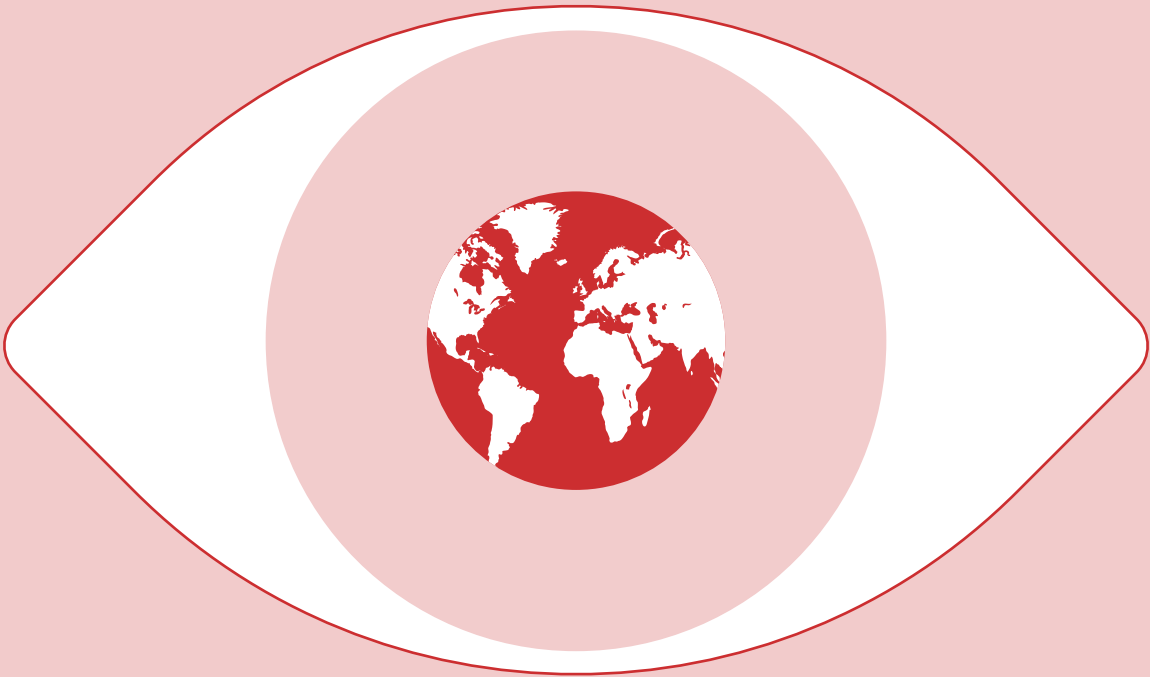


# ARIADNE FORECAST

Celebrating 10 years of forecasts  
for European Social Change and  
Human Rights Funders

## 2024





# Contents

**5**

**Introduction**

**6**

**What do you expect to be the most pressing challenge facing your grantees in 2024?**

**10**

**What opportunities do you see in 2024 that might help your grantees advance their work?**

**14**

**How do you expect your practice as a funder to change in the next twelve months?**

**18**

**What issue or field of practice do you think will become more important in 2024?**

**22**

**What political event or sequence of events do you predict will have a substantial effect on your work?**

**26**

**What is your greatest hope for 2024, in relation to your work or philanthropy in general?**

**30**

**Acknowledgements**

## About Ariadne

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Ariadne is a European peer-to-peer network of more than 700 individuals from 148 grantmaking organisations in 20 countries which support social change and human rights. Ariadne helps those using private resources for public good achieve more together than they can alone by linking them to other funders and providing practical tools of support. Ariadne is a programme of Global Dialogue, a registered charity (1122052) and limited company (5775827) which promotes human rights and social change by supporting innovative and collaborative philanthropy.

## Methodology

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The Ariadne Forecast is a community created resource that draws on the Ariadne network. Ariadne participants and other friends of the network were asked six questions about trends in their field for 2024. We collected surveys and interviews from members across Europe and in-person forecast meetings for funders in France, Italy, The Netherlands, and the UK to discuss and add to the findings. In the end, we estimate that around 198 people have had the chance to contribute to the Forecast. While the meetings and discussions at them were private, the final forecast is publicly available for all, as a reflection on the current direction of the sector.

2024 Ariadne Forecast report was written by Julie Broome and edited by Renata Ćuk, Jana Stardelova, and Molly Mathews.

Ariadne thanks its members for their financial support.

Design and Layout by FRODE: [www.frodedesign.com](http://www.frodedesign.com)

Copies are available for download at [www.ariadne-network.eu](http://www.ariadne-network.eu)  
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# Introduction



## Celebrating 10 years of forecasts for European Social Change and Human Rights Funders

2024 is shaping up to be a year in which our political systems are put to the test. With elections being held in over 60 countries across the globe, this will be a decisive year for political leadership. How the international community responds to key threats, including the climate crisis, will be set in motion through the choices made now. For European foundations, the European Parliamentary elections, as well as elections in the UK and the US, loom particularly large, and there are concerns that with the far-right gathering more strength, democracy itself is under threat. Funders are entering 2024 driven to meet this moment, recognising that the stakes are high. Whether that means funding get-out-the-vote campaigns, efforts to combat disinformation, or platforms that raise up the voices and demands of marginalised groups, funders are looking for the roles they can play to help ensure that elections are free and fair and that human rights are protected throughout the political process and into the future.

At this pivotal moment, Ariadne is publishing its 10th annual Forecast. Looking back over the past decade, we can see that certain challenges have only grown rather than been surmounted. Closing civic space and the restrictions facing NGO activities have been a consistent theme over the years, and while there have been small victories, this trend has continued to unfold unabated. Concerns about a backlash against human rights and the need to address the climate crisis have also been present throughout the reports over the years. In our very first Forecast in 2015, funders expressed fears about the role of Russia and its potentially destabilising influence on neighbouring Ukraine and about instability in the Middle East, with one predicting another intifada. These predictions seem prescient today, and we are only too aware of the potential for further violent conflict in 2024.

Although it can feel, looking back through these reports, that the world has not moved on much in ten years, we should acknowledge that our own responses have developed in that time and that we are learning more about what it might take to make progress. The critique of philanthropy and its traditional forms of operating has become much stronger and more mainstream, particularly following the Covid pandemic with the stark light it shone upon inequalities in accessing support. The discourses of trust-based, inclusive, and participatory grantmaking are much more pervasive among foundations today than at probably any point in the past. The sector also increasingly shares a much stronger analysis of the root causes of the social injustices it is trying to address. While the responses are often still siloed and sometimes disjointed, there is a growing recognition of the interconnectedness of the issues and the need for deeper, structural change to move us forward. The momentum for transformational change is gathering pace, in society and in philanthropy, and this energy has the potential to open new opportunities in the face of challenges that can sometimes feel overwhelming.

As we gear up for a year that will likely set the stage for political opportunities in the coming four to five, we hope that this Forecast gives you a sense of what peer funders are most concerned about and focused on as well as the opportunities, however small, to be seized. While philanthropy cannot solve all problems, as a sector we do have strengths to lend to the agenda for social change, and we are better positioned to capitalise on those when we work as a community. I look forward to working with all of you over the course of 2024 to make the most of what we can bring to the table.

Best wishes,

**Julie Broome**  
*Ariadne Director*

# What do you expect to be the most pressing challenge facing your grantees in 2024?



**Constraints on civic and democratic freedoms, which have been a significant concern for civil society organisations and funders for more than a decade now, continue to be front and centre of mind as we enter 2024, with all signs indicating that such restrictions are only likely to increase in the coming year. Once a tactic primarily used by authoritarian states, we now see many states, including those in Western Europe, employing restrictive legislation to suppress campaigning and protest, particularly on human rights and environmental issues.**

**Across the world we see states using a range of strategies to restrict civic space. Importantly, we have also witnessed the prominence of anti-rights actors who have made long-term investments on every continent to enhance their political power. In 2023, we saw how anti-rights groups leveraged their links with governments to push through regressive legislation aimed at rolling back rights. In 2024, we will see more of this, which poses big challenges for funders.**

*Senior Learning and Research Officer, Donor Affinity Group, UK*

For civil society groups, measures to cut off potential funding for organisations threaten their ability to operate. For example, Hungary is considering draft legislation that would limit access to foreign funding but has included EU funding among the sources considered 'foreign'. The European Commission is a significant source of funds for some organisations, so such a ban would be impactful. It is concerning that an EU member state would try to limit the flow of EU funding within its borders, and this step demonstrates the control some states wish to have over civil society activities domestically.

Funders working with youth and children are concerned about the impact that attacks on civic space will have on youth organising, particularly around climate justice.

