

The social responsibility of associations

Can it strengthen their growth and help them achieve their objectives, while making a positive contribution to building a more harmonious and prosperous world?



Survey conducted by Olivier Mathieu as part of his "European Master on International Association Management (EMIAM)" course at the Solvay Business School of the Université Libre de Bruxelles.

Submission date: 31.05.2024

Contents

	Page
Acknowledgements	3
Preface	4
Definitions	5
1. Choice of subject and field of research	6
1.1 Origin and choice of subject	6
1.2 Preliminary considerations and hypothesis for this study	6
1.3 Framework for the study	7
2. Conduct of the questionnaire and results	8
2.1 Description and purpose	8
2.2 Raw answers and diagrams on a selection of questions and answers	9
2.3 Additional questions on international solidarity	14
2.4 Initial conclusions on the results of the questionnaire	18
3. Personal interviews and methodology	19
3.1 Summary transcript and structured analysis	19
3.2 Transcription and analysis of interviews	20
Conclusion of the study	29

Editorial comment:

The language used is deliberately inclusive: since inclusiveness and equality are fundamental values, the author of the report has made an effort to limit the use of gendered language. However, for the sake of simplicity and to save time, the wording is not epicene. I apologise in advance if this happens.

Acknowledgements

For helping me to complete this study in one way or another, I would like to express my warmest thanks to the people named below.

For inspiration, encouragement and academic support:

- Alessandro Cortese (EMIAM co-academic director)

For their encouragement, advice and contributions:

- Ioannis Pallas (ESAE - European Society of Association Executives)
- Matteo Tassi (CIES - International Centre for Sport Studies)
- Hervé Daudigny (University of Lausanne)
- Ben Haithworth (EASL - European Association for the Study of the Liver)
- Anna Ostanina (European Communities Trade Mark Association)
- Mickael Benaim (SFA Connect)

For their encouragement and support:

- Steeve Pasche and Davy Jansegers (Lausanne Tourisme)
- my fellow EMIAM students such as Sophie Dupuis (ISE - International Nephrology Association), Vivianne Labonne (Francorisk), Tholi Getz Von Der Grün (ENTSOG)
- Marta Gomes and Senthil Gopinath (ICCA - International Convention Centers Association)
- ASSOCIATIONWORLD
- Elly Butler (IAPCO - International Association of the Professional Conference Organisers)

For their inspiration:

- Peter Naglicki and Barbara Marchewka (Team Krakow Foundation)
- Ulrike Tewes (Office Manager at FECAVA, Federation of European Companion Animal Veterinary Associations)
- Prof. Bettina Borish (WFPHA - World Federation of Public Health Associations)

As this list cannot be exhaustive, I would also like to thank all the other people with whom I was able to discuss the subject of this study and who gave me their attention.

Preface

by Anna Ostanina, Head of Legal Affairs, ECTA aisbl, Brussels, Belgium

Often people think that there is ‘nothing they can do’ about a certain issue, so they choose to do nothing... This is certainly not our philosophy at ECTA (association of lawyers specialised in Intellectual Property law) and, hopefully, as this research will demonstrate, in many other associations.

While UN Sustainable Development Goals serve as a North Star for us to build a more harmonious and prosperous world, they are really not so unreachable or unrelated to international associations as they might seem at the first glance. In fact, international associations are very well placed to make a positive change towards a sustainable future in many aspects of these goals because they bring together different perspective, experiences and approaches of members thus creating a melting pot of views where ideas and traditional ways of doing things are challenged and where creative and workable solutions are found.

Members of international associations are already brought together based on the idea of a certain unity, which means that those who join the association or otherwise participate in its activities, come together with a positive approach of achieving something for a greater good of all involved. This approach facilitates progress they make in the area of their expertise, but also spills out to other stakeholders around the table, other associations in their field or adjacent ones. The influence they may actually have internally and externally when it comes to addressing sustainability issues, be it connected to environment, equality, solidarity or peace in the world, should not be underestimated.

What seems to be currently lacking, however, is not so much the understanding of the importance of global issues and desire of the associations to do something about them, but rather the true confidence that any step into the right direction, however small it may be, amplified by the community they unite, will have a real impact on peoples’ lives and on our planet. This is why it is important to maintain the discussions on these topics and share what the associations are already doing, empower them to do more by giving them actionable ideas and sharing best practices, and also equipping them with the methodology of measuring the results of their efforts and their impact. Therefore, I very much welcome this paper and any further research in this regard.

In general, the Intellectual Property legal community values opportunities to make a tangible influence in the sustainability domain, which is demonstrated also by the fact that this year’s World IP Day (26 April 2024) was dedicated to IP and SDGs: building our common future with innovation and creativity. I am proud to share that the association I work for takes a special care to make its events environmentally friendly, takes steps directed at achieving SDGs in various aspects of our work, promotes sustainability topics in discussions and education of our members, we also do not shy away from international solidarity and equally support and engage with other associations, NGOs, partners or organisations that are sharing the same goals, including directing efforts to support people in need in times of crisis and contribute to the wellbeing of our planet in different other ways. I am hopeful that there are many others, like us, who know that there is ‘always something they can do’, the philosophy I also firmly support.

Definitions

- Corporate social responsibility (CSR):

According to the ILO:

"Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is the way in which companies take into account the effects of their activities on society and affirm their principles and values both in their own activities and in their relations with other stakeholders".

On the European Commission website:

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is defined as "the responsibility of enterprises for their impact on society. It must be led by business, and companies can become socially responsible by integrating social, environmental, ethical, consumer and human rights concerns into their business strategy, operations and relationships with stakeholders. In other words, CSR means that companies take responsibility for their behaviour and its impact on society".

- Link between CSR and sustainable development:

ISO 26000 establishes an explicit link between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainable development, defining CSR as "the responsibility of an organization to address the impacts of its activities on society and the environment through transparent and ethical behaviour that contributes to sustainable development".

