



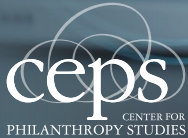
University
of Basel

Center for
Philanthropy Studies



Evidence for the Common Good

Annual Report 2025





When certainties fade, reliable knowledge counts

We live in a time when the fundamental assumptions of stability, solidarity, and impact are increasingly being called into question. What was once taken for granted must be reestablished today. Even the nonprofit sector cannot simply continue with tried and tested routines. Instead, reflection, flexibility and adaptability are required.

It is precisely under these conditions that sound knowledge becomes increasingly important. Research should provide guidance, reveal connections and help to make decisions that are not merely reactive but strategic. Knowledge is based on data, which is why CEPS continuously collects and processes new data on the NPO sector. Dominik Meier impressively demonstrated this in his inaugural lecture as assistant professor at the Faculty of Economics with his studies based on large language models (LLMs). The NPO Data Lab and the Swiss Foundation Report also offer direct access to data. In the current global situation, the Swiss National Science Foundation-funded project 'Balancing Trust and Accountability' is highly topical. We compare the level of trust between NPOs, foundations, the state and society in four countries: Canada, Scotland, Switzerland and the USA. We experienced a completely different atmosphere during the Eurovision Song Contest in Basel, where we conducted a survey among volunteers.

Furthermore, CEPS has made its findings available in numerous publications, both in high-ranking scientific journals and in practical books such as 'Gutes tun von Anfang an' (Doing good from the outset). The master module took place for the second time as part of the executive education program, and we are already



IMPRINT

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 The report is also available in French (Transit TXT) and German.

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looking forward to the master's degree graduation ceremony in June! In addition to the established courses, a new teaching format was launched with 'Philanthropy at Lunch'. Current topics are presented and discussed in one-hour webinars. With well over 100 participants in each session, the series was a great success and will continue in the new year. In the area of knowledge transfer, several projects were launched last year, covering topics such as social impact investing, financial services for NPOs, the development of umbrella foundations and foundation management.

All tasks at CEPS serve to expand and make accessible understanding and knowledge about NPOs and philanthropy, so that NPOs have a good basis for action and the benefits of charitable work can be discussed in an informed manner in society and politics.

We would like to express our sincere thanks to everyone who made our work possible, supported it, used it or passed it on in the past year!



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 → www.ceps.unibas.ch.



Inaugural lecture Assistant Professor Dominik Meier

Scientific Conferences

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

6 to 7 March 2025, Berlin, Germany

ZEFFF Conference (Civil society engagement and voluntary services in the focus of research)

→ Upheaval, pressure, transformation? – The present and future of engagement

26 to 27 March 2025, Skopje, North Macedonia

UPRUN Conference (Urban Planning for Social Resilience in Urban Neighbourhoods)

→ The Future is Resilient: Transformative Change Through Civic Engagement

18 to 19 June 2025, Budapest, Hungary

PROFEEDBACK Conference

→ Shaping the Future: Evaluating Programs and Policies in Public Education and Youth Development

22 to 25 June 2025, Florence, Italy

EURAM Conference (European Academy of Management)

→ Managing with Purpose

25 to 29 July 2025, Copenhagen, Denmark

AOM Conference (Academy of Management)

→ Academy of Management Annual Meeting

22 to 23 September 2025, Basel, Switzerland

Workshop on Global Philanthropy, Centre for Philanthropy Studies

25 to 26 September 2025, Heidelberg, Germany

ERNOP Conference (European Research Network on Philanthropy)

→ Philanthropy by the people, for the people? The roles, organizations, and motivations of philanthropy in contemporary democracies and social structures

20 to 22 November 2025, Indianapolis, USA

ARNOVA (Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action)

→ The Evolving Role of Philanthropy in Global, National and Local Contexts

20 to 21 November 2025, Vienna, Austria

EURNOVA

→ Nonprofit Management and Governance Research Workshop

In Brief



ERNOP PhD Workshop

The ERNOP PhD Workshop in Heidelberg offered Kinga Horváth and Carlo Tschopp the valuable opportunity to present and discuss the latest findings of their research with professors. They received detailed and constructive feedback, which provided important impetus for the further development of their work. The exchange with PhD students from all over Europe was also particularly valuable, as it opened up new perspectives and enabled them to establish many professional and personal contacts.