**Needs are really high, and time scales feel tight and urgent, but civil society is very precarious at the moment. We worry about the impact on youth organising, which is often underfunded and marginalised. Sometimes young people are seen as useful for protests but not given true space for engagement. There is a concern across the whole of civil society, but youth organising feels more at risk.**

*Programme Director, Intermediary Foundation, UK*

Independent media and journalists are also affected by efforts to control civic debate and are increasingly facing reprisals for their work even in established Western democracies. For example, an investigative journalist in France was recently charged with defamation after publishing an

investigation into corruption involving a high-level French politician. While journalists and human rights defenders have always faced challenges to their work, 2024 may test Europe's political will to respond to such threats.

**Upcoming EU parliamentary elections will define the role that the EU is able to play to protect human rights defenders, civic space, independent journalists, and democracy. If elections go to populist parties, we can expect a wave of regressive policies or lack of implementation and enforcement of some of the most progressive human rights instruments that the EU has put in place.**

*Director, Donor Collaborative, Belgium*

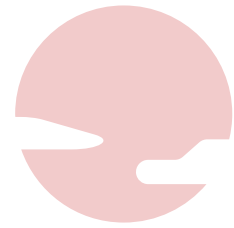
The **rise of far-right extremists**, which could accelerate in 2024 given the number of elections taking place globally (more than 60 countries are due to hold elections in 2024), has potential implications not only for civic and democratic space generally but also for specific populations. Women's rights and LGBTI rights funders are concerned about the spread of anti-gender ideology and restrictions on the rights of women and LGBTI people, especially transgender people.

**European elections might go wrong with the more right-wing European leadership. If it happens it will be even more complicated for human rights organisations. We see the rise of the anti-gender, anti-rights movement in Europe. We also see the appearance of foundations supporting anti-gender movements. We need to protect grantee partners and try to give them the right weapons to answer these attacks.**

*Managing Director, Corporate Foundation, France*

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*Managing Director, Corporate Foundation, France*



As the European political landscape is changing, so too is the role of Europe in the world. There is growing mistrust of European institutions in some parts of the world, which will pose a challenge for organisations working internationally and for organisations outside of Europe who have relied on European governmental funds. European funders will not be able to take for granted that their countries will be seen as benign or as protectors of human rights in the global sphere.

## NL

The fears funders are expressing about the potential strengthening of the far-right in Europe in 2024 are particularly acute in The Netherlands, where the Euro-sceptic, anti-migration Party for Freedom won 37 seats in the November 2023 election and is currently trying to form a coalition government. Funders there are concerned that anti-migrant and anti-Islamic rhetoric will increase in 2024 and that as a result hate crimes could also be on the rise. Organisations working with undocumented migrants, in particular, are worried that their work could become criminalised if the eventual coalition government is extremely right-leaning. Freedom of speech and the right to protest are also under threat in this new environment. Furthermore, in the face of the overlapping climate and economic crises facing Europe and the world, many Dutch people are struggling to put trust in the government to identify and implement solutions.

## UK

In the UK, the Conservative Government has for several years been pursuing a 'hostile environment' policy, which has targeted migration specifically but has also had repercussions for civil society. In the past year, legislative efforts to restrict and even criminalise migration and to deport asylum seekers have ramped up, and funders are concerned that migration could become a negative focal point in the run-up to a General Election in 2024.

**In the UK, we've been under austerity measures and the hostile environment. And that does what it says: makes life unbearable for people on the move. We're seeing more impacts of that through the Illegal Migration Act, the introduction of barges to house asylum seekers, sky rocketing homelessness.**

*Grants Manager,  
Donor Collaborative, UK*

In this environment, some organisations are finding that their work is being targeted by politicians as non-charitable or too political. Even if these attacks have no legal basis, they can result in organisations being harassed and silenced.

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Some funders have raised concerns about a popular narrative suggesting that the far right is gaining more support in part because of the efforts of grassroots groups to push forward a more liberal agenda. In other words, the gains of more left-leaning movements are fuelling a shift to the right. In response to this narrative, some progressive organisations and foundations, much like liberal political parties, are trying to take a more moderate stance on certain issues in

order to avoid creating a backlash. This generates tensions within the sector between those wanting to push for more radical change more quickly and those wishing to take a more gradual approach. These tensions could start to have more of an impact on the human rights community's ability to come together to address the big issues in the coming year. A major challenge in 2024 will be a lack of sufficient funding for civil society organisations to do their work. This is partly a result of an overall reduction in financial resources and partly due to foundations' refocusing or reducing the scope of their support. These two factors together are putting the squeeze on civil society groups at a moment when their costs are rising due to inflation. For some smaller organisations, this pressure could become existential in the coming year.

**In twenty years in and around the field, I don't think I've ever seen such pressure on resources, such a spike in basic needs at all levels of civil society (and independent media), and such pressure of responsibility on frontline grantmakers. The most pressing challenge is a basket of issues involving having to make staff redundant, reduce or spread services and programmes even more thinly, and just managing to remain a going concern. It's bleak. The human, emotional, and community cost of the kind of bureaucratic obstacle courses in groups' way is going to be very clear this coming year (if it wasn't already), and by this time next year, I think we'll be looking at a thinner and more demoralised civil society at the worst possible time, if something large-scale doesn't change.**

*Philanthropy consultant, UK*

Within Europe, **the decision of some foundations**, most notably Open Society Foundations, **to withdraw or reduce their funding in the region**, is having a significant impact on organisations in the human rights and social change space. These decisions increase pressure not only on the civil society groups that need to fill holes in their operating budgets but also on those funders who are continuing to support such work and are now facing increased demand. Funders are worried about the impacts of these shifts and critical of the stress that they place on frontline groups.

**Foundations feel they need to change constantly, and that is a threat to civil society. We should evolve and improve, but constantly changing strategies and looking and putting our resources inwards instead of supporting people that actually contribute to change - it is a threat and a trend. We are not reliable partners; we are not consistent. We put smaller organisations in danger with this behaviour, and no one is holding us accountable.**

*Programme Manager,  
Corporate Foundation, Germany*

## IT

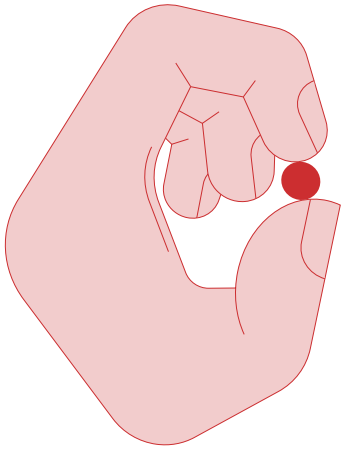
The withdrawal of international funders is being felt in Italy, as it has left even fewer resources for already underfunded local organisations, particularly those working on issues like independent media, gender, and issues that are seen as more political. Given existing economic divisions in the country, it is likely that the poorer south will find itself facing even greater challenges in 2024.

**Funding is centred in particular areas, especially in the north as this is the wealthier part of the country and where more of the Italian banks with their foundations are based. The south is already poorer, and that is reflected in the lack of funding for the south, affecting socio-economic inequality, poverty, access to education, and access to health.**

*Director of Operations,  
Corporate Foundation, Italy*

Finding adequate funding for work to support young people and ensure that they have proper access to education and training opportunities will also be a significant challenge for Italian organisations given the high rate of youth unemployment in Italy in comparison to other European countries.





The twin pressures on organisations to contend with **fewer resources** while the demand for (and political threats to) their work are increasing are leading to a sense of fatigue and burnout that could have a detrimental effect on civil society in 2024. Staff recruitment and retention could become a bigger problem as organisations struggle to pay competitive wages for jobs that can be exhausting and emotionally draining. They will also struggle to fulfil demands from the communities they serve, and to satisfy donors, as they try to make their budgets stretch as far as possible. Some funders note that competitiveness among organisations could increase, just when they need to be cooperating as much as possible to meet all of the needs.

## FR

In France, there are relatively few funders supporting human rights or social justice issues, and therefore the shifts among international foundations away from France have raised questions about the future of this type of worker. A number of French foundations, concerned about the anti-democratic trends spreading across the region, are exploring possibilities for a French philanthropic mechanism to support work around strengthening democracy and civic space. This remains a sensitive topic among French funders, as it is a much more political topic than most foundations have tackled in the past. However, the concerns are so great that there is an impetus to explore what it is possible for philanthropy to do and through which types of funding vehicles.

## UK

The cost-of-living crisis in the UK, brought on through years of austerity measures coupled with the impacts of Brexit, has hit the charitable sector hard in recent years and is expected to bite even harder in 2024 given overall reductions in funding and the closure of response funds that were created during the Covid pandemic. UK funders note that there is likely to be a shift towards service delivery and that funders may find themselves having to step in to fill gaps left by local authorities.