- Organisation Social Responsibility (OSR):

According to UN Global Compact:

While the UN itself does not define OSR, the UN Global Compact focuses on social sustainability. Social sustainability involves identifying and managing both positive and negative impacts on people resulting from business activities. The quality of a company's relationships and engagement with stakeholders is critical.

According to AFNOR OSR:

OSR is the behavior that companies and organizations choose to adopt to maximize their non-financial performance. It encompasses formalized actions, including defining a CSR strategy, implementing action plans, monitoring indicators, and using reporting tools.

Sources:

[L'OIT et la responsabilité sociale de l'entreprise \(RSE\) | International Labour Organization \(ilo.org\) - https://www.ilo.org/fr/publications/loir-et-la-responsabilite-sociale-de-lentreprise-rse](https://www.ilo.org/fr/publications/loir-et-la-responsabilite-sociale-de-lentreprise-rse)

[ISO - ISO 26000 — Social responsibility - https://www.iso.org/iso-26000-social-responsibility.html](https://www.iso.org/iso-26000-social-responsibility.html)

[Corporate social responsibility \(CSR\) \(europa.eu\) - https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/doing-business-eu/corporate-social-responsibility-csr_en](https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/doing-business-eu/corporate-social-responsibility-csr_en)

[Social Sustainability | UN Global Compact - https://unglobalcompact.org/what-is-gc/our-work/social](https://unglobalcompact.org/what-is-gc/our-work/social)

[Corporate Social Responsibility \(CSR\) - AFNOR Group - https://www.afnor.org/en/insights/corporate-social-responsibility/](https://www.afnor.org/en/insights/corporate-social-responsibility/)

1. Choice of subject and field of research

1.1. Origin and choice of subject

My interest in this subject has grown gradually thanks to:

- my work for the Lausanne and Montreux (Switzerland) Convention Bureau, which was supplemented in 2018 by responsibilities in the field of sustainability,
- my participation in association events with a high social impact,
- the increasing visibility of the social values of associations,
- my EMIAM training in 2023 at Solvay Brussels.

While the Coronavirus Disease (COVID) pandemic has disrupted the whole world since the beginning of 2020, society is now facing a growing wave of threats of different kinds:

- the explosion of conspiracy theories and disinformation of all kinds, - the rise of political and religious extremism,
- the testing of democratic values by populism, despotism and authoritarianism,
- the proliferation of armed conflicts and coups d'état, political interference and acts of terrorism, including two new ideological wars that are as worrying as they are destructive (Russia-Ukraine, Israel-Palestine),
- growing geopolitical disorder illustrated by growing and multiple threats (North Korea vs South ; People's China vs Taiwan; China vs USA; Russia vs Europe; Iran vs Israel/USA etc.),
- a year rich in elections in 2024 which will have profound repercussions on the world (particularly those in the EU, the USA, India, Indonesia, autocratic states such as Belarus, Iran and Russia, and strategic allies such as Taiwan and the UK).

1.2. Preliminary considerations and hypothesis for this study

It is clear that these growing threats can:

- have a major impact on public health;
- have systemic effects on the economy, politics, the environment and society;
- potentially threaten the stability of the world;
- affect the smooth running of business;
- also have an impact on the activities of associations;
- their effects are far from over.

What motivates associations and what means do they have at their disposal to combat the threats to society?

Associations of all kinds can act to:

- defend their interests and those of their members,
- ensure their growth and survival,
- protect their activities,
- mitigate these various threats and their effects.

Scope of my reflection

This reflection has gradually led me to take an interest in the social responsibility of associations and in particular in the role they can play in supporting threatened peoples, promoting peace, which can help to stabilise the business world and promote their own activities.

1.3. Framework for the study

In order to find out what international associations think about their social responsibility, I sent out a questionnaire to over 2,500 international non-profit organisations based in Europe, North America, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East.

- Survey period: open questionnaire from 25 April to 8 May 2024
- Result: collection of 34 questionnaires completed by targeted individuals, i.e. a return rate of around 1.4% for the panel as a whole
- Subject covered by the questionnaire: it deals with and explores the social responsibility of international associations and their contribution to a harmonious and prosperous world.
- Target audience: the people targeted and qualified to complete the questionnaire are those involved in the operation of international associations and whose functions relate to governance (presidency and executive committee), general management or responsibilities linked to strategy and sustainability
- Types of associations targeted: business, medical, sports, learned societies and other fields, federations of associations, made up of natural or legal persons
- Main lines of enquiry: questions cover sectors of activity, status of organisations, governance, number of members, and the impact of global conflicts on their operations
- Communication and Impact: The document looks at how organisations communicate about their social responsibility and assess the impact of their actions.
- Solidarity Commitment : *For each questionnaire completed in full, Olivier Mathieu will donate €1 to an organisation working to promote lasting peace in Ukraine and/or around the world. To reinforce this modest international solidarity initiative, his employer has undertaken to double this contribution.*

2. Conduct of the questionnaire and results

2.1 Description and purpose

The questionnaire sent to the associations is structured in 6 parts:

- I. POSITIONING OF THE ORGANISATION AND ITS MEMBERS (questions 1 to 16)
- II. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY (questions 17 to 32)
- III. REDUCING THE DAMAGING EFFECTS OF CONFLICTS AND PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE PEACE (questions 34 to 38)
- IV. LEADERSHIP & COMMUNICATION (questions 44 to 56)
- V. THE IDENTITY OF THE RESPONDENT AND HIS ORGANISATION (questions 59 to 68)
- VI. THE IMPACT OF THE CONFLICT IN UKRAINE OR OTHER CONFLICTS ON YOUR ORGANISATION (questions 69 to 86)

Preliminary remarks:

- by "association" and "organisation", the questionnaire refers only to international associations and organisations
- Estimated time to complete the questionnaire: 10 mins+

To access the full questionnaire, click here: [QUESTIONNAIRE](#)

List of organisations that responded to the questionnaire and interviews and agreed to be mentioned in this study on the social responsibility of associations:

