

Center for Philanthropy Studies (CEPS), University of Basel  
 St. Johngasse 22, CH-4051 Basel  
 Tel.: +41 61 207 23 92, E-Mail: [ceps@unibas.ch](mailto:ceps@unibas.ch)  
[www.ceps.unibas.ch](http://www.ceps.unibas.ch)

## EDITORIAL

Dear readers,



In my last school year, Microsoft launched the operating system „Windows95“ with a completely new screen interface. There was now the Start menu, the taskbar and programs could be opened with mouse clicks on the screen. This made the computer easier to use even for less technology oriented people. At that time, it would never have occurred to me that the computer would one day be able to write and translate texts on its own! Since then, however, the digitalization of everyday life via the Internet, cell phones, etc. has continued to advance.

This has also opened up new opportunities for nonprofit organizations (NPOs): more reach, improved communication, new donation channels, to name just a few. At the same time, however, technological innovations always mean investment and uncertainty. An NPO cannot be at the forefront of everything, nor does it have to follow every trend, but the sector must keep up with developments so that it does not lose touch with business, young people and other social stakeholders.

In this issue, we offer a few ideas for doing just that. Similar to how the Windows95 startup tune opened the door to a new world of users back then.

Wishing you a pleasant read.

Georg von Schnurbein

## Digitalization in NPO

**The 55th edition of „Philanthropie Aktuell“ is not the same as the previous ones. For the first time, ChatGPT was allowed to contribute. Does it know the requirements for a digitalization strategy in NPO?**

**By Cathrin Gerlach and ChatGPT**

Digitalization has affected more and more areas of our lives in recent years, and non-profit organizations (NPOs) are also part of it. The introduction of digital technologies and processes can help make the work of NPOs more effective and efficient and thus increase their impact. But why is digitalization specifically important for NPOs and what does a successful strategy look like? I asked the AI chatbot ChatGPT these two questions:

### «Why is digitalization important for NPOs?»

Many NPOs work with limited resources and must pay careful attention to how they use them. Digitalization offers an opportunity to optimize processes and reduce costs. By introducing digital tools and platforms, workflows can be automated and accelerated, saving time and resources. For example, donation processes can be handled online, reducing administrative overhead and providing donors with an easy and convenient way to give. They can also help make NPOs' work more transparent and effective. By using social media channels and websites, NPOs can showcase their engagement and successes to a wider audience, increasing their reach. Digital tools can also facilitate collaboration with partners and donors.

### «What can a successful digital strategy for NPOs look like?»

A successful digital strategy for NPO should include the following steps:

- Analysis of the current situation and identification of needs and priorities
- Definition of clear goals and priorities that are aligned with the NPO's mission and values
- Selecting appropriate digital tools and platforms, taking into account the needs of both donors and partners
- Consider change management to ensure that staff and volunteers can accept and successfully use the digital changes
- Implementation and training, including the involvement of volunteers and donors
- Monitoring and evaluation, including feedback from volunteers and donors, to make improvement

Overall, digitalization offers NPOs the opportunity to make their work more effective and efficient and to increase their impact. However, a successful digital strategy requires careful planning and implementation tailored to the specific challenges and needs of the organization. NPOs should therefore be aware that digitalization is not

## CONTENT

Digitalization in NPO	01
The Third Sector Digitalized?	02
Interview: Michael Harr	03
Impact Measurement	04
Calendar	04

an end in itself, but a means to fulfill their mission and live their values.

Since I like to engage in experiments, I wrote a post for the first time in collaboration with a Chatbot. It couldn't have gone any better. ChatGPT put all the content together the way I would have, only in an unbeatable amount of time. To round out the article, I felt I had to include the human component, in content as well as text. Because some AI formulations were, in my opinion, too sharp and needed minor corrections. However, other limitations of ChatGPT cannot be neglected, especially when it comes to the application in a specific context. There is also the risk that answers can be distorted or even wrong, because the program likes to fill certain gaps with invented content as well.

The cooperation was fun and it will certainly not be the last time to have created an article in cooperation with a Chatbot.