**There's the potential, because of cost-of-living issues, that there will be more funding focused on delivery. That means that there would be less on elements such as infrastructure. A lot of organisations are looking to develop their infrastructure, which has been creaking since Covid, but have had to do so at their own cost or not at all. Funders want to fund delivery, and I don't see that changing. There's going to be even more of a greying of responsibilities of government and local authorities and where funders have to support. We've already seen this in food banks, and now we're likely to see it in health and mental health and wellbeing within communities.**

*Portfolio Officer,  
Public Foundation, UK*

As the stresses on organisations increase and they are forced into more competitive bids for funding, more questions are coming from some quarters about the **imbalanced relationship between funders and grant recipients** more generally. In recent years, more foundations have been examining their own power and questioning their relationship to the wealth that they hold. The radical steps that a small number of foundations have taken to address such power imbalances have had reverberations throughout the sector, which poses new opportunities but also challenging questions for foundations and the communities they support.

**Questions about philanthropy and colonialism continue to come up; philanthropy is reckoning with the benefits it has accrued in the past. The Lankelly Chase decision to spend down has raised questions for funders about how they use their money and whether they should use it differently or give it away. There are big questions there about what reparative justice means and how it plays out in terms of affected communities. How can we balance historic harm with present issues?**

*Programme Manager,  
Private Foundation, UK*

In the current context, organisations are constantly having to juggle urgent demands and respond to emergent situations. It has been challenging for them to cope and adapt to being in crisis mode all of the time. Some funders have suggested that organisations need to be better prepared for crises, anticipating and planning for the likelihood that they will need to respond to urgent new events throughout the year. But, of course, this requires them to have flexible support from their funders to enable them to make those adaptations, and comparatively few funders are willing to provide such support.

**The dominant funding system today keeps civil society organisations in a perpetual cycle of starvation and measures the wrong things (small outputs vs direct impact and social change).**

*Secretary General,  
Philanthropic Network, Italy*

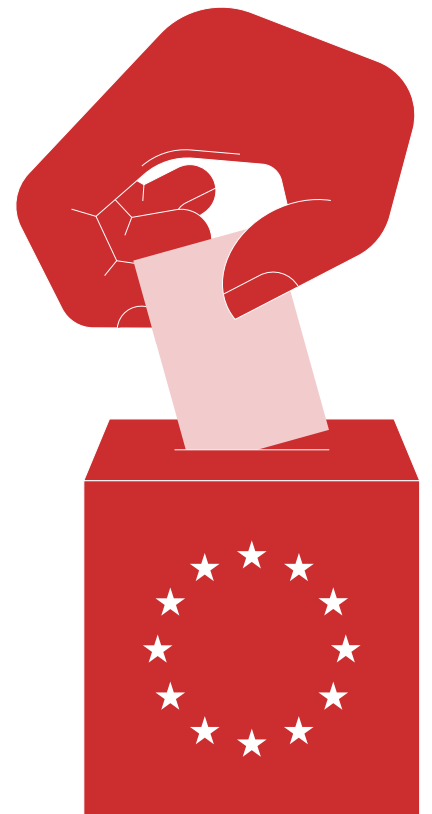
Some funders are also challenging their peers to move their focus away from firefighting and towards the root causes of the issues we are facing today. If philanthropy were able to take a more holistic and long-term view, it may help address more systemic problems.

**When we're not looking at the source of a problem, we're not necessarily looking at how to solve these issues at their source. States are investing in lethal weapons and AI, and if we look at conflict in different contexts, it's all about exploiting resources and mass killing of people for profit. Philanthropy looks less at that. Especially in the human rights sector, there's a disappointing silence on where issues stem from.**

*Grants Manager, Donor  
Collaborative, UK*

# What opportunities do you see in 2024 that might help your grantees advance their work?

The European Parliamentary elections are a potential opportunity in 2024. Some social change funders are hopeful that the elections could result in liberal or progressive parties taking on a more active role in Europe. Others' hopes are more muted, but they see an opportunity simply in the election campaigns themselves to highlight the state of European democracy and draw attention to the need to strengthen the rule of law. More cynical funders also suggest that if the far right gains more power through the elections, which is a possibility, it could provide a wake-up call for European citizens and open more opportunities for engaging the public on human rights and social justice issues. If a more positive election outcome is to be achieved, funders may need to consider their own role in helping shape this opportunity.



One possible role identified by social change funders is to put more funding into grassroots organising to build more people power and solidarity. A significant percentage of social justice funding goes towards service delivery, but relatively little goes towards community organising, which is an important part of getting citizens politically engaged. These funders feel that the gaps are primarily at the grassroots level and that there is too much top-down funding that will not adequately address the democratic deficit. However, some funders also feel that there is a role for pro-democracy political analysis to help inform civil society and policymakers.

**Progressive players have been timid to support think tanks and even political parties that are pro-democracy, and this is an opportunity for them to rise to the challenge, an opportunity for human rights and pro-democracy movements to mobilize.**

*Director,  
Donor Collaborative, Belgium*

**I can see public opinion changing towards more justice and greater love for earth and each other**

**Manager,  
Donor Collaborative, UK**

## UK

Among the many elections to take place in 2024, the UK is expected to call a General Election at some point in the year. After more than a decade of a Conservative Government, public polling suggests that change is likely. Some funders are hopeful that a change in government, even if it does not result in radical policy change, could open opportunities for civil society groups to draw more attention to human rights and social change issues.

**A change in government might bring opportunities. A potential hung parliament could offer a particular opportunity there: while political parties are deciding who to join forces with, it could be a chance for campaigners to take up space in the media around the issues they care about. The General Election itself, while not an opportunity that our grantees should be putting too much emphasis on, should be used for more visioning work.**

*Programme Officer,  
Private Foundation, UK*

**The UK general election and potential change in government could bring about a more progressive political backdrop for human rights issues (although progress may be slow) or at least some interest in evidence-based policy and technocratic improvements to some areas of policy / practice.**

*Director, Private Foundation, UK*

The hopes are tempered, however, by a recognition of the restrictive framework that has been put in place over the past few years and that will continue to set the tone in the absence of political will for dramatic change.

**The challenge is there's a lot of legislation that's been brought in that sets the context, so unless they repeal it, we could still be operating in an eroding rights context. It remains to be seen whether a change in government will make a big difference, because there's already so much that's been taken away.**

*Programme Manager,  
Private Foundation, UK*

The Polish elections in late 2023 have instilled hope in some funders, who point to them as a possible blueprint for action on the European level.

**In Poland, thanks to civil society, grassroots organisations, and community organizing efforts, progressive constituencies, including women and young people, were mobilized and had a strong impact on the elections. There is an opportunity to replicate that in other countries.**

*Director, Donor Collaborative, Belgium*

Focusing on the younger generations and mobilising them to vote could provide an opportunity in the face of the many elections to be held in 2024, not just in Europe but globally.

**There's quite a big gap between older generations and the way they vote and the younger generations. I see an opportunity there. I can see public opinion changing towards more justice and greater love for earth and each other. There's an opportunity there to translate public opinion into action.**

*Grants Manager,  
Donor Collaborative, UK*

In the face of so many overlapping crises, there is an **opportunity for movements and organisations to collaborate more and better** and to stand in solidarity with one another. While the strengthening of far-right movements is a major challenge, it could also create an opportunity as a unifying threat that brings activists together across different parts of the globe to advocate for democracy, human rights, and environmental protection.

**In the face of adversities and due to organising, I think there will be increasing solidarity amongst groups and regions that amplifies organising, protest and action against illiberal actors.**

*Anonymous*

**There's a lot of appetite for connecting across issues and geographies; this could create a global movement and momentum around pressing global issues.**

*Senior Program Manager,  
Private Foundation, USA*

Such collaboration, in addition to enhancing the impact of the work, can also create new funding opportunities.