ASSOCIATIONS	Internet website
AC Forum - Associations and Conference Forum*	www.acforum.net
AIPC - International Association of Convention Centres*	www.aipc.org
EASL -European Association of Societies for the Liver*	www.easl.eu
ECSS - European College of Sport Science*	www.sport-science.org
ECTAA - European Travel Agents & Tour Operators Association	www.ectaa.org
EFORT - The European Federation of National Associations of Orthopaedics and Traumatology	www.efort.org
EOA - European Ostomy Association	ostomyeurope.org
ESAE - European Society of Association Executives*	www.esae.eu
EUMWA - European Microwave Association	www.eumwa.org
Eurocities*	www.eurocities.eu

IAGP - International Association for Group Psychotherapy and Group Processes*	www.iagp.com
IAPB - International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness	www.iapb.org
ISE - International Society of Endocrinology*	www.isendo.org
ISI - Informing Science Institute	www.informingscience.org
ISI - International Statistical Institute	www.isi-web.org
UITP - International Association of Public Transport*	www.uitp.org

**associations interviewed*

2.2 Raw answers and diagrams on a selection of questions and answers

Out of 86 questions, here are some of them and the answers selected according to their degree of relevance to the study.

1*What is your organisation's main sector of activity? (up to a maximum of 2 selections)

(33 respondents, for a total of 48 selections)

Main sectors selected: Education and research; Life sciences, health and well-being; other

3*What is the status of your organisation?

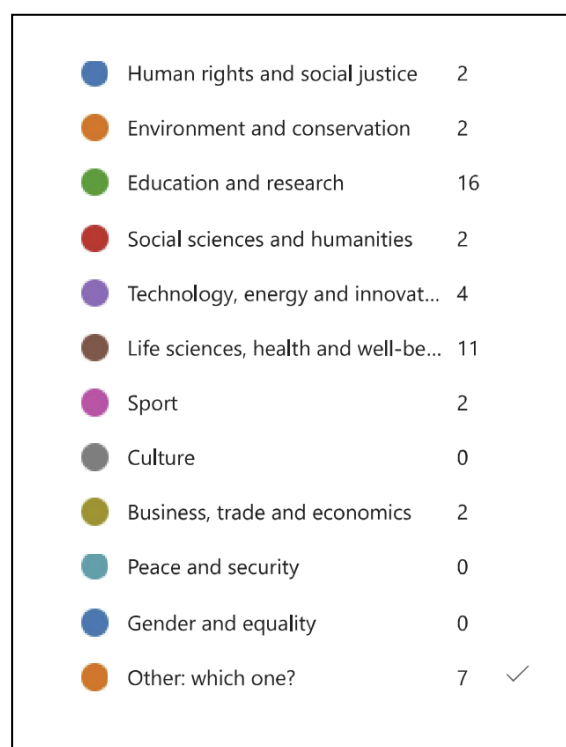
(34 respondents)

82% are International non-profit association
8% Non-governmental organisation (NGO)
2% International organisation
2% Foundation
2% Other status

9*What is your level of responsibility within your organisation? (up to a maximum of 2 selections)

(34 respondents, for a total of 41 selections)

63% are at Management level
15% are in charge of strategy and/or sustainability
12% are part of Governance
10% Other function



11*How many members does your organisation have?

(33 respondents)

42% have more than 1,000 members

36% have between 50 to 1,000 members

21% have less than 50 members

12*What is the status of your members?

(33 respondents, multiple selections)

41% of members are Individuals

30% have associations

24% have companies

4% have other types of status

14*Are they located in ?

(33 respondents)

52% of associations' members are located in 15 up to 50 countries

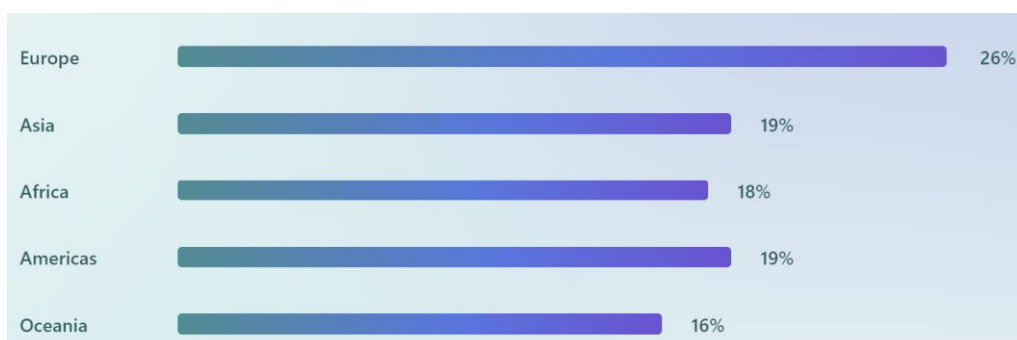
45% in more than 50 countries

1% in less than 15 countries

15*In which continents? (multiple selections)

(33 respondents, for a total of 128 selections)

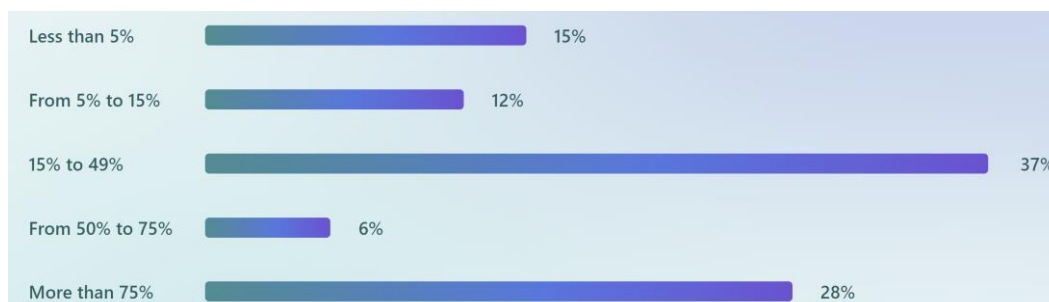
A truly international panel of associations, with a fairly even geographical spread of members across the 5 continents.



