



University
of Basel

Center for
Philanthropy Studies



From data to impact

Annual Report 2024





IMPRESSUM

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From data to impact

Since its foundation, the CEPS has set itself the goal of strengthening the statistical coverage of the nonprofit and philanthropy sector. Without data, no empirical research can be carried out and without empiricism, evidence-based recommendations for action are not possible. The Swiss Foundation Report, the NPO Data Lab and the Yearbook of the aid organizations are now established reference sources for analyzing sector development. The CEPS is constantly using new methods to obtain new data. In recent years, the development of natural language processing, large language models and machine learning has opened up completely new possibilities.

It is therefore a particular success to have filled the newly created assistant professorship in Global Philanthropy with Dominik Meier, who specializes in these methods and received an award at last year's ARNOVA conference for his text analysis program "text2SDG". With him, the research spectrum of the CEPS is expanding to include international developments in philanthropy, both in terms of individual commitment as well as institutional philanthropy. In addition, the SNSF-funded project "Balancing Trust and Accountability" continues the tradition of international comparative research.

Evidence-based recommendations for practical action can be developed on the basis of data. For instance, the data collected and published annually by CEPS in the Swiss Foundation Report were decisive for the Canton of Zurich to have its role as a foundation location examined and, as a result to adjust the tax treatment of charitable foundations last year.

The CEPS also contributes to sector development with its own research. It covers very diverse and current topics such as impact reporting, impact-linked finance or the use of virtual reality in elderly care. In the coming years, the transfer of knowledge from research to practice and applied research at the CEPS shall be advanced even further.

In executive education, we can look back on a very successful year, the highlight of which was the graduation ceremony for the first graduates of the “MAS in Nonprofit Management & Law”. The content of our courses is regularly updated in order to meet the demands of day-to-day management. For example, topics such as innovation management, agile organizational structures and digitalization / AI have recently been added. After all, NPOs are also increasingly reliant on the use of data.

Thank you very much!



Georg von Schnurbein

P.S.: This annual report provides a compact overview of the CEPS' activities. More detailed information and access to publications or brochures can be found on our homepage → ceps.unibas.ch.



Scientific Conferences

CEPS team members have participated in various conferences, including the following:

- January 30 to February 2, 2024, Tallytown, USA,
International Society for Research in the Third Sector ISTR
Global Gathering of Civil Society Research Center Directors
- March 6 to 8, 2024, Lüneburg, Germany, VHB Conference
Sustainability, digitalization and entrepreneurship
- March 14 to 15, 2024, University of Economics and Business,
Prague, Czech Republic
Leadership, Politics and Governance in Turbulent Times:
Global and Geopolitical Challenges in a Changing Europe
- May 16, 2024, The National University of Political Studies and Public
Administration, Bucharest, Romania
**Social Inclusion, Social Innovation, Quality of Life and
Public Health**
- July 16 to 19, 2024, Antwerp, Belgium,
International Society for Research in the Third Sector ISTR
Crisis After Crisis After ...: What About the Third Sector?
- September 12 to 13, 2024, Vienna, Austria,
European Research Network for Philanthropy ERNOP
AGAPE Conference 2024
- November 21 to 23, 2024, Washington, D.C. USA, Association for Research
on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action ARNOVA
Dreaming for a Bright Nonprofit Future:
Policy Making, Technology, and Collaboration in a Dynamic Environment

In Brief



Data & Analytics Section Award

The open source package `text2sdg` received the ARNOVA Data & Analytics Section Award in 2024. Together with Dirk Wulff and Rui Mata, Dominik Meier from CEPS has developed a tool that enables researchers and practitioners to analyze text data in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The prize recognizes methods that strengthen the non-profit sector through innovative approaches and open science principles. `text2sdg` makes data-based analyses more accessible and user-friendly.



Fellowship at Gradel Institute of Charity, Oxford

In his role as Visiting Researcher, Dominik Meier took part in the first meeting of the Visiting Research Fellows of the Gradel Institute of Charity in Oxford in fall 2024. The exchange with leading researchers from all over the world provided valuable insights and feedback on current projects. It was also useful in order to initiate various collaborations. The Gradel Institute is a collaboration between the University of Oxford's New College and the Charity Futures think tank and was established in 2023.