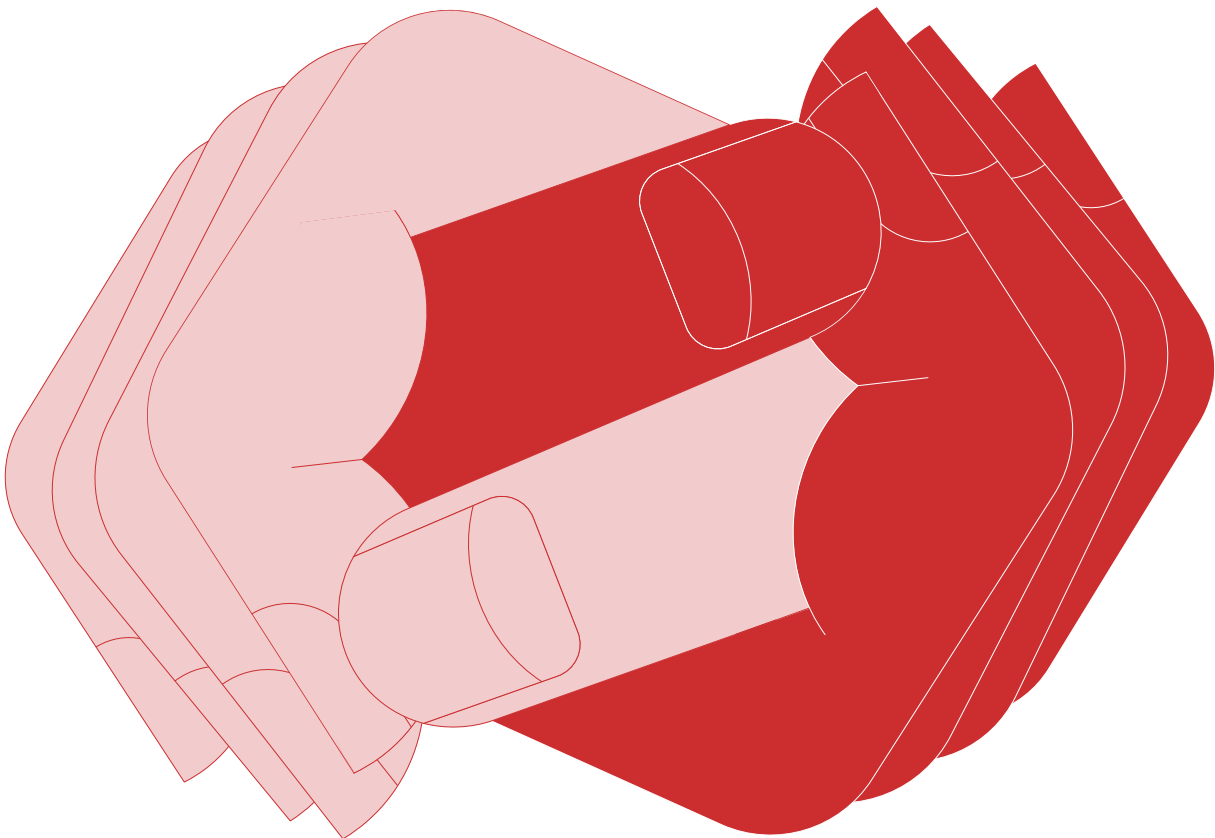
**We see coalitions forming and working intersectionally, especially if there's a common thread. If the common thread is more specific, then it is also easier for foundations to come in and support the work.**

*Programme Director,  
Private Foundation, The Netherlands*

Foundations are also more aware of the ways in which they need to rise to meet the demands of the current moment. There are calls for philanthropy to take more risks, to be more self-critical, and to experiment with new models of grantmaking, all of which create more opportunities to support deeper social change.

**There is increasing awareness among foundations that we need a philanthropy that is more engaged, more courageous, investing in fields it hasn't invested in before. This is a good opportunity as foundations are recognizing they can be bolder.**

*Programme Manager,  
Philanthropy Network, France*



**One issue that reached the foundation sector in Germany last year is the question of where the money comes from in foundations. Usually, it is connected to the Nazi time or colonial time. Some foundations were spearheading that, others were rather late, but this year we saw a push to look at the history and find responsible ways of having transparency on this topic.**

*Senior Program Advisor,  
Private Foundation, Germany*

**I continue to think that the growth of participatory grantmaking is an important way to shift power and resource. It is an opportunity that the sector should be taking up. We're starting to think about what child-led participatory grantmaking would look like.**

*Programme Director,  
Intermediary Foundation, UK*

Shifts towards local giving and support for community foundations and away from professionalised private foundations also offer opportunities for more community-level engagement. While private foundations have been the focus of most of the debates around shifting power in philanthropy, this may be a moment for reflection on the role of intermediary foundations, as well. Some funders see intermediaries as a solution to some of the difficulties in moving money into more challenging contexts and getting funding closer to the ground, while others see an opportunity to rethink the role of international intermediaries channeling funds to the Global South.

**There is huge scope for intermediary funders to be pivotal in 2024 by moving resource into highly closed contexts. We see this as an opportunity to re-evaluate the funding eco-system.**

*Senior Learning and  
Research Officer,  
Donor Affinity Group, UK*

**There is an opportunity for a re-evaluation of the role of international intermediaries and the amount that they absorb at the expense of domestic organisations (including domestic intermediaries). I expect to see a wider set of attempts to establish funding pots/mechanisms closer to where the work is happening, whether that means more locally governed and designed funds within countries, or funds that move from the Global North to Global South regions and countries.**

*Philanthropy Consultant, UK*

Funders point to a number of **policy-related opportunities** in 2024. In Europe, the Digital Services Act, Digital Markets Act, and Collective Redress Directive, all of which are now enforceable at the national level, offer better protection to consumers and are tools that civil society can use to protect rights, particularly in the digital sphere. For those working on environmental justice, a forthcoming treaty on plastics offers an opportunity for advocacy.

**Negotiations for a legally binding global plastics treaty that covers the lifecycle of plastics are expected to wrap up in 2024. The treaty provides a means to tackle the interconnected issues of plastic pollution, climate change, toxic chemicals and a just transition for the informal labour sector and those living on the fence lines of plastic production facilities.**

*Programme Manager,  
Donor Collaborative, USA*

While the **climate crisis** remains an existential challenge, some funders are encouraged that there is now a deeper understanding of the socio-political and socio-economic dimensions of the crisis and more impetus to address those. There is also more alignment among funders on mitigating the climate crisis, offering an opportunity for more action. Some people identified the so-called 'farmers' protests' happening across Europe as an opportunity to open a discussion about climate change and the economic structures that underpin it. While the protests are centred on environmental legislation, the underlying problem is the industrial agriculture complex, which is hurting both farmers and the environment. Some funders see an opportunity for philanthropy to open up dialogue

between different types of actors to try to identify solutions to the climate crisis. In the area of **women's rights**, there are also a few opportunities on the horizon, as France moves to enshrine the right to an abortion in the constitution, which could set an example for other European countries. More countries are also talking about the idea of a feminist foreign policy and exploring what that might mean for them.

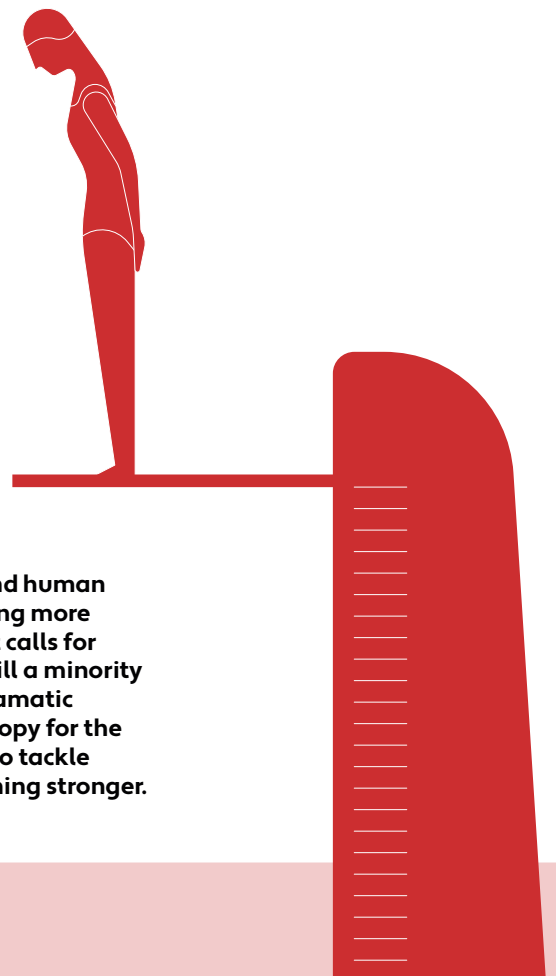
## IT

In Italy, where there is a significant problem with violence against women, 2024 may bring some opportunities to make progress in tackling this issue. In 2023, the government approved a decree that expands protection for women from domestic and interpersonal violence. While the legislation is not as strong as activists hoped, it was passed with cross-party support, an important step forward in Italy, where the problem has been long ignored. Two new funds were established last year: a women's fund and one working explicitly on violence against women. These are the first two funds in Italy focusing on gender, and some funders hope they will help influence other parts of the philanthropy sector.

**I know violence against women is only one aspect of gender inequality, but it is positive to see that there has been lots of public engagement and public protest: half a million people marching in Rome, and protests everywhere for the International Day of Violence Against Women. The younger generation has more awareness.**

*Director of Operations,  
Corporate Foundation, Italy*

# How do you expect your practice as a funder to change in the next twelve months?



**In 2024, European social change and human rights funders are considering taking more risks, recognising that the moment calls for more boldness and courage. It is still a minority of foundations that are making dramatic changes, but calls within philanthropy for the sector to be braver in their efforts to tackle society's systemic issues are becoming stronger.**

**Philanthropy must be bolder, abandoning the banker approach to move to a model more similar to that of a social investor; this implies support for new and unproven initiatives and approaches, and acceptance of the possibility of failure. The relevant measure for judging the effectiveness of one's action is the impact, not the size of the assets, and people (and their ability to influence and shape their communities) rather than projects. Philanthropic action should therefore give centrality to its ability to identify solutions to problems or needs that are beyond the reach or interest of other actors such as market enterprises, the government, or other non-profit organisations by promoting innovative, atypical ideas and being creative outside the usual patterns.**

*Head of Programmes,  
Private Foundation, Italy*

**We want to be more experimental in grantmaking. We want to lead from the front by pushing for maximum transparency over our objectives and frameworks. Our aim is that this will lead to more equitable and sustainable funding relationships.**

*Senior Learning and  
Research Officer,  
Donor Affinity Group, UK*

More funders are talking about funding **systems change** and thinking about what this means for them in practice, taking into account that different sizes and types of foundations may have different constraints on them. For those newer to this approach, they have questions about how to measure the impact of such work. While the language of systems change is now established in the vocabulary of the philanthropy sector, some funders feel that what is actually being funded is reform of the existing system rather than actual change. There is a frustration that current funding is maintaining the status quo and not pushing forward a more transformative agenda.