More and more civil society organizations are dealing with digitalization. The figure shows the distribution of around 100 organizations in Switzerland. Most of the organizations are located in the cantons of Zurich and Bern. Digital civil society is a mouthpiece for civil society, an advocacy actor and carries out educational and mediation work.

Source: Potluka, O., Meier, D., Wolf, R., Giardina, F., Ramacci, R. Mapping Digitale Zivilgesellschaft in der Schweiz. CEPS Forschung & Praxis, Band 29.



Cathrin Gerlach has led large transformation projects at a well-known diagnostics company for more than 10 years. During that time she continuously educated herself in the field of „Digital Transformation,“ and then founded her company maxinity - Partner for Digital Transformation / Focus on People.

ChatGPT is an artificial intelligence based chatbot developed by OpenAI and launched in November 2022. It is based on OpenAI's GPT-3.5 and GPT-4 families of large-scale language models. It has been fine-tuned using supervised and reinforcement learning techniques.

## The Third Sector Digitalized?

**When people talk about digitalization, they do so either at a meta level - the megatrend of digitalization - or in a corporate context. But what about the digitalization of the nonprofit sector? How can a digital transformation succeed?**

Answering these questions is not easy on many levels, because the conditions in the nonprofit sector are fundamentally different from those in the corporate world. Unlike many of the large corporations, nonprofit organizations often go about their daily lives with scarce financial and human resources. Few can afford to buy expensive IT equipment, let alone hire a person to be responsible for IT. As a result, driving digital issues forward often takes a back seat to core operations.

### The Chicken-Egg Problem

It is only logical that in an increasingly digital world, digitally mature nonprofits have better access to resources and can thus better fulfill their social mission. It is easier for them to attract talent, address their target group appropriately and provide them with suitable offers, acquire potential members and involve donors, thus creating the basis for a healthy funding matrix. The level of digitalization of the organization thus has a positive impact on

access to resources, while at the same time forming the basis for successful digitalization.

### Data is Knowledge

In technological terms, digitalization is the processing, transmission and combination of data streams. Data, in turn, is an almost inexhaustible source of knowledge and provides the basis for strategic action. There is potential for scaling and innovation here, but only if the data is not only collected, but also processed. This requires expertise, tools and processes. And it requires the understanding that digitalization can contribute to solving challenges and increasing one's own radius of influence. In the corporate world, this is already the consensus, whereas many nonprofits see digitalization purely as a means of increasing efficiency.

### IT Donations for More Digitalization

The third sector will continue to struggle with scarce resources, and pandemics, wars, and environmental

disasters only exacerbate these shortages. IT donations can help address these shortages. They are a cost-effective way to drive digitalization and thus tap or save resources at other levels. This is precisely why the IT portal [Stifterhelfen](#) by [Haus des Stiftens](#) exists: It offers nonprofit organizations a contact point for hardware and software donations.

Are you interested in the topic of digitalization in the nonprofit sector? You can find out more in the [Digital Report 2020 and 2021](#).

Marianthi Schreiber

The author is Senior Manager Marketing & Communication at Haus des Stiftens.

## «It is better to set the course sooner than too late»

**A certain willingness to experiment with new technologies is recommended for every NPO. Michael Harr, CEO of Pro Senectute of both Basel, tells us why the organization is already investing in the Metaverse, a world accessible through avatars.**

**CEPS:** Pro Senectute of both Basel has attracted a lot of attention with the purchase of properties on two platforms in the Metaverse. Can you briefly explain what the Metaverse is and why you decided to buy properties as an organization?

**M.H.:** The metaverse refers to a virtual world where users enter via avatars and play, communicate and interact with others, use and consume services as in the offline world. Studies show: People are spending more and more time in digital worlds. These worlds are becoming more and more a part of reality, and even younger people who spend time there are getting older. We thought about this: Where will we reach older people in the distant future and how can we reach them?



Michael Harr, lic.rer.pol., studied economics at the University of Basel. He has been Managing Director of the Pro Senectute Foundation of both Basel since 2017. He is a trustee of several foundations and has many years of experience in the management of nonprofit organizations.