Innocheck preliminary study

Impact-linked financing mechanisms offer new opportunities for non-profit organizations. But how great is their potential really? This question was investigated as part of a joint project with Künzler Bachman Direct Marketing. The first step was to analyze the landscape of innovative financing approaches and create a market overview to provide guidance for both NPOs and KBDM. In discussions with NPOs, their needs were analyzed and a profile for “impact buyers” was developed. The results led to service ideas that can open up new target groups for KBDM. The findings form the basis for a planned Innosuisse project.



Projects on philanthropy and local development

The CEPS is currently conducting two projects on the role of philanthropy, foundations and civil society in local development. In the project “Territorial Strategies of Foundations in the Upper Rhine (LIFT)” we have identified strategies of foundations and their interactions with local actors and authorities. On the other hand, we are conducting the project “Urban Planning for Social Resilience in Urban Neighborhoods. Transformative Change through Civic Engagement” (UPRUN). In 2024, interviews with local stakeholders and a comprehensive internet survey on views on the resilience of local communities were conducted.



Knowledge for practice

In several studies, the CEPS has developed new knowledge for the NPO sector, often in cooperation. In line with current regulatory developments, the remuneration study showed how foundation board members of grant-making foundations are compensated. The results offer indications for concrete implementation in practice. The “Church Investment Report” published in collaboration with Invethos shows for the first time how parishes and church-related institutions invest their assets.



Listen in and understand

Podcasts are becoming increasingly popular and there are already several podcast series specializing in NPOs, philanthropy and charitable work. Last year, Georg von Schnurbein was a guest on the German podcast “Neues Stiften” by Andreas Schiemenz and Jörg Schumacher and on the English podcast “Philanthropy Matters” by Rhodri Davis. In each case, the focus was on new findings from CEPS research and their significance for the philanthropy sector. The episodes can be listened to on the Internet.



→ www.istr.org/page/ResearchCenters

Research Center Directors Meeting

On the initiative of the International Society for Third Sector Research (ISTR) and the Rockefeller Archives, a new “Research Center Directors Network” was established last year. The aim is to exchange information on current developments, facilitate study visits and compile a global database on the NPO sector. Over the course of the year, two meetings have already taken place in Pocantico / NY in the USA and in Antwerp, Belgium. In addition, the various project ideas were driven forward at several online meetings.



First MAS degrees

In June, eight graduates proudly received their diplomas for the Master of Advanced Studies (MAS) in Nonprofit Management & Law. They are the first to have completed the CEPS’s full modular continuing education program. This not only resulted in valuable contacts, but also in exciting Master’s theses. At the same time, four Diploma of Advanced Studies (DAS) graduates were awarded their diplomas. They now have the opportunity to extend their CEPS further education to an MAS. We would like to congratulate all graduates on their success!