As foundations explore how they can effect change in different ways, some are considering funding to individuals for the first time.

**We need to fund individual activists but in way that does not make them hyper-visible or targeted. What does it mean to fund individuals well? In January we will make our first ever grants to individuals in the UK. It challenges our conception of funding. It will include some grant funding, but some of it may be done in other ways, as we think about tax and access to benefits.**

*Programme Director,  
Intermediary Foundation, UK*

More foundations are starting to explore **participatory approaches** to their grantmaking, learning from the experiences of their peers over the past several years. Some have been looking explicitly at how to bring affected communities into the grantmaking process, while others have been making broader changes to their governance structures to ensure different perspectives are brought to all aspects of the foundation. While foundations are applying different frameworks to these internal questions, some are considering how to embed a specifically anti-racist practice in their work. They are also thinking about how to take a more intersectional approach to the issues they support.

**We now have enough evidence that we can draw on showing that there are communities being marginalised from funding, for example, minoritised communities receiving significantly less in comparison well established, typically white-led organisations. Taking that research and improving practice is important.**

*Grants Manager, Donor Collaborative, UK*

Encouragingly, some funders are also moving towards more flexibility in their grantmaking and offering more multi-annual, core support. They are taking a more trust-based approach and trying to support organisations to be as sustainable as possible in a demanding and dynamic context of shifting urgent priorities.

**Our practices have changed this year in terms of making more parts of our application processes and evaluation practices move towards trust-based philanthropy, and next year will be reflecting on these changes to identify what we learned from it.**

*Programme Officer,  
Community Foundation, USA*

**We are in a slow process of trying to transform power imbalances in inequalities in our grantmaking. With our current mandate we can't move to a full unrestricted funding model, but we expect to make revisions so that our grants are more flexible, and in the next 12 months start to incorporate participatory decision making in at least one of our grant types.**

*Programme Officer,  
Intermediary Foundation, Germany*

Many in the field, however, continue to lament the challenges to introducing more flexibility to grantmaking processes. In countries where there are a high number of corporate foundations and small family foundations, the overall landscape remains more traditional and impact driven. Also, there are calls from within the sector to reassess what is considered **long-term funding**. Those foundations that give multi-year grants still tend to do so in 2-3-year cycles, but others argue that grants should be given on a 5-10-year basis if they are to truly enable civil society organisations to tackle the challenge of systemic change. Such work is slow and requires much longer-term investment than is currently the norm.

In response to the number of crisis situations that have emerged in recent years, some funders are now setting aside money for **emergency funding** while others are considering how they can help their partners be more prepared to deal with emergencies through more sustainable funding.

**We're not equipped to provide emergency funding as quickly as it's needed. We do receive requests for that. We've been in a constant state of emergency since COVID. Our collective nervous system is feeling that. I think that we need to think about what our role is and how we can reframe the concept of emergency. And how can we push for the usual increase of multi-year, flexible core funding as a solution for emergencies. There's no continuous injection of small amounts of money when things are going badly that is going to support the resilience of groups in the long term. There's a lot to unpack there.**

*Deputy Director of Programmes,  
Intermediary Foundation,  
The Netherlands*

**We want  
to be more  
experimental in  
grantmaking.  
We want to  
lead from  
the front.**

*Senior Learning and Research Officer,  
Donor Affinity Group, UK*



Beyond giving more flexible support, some foundations are also devoting more attention to the **non-financial support** they can provide to their partners, in an effort to move to a 'funder plus' model. This might mean supporting them with contacts, access to different advocacy spaces, or more technical assistance. While foundations often prefer to remain silent, the field is calling for them to speak out against injustice in partnership with grantees.

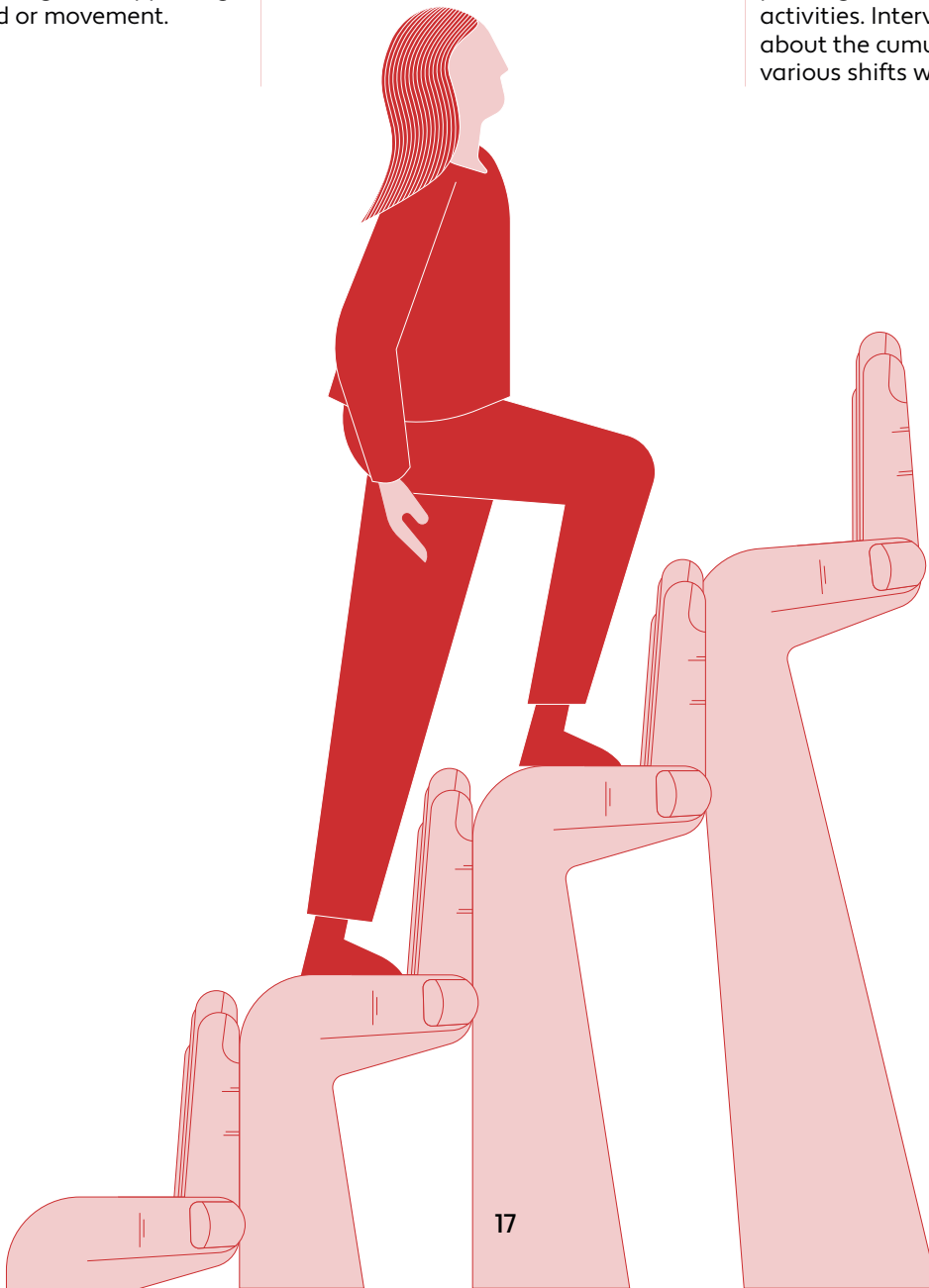
Some funders are encouraging and supporting their partners to think more about wellbeing and care within their organisations. In order to be able to think long term and develop a vision and strategy for the future, organisations need adequate salaries and the support to avoid burnout and exhaustion. This is about more than supporting individual organisations and is a shift to thinking about building and supporting the health of a field or movement.

Funders are also reflecting on how global trends connect to local communities and how they can support work at that level.