As an organization in the field of the elderly, I consider it our task to deal with future technologies at an early stage. I have noticed that many organizations talk about the metaverse, but practically no one has any concrete experience with it. On Decentraland and on The Sandbox, plots of land were purchased with the vision of one day building a virtual course center or a virtual counseling center with a meeting place. The action is therefore not aimed at people who are old today, but at future generations. The primary goal of the action is to learn; we want to gain concrete experience. One deals with a topic in a different way when one has a concrete project. Starting in the summer, we will visit the Metaverse together with a group of older people in a kind of workshop and develop with them what should be created on the land. So the target group will be actively involved. The step into the Metaverse is the beginning of a long-term vision. In summary, it enables us to position ourselves in an innovative and fu-

ture-oriented way with a view to the current younger generation - and it generates visibility as well as donations via new channels.

**CEPS:** What are other areas of digitalization that you are investing in as an organization?

**M.H.:** Another aspect of our activities relates to complementary technologies that can be used in the Metaverse: Thanks to VR glasses, people with disabilities can experience things that are not possible in an analog world. Here we are starting with a group of elderly people with a kind of experimental laboratory. The Corona pandemic has also shown: For a personal consultation, direct contact is not necessary in every case. Often, a conversation via video call is also sufficient. That is why we were the first organization in our region to invest in video and chat counseling. Anyone who calls up our website will find the question „Hello! How can we help?“ One click - and the visitor can see whether a social worker is currently available to talk via chat. An important advantage of this solution: an additional person can be invited to a three-way conversation. Based on OpenAI technology, we are also in the process of developing a chatbot. The chatbot, which has been specially trained to answer questions specific to Pro Senectute of both Basel, will be available on our website starting in the fall and will serve as a supplement to the chat consultation. We are also trying to use digital opportunities in the area of fundraising. In cooperation with Swiss influencers, we have created the NFT collection „Swiss Crypto Marvels“. The NFTs can be purchased on our website [bb.prosenectute.ch/nft](https://bb.prosenectute.ch/nft). With the launch of the NFT collection, we also want to try out new possibilities here. Our expectations have been exceeded: We were able to double the cost of the land purchase. As a result, no donations had to be used for the property purchase.

**CEPS:** What does the nonprofit sector in general need in the digitalization process?

**M.H.:** The world is developing rapidly. This means that a modern organization is always in renewal. Above all, it does not need to be afraid of digital topics. It needs the joy of discovery, the courage to try things out, combined with the realization that there is no getting around digitalization and that it is better to set the course sooner than too late. In all this dynamism, it seems important to me that our values and our culture remain intact. Values like reliability, transparency and honesty. Our culture of helping in a concrete and pragmatic way; our will and motivation to do well. It is important to me that we continue to care about our foundation and the people around it. Our customer-related digital activities are complementary; as before, personal contact, personal advice and guidance are at the forefront of our activities.

**CEPS:** Many thanks and all the best for your future!

### CEPS INSIGHT

#### Changes in the CEPS Team

Lorjeta Dina started working as a student assistant at CEPS in spring. She is studying economics at the Faculty of Business and Economics. She takes over the tasks of Eva Bachmann, who has completed her Bachelor in Economics and Politics. We congratulate her and wish her much success in her master studies.

<https://ceps.unibas.ch/en/about-us/team/>

#### Sunset Foundations Manual

Sunset Foundations exist for a limited time and have the potential to have a greater impact sooner by allocating funds more quickly. CEPS' latest publication, the Sunset Foundations Manual, provides recommendations for successful closure. Eleven areas are discussed and findings from a scientific case study are presented with practical examples.