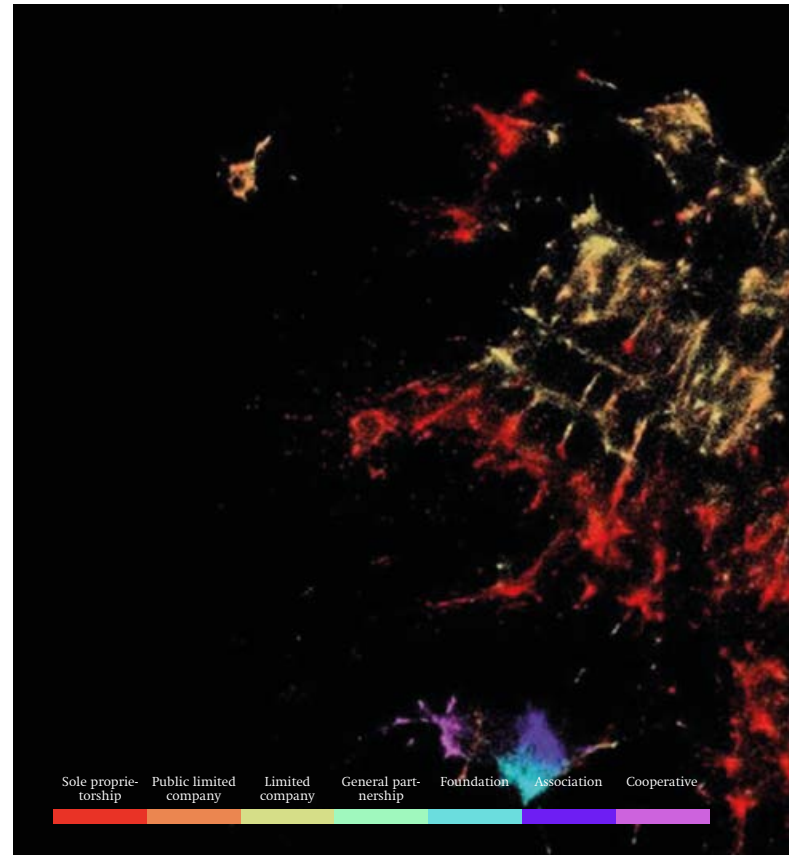
CEPS Research

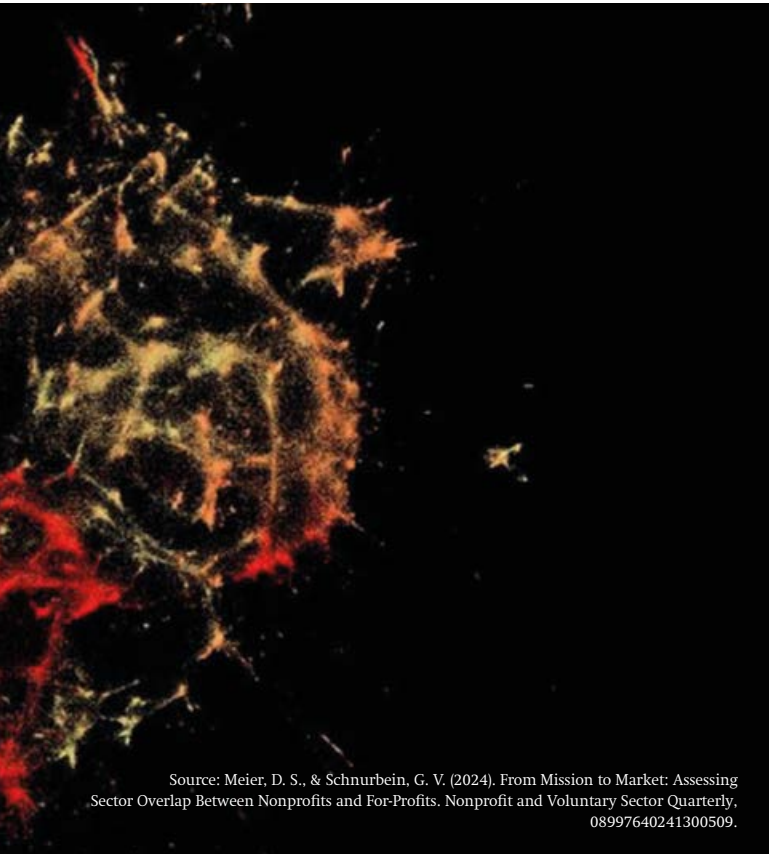
Modern methods for analyzing complex data

Data is an indispensable tool of modern research – but how can it best be used? At CEPS, we rely on innovative methods such as big data, machine learning and natural language processing (NLP) to gain deeper insights that would not be possible with traditional approaches. These tools allow us to efficiently analyze large amounts of data and identify patterns that would otherwise remain hidden. They make research faster, more accurate and often more relevant to practice.

One example of this is our study on the so-called compassion fade hypothesis, which shows how donors react to different group sizes. Traditional laboratory studies have indicated that smaller groups often trigger more compassion and donations when viewed individually. But our analysis of almost 30,000 crowdfunding campaigns from four countries shows a different picture: In situations where multiple fundraising appeals are visible at the same time, larger recipient groups actually achieve more donations. Among other things, machine learning was used in this study to automatically determine the group size. The findings of this study provide valuable information for the design of successful fundraising campaigns

Another data-intensive project looked at the purposes of over 600,000 Swiss non-profit and for-profit organizations entered in





the commercial register. Using NLP methods, we examined how the two sectors differ in their language – and where they converge. Our analysis shows that, for the most part, the two sectors form clear, independent clusters in terms of language. At the same time, we found that NPOs also use the language of for-profits, which could indicate an increasing market orientation. This harbors risks, as too strong a market orientation could weaken the value-based role of NPOs.

