law in the national context... they are exploring the boundaries of the international legal order and its relationship with the national order.

Director of Programmes | Private Foundation | Netherlands

In echoes of the Brexit debate in the UK, politicians are appealing to the national interest and putting rule of law at risk as they do so. This is perceived as an effort to gain voters from the far-right party Forum for Democracy, which is collapsing. Some funders are anxiously watching to see what role social media will play in the elections and whether the spread of disinformation will have a significant impact on the process and the outcome.

Brexit itself could also have a substantial impact on the open economy in the Netherlands. Trade could be affected, and the economic fallout could be felt in the Netherlands. In addition, there is the potential that fewer refugees will seek asylum in the UK and could be directed towards the Netherlands instead, increasing the demands on migrant and refugee organisations there. At the same time, there are fears that right-wing groups in the Netherlands have been emboldened by Trump and that threats to minorities could increase.

The European Green Deal could have an important impact on work to address the climate crisis, as could the COP26 meeting.

What is your greatest hope for 2021 in relation to your work or philanthropy in general?

My hope for 2021 and beyond is that there will be less fragmentation and that it will be possible for groups and people in society to trust each other more and recognise that we are all part of the bigger picture. We have become so distanced. It is so difficult to have normal conversations with each other if there is no common ground, a commonly recognised truth.

Director | Family Foundation | Netherlands

I hope that we can build back better and that we will be able to green and socialise the economic stimulus package as much as possible. Europe could set the global standard in how to build back better if governments back the political vision and ambition of the EU Green Deal with the money to do it.

Director of Programmes | Family Foundation | Netherlands

I hope to see more foundations work in a more intersectoral way to address social issues. Foundations (or any kind of organisation) cannot do this alone. Endowed foundations in particular have some unique offers they can bring to the collaboration table, but they need to use them more fully to realise more social impact.

Head of Communication | Private Foundation | Netherlands

2021 Ariadne Forecast:

UK



After years of debate, the UK officially left the European Union at the beginning of 2021, right in the middle of the pandemic. The country is facing a long financial recovery from these coinciding impacts, and the political union is showing signs of strain. At the same time, conversations around structural inequalities are

gaining momentum, and social movements are advocating for deep reform. Will the upheaval created by all these conflicting forces provide an opening to restructure for the better? British philanthropy is trying to find its way forward into an uncertain future.



What do you expect to be the most pressing challenge facing your grantees in 2021?

The most pressing challenge on funders' minds going into 2021 is the potential impact of the economic downturn following the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a great deal of uncertainty about how much money foundations, particularly those whose assets are invested in the stock market, will have in the coming years, at the same time that those organisations receiving funding have been spending down their reserves in order to meet current demands. Although significant emergency funding was made available in the spring of 2020, fatigue is setting in for both foundations and recipients, who are struggling to devote the time needed to apply for more funds. Much of this emergency funding will be coming to an end in March 2021, and some funders expressed concern that certain sectors could face a cliff edge at that time. There is a sense that philanthropy is coming out of emergency mode, yet the emergency itself is not over. Furthermore, some funders are looking back to the recovery period from the 2008 financial crash as a parallel and express concern that it could take as long, if not longer, to recover financially from the pandemic. They worry that we could be feeling the financial impacts of this crisis for the next decade.

The stresses of the past year, including the loss of income for some organisations, have left the charitable sector in a much more vulnerable position than it was at the start of 2020. Many organisations do not have the resilience to continue to do their work at scale during a prolonged crisis. While most have had to make short-term adjustments to be able to survive, few have had the time or resources (including the mental and emotional resources) to consider what long-term adaptations they need to make the transition to what might be a very different future. During the pandemic, new networks of informal associations have emerged which may be filling some roles that were previously held by more formally registered charities. Funders may need to support their grantees to go through a process of reflection and consider what their roles are and how they relate to some of this new, informal infrastructure.

Everyone needs to reconsider their role in the ecosystem. They need to be honest and confront the existential questions: Is the reason we exist still relevant? Are we doing what we should be doing? Is this really our role? Should we reduce our role? Should we exist, and who should we partner with? This requires courage, as the answers could be difficult.

