



insights on

how the work of efc members changed in 2020

march 2021

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EFC members and Covid-19 – How has their work changed?

At the beginning of 2021, following a challenging year of transformation seen across the globe, the EFC decided to survey the steering committee members of its Thematic Networks to get an understanding of how their work and organisations changed in 2020.

In the survey, we also asked them to share some positive examples of what their foundations have been doing, how they've been supporting their grantees, and what their priorities will be for this year.

The following organisations participated in our survey, from 7 different countries and with representatives from the steering committees of 6 different EFC Thematic Networks:

 Barrow Cadbury Trust, UK

 Fondation de France, France

 Fondazione Cariplo, Italy

 Fondazione CRT, Italy

 Open Society Foundations,
United States / Europe

 Porticus (Vienna), Austria

 Rockefeller Brothers Fund, United States

 Sabanci Foundation, Turkey

 Stiftung Mercator, Germany

Upon analysing their responses, we have regrouped their answers and reflections and compiled a list of interesting examples of initiatives which we have included at the end of the report. Some of the information presented will be considered further in a more in-depth analysis to surface some key trends and forecasts regarding the sector transformation in the post-Covid-19 era.

Changes in the work of grantmakers

Since the beginning of the pandemic, remote/home-working and “digital-working” have had an impact on the daily work of grantmakers and philanthropic actors, particularly influencing their relationships with partners and grantees.

The impossibility to travel and to meet in person has been resolved by connecting and monitoring progress regularly through phone calls and online meetings, in some cases resulting in more frequent check-ins with grantees than in previous years. Indeed, all respondents indicated that in 2020 they have consulted with their grantees through one or more of these options: calls, emails, survey.

Also, grantmaking work has been impacted during the Covid-19 crisis with a shift to an emergency-mode of working and operating, and by the need to increase flexibility with partners and grantees (including in reporting and deadlines). Indeed, grantees have also experienced serious difficulties, from their staff and families getting ill, to donors pulling funding, to challenges in implementing agreed projects. Some funders have mentioned that they were forced to suspend completely some of their programmes due to the changed priorities or to adapt their giving to emerging urgent needs with consequences in the way they operated. For other funders, there has been no major change in the way they've been working in 2020, despite the crisis. Indeed, some mentioned that, even if they've been involved in various emergency funds, their strategic mission and long-term vision remained substantially unaltered.

Positive and negative changes in foundations' work

Among the **positive things** that happened in their work in 2020, respondents mentioned that despite the difficulties in dealing with distance and lack of physical contact (with both their colleagues and grantees), they've observed better team work, more productiv-

ity, and less stress. Also, the ability to adapt quickly and the development of a new flexible working environment were also positive evolutions. The online space has allowed for more regular meetings with grantees and partners, reinforcing their relationship in some cases. Additionally, online events have resulted in a higher attendance rate and have reached more participants. Several collaborations with civil society organisations have been forged in 2020 to respond to the emergency.

One funder mentioned that the changes brought by the year 2020 have created more opportunities to have open conversations and reflections about race, gender and power within the foundation.

One funder active in migration-related issues offered a positive example in one area of its work, saying that the greater recognition of the role played by essential workers during the crisis paves the way for legislative changes to improve migrant workers' living and working conditions.

On the negative side respondents indicated the following: The loss of real contact and human relations with colleagues and partners (worsening with the passage of time); the different nature of online meetings, which are not always ideal for trust-building, especially when involving multiple stakeholders; increased working hours; and difficulty in proceeding with some specific parts of the work (e.g. advocacy work and service provision in the time of lockdowns). Also, some urgent discussions have been suspended (e.g. in the area of climate change), some projects have been more affected by the pandemic than others, and budget cuts are foreseen.