PAM – Philanthropie am Morgen/Mittag

The proven event series 'Philanthropie am Morgen' (Philanthropy in the Morning) was expanded in 2025 to include the digital format 'Philanthropie am Mittag' (Philanthropy at Lunch) to increase the target group and achieve a broader reach. Philanthropy in the Morning remains a popular meeting place for in-depth professional exchange and networking, with a total of 70 participants, while Philanthropy at Lunch has established itself as a successful compact online format for professionals during their lunch break.

→ www.ceps.unibas.ch/de/weiterbildung/pam



United by Volunteering

CEPS collaborated with the University of Freiburg to conduct a study on episodic volunteering at the 2025 Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) in Basel. The project examined what motivates people to volunteer at an international event, and how satisfied they are way they are managed. Data were collected through interviews and online surveys before, during, and after the event. A series of studies focused on various aspects of episodic volunteering.



Scientific exchange

Science thrives on exchange and mutual enrichment of research work. Participating in conferences and workshops is particularly well suited for this purpose, as it allows participants to present their own research and learn more about current developments, including new research methods. Last year, CEPS staff were active at nine conferences, including the ERNOP conference in Heidelberg, the ZEFFF conference in Berlin, the ARNOVA in Indianapolis and the UPRUN conference in Skopje.



CEPS expertise in demand

CEPS's expertise was in demand on a variety of topics last year. Professor Georg von Schnurbein is a member of a working group on governance in foundations set up by the European philanthropy association Philea. Since December, he has also been an expert advisor to the German Science Council. He also discussed current developments in science funding with Prof. Dr. Torsten Schwede, President of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) Research Council.



Research stays in Oxford

As a visiting research fellow at the Gradel Institute of Charity, Dominik Meier took part in two meetings in Oxford in 2025. During these meetings, held in May and autumn, the fellows discussed topics such as the use of AI and large language models in nonprofit research, ethical issues in the sector, and management strategies. The collaboration with the Gradel Institute (founded in 2023), which began the previous year, was thus further strengthened, leading to several joint research projects.



Doing good from the outset

Joining a nonprofit organization (NPO) can be fulfilling — but also surprisingly demanding. In their new book 'Gutes tun von Anfang an', Georg von Schnurbein and Robert Schmuki offer practical guidance for anyone taking on responsibility in an NPO — whether on the board, in management or as a volunteer. Written in clear language and featuring numerous examples, the book illustrates the key aspects of NPO work, including strategy, finance and communication, leadership and innovation.



→ www.link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-658-49594-7



CEPS summer party

On one of the hottest days in August, lecturers and alumni of the CEPS executive education gathered for the first summer party of its kind. A survey on motivation clearly showed that people and interaction were the most important factors to join, closely followed by food and drink. With cool drinks and lively conversation, the St. Margarethengut, near Basel, was the perfect place to be. We were delighted to see so many guests again — and this will certainly not have been the last evening of its kind.

CEPS Research

Global Philanthropy in focus

Philanthropy is a global phenomenon, but research on it often takes place in isolation within national contexts. The Assistant Professorship for Global Philanthropy, established in 2024, bridges these boundaries. A milestone in this endeavor was the first Workshop on Global Philanthropy, held at the University of Basel in September 2025.

This two-day event brought together 34 participants from 13 countries and five continents to discuss current developments in global philanthropy. Organized by CEPS, the event took place in the building of the Christoph Merian Foundation on St. Alban-Vorstadt. Six thematic sessions and two keynote speeches addressed issues that are driving the philanthropy sector worldwide, from cross-border donation flows to power dynamics and justice to digital innovations in fundraising.