Not only are these new methods exciting for research, but they also offer a practical aid: they allow to make data-based decisions and to specifically improve work in the non-profit sector. With projects like these, the CEPS shows how research can be directly applied in practice – for a strong philanthropy and civil society.

→ ceps.unibas.ch/de/forschung



Projects



Figure: The mention of organizational goals and SDGs in annual reports

Impact reporting

In a recent CEPS survey, the annual reports of 476 Swiss NPOs were examined for impact-related content. A key finding is that impact is usually reported implicitly, but clear and comprehensible concepts and indicators are often lacking. A Retrieval Augmented Generation (RAG) model based on a Large Language Model (LLM) was used for the analysis. This model processed the documents in several iterations and extracted the most relevant information using semantic search techniques.

If the general objectives of the NPO are mentioned in the report (in %)?

43.7

56.3

Reporting on specific impact targets (in %)?

97.7

2.3

NPOs refer to the Sustainable Development Goals (in %)?

72.3

27.7

■ yes / ■ no

→ https://ceps.unibas.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/ceps5_Praxistransfer/Wirkungsberichterstattung/Wirkungsberichterstattung_in_NPO.pdf

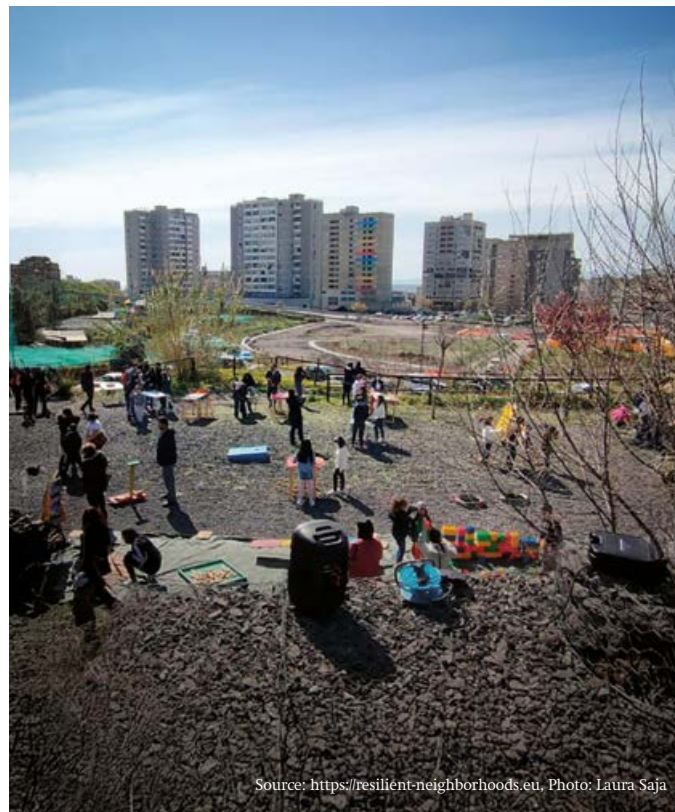


Project “Urban Planning for Social Resilience in Urban Neighborhoods”

We are conducting the project “Urban Planning for Social Resilience in Urban Neighborhoods – Transformative Change through Civic Engagement” (UPRUN). The aim is to investigate how different communities in Europe respond to and cope with crises. The focus is particularly on the role of spatial planning in strengthening crisis management. In 2024, interviews were conducted with local actors and a comprehensive online survey on the resilience of local communities was conducted.



→ resilient-neighborhoods.eu



Source: <https://resilient-neighborhoods.eu>, Photo: Laura Saja

Applied Research & Knowledge Transfer

Impact-linked finance in NPOs



The planned Innosuisse project aims to develop impact-linked finance for NPOs in order to make social and environmental impact measurable. Building on the innovation cheque preliminary study, a financing model will be developed that enables NPOs to reach new target groups such as impact buyers. Through two pilot projects and scientific support, an ecosystem shall be created that combines financial sustainability with social benefit.