Director for UK | Public Foundation | UK

Moving from a short-term, reactive framework to one of building a long-term vision is critical right now, as the pandemic has wrought such massive changes, but it will be a significant challenge for the charitable sector to undertake.

Funders also expressed concern about the mental health of grantees going into 2021. Organisations have been dealing with very intensive workloads and, for those who provide services, an increase in demand, but they have also had to shift their operations to remote working. This not only brings added challenges in terms of adapting to new technology and ensuring organisations are fit-for-purpose in the virtual world; it also means that workers are more isolated and coping with what can be very upsetting work with very little support.

The mental health impacts of everyone working at home are significant. And there is a particular issue if you're doing frontline work. You're constantly speaking to people in really dire situations, but you don't have the counterbalance of having your colleagues around for support or even just being in a different environment. It's taking its toll. Working on online hate all the time in your bedroom is really difficult.

Programme Manager | Private Foundation | UK

Burnout is a very real risk among both funders and the organisations they support, as people across the board have been asked to step up and take on leadership that they weren't necessarily prepared for. It will be difficult for organisations to have the energy to face the ongoing challenges of 2021.

You can't pour from an empty cup. You have to see to people's needs.

Manager | Private Foundation | UK

Despite the focus on the COVID-19 pandemic over the past year, Brexit continues to be a challenge that will shape the future. As the UK comes to the end of the transition period and officially exits the European Union on 1st January 2021, concerns remain about the potential economic and social impacts of the move. For those working on immigration issues, concerns centre around EU citizens who may fall through the cracks of the registration process, particularly those who are more vulnerable and therefore less likely to know what they need to do.

Funders are also concerned about the polarised political climate in the UK, which connects to Brexit but also goes far beyond it. This is felt particularly by those working on issues of migration as a narrative of invasion takes hold and seeks to link migrants to the transmission of disease. Digital and physical threats are coming together as migrants are being attacked and those attacks are being filmed and posted online. Civil society organisations working with migrants are also coming under threat – both online trolling and physical threats. Some small organisations have received death threats. These threats of physical attack are a new development but one that migration funders fear will continue next year. This trend is connected to the issue of judicial reform and constitutional review, a part of the Conservative manifesto and triggered by the courts blocking deportation cases. The statements of Priti Patel and Boris Johnson against “activist lawyers” fighting against deportation is believed to have led to the stabbing of an immigration lawyer in October 2020. Those working in the migration field are concerned that their inflammatory language will only pave the way for further such attacks. An additional concern is that the hostile environment for migrants, particularly the connections being drawn between migrants and disease, will deter people from seeking the health care they require during a pandemic.

This broader context of politicisation extends to the Charity Commission itself. In late 2020, the chair of the commission warned charities against becoming too political and engaging in “culture wars”. This sort of rhetoric poses a real challenge for advocacy and campaigning organisations, as it suggests that their work is not in the public interest. It also has a chilling effect for those trying to open up conversation about issues like structural racism. With the chair due to step down and be replaced in 2021, there are questions for funders about the future direction of the commission.

In this context, UK funders are having to consider how they can stand up for Britain's democratic institutions in a way that they've never had to do before. In the wake of the pandemic, engagement at the local level is especially important and relevant to some funders, where they see that civil society has often played more of a service provision role and does not have experience with democratic engagement. Organisations need to

learn how to build political awareness and engage citizens on a local level. One funder also noted that the nature of leadership will need to change. Whereas the favoured model has traditionally been the “heroic” leader who has all the answers, the future may demand leaders who can adapt to complex challenges and are able to work in a much more horizontal way.

Technology will also be a challenge in 2021, as the effects of moving life online continue to be felt. The scandal around A-level and GCSE exams in 2020 demonstrated that algorithms lead to unfair outcomes. But automation is being integrated into everything, including immigration and health systems. Organisations are still coming to terms with the disparity in outcomes as a result of automation. At the same time, online disinformation and hate is a serious threat that has only grown during the pandemic, as far-right groups and anti-vaxxers have aligned in the generation of conspiracy theories. Some funders are concerned that philanthropy isn’t fully equipped to address this problem, though it can no longer ignore it. Foundations need to be able to promote regulation while also changing social norms, both of which will be a challenge given the size and power of social media companies. The difference in access to technologies and technological skills is also opening new forms of inequalities, between individuals and among organisations. Some organisations are much better equipped to work and fundraise online than others, and for some workers, the right to ‘switch off’ from technological devices is itself becoming a privilege.