16*What proportion of your resources comes from your members?

(32 respondents)

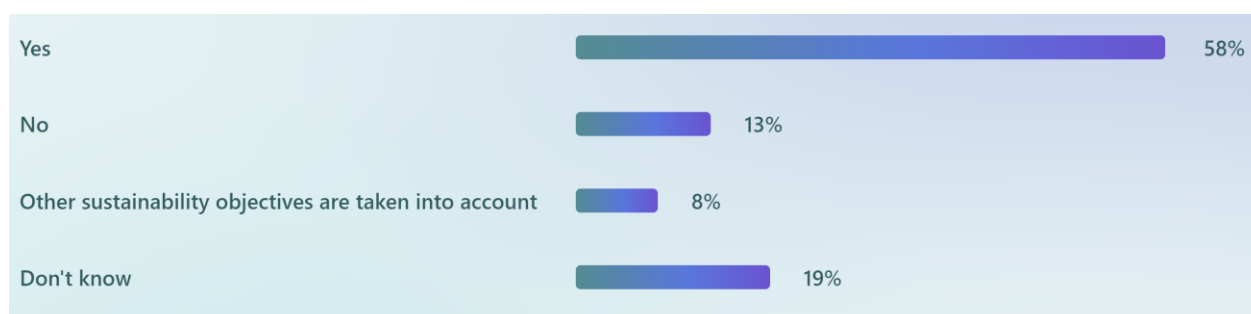
For 34% of associations: their finances depend mainly on their members.



17*Does your organisation take into account the United Nations Agenda 2030?

(34 respondents)

A large majority of the organisations on the panel consider the United Nations 2030 Agenda to be the right one.



18*Which other sustainability objectives ?

(11 respondents)

Details of the responses:

- *Development of sustainable travel and tourism, i.e. reduction of CO2, waste, plastic, energy, water, etc in travel and tourism, respect for human rights, accessible tourism, etc.*
- *ESGs*
- *set on goals developed with myClimate where we also get audited*
- *SDG 6 and all water-related SDGs and targets*
- *WHO Global NCD Action Plan*
- *Social and environmental sustainability*
- *society development through group practices*
- *committed to ensuring our annual Congress is as sustainable as possible. This is challenging, as people must travel to our Congress from various locations around the world. The main source of income for our organisation comes from the Congress, so we need as many people as possible to register, attend, and present their research in an attempt to break even financially.*
- *Statistical capacity building especially in developing countries*
- *some national associations take the SDGs into consideration*

19*If yes, can you indicate your organisation's main SDGs

(26 respondents)

Top 5 SDGs for the associations surveyed:

- ***Quality education***
- ***Good health and well-being***
- ***Gender equality***
- ***Reduced inequalities***
- ***Partnerships to achieve objectives***

20*Which of the following definitions do you think would best define the social or societal responsibility of international organisations (RSO)?

(34 respondents)

The generic definitions submitted are recognised in a fairly balanced way.

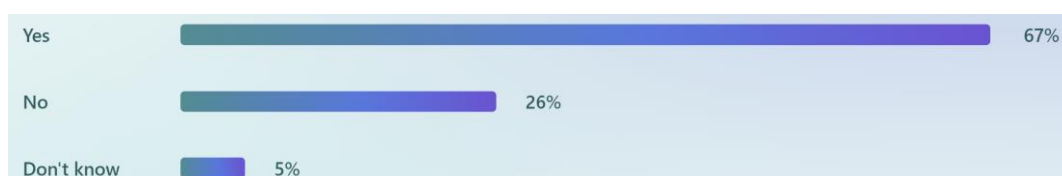
ISO 26000 standard: CSR is an o...	9
United Nations: CSR is the mana...	12
European Commission: CSR, als...	8
None of the above	0
Don't know	5



22*Does your organisation follow a Social or Societal Responsibility approach (equivalent to CSR)?

(34 respondents)

2/3 of the associations panel engaged its responsibility into a social or societal approach.



23*If yes, can you indicate the main social or societal areas for which your organisation takes responsibility? (up to a maximum of 5 selections)

(23 respondents)

Top 5 social or societal areas for the associations surveyed:

- **Education and training**
- **Environment and Sustainability**
- **Health and Wellbeing**
- **Social inclusion**

24*If not, why not?

(8 respondents)

¼ of the associations surveyed are not yet mature enough to undertake a real commitment to their social or societal responsibility.



26*Does your organisation communicate on its approach to social responsibility?

(34 respondents)

74% of organisations surveyed communicate on their social responsibility.

27*If yes, to communicate on this point, your organisation communicates mainly through? (up to a maximum of 5 selections)

(25 respondents)

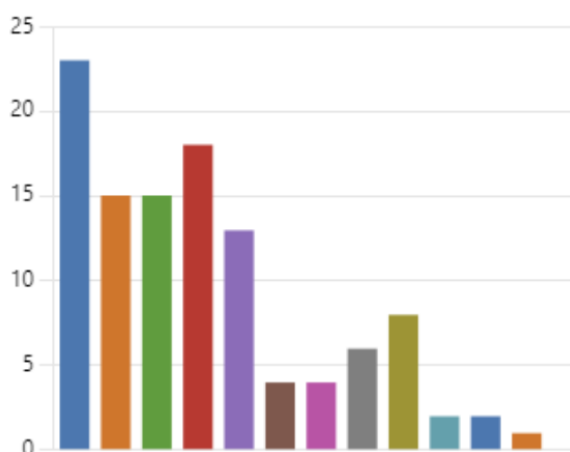
Website, events and social networks are the top means used by the associations surveyed to communicate their social responsibility.