The barometer for the future

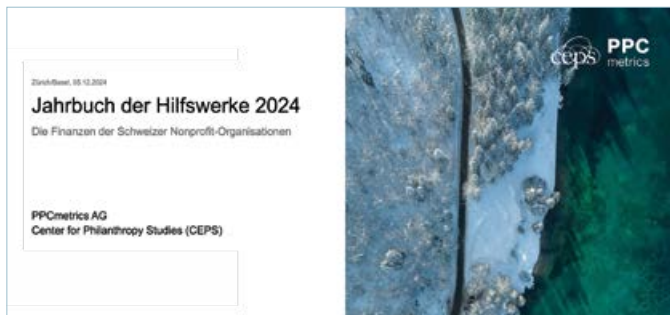
The Swiss Foundation Barometer has been making visible the dynamics in the third sector since 2019. It is now changing to a panel format, which will make the survey more efficient and enable detailed analyses and individual benchmark reports that highlight trends, potential and alliances. The CEPS is providing scientific support for this changeover.



Virtual reality for seniors

On behalf of Pro Senectute beider Basel, CEPS is supporting a project in which senior citizens living in retirement homes are trying out AI chatbots and virtual reality traveling. The CEPS provides scientific support for the project and investigates how these tools affect well-being.

“Jahrbuch der Hilfswerke”



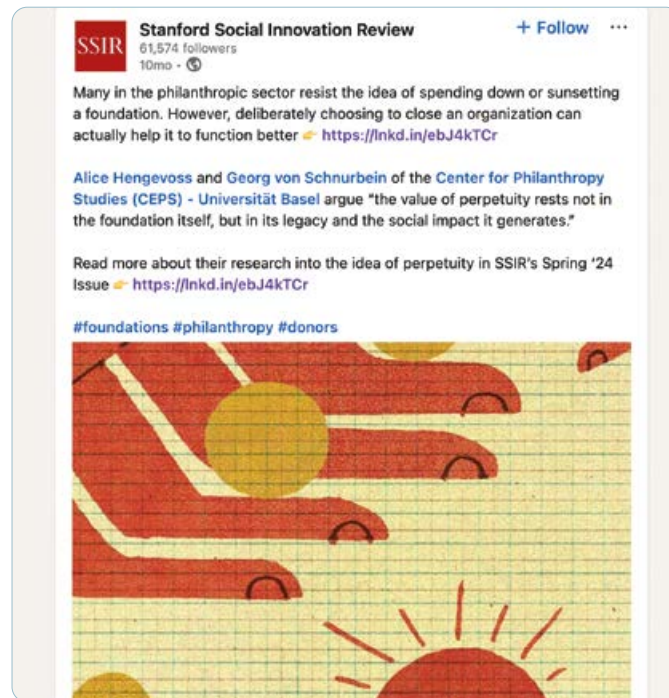
The “Jahrbuch der Hilfswerke 2024” analyzed the annual financial statements of 547 mostly Zewo-certified NPOs in Switzerland. It showed that the volume of donations has declined overall following the coronavirus pandemic, while conflicts such as those in Ukraine and the Middle East have mitigated the decline in the area of “humanitarian aid abroad”. Around 90% of organizations have sufficient reserves. In the “Domestic health” area, the figure is as high as 96%. It was also found that NPOs invest more cautiously than pension funds and therefore achieve lower returns. These results provide important insights into developments in the non-profit sector.

→ ceps.unibas.ch/de/newsdetails/jahrbuch-der-hilfswerke-2024-veroeffentlicht



Post of the Year

What others say about us



[in linkedin.com/company/cepsbasel](https://www.linkedin.com/company/cepsbasel)

Executive Education Programs

Online information events

The first online information event on MAS/DAS in Nonprofit Management & Law took place in June 2022. In the meantime, a format has been established that is offered every 2–3 months. In a short, clearly structured zoom event, interested parties can find out about the executive education program offered by the CEPS and address their questions directly to those responsible for the program.

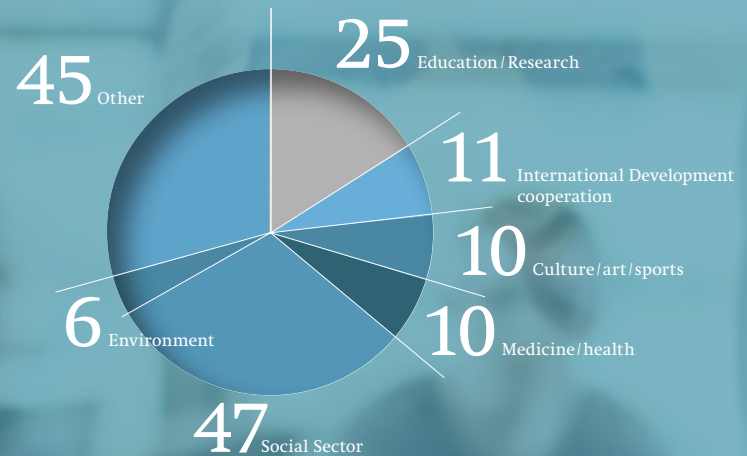
→ ceps.unibas.ch/de/weiterbildung/anmelden-dokumente/online-informationsveranstaltungen-mas/das-2025