The keynote speeches were given by two leading international researchers: Pamala Wiepking from the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy at Indiana University and Peter Frumkin from the Gradel Institute of Charity at Oxford University. Their contributions provided important impetus for the subsequent discussions. The thematic sessions ranged from 'Power, Equity & Organizational Dynamics' to 'Foundations & Global Legitimacy in Turbulent Times and Philanthropy in and for Crises'. Researchers from South Africa, Australia, Belgium, Poland, the USA and Central America



Participants in the first Workshop on Global Philanthropy in Basel in September 2025.

were among those who presented their work and contributed different perspectives. CEPS scholars also presented their own research findings, including on how British aid organizations are adapting and scaling back their activities abroad, and on the role of philanthropic foundations in international development cooperation.

The funding of the workshop was supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF). With this event, CEPS has further strengthened Basel as a center for international philanthropy research and created a format intended to sustainably enrich scientific dialogue. The workshop also gave rise to a concrete research project: together with Diarmuid McDonnell (Oxford) and Pamala Wiepking (Indiana University), Dominik Meier is analyzing data from the World Giving Report on behalf of the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF). With around 56,000 respondents from 101 countries, this is one of the most comprehensive datasets on philanthropic engagement worldwide.

→ www.ceps.unibas.ch/en/research



Ongoing Projects

Social Impact Investing

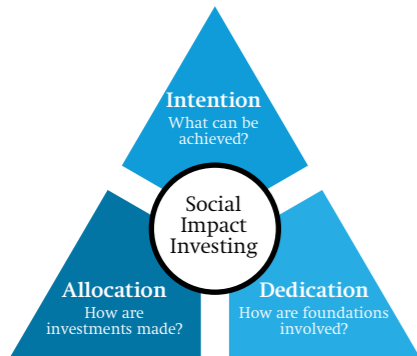


Fig.: Research framework for studies on social impact investing at CEPS

The topic of social impact investing has been gaining importance recently, as the regulatory environment has changed and an ecosystem has emerged that makes scaling possible in the first place. Together with partners such as UBS Social Impact & Philanthropy and the Ursimone Wietlisbach Foundation, CEPS is investigating the various forms of social impact investing, focusing in particular on its implementation by foundations. What are their intentions? What instruments do they use? What roles do they play? The results will be published in various reports and case studies throughout 2026.

ESG communication by British charities



ESG criteria shape the corporate world, but what role do they play in the reporting of nonprofit organizations? Together with the Gradel Institute of Charity (Oxford), CEPS is analyzing over 400,000 annual reports from British charities (2018–2024). An AI-assisted evaluation of 104 million sentences shows how ESG language is spreading in the nonprofit sector and how it differs from the corporate world. These results were presented at the VOLUNTAS Special Issue Workshop in Hong Kong.

How others use our research

The report ‘11 Trends in Philanthropy for 2025’ by the Dorothy A. Johnson Centre for Philanthropy at Grand Valley State University describes key developments in the philanthropy sector. One of these trends is ‘planned lifespans’, i.e. the conscious decision by foundations to limit the duration of their activities and to use their capital in a targeted manner within a defined period of time (‘spend-down’). This approach aims to concentrate resources on solving current social problems rather than continuing a foundation indefinitely.

The report draws on research findings from the Centre for Philanthropy Studies (CEPS), among others, to explain this trend. In their publication, Alice Hengevoss and Georg von Schnurbein describe different approaches foundations can take to strategically plan their exit.

“Recently, two researchers at the Center for Philanthropy Studies at the University of Basel, Switzerland, identified different strategies for foundations to sunset smoothly and successfully: either taking a resource-based approach based on the assets available, or a needs assessment view, being responsive to the needs of beneficiaries and offering as much support as possible.”



Applied Research & Knowledge Transfer

Overview of umbrella foundations

CEPS has surveyed the development of umbrella foundations annually for the past five years. Establishing a fund or sub-foundation can be an efficient alternative to an independent foundation. The 2025 survey showed steady growth to a total of 494

funds and further professionalization of the umbrella foundations themselves in terms of governance, financial investments and reporting.