32*Which of the following options represent your organisation's main motivations for engaging in social responsibility? (up to a maximum of 5 selections)

(34 respondents)

The Top 5 reasons given by the associations surveyed for taking on social responsibility concern their alignment with their: mission, strategy, vision, image and values, commitment to sustainability

Alignment with its mission	23
Alignment with its vision	15
Alignment with its image and va...	15
Alignment with strategy	18
Alignment with its commitment ...	13
A clear conscience	4
Giving meaning to the work we ...	4
Motivating staff	6
Motivate externally (members, p...	8
Work for social justice and com...	2
Pressure/demands from stakeh...	2
Customer pressure/requirements	1
Other motivations	0 ✓
Don't know	0



2.3 Additional questions on international solidarity

34*Do conflicts around the world have an impact that disrupts the activities of your organisation or its members?

(34 respondents)

¾ of the panel say they are affected by conflicts around the world!

35*If yes, does your organisation act directly or indirectly to mitigate the effects of global conflicts that disrupt its operations or those of its members?

(28 respondents)

Yet only 39% of respondents say they are taking action to try to mitigate the conflicts around the world that affect their activities and those of their members.

36*If yes, which of the following strategies does your organisation use to address this issue?

(13 respondents, up to a maximum of 3 selections)

The 2 main strategies to meet this challenge are:

- *Networking and Collaboration*
- *Local Capacity Building*

39*Does your organisation communicate on its actions to combat conflict in the world and promote sustainable peace?

(27 respondents)

82% of the associations surveyed do not communicate about their actions to combat conflict and promote peace (or they are unaware of this).

40* If yes, please indicate the main means used by your organisation (up to a maximum of 5 selections)

(6 respondents)

The 3 main means used to combat conflict and promote peace are:

- *the website*
- *social networks*
- *events*

44*If not, why not?

(16 respondents)

Political issues have been mentioned by 1/3 of respondents.



45*In order to measure this return on investment, does your organisation have a performance instrument/indicator?

(33 respondents)

Almost 80% of the associations surveyed do not evaluate or do not have key indicators to measure the impact of their actions to limit conflict and promote peace!

57. Does your organisation measure the impact of its actions on society?

(33 respondents)

Only 9% do realize measuring the impact of their association on society.

We note that the result does not seem to correspond to the realization knowing that the majority of the associations have for mission to work for the good of the society.

59. If no, why not ?

(22 respondents)

The majority of respondents do not measure the impact of their actions on society due to a lack of resources and/or an insufficient estimated impact.



54*Does your organisation publish a report on its Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) performance?

(14 respondents)

Only 6% of the panel publishes an ESG report!

56*If not, why not?

(22 respondents)

Most of the respondents indicate a lack of time, resources or maturity as the main reasons why they don't publish such a report.



60*Do you agree that the full name of your organisation may be quoted in my study on the social responsibility of associations?

(34 respondents)

*Near ½ of the panel agreed to be mentioned in the study.
Of the 34 associations questioned via the questionnaire, 9 agreed to be interviewed.*

See part “2.3. Description and purpose” to see the names of the associations concerned.

69*Before the war in Ukraine, did your organisation have any activities or links with Ukraine?

(33 respondents)

60% of respondents were already doing business or had links with Ukraine.

70*If yes, could you please briefly specify the forms of these activities and/or links?

(19 respondents)

Nearly 80% of respondents said they had members in Ukraine.

72*Since the start of the war in Ukraine, has your organisation developed its activities or links with Ukraine?

(33 respondents)

42% of respondents have developed their activities and/or links with Ukraine since the start of the war.

74*Has your organisation undertaken any actions of support or solidarity in favour of Ukraine and its people currently threatened by Russia?

(33 respondents)

58% responded positively.

76*If yes, please explain how/what form does your organisation's support take?

(15 respondents)

Among the support given to Ukraine by the organisations surveyed, members are the main beneficiaries.



77*Impact/results: does your organisation evaluate the effectiveness of its support?

(25 respondents)

1/5 of respondents said that they ensure the effectiveness of their support for Ukraine.

80*Other solidarity actions: has your organisation undertaken any actions to support or show solidarity with a country at war or a threatened people other than Ukraine?

(25 respondents)

Only 1/5 of the associations surveyed have ever undertaken support or solidarity initiatives with countries at war or peoples under threat.

81*If yes, Which one?

(6 respondents)

Apart from the conflict in Ukraine, the associations are also active in Sudan, Palestine/Gaza, Turkey (earthquakes), Russia, etc.

82.*How/what form does your organisation's support take?

(5 respondents)

Respondents say they are carrying out the following initiatives:

- *releasing statement of support, putting our local members in touch with other NGOs who can deliver some tangible help*
- *Support groups, training for trauma group work*
- *In solidarity statements*
- *Continuous education and e-Learning*
- *Support to Turkish cities (emergency aid)*

83*Impact/Results: Does your organisation evaluate the effectiveness of its support?

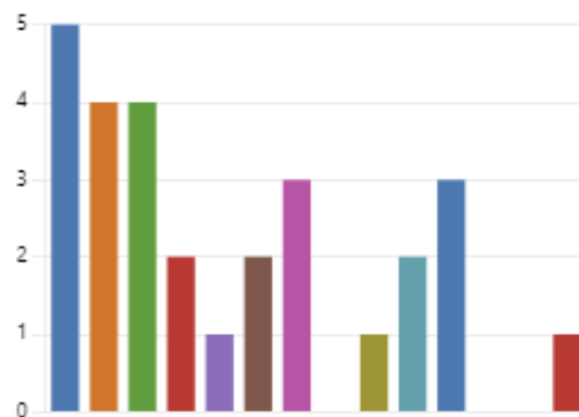
(16 respondents)

No organisation evaluates the effectiveness of its support!