**Although it is a year of elections, and therefore there will be disproportionate concerns about the impacts of right-wing, libertarian or religious conservative administrations coming to power in many pivotal places and the knock-on effects of that, I expect to connect my work a lot more with the sort of local and everyday democracy work being done across the world - how communities small and large make sense of the world around them, the issues that affect them, and the ways in which they can collectively come to decisions that communities can live with.**

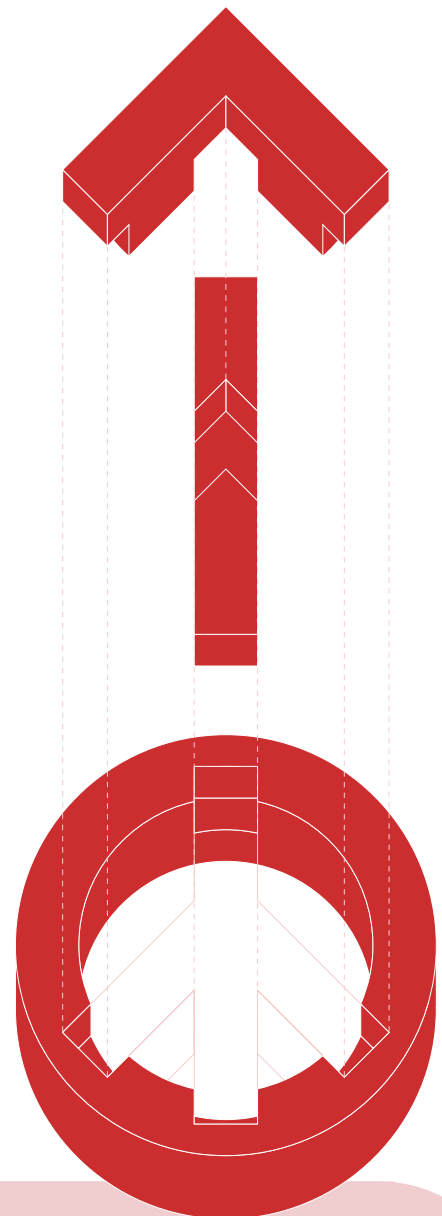
*Philanthropy Consultant, UK*

Unfortunately, despite these positive trends among some foundations, a number of large foundations in Europe are making changes that could have a negative impact on the social change and human rights sector. Some are **withdrawing funding from Europe**, while others expect to be giving out less funding overall. Many funders are looking to collaborate with peers in hopes of making their funding stretch further, but many respondents were concerned that the overall pool of funding would be insufficient to cover the needs in Europe. Some foundations are responding by consolidating their funding and making larger grants to fewer organisations, raising questions about who will be excluded in this shift. As foundations seek to adapt to a reality of greater scarcity of funding, some are being more inward-looking and devoting time to internal strategy processes while suspending or curtailing their grantmaking activities. Interviewees were concerned about the cumulative effect these various shifts will have on the field.



# What issue or field of practice do you think will become more important in 2024?

As we enter 2024, the conflicts in Ukraine and in Gaza are on everyone's minds, and these are far from the only armed conflicts happening in the world. Peacebuilding and conflict resolution and prevention have therefore become more important considerations for social change funders as they look to the coming year. There are concerns that the emergency funding that was made available for Ukraine in 2022 is now drying up, yet the needs remain extremely high. At the same time, some funders feel that philanthropy has not mobilised robustly enough in response to the Hamas attacks in Israel and subsequent invasion of Gaza.



**With regard to Palestine, the world has changed since early October, and that won't go away. I hope it won't go away. I'm frustrated with the silence of mainstream philanthropy, though I know I shouldn't be surprised. We can't ignore this situation, no matter how much people might hope it quietly goes away.**

*Programme Officer,  
Private Foundation, UK*

The **climate crisis**, which has been a growing funder priority for the past few years, continues to be a pressing concern. More funding has been devoted to mitigating the climate crisis as public awareness has increased; however, social change and human rights funders are keen to see more funding put towards a **just transition**, which recognises and tries to address the socio-economic issues driving climate change.

**Migration**, driven both by conflict and by climate change, is expected to be a significant issue in 2024. It will likely be a strong factor in elections in European countries and in the US as politicians position themselves as anti-immigrant and use migration as a divisive tool to garner more support. The EU Migration Pact, passed in late 2023, is expected to make the situation of asylum seekers in the EU more difficult and to lead to more detentions and deportations.

In anticipation of the many elections taking place in 2024, including the European Parliament elections, there will be a stronger focus on **strengthening democracy and ensuring free and fair elections**. Combating mis- and disinformation is likely to become an area of greater investment in this context. However, in addition to ensuring access to verified facts and information, there is also a growing focus on supporting narrative-building in an attempt to combat the rise of the far right.

**Narrative infrastructure – we are losing with all the facts and morality on our side and need to course correct, but we can't do that without infrastructure to support new worldviews and the ability to imagine new possibilities and a better future.**

*Philanthropy Consultant,  
The Netherlands*

**We need  
to go back  
to basics  
and ask,  
how do we  
ensure the  
basics for  
everyone?**

*Grants Manager,  
Donor Collaborative, UK*

Moreover, funders are recognising that in order to sell the promise of democracy, there needs to be more focus on addressing the underlying inequalities that help fuel the rise of populist governments. A harder look at root causes and systemic issues, and at economic justice, may help address some of the current political concerns.

**The fact that democracy hasn't delivered for a large part of the population, and the gap between those who have and haven't got much is increasing. People will not accept that state of affairs. Philanthropy needs to address issues of systemic inequalities much more than it does today.**

*Director, Donor Collaborative, Belgium*

**We need to go back to basics and ask, how do we ensure the basics for everyone: the ability to feed your family, a roof over your head. Bringing it down to that is important, as is connecting it to some of the false narratives that pervade, including scarcity. There's this mantra that we don't have enough money, but the US is giving \$100bn in military aid for three countries. We have money; we have resources on earth. It's about redistributing it. I think that will continue to be an important issue because of the increased inequality we're facing.**

*Grants Manager,  
Donor Collaborative, UK*

In France, where the war in Gaza has unleashed waves of **Islamophobia and anti-Semitism** (hardly a unique situation in Europe), some funders are hoping that a focus on addressing inequalities could help alleviate some of the tensions by bringing attention to the discrimination faced by all marginalised communities.

Machine learning and particularly **generative AI and its implications for society** are concerns for a growing number of funders in 2024, having seen the impact of the release of tools like ChatGPT last year. More funders will be looking at the human rights impacts of such tools and technology in general.

**The area of automated decision making, particularly in relation to public services, has been important for a while, and we receive many applications on this topic. With technology becoming even more prevalent and now with the fast growth of tools like ChatGPT, I'd expect a greater ramp up of using technology as a catch-all solution for providing more cost-effective services, but with major human rights consequences.**

*Programme Officer,  
Intermediary Foundation, Germany*

**Diversity, equity, and inclusion; anti-racism; and decolonising philanthropy** remain important topics for funders, even as many of them are struggling to understand what each of these terms and frameworks means for their work. There is a call to unpack these concepts in practical terms for foundations. Conversations about shifting power also continue to gain traction, with more focus on where wealth is held and how it is distributed.

**I think there is a growing clamour for funds to be based in the places they are for, and there will be an inexorable push for, e.g., endowments, regional funds, etc., over the course of the next year. Funders will come under pressure to explain why they can't draw down money from their endowments to help establish such funds.**

*Philanthropy Consultant, UK*

Some funders are concerned that philanthropy is losing the trust of the public and that it needs to more seriously engage with criticisms of the sector in order to retain legitimacy. They point to a disconnect between the debates that are held at the staff level and the discussions in which board members engage. The day-to-day experiences of these two groups can be so different that it becomes difficult to come to a shared vision for the work of the foundation. As we enter 2024, the calls for a serious look at **tax justice** and how it relates to philanthropy are getting stronger, and foundations may need to decide how they will respond to such criticism.



As civic space continues to shrink and more organisations come under pressure from authorities, funders are considering administrative support to groups to help them deal with registration and tax issues, for example. These issues can feel irrelevant to the core of an organisation's work, but authorities can use them as an excuse for administrative harassment or even closure, and the resources that organisations need to devote to dealing with them can detract from their programmatic work. By providing such administrative assistance, whether through extra funding or the provision of services, funders are helping these organisations continue their vital work. Support for holistic security and for collective care are also greater priorities as activists are facing burnout in contexts where they are constantly under threat and harassment.

In Eastern Europe, **sexual and reproductive health rights** are likely to become more important in 2024 as sex education and access to contraception and abortion are further curtailed. Organisations working on such issues, especially smaller organisations, can struggle to find funding for their work, making the needs even greater.