What opportunities do you see in 2021 that might help your grantees advance their work?

The pandemic has, in a sense, created an opportunity in that it has exposed and laid bare the inequities that previously existed but that were, perhaps, ignored or considered too intractable to tackle. Many funders are seizing on the “Build Back Better” narrative and thinking about how they can help make sure that the process of building back is as inclusive and equitable as possible. They see opportunities to advocate for the big capital that will be injected into the economy as part of a recovery plan to be made through a green and justice lens. There is also an opportunity to demonstrate the positive contributions that migrants have made during the crisis, as key NHS workers or scientists working on vaccines, for example. Some believe that this opening has now brought the language of justice back into the discourse more firmly than it was before.

The pandemic exposed where inequity lies, and it should now be clearer where and how to act.

Director for UK | Public Foundation | UK

I hear the word “justice” used more readily than ever before in UK philanthropy. There’s a dawning realisation that justice doesn’t only refer to laws and policies. Now justice is being understood to include the underlying mindsets and overarching structures defined by wealth, class, etc.

Manager | Private Foundation | UK

However, others are more sceptical about this opening. While they agree that inequality has been exposed, they see the many challenges to actually tackling it and question whether philanthropy has the courage to truly take on questions of power and privilege. In order to seize the opportunity presented by the pandemic, philanthropy needs to be prepared to offer a vision.

We need to be clearer about what we need as a society. We came up with this phrase, “build back better”, but what do we mean by a “better” future? Our message needs to speak to people’s vulnerability and sense of fairness. And it is a challenge: it’s easier to be reactive rather than proactive. This is a time of opportunities.

Executive | Private Foundation | UK

The rapid and flexible response of funders to the needs of civil society during the initial lockdown in the spring of 2020 also signalled a potential turning point in the way that UK philanthropy operates. It demonstrated that acting quickly, nimbly, and flexibly is possible, and some funders are hopeful that the sector will have learned a positive lesson from this experience.

COVID has also unblocked the cholesterol-filled veins of philanthropy. It got lots of money flowing from energetic and responsive funders, doing things we’ve talked about for decades. Because all of this has happened and funders have seen it work, this is an opportunity for grantees to step into the space and encourage funders to work differently. Funders always had a good reason why they couldn’t do it, and now they have and are in a better place to listen. That could go a long way towards addressing other questions around philanthropy, power, and what good support looks like.

Manager | Private Foundation | UK

The generous outpouring of public donations during the pandemic is also an opportunity for civil society organisations. There is an opportunity to build on the narrative of mutual support and continue to grow the idea that we all have a responsibility and connection to one another. Some funders noted that organising has been happening in a much more horizontal way and that this might be a longer-term shift and opportunity to rethink leadership and what it means. Similarly, the way that people, institutions, and sectors have come together to collaborate and coordinate during the pandemic creates an opportunity for much deeper alignment going forward. There is a renewed appreciation for the interdependence of people and of issues and hope that this could be a moment of real change.

When everything has been shaken to the core, there is the possibility of creating something different and of that being galvanising.

Director for UK | Public Foundation | UK

Public momentum to “build back better” and shape the pandemic recovery to be green, socially just, and equitable can help progress grantee agendas and build political pressure.

Director for UK/Europe | Hybrid Foundation | UK

The pandemic has also highlighted the importance of specialist expertise, and while this is relevant for many issues, some funders see that this recognition could also help bring nuance to discussions within the funding community. Although the focus on participatory approaches and lived experience is long overdue, communities and organisations also need access to outside expertise in order to fully achieve their goals. Some funders see the possibility of a more tailored approach that brings together both lived and learned experience in a way that really serves the needs of communities.