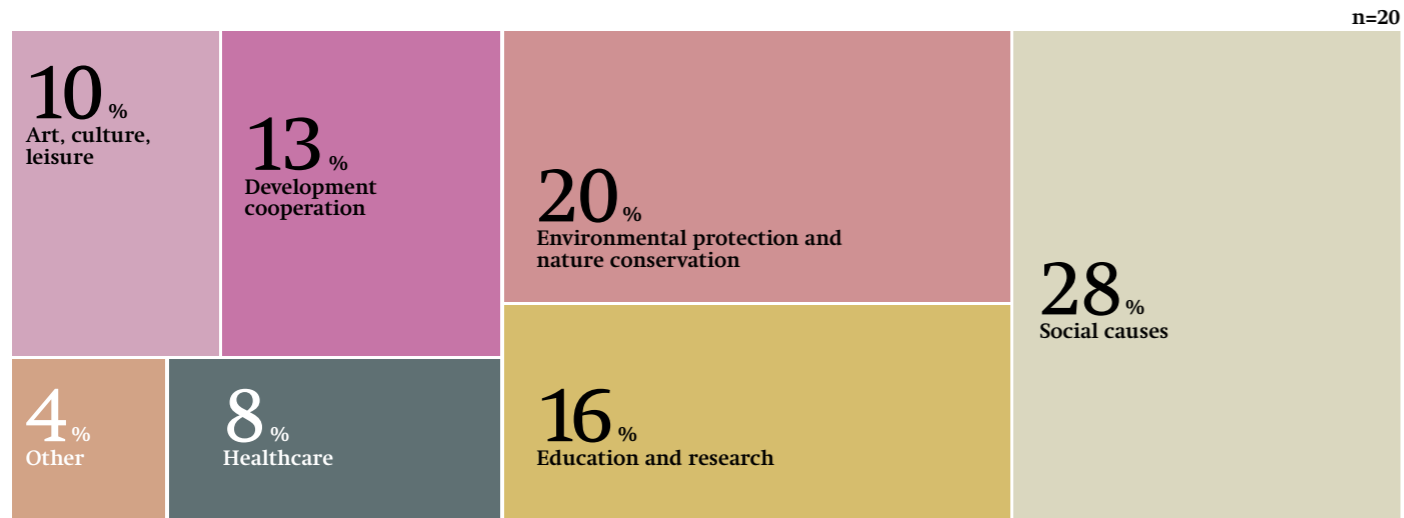


Fig.: Distribution of umbrella foundation distributions by subject area

→ www.dachstiftungen.ch/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Schweizer-Dachstiftungen_Jahresstatistik-2024.pdf



Foundation location St. Gallen

In collaboration with SwissFoundations, CEPS has conducted an analysis of the foundations in the canton of St. Gallen. Of the 541 foundations in the canton, many are active in a wide range of areas, primarily at the regional level. In addition to evaluating the data, CEPS conducted interviews with stakeholders to develop recommendations for action for the canton and other relevant parties.

“Future-Proof Funding Initiative”



With its Future-Proof Funding initiative, SwissFoundations aims to better anchor understanding and knowledge of modern funding approaches within the foundation sector, thereby further strengthening the social impact of philanthropy. Together with Con-Sense Philanthropy Consulting, CEPS contributed to the development of the initiative’s five guiding principles and various implementation formats. In just one year, the initiative has already attracted significant attention and triggered concrete actions at individual foundations.

→ www.swissfoundations.ch/stiftungspraxis/the-future-proof-funding-initiative



Post of the Year

Carola Büchel 1st
Geschäftsführende Inhaberin + leidenschaftlich engagiert für die Gemeinnüt...

[Visit my website](#)
3mo •

You want to know where your organization stands financially in comparison? How high are your reserves in relation to other NPOs? How much do others spend on fundraising or administration? Or how your operating income compares to the industry average?

Yes, there is often no comparison. You know your own number, but not that of others.

You simply don't know what comparable organizations are doing. And yet he is often confronted with information when talking to donors: "I have read that other organizations give 90 percent directly to the projects, what about you?"

(Sure, one could hope that figures will leak out at the next meeting with the partner organization.)

But I came across a tool that allows exactly such industry comparisons.