86*Which of the following options represent your organisation's main motivations for supporting Ukraine and its threatened people and/or another country at war or another threatened people? (up to a maximum of 5 selections)
(10 respondents)

The top 3 motivations are : Alignment with its mission, Alignment with its vision, Alignment with its image and values

Alignment with its mission	5
Alignment with its vision	4
Alignment with its image and va...	4
Alignment with strategy	2
Alignment with its commitment ...	1
A clear conscience	2
Giving meaning to the work we ...	3
Motivating staff	0
Motivate externally (members, p...	1
Work for social justice and com...	2
Pressure/demands from stakeh...	3
Customer pressure/requirements	0
Other motivations	0 ✓
Don't know	1



2.4. Initial conclusions on the results of the questionnaire

The motivations for social responsibility among the organizations surveyed include alignment with mission, strategy, vision, image, values, and commitment to sustainability.

The questionnaire revealed that the vast majority of the associations consulted have a social responsibility that is an integral part of their mission and values. While all of them obviously have limited resources to take more action, particularly in terms of communication, they do not fully exploit their power of influence and leadership.

And when it comes to international solidarity, while most associations feel concerned by and impacted by conflicts around the world, they still have a great deal of room for improvement when it comes to providing support and assistance to their members and/or to the civil society affected. And we can see that it is not necessarily a lack of means or resources that prevents them from taking action, but above all a question of will and priorities.

3. Interviews carried out and methodology

3.1 Summary transcript and structured analysis

The methodology used in the study involves a qualitative approach through interviews with key members of international associations who agreed to talk more about their mission and their initiatives in terms of sustainability and more particularly its social aspect. Their commitment to international solidarity is also mentioned. Their commitment to international solidarity is also discussed.

Structure and organisation of the interviews:

- Targets: members of the board of directors or general management, people in charge of strategy and/or sustainability
- Number of interviews carried out: 7
- Number of international associations surveyed: 9
- AI tool to support the retranscription from vocal recordings to text : [elicit.com](https://www.elicit.com)
- The analysis is structured according to a number of specific criteria, such as: Summary and main findings; Methodology; Interventions & effects; Outcome measured; Limitations.

List of associations and people interviewed:

- A. AC Forum - Associations and Conference Forum
EASL - European Association for the Study of the Liver (The Home of Hepatology)
by Ben Hainsworth, EASL CEO and AC Forum president
- B. AIPC - International Association of Convention Centres
by Sven Bossu, CEO
- C. ECSS - European College of Sport Science
Janice L. Thompson, ECSS president elect and Emeritus Honorary Professor of Public Health Nutrition & Exercise, University of Birmingham, UK
- D. ESAE - European Society of Association Executives
UITP - International Association of Public Transport
by Mohamed Mezghani, ESAE vice-president and UITP General Secretary
- E. EUROCITIES
by André Sobczak, General Secretary
- F. IAGP - International Association for Group Psychotherapy and Group Processes
by Bruno Chevolet, Treasurer
- G. ISE - International Society of Endocrinology
by Helen van Oers, Executive Director

3.2 Transcription and analysis of interviews

Interview A

AC Forum - Associations and Conference Forum

EASL - European Association for the Study of the Liver (The Home of Hepatology)

by Ben Hainsworth, EASL CEO and AC Forum president

Selection of the association audited:

Although Ben Hainsworth is involved in the management and strategy of the two associations mentioned, the choice was made to focus on AC Forum for reasons of simplicity and because AC Forum's mission overlaps with the activities of some thirty major medical associations in Europe.

AC Forum Mission:

- to advance association leadership and conference management through peer-to-peer sharing of good practices and expanding thinking
- to serve as a peer-to-peer platform for exchanging ideas and addressing specific issues

Summary and main findings

As a peer-to-peer platform, the AC Forum association's role focuses on

- ESG, sustainability, diversity, equity, and inclusion
- governance through codes of ethics
- emphasis on diversity and inclusion
- a strong commitment to social impact and supporting public health initiatives

Its engagement covers various aspects such as:

- idea exchange on the platform
- diversity discussions
- specific projects like the one in Glasgow (cf. [Net Zero Carbon events](#))
- solidarity support to the public health community in countries like Ukraine, along with the complexities of different membership types and potential political implications
- Discussions on diversity, equity, and inclusion are extensive at the forum level
- Gender equity is a significant topic of discussion

Methodology

AC Forum demonstrates its social responsibility through the following initiatives:

- creating safe spaces for open discussions & idea exchange: The association values confidentiality and frank exchanges to identify best and worst practices
- promoting diversity and inclusion
- involving the local population
- managing a sustainability task force
- impact assessment

Interventions & effects:

- sustainability best practice & standards for events toolkits developed thanks to a task force on sustainability
- implementing & emphasizing a code of conduct
- conduction of impact legacy projects
- conduction of online activities to address issues for remote participation
- facilitating support initiatives like finding ambulances for countries in need (e.g. Ukraine)

Outcome measured

Discussions and exchange of ideas such as:

- data collection & challenges, liver screening
- ESG, sustainability, code of ethics and conduct, diversity, equity and inclusion, gender equity, social impact, local community involvement
- support for public health initiatives in Ukraine.

Limitations

The main limitation of AC Forum in regards its interventions may include:

- potential political complexities within associations due to different types of memberships which could lead to decisions affecting individual members negatively

Interview B

AIPC - International Association of Convention Centres

by Sven Bossu, CEO

AIPC mission:

- To represent the industry association for professional convention and exhibition centre managers worldwide
- to encourage excellence in convention center management worldwide and to provide global representation for professionals in this industry.
- To provide the tools to achieve such high standards through its research, educational and networking programs

Summary and main findings

The interview covers the importance for AIPC of :

- the ecological, economic, and social aspects of sustainability
- focusing current actions on ecological aspects
- the social aspect in the industry
- Social aspects providing employment opportunities and testing the "future force" concept before expanding

The interviewee emphasizes the need for:

- for flexible workers in the events industry
- to address social factors and share best practices among members (AIPC meeting recording)
- planning to test and expand a concept starting with a convention center

Methodology

The association methodology involves:

- focusing on sustainability pillars
- providing career opportunities for young individuals
- collecting testimonials to showcase career diversity within the events management industry
- Intervention & effects
- promotion of opportunities to work in the events sector
- management of a portal for talent attraction
- a 9-month management program with lectures on leadership, and