The growing momentum of the Black Lives Matter movement is also a potential opportunity, as many funders believe that both the public and the government are taking the call for racial equity much more seriously now. There is now more pressure on the government to act, leading to the creation of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities. While the appointed commissioners do not all have a background in addressing racism – creating a risk that the report could downplay its prevalence – this is a potential opportunity to advance an anti-racist agenda in the UK. Similarly, some funders see the opening of the discussions around racism as an opportunity to help funders move beyond the framework of DEI and look more deeply at their practices and at the systemic issues in their institutions and the sector at large.

The COP26 meeting, which the UK was to host in 2020 but which has now been delayed to 2021, presents a real opportunity for advancing a climate agenda, both in the UK and internationally.

▲ How do you expect your practice as a funder to change in the next 12 months?

After the events of the past year, foresight is being recognised as much more important than it once was. Funders are recognising the need for longer-term thinking and strategic foresight, for themselves but also together with the organisations they're supporting. They hope that by anticipating what lies ahead the sector will be better prepared to shape outcomes.

At the same time, some funders are becoming less prescriptive about what change looks like and focusing more on who is involved in pushing for that change and how it is coming about. There is a groundswell of interest in supporting movements in the UK, especially following the growing traction of the Black Lives Matter movement, but one funder sounded a word of caution: because funders are inexperienced in supporting movements, there is the risk that they will weaken movements by trying to make them look like what they are used to supporting. This is a learning moment for UK philanthropy as it evolves and adapts to a new landscape of organising.

Several funders noted that UK philanthropy is becoming more politically aware and starting to take more risks. There is the potential for more foundations to adopt a rights-based or justice-based approach. Participatory grantmaking approaches are becoming more popular with a number of funders shifting in this direction. Funders are also bringing more focus to the inclusive practices of their grantees.

We will have a more explicit focus on addressing structural inequalities, and we will prioritise those who can show a deep connection to communities and individuals facing barriers and demonstrate how they are involved in the design and decision making.

CEO | Private Foundation | UK

Some funders, though, call for more self-reflection on the part of foundations as they grapple with inequalities.

There is a desire to contextualise philanthropy. What about tax? What are the sources of philanthropic wealth and what does that mean for philanthropy's legitimacy? Is philanthropy a tool to fight inequalities, or a proof of inequalities? How do we deal with the historic links to slavery?

Head of Policy | Public Foundation | UK

Strategic communications and narrative building, which has been a growing interest of funders for the past few years, continues to be an area of development. In the UK, there is more infrastructure for the strategic communications and framing work than there was even a few years ago, creating more potential for this to develop into a more powerful and cohesive field. The risk is that so many new projects have been seeded that they could end up operating in silos and not really shifting the hegemonic frames that have been developed by the political right. There is more to be done to bring all of these efforts together in a truly strategic way.

We haven't taken any steps towards the thorny problem of aligning and linking frames towards a grounded, positive visioning and are still not far forwards in thinking about the process of alignment around counter-visions at the meta level. The question as we go forward into 2021 is how do we find ways to help with that synthesis?
 Programme Director | Private Foundation | UK

Funders are also grappling with the transition to purely virtual working and relationship building and are looking for ways to ensure that they do not lose the personal relationships with the groups they support despite the lack of face-to-face meetings. They are also exploring ways to support networking and sharing among organisations in virtual spaces. One funder is planning an audit around digital inclusion to ensure that it is not excluding certain groups by digitising more of its work.

What issue or field of practice do you think will become more important in 2021?

The ethical and moral implications of the use of technology will be an important issue for funders in 2021. They are concerned with questions around how to highlight and challenge its lack of neutrality and lack of transparency. The privacy considerations around the use of technology are also a pressing issue following the rollout of test and trace apps. More experienced technology funders expressed frustration that the discussion about technology among UK funders often ends up being focused on skills, access, and inclusion and does not really address the capacity of civil society to shape how technology is being developed and deployed. However, this does appear to be slowly shifting and more funders are thinking about the broader implications of technology. Online hate and disinformation will also be an area of focus for some funders.