Most serious challenges faced by foundations

The largest challenges expressed by the respondents revolve around:

Challenges related to the institutional environment

- Addressing the economic/social inequalities exacerbated by the pandemic
- Deciding about the future and revising strategies in a moment of unpredictability
- Questioning working methods and the current economic models in a context where collective thinking is more complex

Challenges related to working with grantees and partners

- Reassessing feasibility of activities (in particular in areas of work more affected and non-transferable to the digital space e.g. performing arts)
- Monitoring and addressing the evolving needs of partners
- Maintaining contacts with partners

Challenges related to internal practices of funders

- Organising confidential conversations and trust-building opportunities without physical meetings
- Dealing with challenges related to home-working

2020 brought new collaborations and new grantees

New collaborations

All respondents have replied that they started new collaborations, mostly with other funders:



* In the "other" category, respondents indicated that they established new collaborations with:

- Health organisations (hospitals and research centres)
- Networks and associations that are part of the economy of solidarity
- Public/private entities of local territories
- Private companies
- NGOs

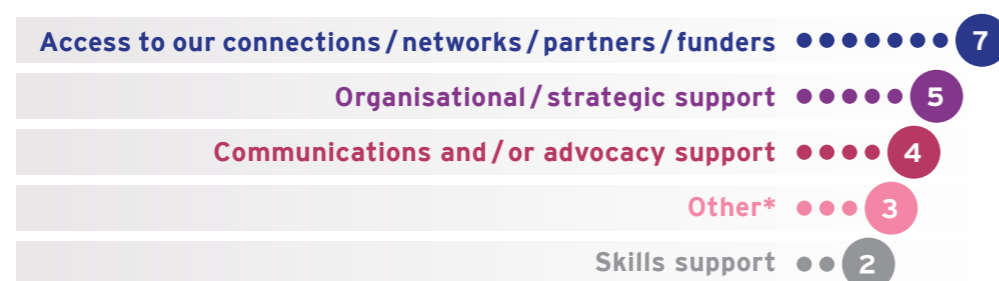
New grantees

Among the respondents, 6 out of 9 said that they worked with new grantees in 2020. These new relationships were often established in response to emerging needs and issues. For example, one organisation mentioned that they

started to work with some new organisations involving young people with digital skills, another indicated that they started to fund more frontline groups responding at the peak of the emergency.

Beyond financial support

All respondents reported that they provided non-financial support to their grantees as follows:



* In the "other" category, respondents indicated: Full flexibility with funding (timeline, purpose, earlier renewals, etc.); and technical support including providing computers, internet access etc.

Looking forward to continuing the work in 2021 and beyond

We asked funders to share something that they believe will be permanently transformed in their work or organisation as a result of the Covid-19 crisis.

Among the transformations brought, these are the ones that respondents believe will stay:

In their daily grantmaking/philanthropic work:

- Hybrid/remote/flexible work
- Operational agility
- Less travel/conferences
- Use of digital tools/paperless work/online meetings

In relation to their partners and grantees:

- Increased flexibility with grantees
- A more local approach to providing aid
- Interventions more integrated and at scale
- Institutional priorities advanced at the global level through scaled-up initiatives
- More collaborations
- Continuation of some of the projects launched and developed during the pandemic

Changes in funding and priorities in 2021

Among the priorities for 2021 these were highlighted by the respondents:

For the foundation:

- To stay alert and draw lessons from 2020 to move the organisation forward in its philanthropic role
- To find stable processes and ways of working that will become the new normal

In relation to grantees and partners:

- Maintaining the same level of funding for existing grantees
- Monitoring the needs of grantees and partners
- Continuing to provide general and flexible support to grantees and partners
- Offer capacity-building opportunities for grantees and partners

For 5 out of 9 respondents, the funding priorities will be changing in 2021

These respondents indicated that their organisations are planning to give more to the following areas:

- Health (including mental well-being)
- Emergency (in particular food and housing)
- Core-support to partners and grantees
- Distance education
- Impact of digitalisation on democracy
- Employment and labour market integration

And they indicated the following areas as those where their organisations are planning to give less:

- Events, conferences, prizes
- Cultural heritage
- Cultural education

Some additional key priorities in **thematic areas** for 2021 indicated by respondents are:

Reducing poverty, climate change, cultural participation, independent scientific research, welfare, social housing, demographic challenges, online hate, use of technology.

Examples of inspiring initiatives from foundations in 2020

Respondents shared these examples of inspiring initiatives, either supported by their own organisation or by other EFC members that they found inspirational:

Culture of Solidarity Fund by European Cultural Foundation

Set up at the beginning of the pandemic crisis, the fund continues to support imaginative cultural initiatives that reinforce European solidarity and the idea of Europe as a shared public space.