👉 The NPO Data Lab provides well-founded key figures. Free of charge. Scientifically evaluated. Developed by the [Center for Philanthropy Studies \(CEPS\) - Universität Basel](#), for anyone working in the non-profit sector.

You can:

- Compare organizations by size, year of foundation or legal form
- Classify reserve ratio, overhead, operating income or donation income
- put your numbers in perspective realistically

(It's good if you don't just have to guess at the next budget meeting.)

The tool also offers exciting insights for all those who work with foundations:

- Where are there how many foundations?
- How many foundation board mandates are active per canton?
- Which topics are more strongly represented regionally?

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

Executive Education Programs

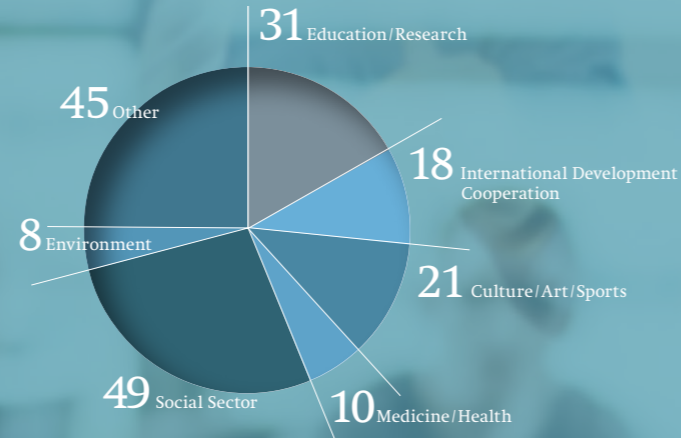
Work portfolios

At the end of each CAS, participants compile a work portfolio. In this compact assignment, participants process course content to reflect on its specific application within their organization. The portfolios often result in concepts and plans that are quickly implemented and sometimes spark longer-term changes. CEPS has compiled and assessed 55 work portfolio this year alone.

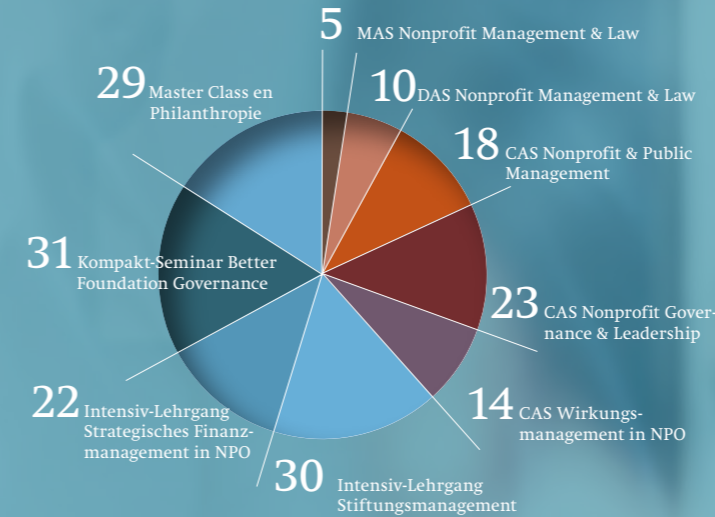
Quality and satisfaction in continuing education

97% of participants are satisfied with the training provided in the courses (very good or good).

Sector of origin of course participants



Number of course participants



Lecturer



All events

Courses Executive Education:	182
Massive Open Online Course (MOOC):	10'055
Seminars and Workshops:	759
Total participants (all events):	10'996

Number of executive education days:

1'101

Participants x number Attendance days

Total number of course participants:

182

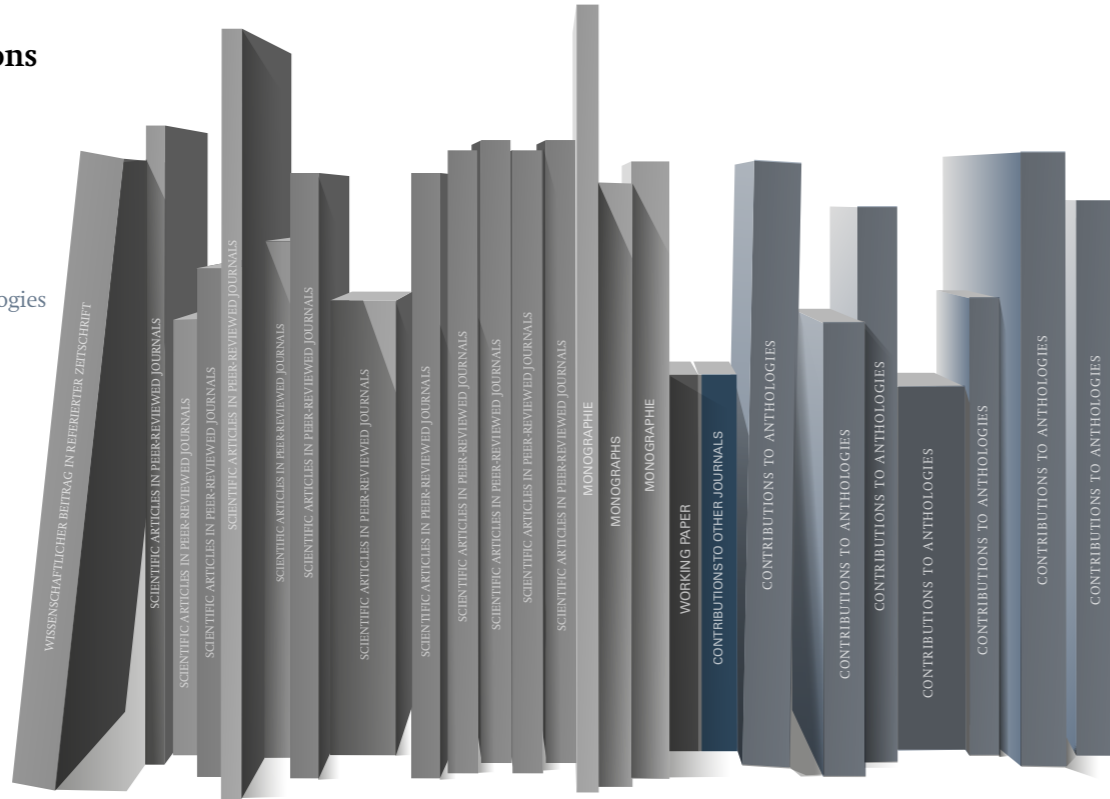
→ www.ceps.unibas.ch/en/executive-education



Scientific Publications

- 13 Scientific articles in peer-reviewed journals:
- 3 Monographs
- 1 Working Paper
- 7 Contributions to anthologies
- 1 Contribution to other journals

Total: **25**



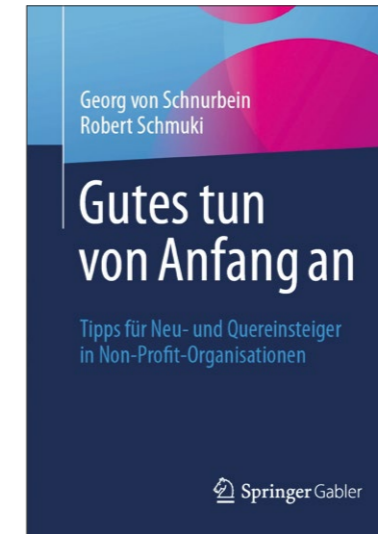
Complete publication list:

→ www.ceps.unibas.ch/en/research/publications



Handbook on Corporate Foundations

(Korean edition)
 Lonneke Roza,
 Steffen Bethmann,
 Lucas Meijs,
 Georg von Schnurbein



Gutes tun von Anfang an

Georg von Schnurbein,
 Robert Schmuki



CEPS Forschung & Praxis – Vol. 33

Der Schweizer Stiftungsreport 2025

Katja Schönenberger,
 Dominique Jakob,
 Georg von Schnurbein

Lectures

Artificial intelligence is becoming increasingly important in university teaching and opens new opportunities for designing learning processes in an active and reflective manner. At the CEPS colloquium on corporate responsibility, students worked on scientific articles both with and without AI support and then systematically compared the different results to critically reflect on the opportunities and limitations of the technology. In another colloquium, students were allowed to use AI as a working tool for their work. In the subsequent individual oral examinations, they were tested on whether they could explain their lines of argumentation and calculations in a comprehensible manner and understand them independently, even without AI. Experts in the field regularly enrich the courses by providing insights into their experiences and linking theory with application. Additionally, the lectures are recorded and made available as videos, enabling students to learn flexibly, regardless of location.