Quality and satisfaction with the Executive Education Program

96% of the participants are satisfied with the training courses (ratings: excellent or good)

Sector of origin of course participants



Number of executive education days:

1,089

Participants x number
Attendance days

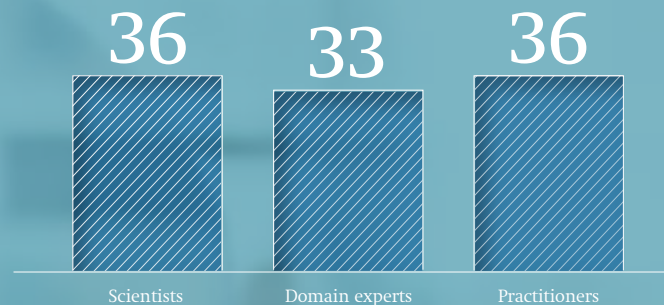
Number of course participants



Total number of course participants:

154

Lecturer



All events

Courses Executive Education:	154
Massive Open Online Course (MOOC):	8,919
Seminars and Workshops:	153
Total participants (all events):	9,128



→ ceps.unibas.ch/en/executive-education

Scientific Publications



Complete publication list:
→ ceps.unibas.ch/en/research/publications



4 Monographs:

1 Other publications (Research reports)

7 Contributions to edited volumes:

6 Monographs

5 Article in collected editions

Total publications: **23**

CEPS Forschung & Praxis – Special Issue
Honorierungsstudie für Schweizer Förderstiftungen
Georg von Schnurbein,
Alice Hengevoss,
Dominik Meier,
Philip Valta



CEPS Forschung & Praxis – Vol. 32
Konjunkturbarometer 2023
Alice Hengevoss,
Lidia Radojicic



CEPS Forschung & Praxis – Vol. 31
Der Schweizer Stiftungsreport 2024
Sabrina Grassi,
Dominique Jakob,
Georg von Schnurbein



CEPS Forschung & Praxis – Special Issue
Der Kirchen-Anlagereport
Michael Arnet,
Lukas Stücklin,
Georg von Schnurbein



Lectures

Theory meets practice – with AI as a learning companion

University teaching is changing and traditional lecture formats are increasingly being expanded to include interactive and practical formats. Artificial intelligence complements this change: a new AI guideline issued by the university has created a basis for the responsible use and integration of innovative technologies in teaching. In the CEPS' lectures, increased emphasis is placed on application orientation by means of case studies in which students develop their own solutions based on practical issues. Experts from the field regularly enrich the courses by providing insights into their experiences and linking theory with practice. In addition, the lectures are recorded and made available as videos, allowing students to learn flexibly and from any location.

Spring semester 2024

- **“Einführung Corporate Responsibility”** (Lecture)
Number of students: 73 (previous year: 82)
 - Lecturer: Prof. Dr. Georg von Schnurbein
 - Lecture Supervision: Kinga Horvath
 - Student evaluation and satisfaction: The students (N=53) rate the lecture on average with a grade of 5.1
- **Nonprofit Management** (Lecture)
Number of students: 152 (previous year: 131)
 - Lecturer: Prof. Dr. Georg von Schnurbein
 - Lecture Supervision: Muriel Grassmann
 - BStudent evaluation and satisfaction: The students (N=19) rate the lecture on average with a grade of der Note 4.7
- **“Vertiefung Privatrecht: Stiftungs-, Vereins- und Gemeinnützigkeitsrecht”** (Lecture)
Number of students: 1 (previous year: 7)
 - Lecturer: Dr. Roman Baumann Lorant



