



# efc members' responses to the covid-19 pandemic

results from efc survey  
march-june 2020

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# Introduction

The European Foundation Centre surveyed its members, affiliates and partners from March to early June 2020 to find out what immediate measures they were taking (or were planning to take), internally and in their programmatic and funding activities, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The survey aimed to gain an initial overview of how EFC members and affiliates were reacting to the crisis in order to identify possible points of collaboration and synergy, and to share useful information among them.

In total, more than 100 responses were received from 23 different countries in Europe and elsewhere. The survey was sent on the day after the health crisis was officially declared a pandemic by WHO officials (11 March 2020).

During the survey period, the countries of several responding organisations had not yet entered a lockdown phase. Nevertheless, these organisations were already reacting both internally to protect their staff by moving financial and non-financial resources where needed; and by activating emergency funds and partnerships to join forces across sectors.

The respondents: 106 from at least 23 different countries<sup>1</sup>

Austria	Senegal
Belgium	South Africa
Bosnia & Herzegovina	Spain
Denmark	Sweden
Finland	Switzerland
France	Turkey
Georgia	United Kingdom
Germany	United States
Greece	
Italy	
Netherlands	
Norway	
Poland	
Romania	
Russia	



1 – Several respondents answered anonymously, and therefore were not counted in this country distribution.

# Survey results

The survey questions fell into three broad categories: Internal changes made or challenges faced by the organisation, the value that philanthropy can bring to the crisis, and actions taken by members.

## 1. Internal changes and challenges

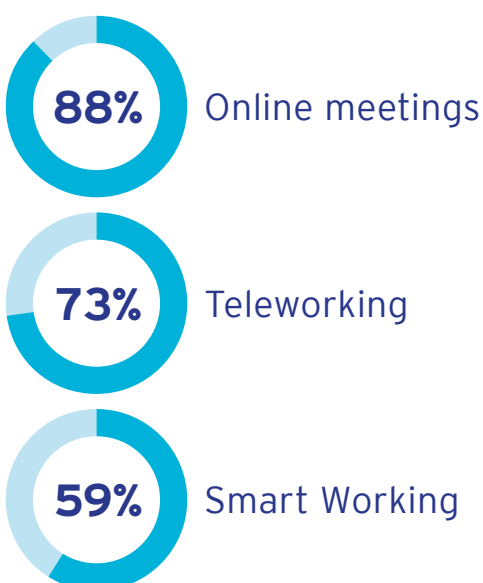
We asked responding organisations about the ways in which the crisis has affected their work, what the impacts have been on their programmes, and what specific challenges they have faced in this new context.

### Ways of working and changes regarding office facilities

**Question: In light of the fast-evolving developments of COVID-19, is your organisation taking internal measures to protect staff, visitors etc.?**

Several of the respondents took the survey before their countries entered the official lockdown phase. Nonetheless, **100% of the 106 respondents had adopted safety restrictions** to protect their staff and stakeholders. Almost all (88%) moved their meetings online.

### Measures taken



### Some challenges expressed as a consequence of the teleworking and digital transition

Several respondents mentioned that they had to build capacity to adapt to the new way of working, bringing numerous difficulties such as employees dealing with online schooling for their children, employees in different time zones, managing different teams, issues related to internal communication, and issues for people with disabilities.

The digital transition has also impacted the way these foundations share their knowledge, with some having turned their information and research into open digital resources.

### Some initiatives in response to internal challenges:

- IT literacy programmes for staff
- Hotline for psychological help
- Buddy system to support employees, e.g. for those who have children at home

### Closing of buildings

It is important to observe that several EFC members own buildings (e.g. cultural centres, libraries, museums, co-working spaces for grantees, etc.): The measures adopted internally were also extended to these buildings, with a number of consequences (especially for the cultural venues).

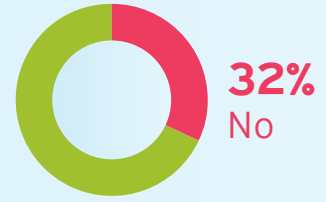
## Challenges faced

### Impact on the work of the organisations

**Question: In light of the critical situation, is there any programme/initiative you are running or supporting that will be harder to implement?**

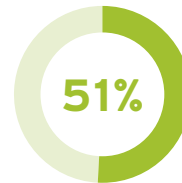
The majority of respondents (68%) replied “yes”, some of their programmes will be harder to implement.

68%  
Yes



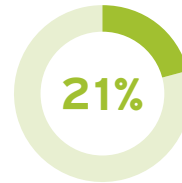
**Question: Are there specific challenges you are expecting to face?**

Respondents faced challenges in evaluating which, if any, activities to suspend, and in finding ways to modify or restructure programmes to accommodate the new situation. They were particularly concerned about how the situation would **impact their grantees**: several EFC members have consulted their grantees through surveys. Another major concern revolved around the implications of social distancing measures for all activities requiring **physical participation and human interaction**. Travel restrictions made their **cross-country mobility programmes** impossible. High concern was also expressed for those beneficiaries belonging to **vulnerable groups** where the current crisis represented an additional complication to their already difficult living conditions.



