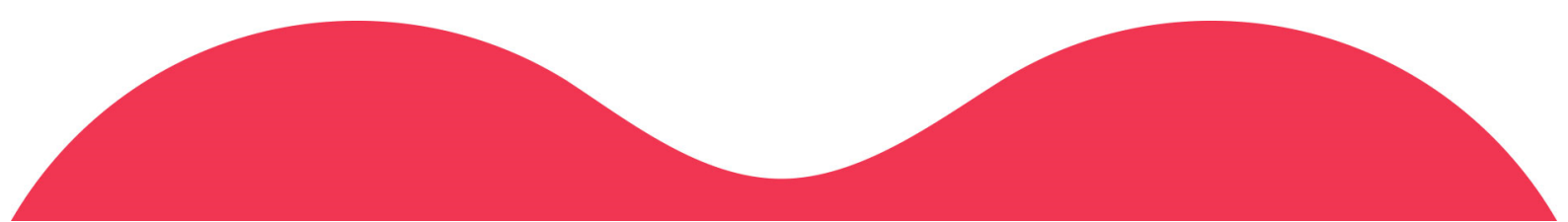


December 2023

Public-Benefit Foundations in Europe

Comparative analysis and aggregate figures across 26 countries



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Introduction

This briefing presents an up-to-date picture of the institutional philanthropy landscape in Europe by offering an analysis of the philanthropic sectors in 26 European countries. It includes data by country as well as total figures for Europe on the number of public-benefit foundations as well as their assets and annual expenditure.

This report is part of Philea's commitment to demonstrating the size, diversity and scale of European institutional philanthropy to a range of stakeholders. The briefing builds on and updates the information provided by [the 2016 Public-Benefit Foundations in Europe Report](#), published by Donors and Foundations Networks in Europe (Dafne) (now part of Philea) and analysed by Candid (previously known as the Foundation Center).

The new data was collected from national associations of donors, all of which are Philea members, covering 26 European countries, including 19 EU Member States – Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Spain and Sweden. The 7 non-EU countries included in the dataset are Liechtenstein, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom and Ukraine. For more information, please see the “Methodology” section.



Key findings

Summary of total figures for public-benefit foundations in Europe

Number: **186,079**

Total assets: **€647.5 billion**

Total annual expenditure: **€54.5 billion**

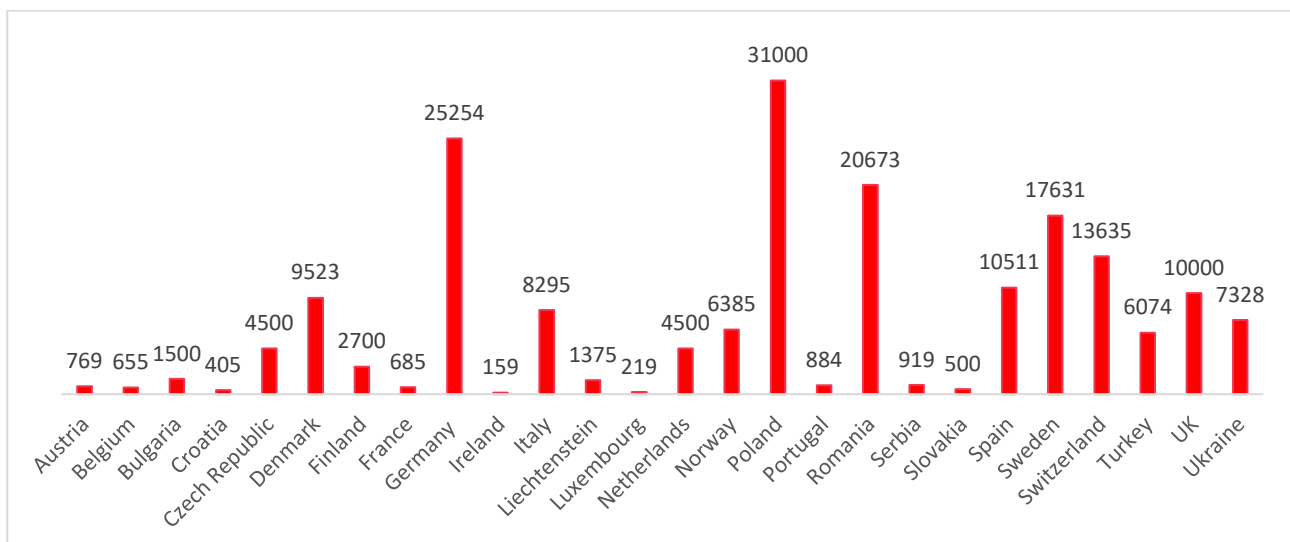
Please see below for details on how we arrived at these figures.