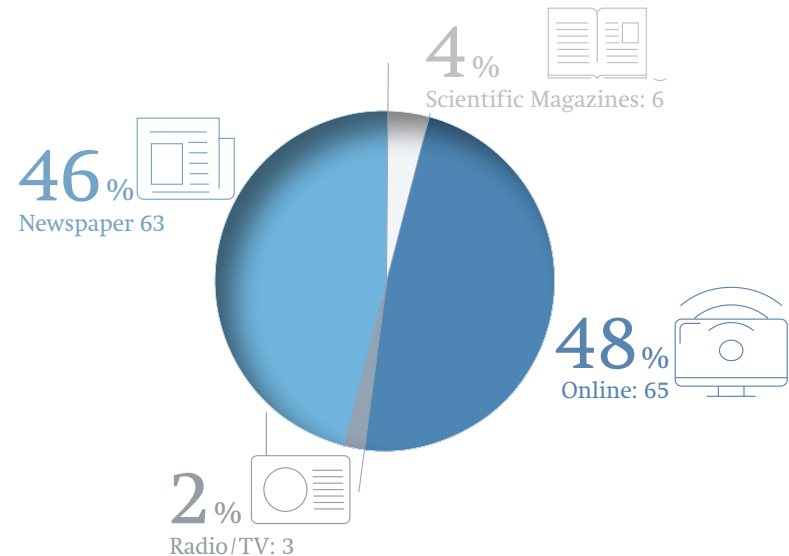
Media

Fall semester 2024

- **Impact Measurement** (Lecture)
Number of students: 72
• Lecturer: Dr. Oto Potluka
• Student evaluation and satisfaction: The students (N=19) rate the lecture on average with a grade of 4.1.
- **“Einführung in die moderne Datenanalyse mit R und künstlicher Intelligenz”** (Colloquium)
Number of students: 5
• Lecturer: Prof. Dr. Dominik Meier
- **“Einführung in das Unternehmertum und die Unternehmensgründung”** (Colloquium)
Number of students: 12
• Lecturer: Dr. Sophie Hersberger-Langloh
• Student evaluation and satisfaction: The students (N=12) rate the lecture on average with a grade of 5.7

Invited guest speakers

- Sophia Schwager & Joël Pregger, *Catapult*
- Michael Harr, *Pro Senectute beider Basel*
- Sarah El Jaddar, *Basler Kantonalbank*
- Marjolaine de Clavière & Andrea Mannhart, *Ricola AG*



Total media contributions:

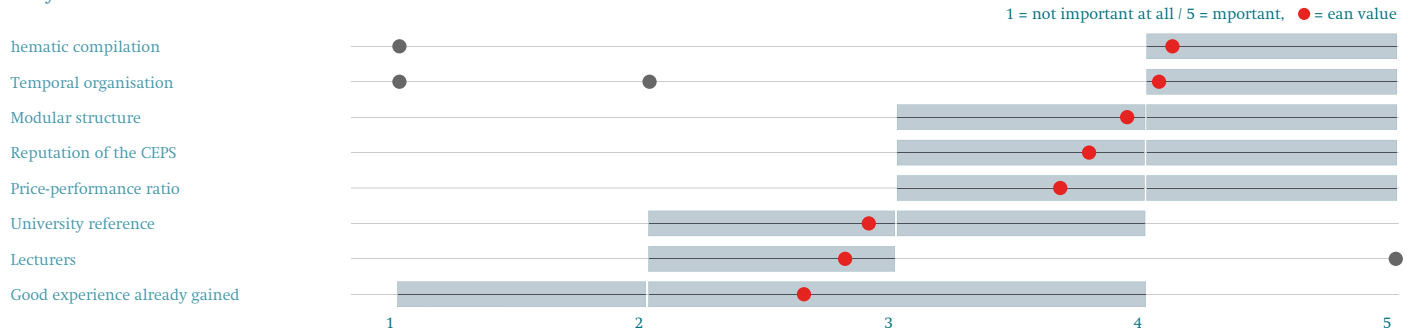
137

For Ears any Eyes – Media Coverage of CEPS 2024
→ ceps.unibas.ch/en/about-us/media-report