Solidarity Culture Europe

<https://culturalfoundation.eu/stories/culture-of-solidarity-third-round-grantees>

LETS GO by Fondazione Cariplo

A cross-sectorial call for proposals to maintain strategic services for the third sector organisations supported by the foundation.

Third sector organisations

www.fondazione-cariplo.it/it/bandi/lets-go-misura-di-sostegno-agli-enti-di-terzo-settore.html

National call for funds by Fondation de France

The foundation launched a national appeal for funds and collected around €40 million to support medical/socio-medical staff, caregivers, researchers and vulnerable people. All their teams were involved in the identification and financial support of more than 750 organisations all over the country (and around 30 organisations abroad). Moreover, all their programmes provided no-cost extension agreements for ongoing projects and sometimes top-up agreements.

Solidarity Health sector

Researchers Vulnerable people

Respond and Adapt programme supported by Barrow Cadbury Trust and other EFC members

A programme of learning and targeted grants in support of the UK migration and refugee sector. The programme was launched in June 2020 as an emergency response and is supported by ten contributing funders: AB Charitable Trust, Barrow Cadbury Trust, Comic Relief, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, Lloyds Bank Foundation, Migration Foundation, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Rayne Foundation, and The Blue Thread.

Third sector organisations

Migrants Refugees

<https://global-dialogue.org/respond-and-adapt-programme-rapl>

Data Hub

supported by the National Lottery Community Fund

The Data Hub exists to support frontline organisations affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. By identifying the needs of people and organisations in the immigration system, the Hub ensures that others can develop the right response at the right time – be that operational, advocacy-based, or finding new funding. It's a space to gather insight on current needs and trends, and a way to connect organisations in the sector.

Third sector organisations

Data Refugees Migrants

<https://www.ragp.org.uk/data-hub>

Social Bonds, Series 2020 by Ford Foundation

The foundation issued social bonds in order to increase their overall giving in 2020.

Social bonds

www.fordfoundation.org/the-latest/news/ford-foundation-takes-historic-unprecedented-action-to-increase-grantmaking-for-nonprofits-by-1-billion-with-proceeds-of-offering-of-social-bonds-in-response-to-covid-19

Emergency Fund by ERSTE foundation

The foundation set up an easy access emergency fund for basic costs for grass-roots organisations.

Third sector organisations

www.erstestiftung.org/en/about-us

Technology for Women, Solidarity for All

by Sabanci Foundation

In cooperation with the Federation of Women Associations of Turkey and TEKNOSA (Sabanci's leading technology retail company), Sabanci Foundation in 2020 prepared a national campaign (launched in February 2021) to collect second-hand smart phones and distribute them to women facing domestic violence. There are some emergency hotlines and apps in Turkey which can be used in case of violence but many women are not aware of them or cannot use them since they do not have phones. Especially during the pandemic, domestic violence has increased dramatically due to the fact that people spend more time indoors.

How does it work? People who would like to join the campaign can bring their phones to TEKNOSA stores or they can call the call centre and deliver the phone to the mobile team. All the maintenance work is done by TEKNOSA and then the phones are given to women victims of violence (e.g. have a police report, live in shelters etc.) Women who would like to get a phone from the campaign can apply to the Federation through its different channels.

Technology Women

www.sabancivakfi.org/tr/sosyal-degisim/kadin-icin-teknoloji-hepimiz-icin-dayanisma

Alliance for Social Cohesion initiated by Bertelsmann Foundation and joined by several EFC members

An alliance for social cohesion was created in 2019 by 11 German foundations. Together, the foundations want to coordinate their activities to promote social cohesion more closely, create opportunities for exchange and promote innovative ideas.

Alliance of funders Social cohesion

<https://allianz-fuer-zusammenhalt.de/en/start>

Open questions about the future

In conclusion, there are some important considerations and open questions that deserve particular attention and could be further interrogated and explored in order to imagine what the future might look like.