Number of public-benefit foundations

The total number of public-benefit foundations in Europe is 186,079, based on new data from 26 European countries¹ compiled by Philea members.

The total number per country ranges from 156 (Ireland) to 31,000 (Poland). Germany has the second highest number (25,254), with 5 other European countries (Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom) having at least 10,000 registered public-benefit foundations.

Total number of public-benefit foundations by country



¹ This is not the total number of all types of foundations in Europe, but public-benefit foundations according to our working definition. For instance, even though there are over 5,300 foundations and endowment funds in France, the number public utility foundations is around 600, and this study included the latter figure as a data point for France because it meets the criteria we developed for the public-benefit foundation. See the “Methodology” section for more details.



Foundation assets

The total asset figure for the 21 countries reporting is €647.5 billion, based on the latest available data in each country.

The total asset figure per country ranges from €160,000 (Serbia) to €140 billion (Switzerland). Countries with the largest foundation assets include Switzerland, UK and the Netherlands.

Total assets of public-benefit foundations (in millions of €)

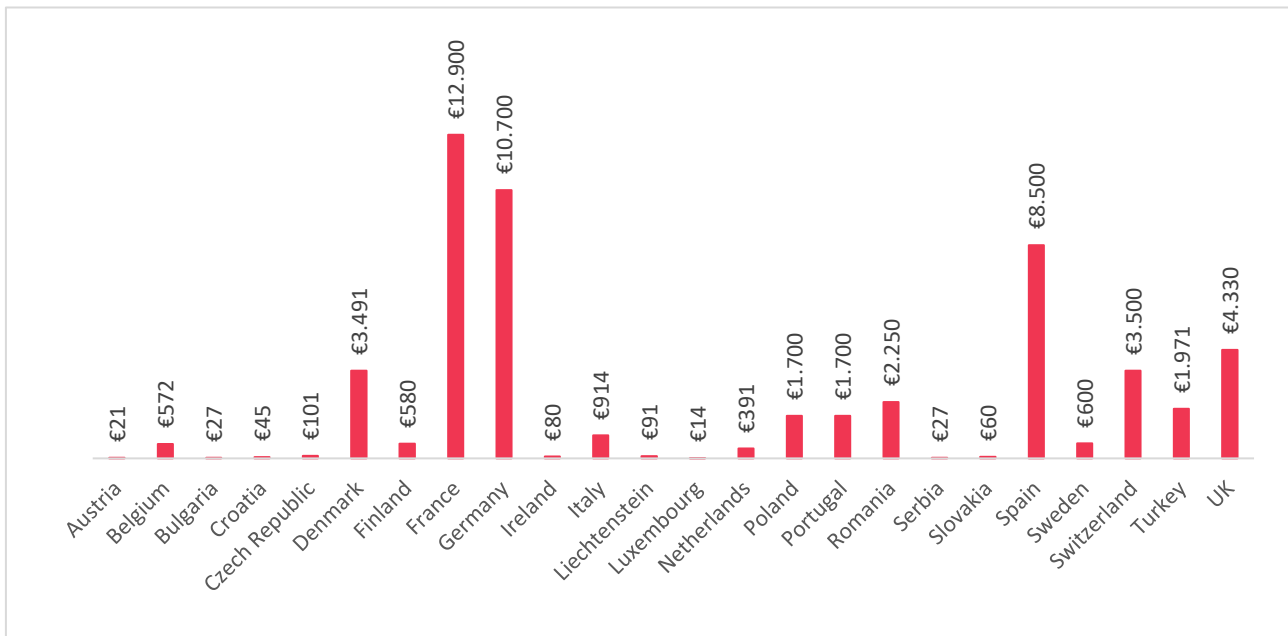


Annual foundation expenditure

The total annual expenditure for the 24 countries reporting is €54.5 billion, based on the latest available data in each country.

The total expenditure per country ranges from €14 million (Luxembourg) to €13 billion (France). France, followed by Germany and Spain, has the highest level of total charitable expenditure – approximately €13 billion – and accounts for 24% of all charitable expenditure by public-benefit foundations in 24 countries.

Total expenditure of public-benefit foundations (in millions of €)



Methodology and limitations of the data

Philea's annual survey

A survey with Philea's national association members has been conducted each year since the inception of the initiative in 2015. The most recent iteration was conducted in April 2023. Through an online survey, members were queried about the number, assets, and expenditure of foundations in their respective countries. Overall, 26 countries participated in this survey as outlined in the Introduction (see also "Participant organisations" section).

Participant countries of the survey



The data provided by national associations derives from various sources. In most European countries, relatively precise figures about the total number of public-benefit foundations are available. In such cases national associations rely on the data collected by the state and made publicly available at varying levels of detail.