Outcome measured:

- Sustainability (ecological, economic, social)
- career development opportunities
- talent attraction
- management program

Limitations:

- in addressing social aspects,
- Relatively short-term intervention duration of 9 months
- Reliance on individual-generated ideas for projects
- Initial testing limited to a single convention center

Sources:

[Sustainability – the power of collaboration - AIPC](#)

[Legacy impacts, industry advocacy through association events, and how to better lobby for association conferences through social, cultural and economic benefits. - AIPC](#)

Interview C

ECSS - European College of Sport Science

Janice L. Thompson, ECSS president elect and Emeritus Honorary Professor of Public Health Nutrition & Exercise, University of Birmingham, UK

ECSS Mission

ECSS is a non-profit scientific organisation devoted:

- to lead the promotion, dissemination and application of world-class, multi- and interdisciplinary research in sport and exercise science, exercise, physical activity, and health
- to advance knowledge, fostering interdisciplinary research, and enhancing the impact of sport science globally

Summary and main findings

The interviews provides insights into the social responsibility, sustainability efforts, gender equity, diversity, and potential influence of the ECSS organization.

This is illustrated by the following aspects:

- Focus on social responsibility and sustainability activities within the organization
- Focus on disseminating high-quality and innovative science within ECSS
- Emphasis on physical activity and active lifestyle to promote sustainability
- Face-to-face element at the annual Congress for financial viability and organizational survival
- Acknowledgment of the carbon footprint associated with computer usage compared to airplanes

Methodology

The methodology of the association to reach its focus on social responsibility is composed of:

- interventions related to sustainability, physical activity, lifestyle, and diversity
- activities to lower the impact of using computers, challenges related to travel
- specific engagement with Eastern European countries
- the organisation by the association of the “**Bengt Saltin Charity Run** »

Intervention & effects:

The interview also emphasizes the importance for ECSS to disseminate high-quality and innovative science in addition to engage in terms of social responsibility and sustainable practices such as:

- promoting high-quality science
- empowering the development of young scientists
- building and retaining the ECSS community engagement
- developing strong partnerships with the private and public sector
- promoting an active lifestyle for sustainability

Outcome measured:

The association's main key performance indicator is the financial income generated by the annual congress.

The association then considers and evaluates the following priority areas as far as possible: physical activity, sustainability lifestyle approach, active commuting, gender equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Limitations:

ECSS's field of activity is theoretically limited to sport science, whereas the interviewee mentions the importance of considering physical activity as a whole.

Interview D

ESAE - European Society of Association Executives

UITP - International Association of Public Transport

by Mohamed Mezghani, ESAE vice-president and UITP General Secretary

Selection of the association audited:

Although Mohamed Mezghani is involved in the management and strategy of the two associations mentioned, he was naturally more interested in UITP for reasons of simplicity and because it is in this association that his activity and experience are mainly based.

UITP mission:

- to be a global network that brings together public transport authorities, operators, policy makers, scientific institutes, and sector services and supply
- to advocate for sustainable urban mobility, enhances quality of life, and promotes economic well-being by supporting and advancing sustainable transport in urban areas worldwide

Summary and main findings

For the interviewee, social responsibility within associations offers challenges and is an important topic. At UITP, members have the obligation to have a CSR policy. He also underlines:

- the balance between sustainability goals and practical considerations in event organization
- the inherent responsibility of associations
- the obligation of members to have a CSR policy
- attractiveness of the public transport sector for its social and environmental contributions

The interview also covers the:

- motivation for working in environmentally friendly sectors
- comparison of associations' sustainability goals
- consideration of SDGs
- challenges in organizing environmentally friendly events
- the approach towards promoting sustainability in different associations
- the alignment with UN SDGs, and the role of organizations in contributing to societal goals

Methodology:

- obligation of members to have a CSR policy and submitting reports
- exploring potential differences and progress within the UITP association

Outcome measured:

Consideration and implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within the association, specifically focusing on the 17 objectives such as poverty reduction, road safety improvement, and air pollution reduction.

Further findings and thoughts on UITP beyond the interview:

UITP has demonstrated its commitment to international solidarity in several ways:

- **Solidarity After Earthquakes:** Secretary General visit of Turkey in April 2023 to express solidarity with its members ; cancellation of all UITP events in the country ; support offered to the UITP Member city Gaziantep, which was in the earthquake zone
- **Support for Public Transport** (impact of the earthquake on public transport and the steps needed to restore the system to normalcy)
- actively promotes cooperation and knowledge-sharing among its global members.

Sources:

www.uitp.org

www.uitp.org/news/uitp-secretary-general-mohamed-mezghani-has-mandate-extended-for-a-new-five-year-term/

www.uitp.org/news/mohamed-mezghani-visited-turkiye/

Interview E

EUROCITIES

by André Sobczak, General Secretary

Eurocities mission:

- to represent an important network of large European cities, both within and outside the European Union
- to build places where people can enjoy a good quality of life in a healthy, green environment
- to let member cities address global issues at the local level, from climate change to integration to the digital transition, among many others

Summary and main findings

The interviewee discusses on:

- challenges relevant to members
- the influence of the association and of its members
- the common tendency to reduce car usage in cities
- focusing on the biggest cities
- the emphasis on collaboration within a European context and issues
- the importance of partnerships with various associations

Methodology

To achieve this goal, the association has a methodology which involves:

- focusing on smart and achievable agendas
- selecting cities with similar capacities and challenges
- emphasizing common principles among members
- providing opportunities for learning and progress through working groups and expert involvement

Intervention & effects

The association has the power to influence its members by:

- putting certain topics on the agenda
- setting up new working groups or task forces
- organizing online discussions
- highlighting specific elements during events
- providing tools, learning experiences, and city visits

The association can submit certain subjects to its executive committee for consideration and further action.

The association believes it can identify relevant challenges for its members and influence them accordingly.