On the distribution of philanthropic resources:

There is a general concern around the fact that annual budgets allocated by funders might (or have been already) decreased, either in general or towards support given to specific areas (as mentioned in this survey, one example seems to be in the area of cultural heritage where support might be decreased). Talking with our members, we understand that there is also a fear around the fact that by having to address immediate and urgent needs locally, foundations might be allocating less funding transnationally.

On a positive note, there seems to be an increase in foundations' support to (or implementation of) organisational development programmes for their grantees and partners. Some important questions to better understand what changes to expect could be: Have other EFC members decreased their annual budget in 2021, or are they planning to do so next year? For EFC members active internationally, has Covid-19 had any consequences in their transnational giving? When funding will be devoted to new areas and issues, will this be at the expense of other areas? Have organisational development programmes become even more important among the types of non-financial support provided by EFC members?

On re-inventing activities, relationships and collaborations:

The lack of human and physical contacts as well as the transformation of travel and mobility not only due to the current crisis but also to the climate emergency, have already had several impacts on the activities and relationships between funders and their partners. The digital transformation has brought both interesting advantages and some frustrating disadvantages. Moreover, living through an historical global crisis, has proved more than ever the importance of acting together, across sectors and fields, and as a whole ecosystem driving change in the same direction. These changes or increased awareness are seen as opportunities for reinventing and reimagining the way some things are done, and to renew and improve donor-grantee relationships and the way collaborations are conceived. How are other EFC members transforming their activities and relationships with partners and grantees? What solutions have they found? What are the challenges that they are encountering?

There are certainly positive and less positive factors that are under consideration in this transformation and we hope to be able to explore them further in future conversations, consultations and gatherings with our members. As one respondent observed, we're living several transformations in parallel and at different levels (both internally and externally) - e.g. we at the EFC are in a process of transformation ourselves. Therefore, in order to see how the future of philanthropy will look, throughout the year we will be asking ourselves and our members: What are the obstacles and opportunities that these transformations bring in advancing the sector's mission to effect change in our societies?

About the EFC

As a leading platform for philanthropy in Europe, the EFC works to strengthen the sector and make the case for institutional philanthropy as a formidable means of effecting change.

We believe institutional philanthropy has a unique, crucial and timely role to play in meeting the critical challenges societies face. More people and causes benefit from institutional philanthropy than ever before, from eradicating deadly diseases and making the world's populations healthier to combating climate change and fighting for global human rights and equality.

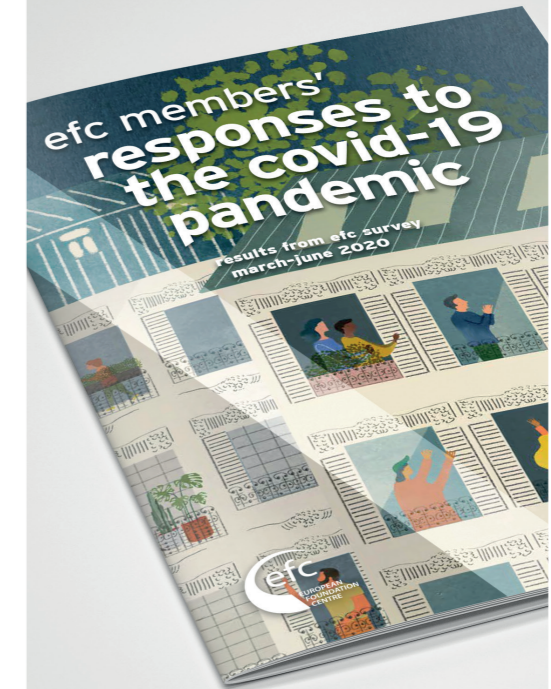
Working closely with our members, a dynamic network of strategically-minded philanthropic organisations from more than 30 countries, we:

- **Foster peer-learning** by surfacing the expertise and experience embedded in the sector
- **Enhance collaboration** by connecting people for inspiration and joint action
- **Represent philanthropy** for favourable policy and regulatory environments
- **Build a solid evidence base** through knowledge and intelligence
- **Raise the visibility** of philanthropy's value and impact

www.efc.be



Read more about EFC members' reaction to the Covid-19 crisis



efc.issuelab.org/resource/efc-members-responses-to-the-covid-19-pandemic-results-from-efc-survey-march-june-2020.html

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