<https://ceps.unibas.ch/en/transfer-into-practice/sunset-foundations-manual/>

## Impact Measurement - from Ideal to Real

**For NPOs, understanding their own impact plays a central role both in external communication and for strategic development internally. While measurement models seem clear in theory, their implementation is complex.**

In an ideal measurement model, project goals are first defined, impact measurement is planned, and the relevant data is collected and evaluated so that lessons learned can be used strategically. However, the reality is often different. Impact cannot be mapped directly. Instead, the NPO defines indicators to make its impact measurable. Impact indicators are therefore always subject to a certain degree of subjectivity. Data collection can also be challenging. In the context of development cooperation, for example, the necessary training and technology on the ground are often lacking. In a complex environment, it is also not clearly demonstrable which consequences can really be explained by the NPO's intervention and which were brought about by other factors. And once meaningful data have been collected and evaluated, the NPO then needs time to learn from these findings. These challenges should not discourage NPOs from investing in impact measurement. On the contrary, NPOs that are aware of the challenges understand that some pragmatism is essential to understanding their own impact. Accordingly, when developing

the impact model, it is important to take into account the local context, existing capacities, and knowledge within one's own organization and among the beneficiaries. In this way, the NPO can succeed in learning from mistakes and planning resources for the further development of its service offering. The CAS Wirkungsmessung in NPO introduces methods for impact measurement and takes a holistic approach to impact-oriented organizations in order to bridge the gap from theory to practice.

Dr. Elisabeth Hasse & Dr. Alice Hengevoss

## NUMBER OF THE QUARTER 2

More than 100 countries were evaluated in the Global Philanthropy Environment Index (GPEI) by the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy at Indiana University with regard to the political, socio-cultural and economic environment for philanthropic activities. Switzerland ranks second together with Norway and behind Liechtenstein.

Source: Stiftungsreport 2023

## NPO Handbook

**The revised 6th edition of the Handbook of Nonprofit Organizations addresses current developments.**



In 1997, the Handbook of Nonprofit Organizations was published in its first edition. Over the past 26 years, interest in the study of nonprofit organizations has increased. Topics such as impact investing and social entrepreneurship have been added over time, while areas such as volunteer management have changed significantly. This updated edition incorporates recent changes. Added value is also provided by the differentiated view from various perspectives, such as a legal or sociological one. Overall, the 6th edition of the Handbook of Nonprofit Organizations offers a comprehensive and up-to-date account of the nonprofit sector, as well as concrete fields of action for management in organizations. The revisions in this edition make the book an indispensable tool for anyone working in or interested in the sector. The handbook is available in German only.

Lucca Nietlispach

<https://www.orellfuessli.ch/shop/home/artikeldetails/A1063049128>

## CALENDAR

### Executive Education

#### CAS Wirkungsmanagement in NPO

3 Modules – Wilen & Basel  
Start: 21 August 2023

#### IL Strategisches Finanzmanagement

6 - 10 November 2023 – Gunten

#### CAS Nonprofit & Public Management

4 Modules – Gunten & Basel  
Start: 8 January 2024

#### IL Stiftungsmanagement

4 - 8 March 2024 – Sigriswil

#### MAS/DAS in Nonprofit Management & Law

Start at any time

[Register Now -> CEPS Executive Education](#)

### FURTHER DATES

#### ERNOP Conference 2023

**ERNOP**  
29 - 30 June, Zagreb, Croatia

#### Master Class en Philanthropie 2023

**CEPS; GCP; Swiss Philanthropy Foundation**  
23 - 25 August 2023, Bogis-Bossey

#### 12. Basler Stiftungstag

**Stiftungsstadt Basel**  
29 August 2023, Basel

#### SwissFoundations Symposium

**SwissFoundations**  
21 September 2023, Fribourg

#### Better Foundation Governance

**Foundation Board Academy**  
26 - 28 October 2023, Basel

## LEGAL NOTICE

### PUBLISHER



University  
of Basel



Center for Philanthropy Studies,  
Steinengraben 22, 4051 Basel

[www.ceps.unibas.ch](http://www.ceps.unibas.ch)

[twitter.com/CEPS\\_Basel](https://twitter.com/CEPS_Basel)

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

### EDITOR

Lucca Nietlispach  
([lucca.nietlispach@unibas.ch](mailto:lucca.nietlispach@unibas.ch))

### LAYOUT & PICTURES

a+ GmbH

© pexels

© CEPS 2023

Available online:

[ceps.unibas.ch/en/philanthropie-aktuell/](https://ceps.unibas.ch/en/philanthropie-aktuell/)