

Climate philanthropy and the Geneva foundations

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Geneva is one of Europe's capitals of foundations, and climate philanthropy has taken a growing place there. Family, corporate and international foundations fund research, conservation, adaptation in developing countries and sustainable finance initiatives themselves. Some have contributed to the creation of blended finance instruments and impact funds in which Geneva managers invest.¹ Part F described the link between philanthropy and finance in Geneva. In climate matters this link is particularly close, because foundations accept risks and time horizons that ordinary investors refuse, and thereby open the way to subsequent private financing.

Foundations are also investors. A foundation whose capital is invested without regard to its mission may finance through its investments what it combats through its grants. Geneva foundations were among the first in Europe to align their investments with their mission, their managers having developed demanding responsible investment policies for them. The foundation supervisory authority, cantonal or federal as the case may be, accepts these policies provided they comply with the duty of prudent management.²

1 Notes

1. Wikipedia (en), art. "Oak Foundation": foundation created in 1983 by Alan M. Parker, co-founder of DFS Group, with its head office in Geneva; in 2025 it distributed around USD 383 million through some one thousand grants in 33 countries, spread across eight main programmes, including climate justice and human rights, and two national programmes (Denmark and Zimbabwe). ↩

2. ASFIP Genève, page “Missions de l’ASFIP” (asfip-ge.ch): the authority rules on whether foundations are subject to its supervision, reviews and approves the articles and their amendments, examines the annual accounts, the auditors’ reports and the activity reports, and checks that the assets are “used in accordance with the statutory purpose”; RSFIP-Surv. regulation in force since 1 January 2012 and circulars addressed to the institutions. État de Genève, “Synthèse essentielle du cadre légal suisse et genevois” (Essential summary of the Swiss and Geneva legal framework) (ge.ch): resources must be devoted exclusively to achieving the statutory purpose, tax exemption presupposing six cumulative conditions under Circular No. 12 of 8 July 1994. ↩

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