The state entity responsible for collecting information on foundations may be a specific ministry; a central statistics office or state census; a central tax registry; regional or local tax registries; or specific foundation supervisory authorities. In other cases, in the absence of publicly available data or a legal definition of a public-benefit foundation, national associations refer to data they directly collect from their foundation members.²

² For instance, in Ireland and the United Kingdom, because there is no legal definition of "foundation," there is no official data available on foundations. It must be compiled through research conducted by non-governmental organisations, such as Philanthropy Ireland, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (England), and the Association of Charitable Foundations (UK).

Limitations

The data presented in this briefing offers valuable insights into institutional philanthropy in Europe and represents the best and most comprehensive estimate available. However, it is crucial to recognise that the data will always be imperfect. Together with our members, we strive continuously to enhance our efforts in data collection and reporting for greater accuracy and consistency.

At the same time, we feel it is our responsibility to acknowledge the inherent limitations and to communicate openly the origins of those limitations. In this way researchers and other users can trace and understand these constraints, and future studies can contribute to filling the data gaps and refining methodologies in the pursuit of a more accurate representation of institutional philanthropy in Europe.

Because the legal definition of “foundation” differs across countries, for purposes of creating a working definition, five criteria had been collectively defined to consider an organisation as a public-benefit foundation:

1. They are independent, separately constituted non-profit bodies.
2. They have no members or shareholders.
3. They have their own established and reliable source of income, usually but not exclusively from an endowment.
4. They have their own governing board.
5. They distribute their financial resources for educational, cultural, religious, social or other public-benefit purposes, either by
 - o Supporting associations, charities, and educational institutions or individuals; or,
 - o Operating their own programmes.

Based on these criteria, we have excluded the following types of organisations from the totals.:

- Private-benefit foundations (foundations which pursue private purposes such as “the advancement of one family, relatives of the founder, trust funds for the education of the founder’s children, etc.”)
- Foundations established and largely operated by the state (because such foundations are not privately governed and do not operate independently from the state)
- Inactive foundations (foundations which are no longer active but have not been removed from public records)
- Other types of public-benefit organisations



Nevertheless, the respondents needed to use their judgement to decide which foundations should be included in the sample based on the given criteria where these categories were not explicit enough. In some countries the available aggregated data do not permit drilling down and making distinctions between those categories. While we have taken every care to include only public-benefit foundations, some respondents have not been able to completely isolate and remove foundations that do not meet the criteria in cases where the data is not specific enough to allow differentiation between these categories.

When it comes to gathering comprehensive data on foundation assets and endowments the challenges include:

- Diverse investment strategies employed, including unconventional assets with non-market valuations, such as art collections, which lack clear market valuations making it difficult/subjective to determine the fair value of these assets
- Inconsistent recognition of non-monetary contributions, such as land or intellectual property
- Different financial reporting standards or frameworks, and varying accounting practices
- Diverse regulatory environments
- incomplete information on endowment payouts and spending patterns
- Delayed reporting (foundations might not report their financial data promptly, leading to outdated information)
- Limited transparency on donor-advised funds
- Currency fluctuations affecting the reported value of international investments

Please see below to learn how we are planning to address these data gaps together with our members and research partners.

European Foundation Data Project

The existing datasets on numbers, assets and expenditures of foundations across Europe are imperfect due to factors such as the ones mentioned above. Additionally, the voluntary nature of disclosure by foundations, coupled with the complexities of tracking cross-border financial activities, contributes to data limitations. Despite these challenges, we need data on foundations for understanding and showing the size and scale of the sector and how it is evolving over the years. For that reason, we will put additional effort into expanding the geographic coverage of this report to include all countries in Europe based on the definition of the Council of Europe and improving the process of collecting and reporting data.



Our website will serve as the open-source platform for this, dedicated to sharing foundation data and additional resources, and catering to researchers, philanthropy practitioners, policymakers, journalists, and anyone invested in understanding the philanthropic landscape. Our platform will welcome contributions and corrections from all stakeholders. For further details and updates, we invite you to visit our website or get in touch using the contact details in the “Contact” section below.



Participant organisations

1. Austria: Austrian Foundations Association
2. Belgium: Belgian Federation of Philanthropic Foundations
3. Bulgaria: Bulgarian Donors' Forum
4. Croatia: Croatian Foundations Forum "ForWellBeing"
5. Czech Republic: Czech Donors Forum
6. Denmark: Knowledge Centre for Danish Foundations
7. Finland: Association of Finnish Foundations
8. France: French Centre for Funds and Foundations
9. Germany: Association of German Foundations
10. Ireland: Philanthropy Ireland
11. Italy: Acri & Assifero - Italian Association of Grantmaking Foundations
12. Liechtenstein: Association Liechtenstein Charitable Foundations and Trusts
13. Luxembourg: Fondation de Luxembourg
14. Netherlands: FIN Dutch Association of Funds
15. Norway: Association of Norwegian Foundations
16. Poland: Polish Donors Forum
17. Portugal: Portuguese Foundation Center
18. Romania: ARC
19. Serbia: Serbian Philanthropy Forum
20. Slovak Republic: Centre for Philanthropy
21. Spain: Spanish Association of Foundations
22. Sweden: The Association of Swedish Foundations
23. Switzerland: SwissFoundations
24. Turkey: Third Sector Foundation of Turkey
25. Ukraine: Ukrainian Philanthropists Forum
26. United Kingdom: Association of Charitable Foundations