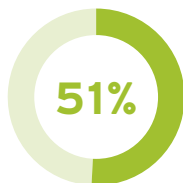
Physical participation/  
human interaction

- Training or capacity-building programmes that require physical participation
- Donor-grantee relationship and field visits
- Education programmes and activities for schools
- Arts & culture activities
- Consultative meetings



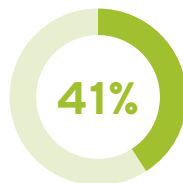
Impact on specific vulnerable groups of beneficiaries/  
specific areas of work

- Elderly, schools, children, education, arts, non-profit organisations, social businesses, etc.

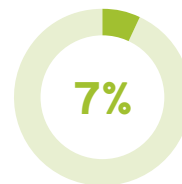


Impact on  
own grantees

- Loss of grantees
- Administrative issues (simplification of processes, due diligence, partner audits, selection of grantees, etc.).
- Delays (in process, delivery, evaluations, etc)
- Projects not launched, stopped or re-focused (e.g. activities related to physical participation, advocacy-related activities; activities related to specific groups e.g. elderly)
- Liquidity, cash-flow issues
- Co-working space difficult to run

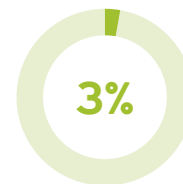


Impact on  
foundation's  
programmes

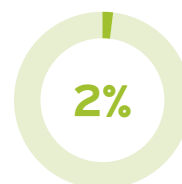


Cross-country  
mobility

- See “Actions taken” section



Launch of  
emergency funds



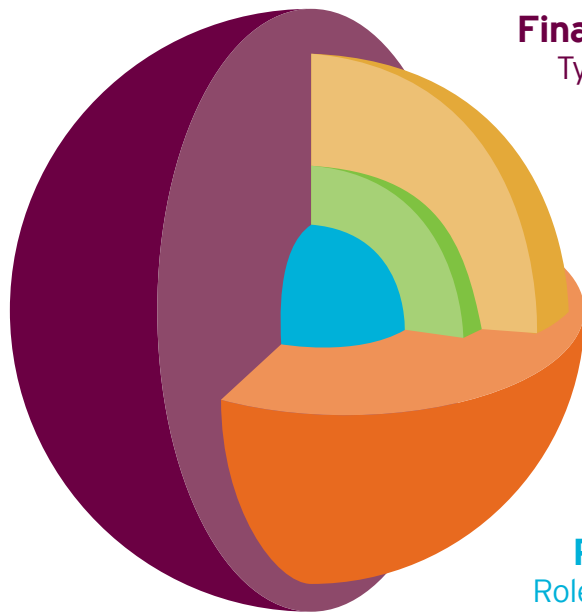
Worries around  
political commitment

- Specifically on climate change but also policy issues, see “Actions taken” section

## 2. Value of philanthropy

For this survey, we asked respondents to tell us the various ways their organisations are contributing value in response to the pandemic. Below you can see their answers and how they fit into our Institutional Philanthropy

Spectrum (IPS), a framework we have developed to help us better understand philanthropic organisations and how they carry out their activities. The Spectrum encompasses the following key aspects of the sector:



### Financial resources

Type of resources and size of assets

### Use of assets

Financial tools, staffing, non-financial assets and tools, scope and approaches

### Governance

Governance arrangements, time horizon and organisational and legal forms

### Practices and behaviours

Operations and interactions with peers and stakeholders

### Relevance

Roles, functions and public good areas

**Question: Given your specific context, work and experience, what do you consider your foundation can bring to respond to this situation?**

Figures represent number of responses falling under the specific category.

- 17 Financial support
- 12 Networks and connections
- 7 Expertise / advisory service
- 7 Info sharing / knowledge / research
- 6 Adaptability
- 5 Catalysing power
- 5 Flexibility
- 4 Other
- 2 Communication
- 2 Influence
- 2 Long-term perspective
- 2 Perspectives, ideas
- 1 Risk-taking
- 1 Systemic change

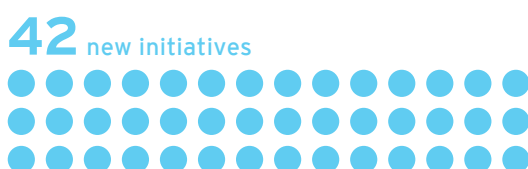
### 3. Actions taken

We asked responding organisations to describe the actions they are taking in response to the pandemic, including launching new initiatives and collaborations, or modifying existing ones.