→ www.ceps.unibas.ch/en/studies

Invited guest speakers in teaching

Sabrina Trachsler (Karma Lama), Michael Harr (Pro Senectute beider Basel), Philipp Schallberger (Kaffeemacher GmbH), Dr. Lucca Nietlispach (Zewo), Sarah El Jaddar (Basler Kantonalbank), Marjolaine de Clavière & Andrea Mannhart (Ricola AG), Michal Almog-Bar (Hebrew University of Jerusalem), Pascal Biedermann (Gundeldinger Feld), Guido Fuchs (Coop Genossenschaft), Janet Michel (Global Health Mentorships)

Spring semester 2025

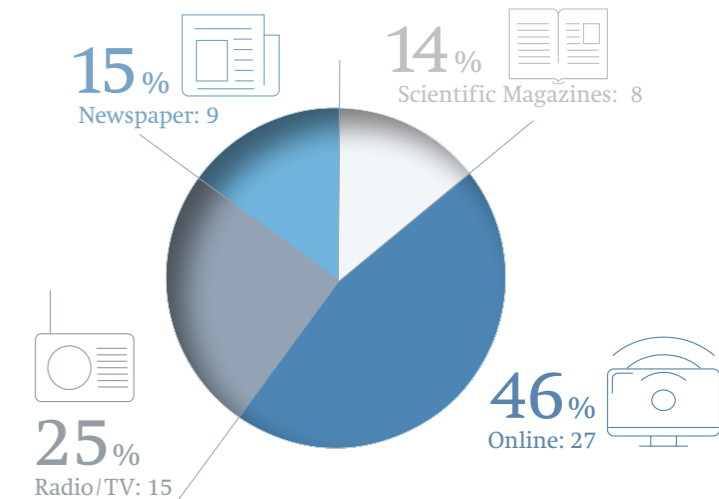
- **Nonprofit Management** (Lecture)
Number of students: 131 (previous year: 152)
• Lecturer: Prof. Dr. Georg von Schnurbein, lecture support: Milan Weller
• Satisfaction: Students (N=70) gave the lecture an average rating of 4.9
- **Introduction Corporate Responsibility** (Lecture)
Number of students: 77 (previous year: 73)
• Lecturer: Prof. Dr. Georg von Schnurbein, lecture support: Kinga Horváth
• Satisfaction: Students (N=60) gave the lecture an average rating of 4.6
- **Text Analysis in R: From Basic Techniques to Modern AI** (Colloquium)
Number of students: 21
• Lecturer: Prof. Dr. Dominik Meier
• Satisfaction: Students (N=11) gave the colloquium an average rating of 5.6
- **Social Preferences and Fundraising: A Behavioral Economics Perspective With a Global Focus** (Colloquium)
Number of students: 17
• Lecturer: Prof. Dr. Dominik Meier
• Satisfaction: Students (N=13) gave the colloquium an average rating of 5.5
- **Advanced Private Law: Foundation, Association and Non-Profit Law** (Lecture)
Number of students: 4 (previous year: 1)
• Lecturer: Dr. Roman Baumann Lorant

