

EFA EUROPEAN FUNDRAISING FORUM PROGRAMME

19 November 2026, Leuven (BE)

Venue: KU Leuven, Leercentrum AGORA (114-01), Edward Van Evenstraat 4, 3000 Leuven, Belgium

THURSDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2026 - Meeting room: M01.E50 - Zaal Couvreur

08.30-09.00 Arrival, registration and coffee

09.00-09.10 **WELCOME AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Ceri Edwards, President, European Fundraising Association
Malcolm Fleming, Director of Public Affairs, Postcode Lottery Group

09.10-09.45 **POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY ON FUNDRAISING IN TIMES OF SHRINKING SPACE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY**

Ilja De Coster, Supporting Fundraising (BE)

What if the future of freedom and democracy depends on something as everyday as a donation? In this talk, fundraising consultant Ilja De Coster wears his other hat — that of a passionate political philosopher and revisits leading 19th-century thinker philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville's enduring insight that democracy requires decentralisation of power, and that independent funding is the lifeblood of counterforce. From this foundation, he builds a bold thesis: no democracy without civil society, and no civil society without fundraising.
At a time when civic space is shrinking across the globe, the talk explores how funding given directly by citizens empowers organisations to act as critical watchdogs against political and economic power, to meet societal needs where the welfare state falls short, and to weave the social capital that holds democracies together. It is an invitation to fundraisers to see their jobs not as a technical marketing exercise, but as a profoundly political act of democratic renewal — and to rethink the role each of us can play in sustaining a free society.

09.45-10.20 **SHRINKING CIVIC SPACE IN EUROPE: COUNTERING POLARISATION THROUGH POSITIVE NARRATIVES**

Ruth Williams, Fundraising Verband Austria (AT)

Across Europe, civil society organisations are facing growing pressure. Democratic backsliding, political polarization, declining trust in institutions, disinformation, inflation, insecurities and increasing attacks on NGOs are reshaping the environment in which nonprofit organisations operate. While these trends are often associated with countries in Central and Eastern Europe, they are increasingly visible across Western Europe as well, including Austria.

This session explores the current state of civic space in Europe through a fundraising and civil society lens. Drawing on recent societal and political developments, with a special focus on

Austria, we will examine how public narratives about civil society are changing and how these shifts affect trust, legitimacy, and philanthropic support.

At the same time, the session moves beyond diagnosis and focuses on solutions. What can civil society organisations do when negative narratives gain traction? How can fundraisers help strengthen public support for civic engagement, democracy, and solidarity?

Participants will discover inspiring examples of positive narrative campaigns and collective actions from Austria, Germany, and France. From sector-wide initiatives to innovative communications strategies, these examples demonstrate how civil society can proactively shape the narrative rather than merely react to criticism.

10.20-10.40 Networking break

10.40-11.25 **LIFE AFTER THE META AD BAN: HOW FIVE EUROPEAN SECTIONS OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL ADAPTED TO THE NEW REALITY**

David Conway, Amnesty International (GB)

In October 2025, Meta withdrew all political, electoral and social issue advertising from the EU in response to the new Transparency and Targeting of Political Advertising (TTPA) regulation. For human rights and advocacy organisations, this removed a channel that much of our fundraising and campaigning had depended on. This session draws on direct, evidenced experience from five Amnesty International sections — the Netherlands, Italy, France, Greece and Hungary — covering what actually happened to cost per lead, conversion rates and campaign approval, and what each section changed in response. It closes with practical, cross-market advice for getting approvals on Meta, and a discussion of what a genuinely diversified acquisition strategy looks like once you can no longer rely on one channel.

By the end of this session, participants will be able to understand the practical mechanics of the TTPA regulation and why it led Meta to withdraw social issue advertising in the EU; see real before-and-after evidence — cost per lead, conversion rates, and rejected versus approved ad creative — from five European fundraising teams; apply a practical checklist for what Meta's ad review actually checks, and how to adapt messaging and creative to stay compliant; and assess how to rebalance an acquisition strategy that has relied heavily on a single paid channel.

11.25-12.10 **SCALING GENEROSITY DATA: FROM PILOTS TO A EUROPEAN COMMONS**

Birce Altay, GivingTuesday Europe Hub (TR)

Across Europe, organisations are generating valuable evidence on giving, volunteering and civic participation. Each initiative has its own purpose, methodology and strengths, contributing important insights for the organisations and communities they serve.