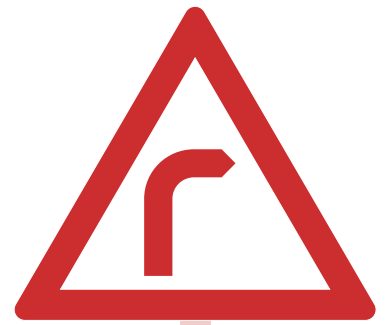
In Italy, **education, skills training, and up-skilling** will be priorities for many funders as they try to address the high youth unemployment and generational gap in the country. In this context, there is a need for funders to help instil a sense of hope and optimism in a generation that risks getting left behind.

**When you live in southern or rural regions in Italy, you can touch the poverty and abandonment in which the new generations live. They lack hope. Is philanthropy ready to meet these shattered narratives of change?**

*Vice President,  
Youth Association, Italy*



# What political event or sequence of events do you predict will have a substantial effect on your work?



As already noted, 2024 is a big year for elections and stands to be a test for democracy. The European elections are of concern for funders across the region as they fear it could mark a shift of the EU to the right. Elections in the UK and US are also key ones to watch, as they are likely to have an impact on global geopolitics. Funders are particularly concerned about the impact a further political shift to the right could have on civic space and on addressing the climate crisis.

**Increasingly I think that it is the political space (either positive or negative) created by electoral cycles and 'events' (Ukraine war, Hamas attacks, Israeli response, Covid...) that are having the biggest effects on the operating context for Ariadne partners and grantees of Ariadne members.**

*Philanthropy Consultant, UK*

**There is a big risk of Europe turning more right wing and (among others) ignoring its historical responsibility for the climate crisis.**

*Anonymous*

On the one hand, funders see the potential for collaboration around support for democracy given the scale of the challenges and the need to a coordinated response. On the other hand, there is frustration in the sector that for so many funders such support still feels too political. There may be a need for clear guidance for funders on where the 'red line' is regarding political funding in different jurisdictions.

Some of the predictions for election outcomes in the US are quite pessimistic, and there are concerns about the knock-on effect this could have on foundation funding flows.

**I predict war breaking out on another major front and Trump winning the US presidency again, furthering geopolitical shifts and authoritarian gains.**

*Anonymous*

**The US election is likely to have a huge impact on the work of private philanthropy. We can foresee a future where private philanthropists pivot from focusing on the global majority and instead, focus their efforts on democratic backsliding in the global minority.**

*Senior Learning and Research Officer, Donor Affinity Group, UK*

The **regulation of online spaces** will become more important in an election context, and recent European legislation could be tested in the coming year.

**In Europe, the combination of the growing use of online spaces for communication with identity politics has come with a lot of negative consequences, particularly for the more marginalised groups in**

**society (hate speech, online attacks, misinformation, etc). New regulations like the Digital Services Act and Digital Markets Act, combined with more progressive governments, could help with this. But alternatively, if the new regulations are not implemented effectively, plus more authoritarian governments take power across Europe, that will have more negative consequences.**

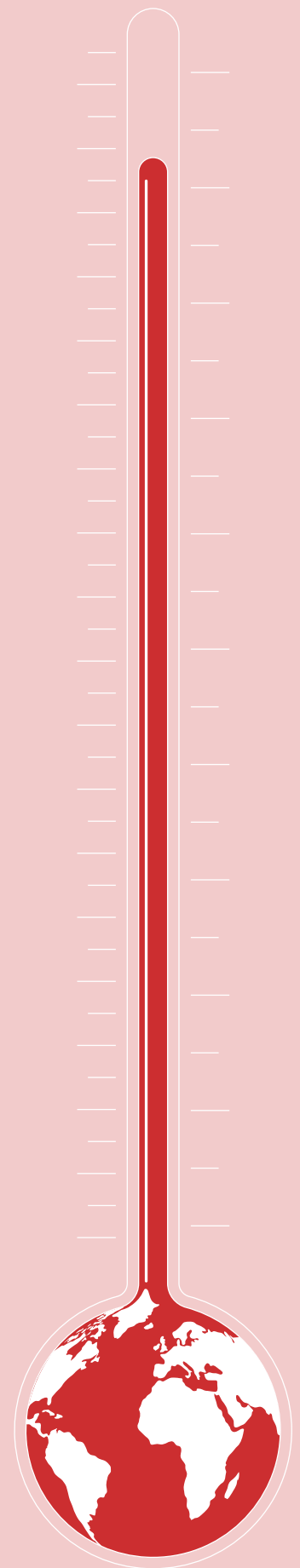
*Programme Officer, Intermediary Foundation, Germany*

The **climate crisis** remains a pressing and urgent threat, but there are concerns that it has been overshadowed by other events and will need to be made more of a political priority.

**Current contingencies have weakened the urgency of the climate crisis, which still finds heterogeneous responses and actions that are not consistent with needs. I believe that philanthropy can play a crucial role as an interested observer capable of bringing together the demands of different actors (state and market) towards common objectives and assuming a role as a natural leader and activator of processes.**

*Head of Programmes, Private Foundation, Italy*

The **ongoing conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine** are top of mind for many going to into 2024, as it is not at all clear how long the fighting will continue, not to mention the long process of rebuilding that lies ahead once hostilities cease. For European funders, their concern around Gaza extends beyond the loss of life and violations of international humanitarian law happening in the region to the impact the conflict is having in Europe. Hate speech and hate crimes against both Jews and Muslims have increased in Europe since the beginning of the conflict. Moreover, several governments have restricted rights to protest in relation to the war, and some groups have felt that their views are being silenced if they are not in alignment with their own government's position. The response to the situation in Gaza, and the International Court of Justice case brought by South Africa against Israel in particular, will be an important test of the human rights mechanisms established since the end of the Second World War and will be influential to how the human rights discourse develops globally.



## FR

In France, the 2024 Olympic Games, to be held in Paris over the summer, could have an important political impact, both as a focal point for debates on securitisation and as a platform for activism.

**The 2024 Olympic games will spark security debates. Many people think there will be terrorist attacks, people trying to sabotage the games. Paris will be at the centre of attention for two weeks, which is an opportunity for people to put their cause at the centre (by organizing strikes, etc). Lots of groups will take the opportunity to be vocal; it's a complex situation and will impact foundations' work. The Games will require a huge mobilisation of police forces and fireman - it will be a tense moment in France, and many groups will take advantage of this.**

*Programme Manager,  
Philanthropy Network, France*

The Olympics are also having an impact on housing in Paris. While the government has promised that at least 25% of the Olympic Village will be turned into social housing following the Games, in an attempt to revitalise the area north of the Seine, there have been complaints of evictions in the area to clear space for construction of the Village. Furthermore, the development is driving up housing prices in the whole area, affecting students and those on lower incomes. Finally, private landlords renting their flats on Airbnb for visitors attending the Olympics is expected to exacerbate the existing housing crunch over the summer.

## IT

Migration flows to Italy, especially those crossing the Mediterranean by boat, have been a point of political tension in the country for the past decade. Italian funders are concerned that the conflict in Gaza, together with other conflicts in Africa and the growing pressures of the climate crisis, could push more asylum seekers to Italy, thus sparking further debate about Italy's migration policies.

**These conflicts and other conflicts, especially in Africa, could cause a new flow of refugees towards Europe and Italy in particular. Big climate events will also have an impact. Even Italy will be subject more and more to this type of catastrophic climate events, and foundations might look to support local populations.**

*Director of Operations,  
Corporate Foundation, Italy*

## UK

Funders in the UK are preparing for a General Election in 2024. The Conservative Party has long threatened to withdraw the UK from the European Convention on Human Rights and has also made several proposals to repeal the domestic implementing legislation for the treaty, the Human Rights Act, and replace it with a watered-down version of human rights protection. It is therefore likely that human rights could become a lightning rod issue in the campaign period. This is especially significant for Northern Ireland, where the Human Rights Act is an integral element of the Good Friday Agreement.

Against this backdrop of pivotal elections and the potential for interference in them, coupled with ongoing social divisions, some funders are concerned about a shortage of independent media in Europe.

**We work in the independent journalism field, and each time a billionaire buys a newspaper or a radio broadcast these are political events that are not good. Media concentration and lack of media plurality it is a political trend happening across Europe and it is concerning. There is not a single EU member state where media concentration is not a problem. Every time a journalist is arrested or murdered (which happens in the EU - for example, Slovakia and Malta) it is a political event.**

*Director,  
Donor Collaborative, Belgium*

## DE

While there are no federal elections in Germany in 2024, there will be state level elections in three states in the eastern part of the country, where the right-wing populist party Alternative for Germany (AfD) is expected to perform well. This is coming on the heels of AfD winning its first mayoral election in December 2023. Funders are concerned about the impact of AfD gaining more power, especially for minority groups and migrants, and that the party's far-right positions could start to become normalised.