Alumni survey 2020 to 2024

Why executive education at CEPS



Survey of executive education alumni and alumnae

For over fifteen years, the CEPS has been offering executive education for managers and leaders in the foundation and non-profit sector. It is of course important to constantly develop the courses on offer and to regularly check whether they meet the needs of the participants. The CEPS therefore conducted its third alumni survey, which complements the ongoing course evaluation. Constructive criticism, particularly of certain formats, and suggestions for new topics will be incorporated into the further development of the courses. All graduates who completed at least one course at the CEPS between 2020 and 2024, i.e. more than 300 alumni, were addressed. 35% of them took part in the survey. A quarter of the participants have already completed the CAS Nonprofit & Public Management, which has been offered since 2022. Just under half of the respondents have either already completed the DAS in

Nonprofit Management & Law, are in the process of doing so or are planning to do so, while a third are also planning or considering an MAS in Nonprofit Management & Law. The survey reveals that both the thematic composition as well as the temporal organization of the courses are particularly important for the decision in favour of the executive education at the CEPS. In retrospect, the practical benefits of continuing education in everyday professional life are rated particularly highly, as is the expansion of the professional network and the interdisciplinary linking of knowledge. These positive experiences are also reflected in the fact that 91% of respondents state that they have already recommended the CEPS to others.

→ ceps.unibas.ch/en/executive-education



3 questions to...



Renata Fäh

DAS in Nonprofit Management & Law, Vontobel Foundation,
Deputy Managing Director/Head of Individual Case Management

What motivated you to complete the Diploma of Advanced Studies at CEPS?

I am a career changer and felt the need to acquire the theoretical foundations of nonprofit management. Originally, I only planned to complete the intensive course in Foundation Management and the CAS in Impact Management at CEPS. The interesting content, the good atmosphere, the competent lecturers and, in particular, the inspiring fellow students then motivated me to attend a further CAS and, by writing my diploma thesis, to delve deeper into a topic that would be useful for me and my employer.

What content have you already been able to apply in practice?

The knowledge that I have been able to take with me flows into my work in a holistic way and helps me in many areas to be a competent contact for our stakeholders and to understand the sector. In particular, we have already been able to apply and partially implement the content of impact management for certain funding areas. I leave the CEPS with a colorful bouquet of knowledge, methods and a valuable network that is characterized by mutual support and help.

What do you wish for the future of the NPO sector?

Non-profit organizations are important players in a society that sticks together even without the state pulling all the strings. They tackle issues of the future and of minority groups without long decision-making processes. I hope that the sector has the ability to support disadvantaged people as efficiently and effectively as possible and that it tackles pressing social issues that require trust and risk capital with courage and a forward-looking approach. And last but not least: that it has the strength to motivate many people to become socially involved as volunteers and thus make a contribution.

Team



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MSc in Business and Economics
- Dr. oec. HSG Lars Stein

Former Employees 2024

- Muriel Grassmann
- Alice Hengevoss
- Lucca Nietlispach
- Anja Rogenmoser

Doctoral Thesis Lucca Nietlispach



The thesis comprises three research contributions that deal with the management of hybrid organizations and the role of social impact incubators and accelerators (SIIA). On the one hand, it covers theoretical foundations in order to identify strategies for handling different organizational logics. Building on this, the significance of an incubator program is examined on the basis of a ten-month long-term study. Finally, the financing of SIIA is investigated in a first-time global survey. The dissertation makes an important contribution to a better understanding of these intermediary organizations and offers approaches for a more effective management of SIIA. The complete dissertation has already been published in the CEPS PhD Series.

→ «Social Hybridity and Social Innovation»
<https://ceps.unibas.ch/de/publikationen/#c4679>



Dominik Meier appointed new assistant professor



The University of Basel and the CEPS are strengthening research in the field of international philanthropy with the appointment of Dr. Dominik Meier as Assistant Professor of Global Philanthropy. The focus of the new professorship is on research into international philanthropic initiatives and their contribution to solving complex global problems. The assistant professorship thus complements existing research at the CEPS, which is primarily focused on philanthropy in Switzerland. For example, the CEPS conducts an annual survey on the development of the foundation sector and has already been involved in many international comparative studies on the philanthropy and non-profit sector in the past.

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Generate knowledge

We contribute to a modern understanding of philanthropy in different subject areas. The CEPS is a recognized research institute with innovative projects that have found acclaim in Switzerland and beyond.

Impart knowledge

We support the development of philanthropy by means of university lectures, executive education programs, and information services. Foundations and other nonprofit organizations benefit directly from our work.

Educating Talents since 1460.

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