The climate crisis, though it slipped from focus in 2020 with the onset of the pandemic, is still on funders' minds and will be an area of concern as the world emerges from lockdowns. Racial justice and equity with an intersectional lens will be a focus for many funders. Funders will continue to seek ways to involve those with lived experience in their work.

Many funders flagged that there is a mental health crisis coming and that this intersects with the elderly and with marginalised communities for whom language or physical health creates a barrier for seeking help. There could also be a crisis in physical health, as people take less exercise and hesitate to seek treatment for non-COVID issues. Funders are also expecting to see a rise in poverty-related issues with the most marginalised being hit.

Issues of workers' rights and labour conditions will get more attention as unemployment rises. The government is focused on creating jobs rather than good jobs, and pressure will need to be maintained to prevent an erosion in labour rights.

Corruption should be an issue of concern following the government's award of contracts and tenders to friends of individual ministers.

There may also be more focus on funding "ecologies". How can funders grow and fund ecosystems for change rather than individual organisations? This is a trend that has been accelerated by the crisis.

What political event or sequence of events do you predict will have a substantial effect on your work?

The main political event of concern for UK funders is, unsurprisingly, Brexit. While many of the impacts of Brexit are already in motion, there are concerns about food security, supply chains, and the possible relocation of manufacturing jobs, all of which could be devastating for a society already facing economic challenges as a result of the pandemic. There are also concerns about what rights and protections will look like in the UK as Brexit takes hold. Over the past year, COVID has distracted attention from Brexit, but important changes are taking place and civil society needs to continue its watchdog function.

Brexit has also raised questions around the UK's constitutional future. With some political actors in both Scotland and Northern Ireland calling for independence, there is a real risk that the UK could disintegrate over the coming years. In the meanwhile, whatever the outcome, there is likely to be a very polarising debate about the future and a decline in confidence in institutions.

Mayoral elections in London will be important for funders focused on the capital, and other local elections will be taking place across the UK. Some funders will be paying attention to how the elections themselves play out, particularly in terms of how the online information sphere affects the campaigns and the election outcomes.

After the experience of 2020, some funders are asking themselves how to bolster themselves for those political events that they can't predict.

How do you prepare yourself for unknown unknowns? With reflexive, nimble capacity building? Rapid response funds? Intelligence processing capacity? Can we do a better job collectively of thinking in those terms?

Programme Director | Private Foundation | UK

What is your greatest hope for 2021, in relation to your work or philanthropy in general?

My hope is that we come out from the crisis of 2020 focused on a positive vision and focused on opportunities for building something better. Let's embrace the challenge. I hope philanthropy doesn't get buried or overwhelmed in only responding to the immediate aftermath of the crisis but keeps its eye on the longer term.

Grants Manager | Private Foundation | UK

I hope that the Black Lives Matter movement leads to real change. And I hope that in the face of online hate and its pernicious impact on society, there will be a gradual turning point and people realise that Facebook is not a benign platform and Google not a neutral actor.

Programme Manager | Private Foundation | UK

One hope is that where there is resource, could we please act more wisely to get it to places where it's really needed?

Director for UK | Public Foundation | UK

My hope is that we can be really honest with ourselves that business-as-usual philanthropy failed many communities, especially black and brown communities. I hope we'll have the strength and impetus to go into those communities and look at who we are and look at how we can upend those toxic patterns.

Manager | Private Foundation | UK

I really hope that we can push the conversation away from transactional one-to-one grantmaking to more movement-based thinking. We need to be thinking about movement ecology and the "orchestra".

Programme Director | Private Foundation | UK

I hope that funders concerned with social change begin to work outside silos, within an understanding of intersectionality, and that groups largely ignored by social change donors such as user-led organisations of disabled people (currently chronically under-funded) are supported in their work to mobilise for change.

Programme Manager | Private Foundation | UK

I hope that we and our grantee-partners can travel and meet one another again, to rebuild the bonds of solidarity, fellowship and community that enables us to persevere in our work to advance human rights despite working against all odds.

Senior Programme Officer | Private Foundation | UK

I hope that funding is made available to support those who most need it; that we never forget the way that COVID-19 has exposed the vast global inequalities and the inequalities in the UK. Our benefits system is not fit for purpose; our labour market penalises the poor; women are always, always the biggest losers. I hope people remind politicians of that every day.