**There is a big  
risk of Europe  
turning more  
right wing  
and ignoring  
its historical  
responsibility  
for the  
climate crisis**

*Anonymous*

# What is your greatest hope for 2024, in relation to your work or philanthropy in general?



As we enter 2024, European social change and human rights funders aspire to a transformation in the philanthropy sector, such that it recognises and utilises its power for collective change. This may mean having a more ambitious vision for systemic change or being more courageous, including having the courage to distribute power and responsibility for funds to others. Many of the hopes expressed relate to philanthropy changing its own practices and better living up to the values it claims to hold

**The sector is currently governed by narratives of scarcity, fragmentation, and competition that don't reflect the reality of its abundance or the desire to work together to heal the pain in our world. My hope is that more individuals and organizations are able to step into our own power by embodying narratives that construct a future where we are all flourishing.**

*Philanthropy Consultant,  
The Netherlands*

**I hope that philanthropy starts to model some of the values and aspirations that it espouses, for example, taking responsibility for the impact of investment choices and moving away from some of the practices of white supremacist culture, such as power hoarding.**

*Head of Evidence and Learning,  
Private Foundation, UK*

**I hope to see foundations more and more putting their money where their mouth is regarding core funding, participation, wellbeing of activists, and funding related to climate change.**

*Country Manager,  
Private Foundation, The Netherlands*

**There needs to be a recognition that us (foundations) holding all this cash is not going to change the world. We rarely have the answers and insights that communities do. I hope that the conversations we have about shifting power and decolonising continue and increase. I do believe we can make a difference, but we just need to start doing it. We just need to start putting into practice giving up power, handing over money. We need to be collaborative and collective and not as focused on ourselves but rather on the communities we want to uplift.**

*Programme Director,  
Intermediary Foundation, UK*

**Philanthropies need to be better at reflecting the activists that they serve. We hope that philanthropy continues its movement towards shifting power and addressing longstanding imbalances.**

*Senior Learning and  
Research Officer,  
Donor Affinity Group, UK*

**I hope  
to see  
foundations  
putting  
their money  
where their  
mouth is**

*Country Manager,  
Private Foundation, The Netherlands*

**Philanthropy in Germany will be shaped by people who are courageous. The biggest step they can take is letting go of control and sharing power with those with less power (through participation, budgeting, collaboration, abandoning strict rules). It takes boldness and courage, but that is my hope. It makes our work more fun, interesting, and fulfilling. It gives us more space to grow as individuals.**

*Programme Manager,  
Corporate Foundation, Germany*

**For Italy, I hope for more diversity in terms of age, gender, and ethnic background in the boards and staff of the Italian foundations. That will bring about changes in practices and decisions of foundations themselves.**

*Director of Operations,  
Corporate Foundation, Italy*

**The hope is that philanthropy can move out of its comfort zone and increasingly act as a social investor or pioneer of innovation by promoting unusual and atypical approaches based on "what if" to challenge established paradigms and act as "capital of risk to society".**

*Head of Programmes,  
Private Foundation, Italy*

Funders also see the **potential for collaboration** in the current moment and hope that this opportunity will be seized.

**I hope we can create more spaces for collaboration across issues and geographies, thus creating a global movement to drive change, putting pressure on governments and international institutions.**

*Senior Programme Manager,  
Private Foundation, USA*

**I'm hopeful that there will be more solidarity across borders and understanding of the need to work together. And that people will grab the opportunities for collaboration. Because the reality is it's the fight of our lives. Covid happened and is now gone out of the daily psyche, but there are some horrific things that happened during pandemic, the utter disdain for human life. But there are some real opportunities for collaboration, if civil society take them. I'm hopeful grassroots groups and organisations will step up and fight for the things that are important.**

*Programme Officer, Private  
Foundation, UK*

Given the number of elections on the horizon, it is no surprise that many people are hoping for **political change**, whether it comes through the ballot box or through collective organising.

**I hope that EU member states, in the form of an alliance or via the EU, mobilize collectively to protect our democracies.**

*Managing Director,  
Private Foundation, France*

**The sector has been through a lot lately and is struggling to cope. So, it is hard to have hope. But, I am optimistic, and I'm hoping that electoral change may put us all on a better track.**

*Anonymous*

**My hope is that Trump isn't re-elected as U.S. President.**

*Philanthropy Consultant, UK*

**I hope that the examples of Poland and Brazil show that organised and determined progressive oppositions can win back power, despite the tilting of the field against them. And that support for civic power, independent media, citizen deliberation and related areas becomes a core and sustained collective endeavour.**

*Philanthropy Consultant, UK.*

**I have hope for the new generations and the resistance that we show, especially when we're in the face of such a heavy amount of oppression. I hope people will resist and come together in communities and say, 'We're not going to be treated like this and accept a lesser share of the cake.' People standing up for rights in solidarity and building power collectively gives me hope.**

*Grants Manager,  
Donor Collaborative, UK.*

**My hope is for a shift towards radicalisation of political standing points towards upholding human rights as a whole, with particular focus on economic and social rights, peace, environmental justice and reparations for historical injustices.**

*Philanthropy Consultant, Serbia*

**I hope there will be a genuine commitment to addressing catastrophic climate change.**

*Trust Secretary, Private Foundation, UK*

In a year when shifts in foundation priorities and the overall economic situation point to less money being available for human rights and social change work, many funders are hoping for **new sources of funding** to appear.

**I hope that new funders will continue to enter the field and promote human rights (whether they call it that or not).**

*Anonymous*

**My hope is finding more money to fund digital rights issues.**

*Director,  
Intermediary Foundation, Germany*

**I'm hoping for more money for gender equality. We know what is in front of us: anti-gender, anti-rights movements, and we know they have lots of money. We cannot close our eyes to the money they have.**

*Managing Director,  
Corporate Foundation, France*

But sometimes the simplest hopes can be the hardest to achieve...

**I hope  
to finally  
have a quiet  
year without  
emergencies**

**It's more of a utopia  
than a hope, I know**

***Director,  
Community Foundation, Italy***

# Acknowledgements

Ariadne would like to thank those who contributed their insight, ideas and vision to the 2024 Ariadne Forecast. We are grateful to the people who have either answered the questionnaire, been interviewed or taken part in the Forecast roundtables, including the following people

**Achraf Manar**  
European Climate Foundation

**Adriano Tomba**  
Fondazione Cattolica Verona

**Agnes Bruszik**  
Wikimedia Foundation

**Alba Quku**  
Assifero

**Alessia Mora**  
Open Society Foundations

**Alexandra Dethyre**  
RAJA-Danièle Marcovici Foundation

**Ali McGinley**  
Legal Education Foundation

**Alice Corrigan**  
Calais Appeal

**Ame Trandem**  
Plastic Solutions Fund

**Amina Izarouken**  
Mediterranean Women's Fund

**Andrea Chiara Brancale**  
Assifero

**Andrea Sassolini**  
Rondine Foundation

**Angelica Goelkel**  
Fondation de France

**Annam Dahlman**  
Aidsfonds

**Anne Cornilleau**  
Fondation de France

**Anne Lacoste**  
Fondation Inkerman

**Anne Sophie de Quercize**  
Fondation Jericho

**Antonia Autuori**  
Community Foundation Salernitana

**Aracy Pires**  
Mama Cash

**Arjos Vendrig**  
COC Nederland

**Aybala Carlak**  
Stichting Democratie & Media

**Barbara Van Paassen**  
For the Love of Changemaking

**Benoît Mounier**  
Fondation Carasso

**Borislav Petranov**  
Open Society Foundations

**Cardenia Casillo**  
Vincenzo Casillo Foundation

**Carola Carazzone**  
Assifero & Philea

**Carole Sarkis**  
Independent Consultant

**Caroline Sakina Brac de la Perriere**  
Mediterranean Women's Fund

**Céline Bonnaire**  
Kering Foundation

**Chandrima Padmanabhan**  
Climate Emergency Collaboration Group

**Charlotte Divin**  
Peace Direct

**Christine Oliver**  
Polden-Puckham Charitable Foundation

**Claudia Bollwinkel**  
Dreilinden

**Coco Jervis**  
Mama Cash

**Dalia Abu Yassien**  
Disrupt Foundation

**Daniela Mazzucca**  
Giuseppe Di Vagno Foundation

**Daniela Castagno**  
Kering Foundation

**Daniele Ferrocino**  
Community Foundation of Salento

**Daniele Messina**  
Fondazione Monte dei Paschi di Siena

**Daria Cybulska**  
Global Dialogue

**Deborah Doane**  
Rights CoLab

**Dominic Perera**  
Funders Initiative for Civil Society

**Eda Tajuddin**  
The Social Change Nest

**Elena Mencaroni**  
Fondazione Con il Sud

**Elisa Paluan**  
Fondazione Unipolis

**Elisa Peter**  
Civitates

**Elisabeth Dau**  
Fréquence Commune

**Ellie Kennedy**  
Open Society Foundations

**Emanuela Greco**  
United World Colleges

**Esther Foreman**  
The Social Change Agency

**Eve Nagel**  
Robert Bosch Stiftung

**Fanny Triboulet**  
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