

A tradition and an ecosystem

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Geneva has a large number of public-benefit foundations, many of which are linked to wealthy families, to companies, to international organisations or to academic institutions.¹ These foundations fund health, education, research, culture, humanitarian action, the environment and development, in Switzerland and around the world. Their concentration in Geneva is explained by the presence of the international organisations, which provide partners and projects, by that of wealthy families, which provide the capital, and by that of the banks and advisers, which structure and manage.

International Geneva is also home to major foundations and major global partnerships, in particular in the field of health, which mobilise public and private contributions amounting to several billion dollars.² These institutions, half public and half private, illustrate the encounter between international cooperation and private philanthropy that characterises the city.

Professional associations and research centres give this sector its structure. SwissFoundations, the association of Swiss grant-making foundations, defends the interests of foundations and secured, in the final vote of 26 September 2025, an exemption for foundations and associations from registration in the transparency register.³ The Geneva Centre for Philanthropy at the University of Geneva, established with the support of foundations and banks, conducts research and trains professionals.⁴

This tradition continues the line that the preceding parts have traced. The Bourse française of the sixteenth century, described in Part B, was a community philanthropic institution, funded by private donors and administered according to precise rules. The Société genevoise d'utilité publique, whose president co-founded the Red Cross, belonged to the organised philanthropy of the nineteenth century discussed in Parts D and

F. Today's foundations carry on from these institutions with greater means and greater ambitions.

Key points. Geneva philanthropy belongs to a continuous tradition, from the Bourse française of the sixteenth century to today's foundations. It brings together wealthy families, international organisations, banks and advisers, in an ecosystem structured by associations and research centres.

1 Notes

1. État de Genève, "Publication du Rapport 2025 sur les fondations en Suisse" (8 July 2025, [ge.ch](https://www.ge.ch)): 12,722 public-benefit foundations in Switzerland, of which 49.1% are grant-making foundations; annual philanthropic commitment of more than CHF 6 billion; in 2024, 298 foundations established and 268 wound up, a net growth of 30; Geneva is the third canton by number of foundations, after Zurich and Bern. ↩
2. Wikipedia (en), art. "The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria": first board meeting on 28 January 2002; secretariat in Geneva of around 1,300 staff; more than USD 41.6 billion disbursed as at June 2019; 2022 replenishment: USD 15.7 billion; eighth replenishment (2025, Johannesburg): USD 11.34 billion; seed funding of USD 100 million from the Gates Foundation. Art. "GAVI": alliance established in 2000, headquartered in Geneva, more than 760 million children vaccinated; USD 8.8 billion raised for the 2021–2025 cycle and USD 9 billion budgeted for 2026–2030 (target of USD 11.9 billion). ↩
3. "Les fondations et associations suisses sont définitivement dispensées de s'inscrire dans un registre de transparence" (Swiss foundations and associations definitively exempted from registration in a transparency register), SwissFoundations, 2 October 2025. ↩

4. État de Genève, “Le Centre en Philanthropie voit le jour à Genève” (28 September 2017, [ge.ch](#)): centre established with the support of the Fondation Lombard Odier, the Fondations Edmond de Rothschild and a third Geneva private foundation, directed by Professor Henry Peter (Laetitia Gill, executive director), co-funded by the University and the partner foundations; [unige.ch](#), page “Fondations partenaires”: nine partner foundations, including the Fondation Hans Wilsdorf, the Fondation Hélène et Victor Barbour, Edmond de Rothschild Family Philanthropy, the Fondation Lombard Odier, the Fondation Leenaards, the Fondation Mercator Suisse, the Fondations Audemars Piguet, the Fondation de France and the Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo. ↩

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