Data Sources

Number of foundations

Country	Year	Source
Austria	2023	Austrian Federal Ministry of Interior & NPO Competence Center
Belgium	2022	Moniteur Belge (Official Journal)
Bulgaria	2022	National register
Croatia	2022	Public Register of Foundations
Czech Republic	2022	CDF
Denmark	2021	Statistics Denmark
Finland	2023	Finnish Patent- and Registration Office
France	2023	CFF
Germany	2022	The Association of German Foundations
Ireland	2021	Benefacts
Italy	2020	Istat
Liechtenstein	2022	Foundation supervisory authority
Luxembourg	2021	Ministry of Justice
Netherlands	2022	Ministry of Finance
Norway	2021	The Norwegian Gambling and Foundation Authority
Poland	2021	REGON Register
Portugal	2019	Centro Português de Fundações
Romania	2023	Ministry of Justice
Serbia	2020	Serbian Business Registers Agency
Slovakia	2023	Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic
Spain	2022	Spanish Association of Foundations
Sweden	2022	County Administrative Board
Switzerland	2022	Swiss Foundations
Turkey	2023	General Directorate of Foundations
UK	1997	Charity Commission
Ukraine	2019	State Fiscal Service

Foundation assets

Country	Year	Data source
Austria	2019	Austrian Foundations Association, FVA
Belgium	2015	University of Liège
Croatia	2022	Croatian Foundations Forum "ForWellBeing"
Czech Republic	2021	Czech Donors Forum
Finland	2023	Association of Finnish Foundations
France	2020	Fondation de France
Germany	2020	Association of German Foundations
Italy	2021	Acri



Luxembourg	2014	Fondation de Luxembourg
Netherlands	2013	Giving in Netherlands, Research by VU University
Norway	2021	The Norwegian Gambling and Foundation Authority
Poland	2012	National Statistics Office
Portugal	2021	Centro Português de Fundações
Romania	2017	The Civil Society Development Foundation (CSDF / FDSC) Study 2017
Serbia	2017	Serbian Business Registers Agency
Slovakia	2021	Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic -
Spain	2019	Spanish Association of Foundation and Spanish Statistical Office - INE
Sweden	2012	The Association of Swedish Foundations
Switzerland	2022	Rapport sur les fondations en Suisse 2023
UK	2020/21	ACF Foundation Giving Trends 2022
Ukraine	2019	State Tax Service

Foundation expenditure

Country	Year	Data source
Austria	2023	NPO Competence Center
Belgium	2015	University of Liège
Bulgaria	2018	Bulgarian Donors Forum
Croatia	2022	Croatian Foundations Forum "ForWellBeing" (approximation)
Czech Republic	2021	Czech Donors Forum
Denmark	2021	Statistics Denmark
Finland	2021	Association of Finnish Foundations
France	2020	Fondation de France
Germany	2020	Association of German Foundations
Ireland	2021	Benefacts Legacy
Italy	2021	Acri
Liechtenstein	2012	Association Liechtenstein Charitable Foundations and Trusts
Luxembourg	2014	Fondation de Luxembourg
Netherlands	2022	Giving in the Netherlands 2022, Research by VU University
Poland	2016	Non-Profit Research Centre
Portugal	2016	Portuguese Foundation Centre
Romania	2017	The Civil Society Development Foundation (CSDF / FDSC)
Serbia	2019	Catalyst Balkans
Slovakia	2021	Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic
Spain	2022	Spanish Association of foundations from National statistical office and participating supervising authorities
Sweden	2018	Association of Swedish Foundations
Switzerland	2022	SwissFoundations
Turkey	2021	Directorate of Foundations
UK	2020/21	ACF Foundation Giving Trends 2022



About Philea

Philea – Philanthropy Europe Association nurtures a diverse and inclusive ecosystem of foundations, philanthropic organisations and networks in over 30 countries that work for the common good.

With individual and national-level infrastructure organisations as members, it unites over 10,000 public-benefit foundations that seek to improve life for people and communities in Europe and around the world.

Philea galvanises collective action and amplifies the voice of European philanthropy, and in all it does, it is committed to enhancing trust, collaboration, transparency, innovation, inclusion and diversity.

www.philea.eu

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