Executive Director | Public Foundation | UK

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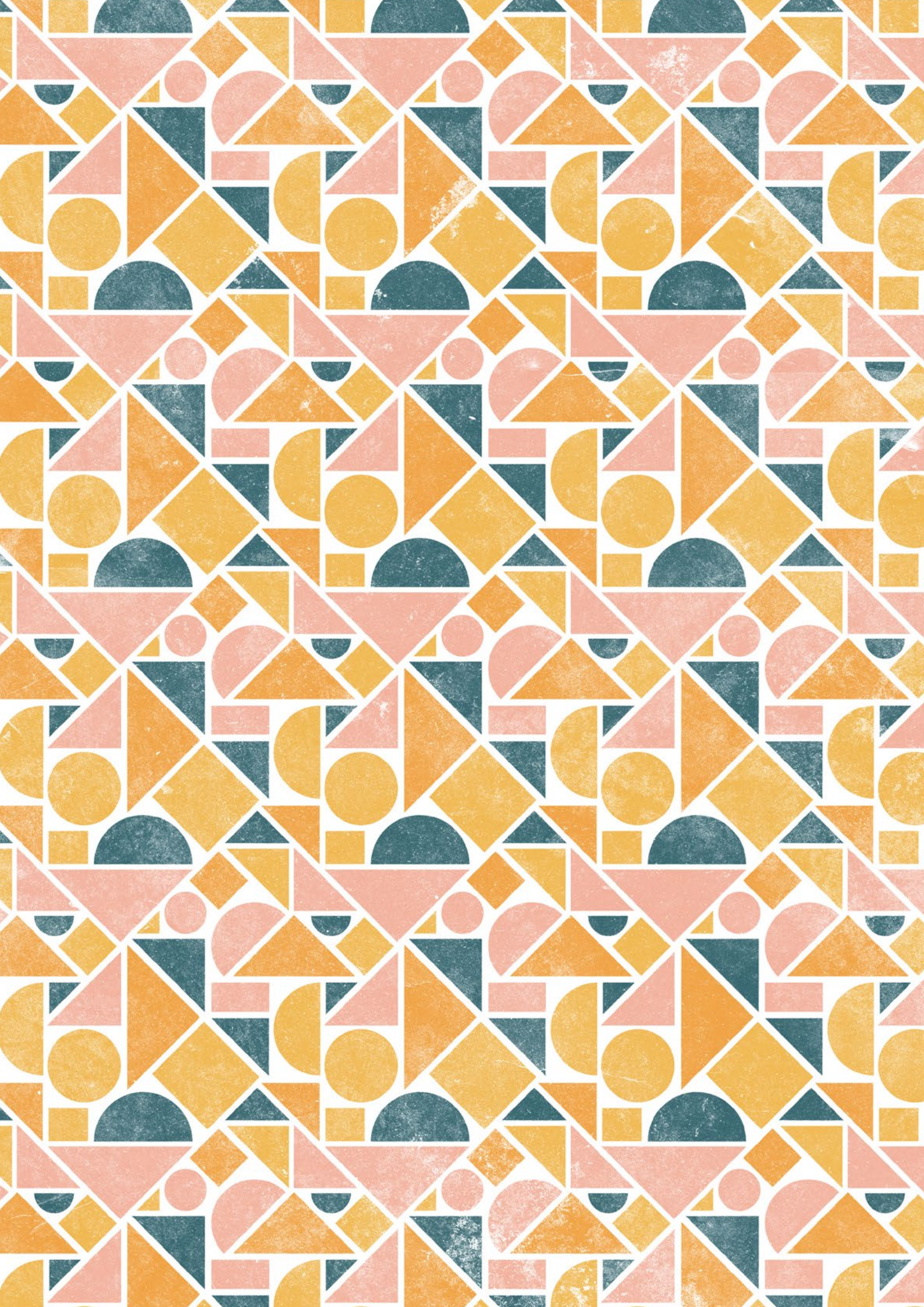
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