**Questions: Are you supporting any organisation/individual in response or have you launched new initiatives? Are you thinking about or already planning to implement something in the near future?**

Only 23 organisations said they had not launched any new initiatives nor were they planning to. All of the other 83 respondents indicated they had launched new initiatives and/or were planning to.

The planned or launched actions that were described in more detail break down into the following three categories:



#### New initiatives

New programmes and initiatives fell largely into the following categories:

- Emergency funds
- Funds to mitigate economic consequences post emergency
- Research projects
- Funding pledges
- Long-term programmes

For new initiatives, the following types of partners/beneficiaries were the most cited:

- Research (institutes, researchers)
- Hospitals and health services
- Humanitarian organisations/ international agencies (Red Cross, WHO Digital Health, etc.)
- Local communities (for social, health and economic urgencies)
- Third sector partners (e.g. relaunch of NGOs, social businesses)
- Specific groups (e.g. elderly; artists; students and teachers; children; youth, families)

The new initiatives are mostly directed to the foundation's existing partners and grantees.

#### Data / Digitalisation

Some members strengthened their commitment to use data for social good (see [A Call for Action](#) - Data Stewards Network).

Some members increased support to the digital transformation of the education system.

#### Collaborations

The following types of partners for collaboration were the most cited:

- Governments
- Universities/research institutes
- Other foundations
- Other types of philanthropic organisations

#### Want to know more?

If you are an EFC member or affiliate, you can ask us for further details on these new initiatives by getting in touch with Lucia Patuzzi, EFC Knowledge Hub Coordinator, at: [lpatuzzi@efc.be](mailto:lpatuzzi@efc.be).

You can also find a number of initiatives that were sent to us from our members or that we identified through research: <https://www.efc.be/news-post/how-are-efc-members-mitigating-the-impact-of-covid-19/>



# What's next?

The survey is now closed, but the EFC will continue to:

## Monitor EFC members' response to the crisis and emerging initiatives

- If you have a new initiative that you would like to share please get in touch with us.

## Organise webinars on COVID-19 related challenges for the sector and responses

Check out upcoming events on our website [www.efc.be/events](http://www.efc.be/events)

## Centralise the ongoing collection of information to map out the contribution of EFC members and philanthropy in the COVID-19 emergency context

- For our members and affiliates, you can reach out to us to get additional details on how the EFC membership is responding to the crisis, including information on specific questions/aspects/topics that you may be interested in. This information can help you connect with your peers, and be inspired by others' solutions and innovative approaches. Please get in touch with us.
- And while we continue to build this collective knowledge with and for our members, we will also prepare some follow-up questions to be sent to respondents in order to go deeper into some essential aspects that have emerged from the survey and to see how the situation is evolving for our members.

## Post blogs from our members on their reactions to, experiences of and thoughts on philanthropy in a COVID-19 world.

# Get in touch and share!

If you haven't taken the survey, but would like to share what your organisation is doing, or if you would like to share your foundation's experience during this crisis through a blog posted on our website, please reach out to Lucia Patuzzi, EFC Knowledge Hub Coordinator, at: [lpatuzzi@efc.be](mailto:lpatuzzi@efc.be)

If you have any other questions or would like more information, do not hesitate to get in touch.

## About the EFC Knowledge Hub

Through our online Knowledge Hub, members can access insights and intelligence offered by our knowledge base. Our knowledge work helps philanthropic organisations to:

- Learn about and reflect on practices from other organisations
- Establish benchmarks, both programmatic and operational
- Get inspired by ideas and methods discovered
- Connect with peers and identify potential partners
- Gain insights to inform strategy and build evidence for strategic change

## What our Knowledge Hub offers

### Mappings

The EFC maps the European funding landscape in an array of thematic areas. Recent mappings include "Environmental Funding by European Foundations" and "Arts and Culture at the Core of Philanthropy". All EFC mappings and publications are available for download from our website.

### Research service

The EFC provides answers to members' research requests on a range of topics - from who is funding in specific thematic or geographic areas, to how other organisations operate, to questions about the sector as a whole.

### Virtual Library

The EFC curates this publicly-available, fully-searchable collection of more than 1,000 free-to-download publications on philanthropy and foundations. We continuously add new resources published by our members, as well as resources they suggest for inclusion.

[www.efc.be/knowledge-hub](http://www.efc.be/knowledge-hub)

## 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

Visit the EFC website to read more about the EFC Strategic Framework 2016-2022, developed by the EFC membership.

[www.efc.be](http://www.efc.be)

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## European Foundation entre, AISBL

Philanthropy House  
Rue Royale 94  
1000 Brussels, Belgium  
+32 2 512 89 38  
[efc@efc.be](mailto:efc@efc.be)  
[www.efc.be](http://www.efc.be)



Cover image created by Catherine Cordasco and submitted to the United Nations Global Call Out To Creatives - help stop the spread of COVID-19.