Limitations:

Limitations of the association are:

- Reliance on self-reported information and potential bias
- Limited generalizability to cities outside of Europe

- Lack of detailed methodology description
- Call for further research on collaboration opportunities

Sources :

[*Aiming for an updated European Pillar of Social Rights - Eurocities*](#)

[*Eurocities - European Commission \(europa.eu\)*](#)

[*Cities, a driving force for social action - Eurocities*](#)

[*Cities are building the social Europe of tomorrow - Eurocities*](#)

[*Solidarity Cities*](#)

[*EaSI – InclusiveCities4All - Eurocities*](#)

[*Solidarity and volunteering - Eurocities*](#)

Interview F

IAGP - International Association for Group Psychotherapy and Group Processes by Bruno Chevolet, Treasurer

Mission

IAGP is a global network of professionals dedicated to:

- the development and study of group psychotherapy and group processes
- foster collaboration in theory, clinical practice, training, education, research, and consultancy, with a focus on intercultural bridges

Summary and main findings

The interview discusses about the organization's activities and focus, its mission, the fact the IAGP does not have a specific sustainability approach but focuses on:

- providing psychological assistance in social trauma contexts
- aims to increase its global presence for greater societal impact
- contributing to the advancement of group psychotherapy, organizational well-being, and cross-cultural understanding through a multifaceted approach

Methodology:

IAGP's methodology likely involves a combination of research, collaboration, and practice in group psychotherapy and group processes.

Intervention & effects:

IAGP's interventions could include:

- group therapy sessions, workshops, conferences, and community engagement
- structured interventions by several practitioners under the guidance of a supervisor to support the professionals in their specific difficulties and professional experiences
- aim to help professionals find solutions as a group and provide additional know-how for their work

The effects of these interventions might be measured in terms of improved mental health, interpersonal relationships, and overall well-being.

Specific interventions related to international solidarity:

- supporting psychotherapists in Ukraine
- providing mental support to local psychologists in Turkey post-earthquake
- supervising groups facing crises or critical events

Outcome measured:

The main or primary outcome measured in the interview is the vision and ambition of the interviewee and the dream of making the IAGP an association offering activities of global and societal significance, aiming for inclusivity and worldwide impact (alignment with the association's president engagement).

In addition, IAGP commits to solidarity activities, particularly in response to events that disrupt society and business.

Limitations:

Demonstrating commitment of IAGP to social responsibility and sustainability can be challenging due to various factors:

- Resource Constraints: Like any organization, IAGP faces resource limitations in terms of funding, personnel, and infrastructure
- Geographical disparities in the distribution of IAGP members, high concentration of members in certain countries and low presence in others although IAGP is global and its board is very international
- Measurement limitations: Assessing long-term effects and attributing them solely to IAGP's work can be complex ; Absence of formalized evaluation process for activities and projects
- Management weaknesses: the renewal of the management team, the lack of management professionals among members and the lack of administrative management skills

Sources:

<https://iagp.com/>

[Publications – IAGP](#)

[IAGP Annual report – IAGP](#)

<https://iagp.com/2024/01/05/globeletter-2024/>

Interview G

ISE - International Society of Endocrinology

by Helen van Oers, Executive Director

Mission:

- to represent the global network integrating all areas of endocrinology and metabolism
- to promote endocrine and metabolic science, education, practice and advocacy worldwide

The main findings of the interview suggest:

- a focus on the social aspect of corporate social responsibility as part of the organization's mission
- aiming to impact endocrinology on the agenda of public health in various countries
- working with different societies to promote webinars and events
- Potential for the organization to provide support and connect with members for initiatives

beyond financial assistance

The organization's activities in promoting public health and education in endocrinology are aligned with their mission and core business, rather than being separate CSR campaigns.

Methodology

In order to achieve its sustainability goals, among other actions the association implements:

- collaboration with different societies to support their initiatives in the field of endocrinology and public health
- engagement with nurse federations and patient societies
- promotion of their webinars and events
- speaker provision to member society events

Intervention & effects:

The intervention of the association is focused on social responsibility and aligns with the organization's mission.

The intervention effects in the association focusing on this field are:

- activation of its own social media campaigns, online learning webinars
- engagement in patient outreach & public health initiatives
- collaboration with national and regional societies around the world
- providing educational resources and support to national societies for public health impact
- support national societies in impacting endocrinology on the agenda of public health in their respective countries

Limitations

Limitations of the association are:

- Challenge in focusing on the social aspect of sustainability
- Difference in integrating CSR compared to other associations
- Activities not explicitly part of a social responsibility campaign
- Lack of a platform for national societies to communicate effectively
- No specific quantitative data provided regarding the direct intervention effects or outcomes of the association specific activities
- Organization's approach is more aligned with its core business and mission rather than a specific social responsibility campaign

Sources:

[About ISE - International Society of Endocrinology \(isendo.org\)](http://isendo.org)

Conclusion

Associations' status intrinsically confers on them a social and/or societal responsibility. And while the mission of associations differs from one to another, their leadership and power to influence are channelled firstly "internally" (on their own organisation, their partners, their own stakeholders, including the authorities who legislate for their sector) and then "externally" to a lesser extent (on civil society or on specific systems within society).

Non-profit organisations, especially when they are active at international level, use only a small part of their capacity and power of influence to support threatened communities and peace. Although there are many of them involved, they struggle to communicate their social and solidarity actions. They do not always realise that a simple informal exchange, a gesture of encouragement, moral support or even material or financial support, however modest, can have a considerable positive impact. Indifference kills. In short, we can see that associations are gradually beginning to communicate on their actions linked to the social aspect of sustainability, which is partly explained by the difficulty of measuring their impact and their progress (Key Performance Indicators). The major international institutions such as the UN and the European Union play a role as significant examples which naturally also inspire associations positively, including with regard to world stability and peace.

Despite the current anxiety-inducing climate in the world, this study has enabled me to show that voluntary organisations are already assuming a high level of social responsibility in relation to their field of activity, even though much remains to be done, particularly in the areas of public health, education and peace.