Using the GivingTuesday Data Commons as a practical example, this session will explore the principles behind collaborative approaches to generosity data and consider what they might mean in European realities. Together, we'll examine which approaches complement existing initiatives, where they could create additional value through complementary evidence and collaboration, and which ideas may be worth testing through future European pilots.

The session will also explore how a broader European perspective on generosity could strengthen fundraising, inform decision-making, support research and help answer some of the shared questions facing our field. Building on insights from a global movement that mobilises millions of people each year, we'll consider which collaborative approaches could create additional value in Europe and where there may be opportunities to test them through future pilots.

12.10-13.10 Lunch and networking break

13.10-13.55 **ENGAGING WITH PUBLIC AUTHORITIES: WHAT LESSONS FOR PHILANTHROPY AND FUNDRAISING IN EUROPE?**

Laurence Lepetit, France générosités (FR)
Hanna Surmatz, Philea (BE)

Civil society organisations across Europe engage with public authorities in very different ways: formal consultation bodies, national philanthropy strategies, informal networks or coalitions built around specific issues. Hanna Surmatz (Philea) will present the main findings of the study Philanthropy & Public Authorities: Harnessing the Power of Collaborative Dialogue in Europe, published by Philea and the Belgian Federation of Philanthropic Foundations and the lessons national associations can draw from it for their own advocacy.

The presentation will be followed by questions and testimonies from the audience.

The session will close with a short exchange on the EU Strategy for Civil Society adopted by the European Commission in November 2025, and in particular the donor dialogue it provides for. Participants will discuss how the strategy's guiding principles for civil dialogue, once taken up at national level, could help national umbrella organisations open or strengthen dialogue with their governments.

13.55-14.40 **TESTING OUR FUNDRAISING INTUITION AGAINST THE EVIDENCE**

Vuk Vuković, KU Leuven (BE)

Fundraisers are increasingly exposed to claims about "what works." Some claims rest on common sense, others on years of professional experience, but only a fraction have been rigorously tested.

To help fundraisers and nonprofit leaders separate the wheat from the chaff, this session examines the scientific evidence behind three widespread fundraising claims:

- Showing one beneficiary evokes more compassion than showing many.
- Providing evidence of effectiveness increases giving.
- Saying "thank you" keeps donors giving for longer.

Unpacking the research behind these claims will reveal where the evidence is strong, where findings depend on context, and where we know much less than we think. Participants will leave with a better understanding of when fundraising claims do – and when they don't – deserve their attention.

14.40-15.00 Networking break

15.00-15.45 **IF YOU WANT TO CHANGE THE WORLD, DO YOU REALLY NEED A CHARITY TO DO IT?**

Ian MacQuillin, Rogare (GB)

For a long time, if you wanted to support a good cause and help people in need, charities were the vehicle through which you did this. You donated money to charities, which then turned your donations into services to transform the lives of their beneficiaries.

Charities no longer uniquely occupy this pro-social space. Over the past 20 years, there has been a rise in the number of other actors who are cutting out and displacing 'middleman' charities from giving, asking for support and service delivery – a process known as 'disintermediation': Companies deliver services; crowdfunding platforms enable giving directly to people who want help. But what might surprise you is the number of ways that charities are losing control of their fundraising and donor stewardship.

This session presents a typology of disintermediation developed by the international fundraising think tank Rogare and Kingston University Business School in the UK, and then sets out the implications for charities, their fundraising, and their hallowed place in the civil society ecosystem. Because it turns out, people might not need charities at all to carry on feeling like they are changing the world.

15.45-16.00 Networking break

16.00-17.00 ROUNDTABLE ON UNLOCKING U.S. PHILANTHROPY:
NEW SOURCES OF SUPPORT FOR EUROPEAN NONPROFITS
Suzana Erickson, Myriad USA

This roundtable will introduce European nonprofits to U.S. philanthropy and to Myriad USA's services for accessing U.S.-based charitable donations in a trusted, compliant, and efficient way. Participants will learn how Myriad USA's American Friends Funds enable European organisations to receive U.S. tax-deductible gifts without establishing a separate U.S. charity, while benefiting from transparent fund administration.

17.05-18.30 Free time

18.30-19.30 **GUIDED TOUR OF LEUVEN** *(Optional)*

19.30-22:00 **EFA EUROPEAN FUNDRAISING FORUM DINNER**
Grand Café Notre Dame, Grote Markt 11, 3000 Leuven

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