Autumn semester 2025

- **Impact Measurement** (Lecture)
Number of students: 81
• Lecturer: Prof. Dr. Georg von Schnurbein, lecture support: Abigail
• Satisfaction: Students (N=16) gave the lecture an average rating of 5.0
- **Corporate Responsibility** (Colloquium)
Number of students: 21
• Lecturer: Prof. Dr. Georg von Schnurbein, lecture support: Kinga Horváth
• Satisfaction: Students (N=20) gave the colloquium an average rating of 5.25
- **Sustainability Management: Fundamentals of Responsible Corporate Governance** (Lecture)
Number of students: 102
• Lecturer: Prof. Dr. Dominik Meier
• Satisfaction: Students (N=14) gave the lecture an average rating of 4.3
- **Introduction to modern data analysis with R and artificial intelligence** (Colloquium)
Number of students: 25
• Lecturer: Prof. Dr. Dominik Meier
• Satisfaction: Students (N=7) gave the colloquium an average rating of 5.6
- **Nonprofit organizations and management** (Bachelor seminar)
• Lecturer: Prof. Dr. Georg von Schnurbein and Milan Weller

Number of students in teaching: **482** (previous year: 315)

Media



Total media contributions:

59

For Ears any Eyes – Media Coverage of CEPS 2025
→ www.ceps.unibas.ch/en/about-us/media-report



Innovations in CEPS Executive Education

Since 2009, CEPS has been offering executive education for the NPO and foundation sector with the aim of promoting the professionalization of the sector and linking the knowledge generated by CEPS research with practical applications. From the outset, CEPS has relied on current teaching methods such as blended learning and cooperative learning formats. In addition to excellent lecturers from academia and practice, one of the most important resources in executive education is the participants themselves, who learn from each other's experiences and build new networks. Our alumni repeatedly emphasize the added value of CEPS's executive education.

However, CEPS does not rest on its laurels. It continuously updates its executive education program. This ensures that current content, technical possibilities and human experience are optimally combined. In terms of content, this is reflected, for example, in the integration of current topics such as agile organizational forms, the use of AI for NPO management and digital transformation into the courses. Interactive and self-reflective learning units are becoming increasingly important in the structure of the courses. At the end of 2025, the CAS Wirkungsmanagement in NPO was significantly revised so that not only are all important topics of impact-oriented management comprehensively covered, from strategy to impact assessment and analysis to communication, but they are also extensively practiced and transferred to the participants' own areas of application. Finally, digital elements such as the MOOC Nonprofit Management & Innovation, which forms the



first module of the CAS Nonprofit & Public Management, enable flexible independent learning – now with AI-assisted elements. As a logical consequence, CEPS has also fully switched to digital course materials in 2025.



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

3 questions to ...



Thijs van Middelaar
DAS Nonprofit Management & Law,
Managing Director, samowar Prävention | Jugendberatung
Bezirk Horgen

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

After more than 20 years of client-focused consulting work, mainly in NPOs, I developed a desire to make a career change to management level – but still within the NPO sector. While searching for a suitable further education program, I was impressed by CEPS with its practical, scientifically sound, varied, manageable and cost-effective offering. It was clear to me that I not only wanted to complete a CAS but the entire DAS to lay a solid foundation for my future career path. With success ...

How did you or your organization benefit from this in concrete terms?

Completing the first CAS already enabled me to move into a management position – on the very positive condition that I continue the DAS that I have to complete the DAS. In the professionalization process I initiated, the content of all three courses proved to be extremely valuable. For me, they formed a kind of guide for further developing all levels of the organization – from the mission statement to accounting, from human resources management to impact-oriented strategy. They also provided me with convincing arguments to persuade important stakeholders such as employees and the board of directors to get on board with this process.

Where do you currently see particular opportunities for the NPO sector?

One opportunity for the NPO sector lies in responding to the growing social expectations to demonstrate its raison d'être more clearly. Stakeholders increasingly want to be able to see that the money they invest is having an impact. Depending on the field of activity, proving this can be more or less challenging.

We are using this development as an incentive to review our services in terms of impact and sustainability and to better demonstrate the impact we have achieved – a challenging but inspiring and groundbreaking process that also strengthens our own sense of the meaningfulness of our work.

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- **Annalena Zengerle**

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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, coaching, and information services. Foundations and other nonprofit organizations benefit directly from our work.

Educating Talents since 1460.

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Initiated by: Swiss**Foundations**