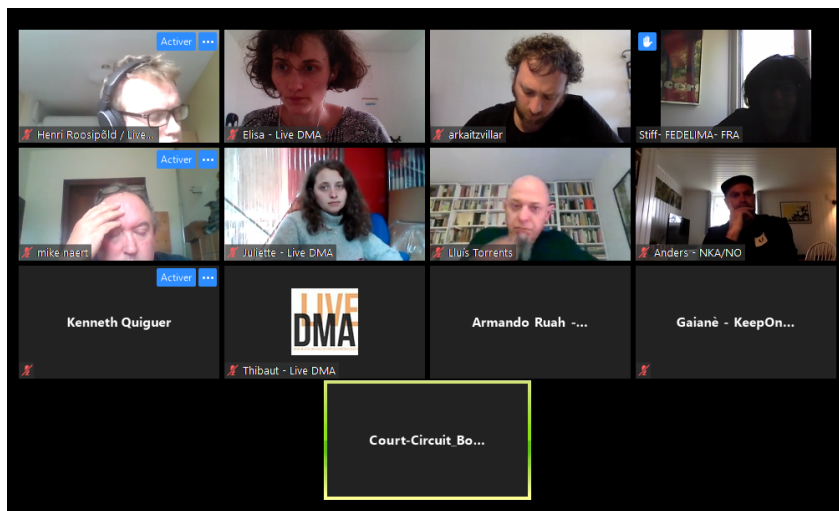


REPORT

LIVE STYLE EUROPE WORKING GROUP

Cooperation & Representation Within the music sector

First online session – 30th of April 2020



Participants: Mike Naert (Clubcircuit, BE), Henri Roosipold (Live ME, EE), Stéphanie «Stiff» Thomas (Fedelima, FR), Gaianè (KeepOn Live, IT), Anders Tangen (NKA, NO), Armando Ruah (ACCES, ES), Lluís Torrents (ASACC, ES), Arkaitz Villar (Kultura Live, ES), David Dehard (Court-Circuit, BE), Elisa Thoma (Live DMA), Juliette Olivares (Live DMA)

Moderation: Kenneth Quiguer

Context & motivations

Live DMA members decided to work on the topic of cooperation & representation of live music venues, clubs, and festivals within the music sector at the annual Live DMA members meeting (June 2019, Nantes). This decision was motivated by the common observation that policy makers and institutions are pushing the whole music sector to cooperate and speak with one voice. Members also noted that especially smaller live music scenes often lack of consideration from other actors in the music ecosystem.

Speaking with one voice makes the sector easier to grasp for decision makers and can facilitate communication with public authorities. Competition models could transform into cooperation, small actors might have more weight when facing giants and negotiating with other sectors. How to ensure the full representation of the sector, democracy and solidarity among these types of collaboration? What happens when the different music organisations share diverse and conflicting interests? What are the power relationships? How can it be possible to overcome them?

By gathering its members as a think tank, this working group aims to create a common strategy on how Live DMA and its members could face these interrogations.

Covid-19 - Adapting and innovating in times of urgency and crisis

In order to respond to the instructions and precautions ordered by governments to avoid the spreading of Covid-19, Live DMA decided to postpone all its meetings planned in spring 2020.

The global outbreak of the coronavirus created a high degree of uncertainty among the actors of the music sector with many of them finding themselves under tremendous pressure and fear for their existence. Live DMA members have been very reactive. Their advocacy work is highly important to ensure that government and public partners fully understand the specific support venues, clubs, and festivals need. In certain countries, the urgency accelerated cooperation processes amongst the music sector.

In order to support our members in this particular situation, Live DMA decided to initiate the working group process via a first online meeting allowing participants to exchange experience and sharing best practice that could be helpful immediately. This experience will also allow us to test out new formats of networking and help evaluate if first online gatherings could be a benefit for future Live DMA working groups.

It seems however evident that a physical meeting will still be necessary in order to achieve the goals set for this working group. Live DMA working groups allow participants to take some distance physically and mentally with their daily work, exchange informally with international peers in a setting that stimulates creative processes and outside of the box thinking.

1st remote working group session – exchanging experience

During a first roundtable, participants exchanged on how they deal with the impact of Covid-19 in their countries in terms of cooperation. From there, we analysed existing cooperation models and tried to define specific needs for each country.

Belgium

In the Flanders region of Belgium, the organisation VI.BE lobbies for a prolongation of the support measures pronounced by the government. The organisation cooperates with an association representing bigger events on this issue. VI.BE tries to regroup the whole live sector (big festivals such as Tomorrow Land, all other festivals, all venues (including Clubcircuit members), bigger venues, Live Nation & big cooperation, music managers...). VI.BE is a very strong group.

Belgium is a federal country which can complicate the advocacy work. They work together with their French colleagues, but lead is still in Flanders as the music industry is bigger and better organised. All they do is also for the French speaking part of the country.

The structuration of the music sector in Wallonia, the French speaking part of Belgium, is in full process. Several associations exist. The federation of musicians were the first ones to be recognized by the Ministry as voice from the non-classical sector. As they only represent one part of the sector, other associations were consulted. The existing networks & organisations still could not represent the whole spectrum of the music ecosystem in Wallonia, hence new associations were created in the last weeks (e.g. booking agencies). As the sector is in a structuration process, they are still finding out with whom they share interests (e.g. association to bring forward the cause of non-mainstream music actors).

Status quo on cooperation

In Flanders, cooperation works quite well and the structuration is advanced with an organ reuniting all cultural organisations receiving subsidies, and groups uniting all music genres. Recognition was a big issue in the past, but now live music actors gain importance in cross-sector meetings. Regular meetings per year help to overcome conflicts in interest. In general, a feeling of being heard by decision makers.

Estonia

The Estonian Ministry of Culture recognizes Music Estonia as partner. In this position, they proposed concrete recommendation for the music sector. Music Estonia gathers diverse actors from the music ecosystem across Estonia (including managers, labels, venues, etc.).

In Estonia, popular music still lacks recognition. Although some municipalities support live music venues, the Ministry is still quite conservative on this point. Music Estonia has been particularly promoting the narrative “music =culture” since the outbreak of the coronavirus in order to seek support from the Ministry of Culture.

Music Estonia also joined forces with the author rights collecting society. The relationship is still fragile, but both are aware that they are stronger together. In addition, a crisis commission has been put together with actors from the classical field. This is more difficult as objectives do not align between the different organisations involved.

Status quo on cooperation:

Existing cooperation with jazz union and traditional music centre union on certain topics. The current crisis helped to speed up cooperation processes and allowed the sector to come together and agree on common issues to work on together. However, there is still a long way to go as subsectors have their own internal conflicts to overcome.

France

FEDELIMA is working closely with other music networks (jazz, classical, etc.). Relationships have been built in the past. In France, regional networks gather the whole music sector (promoters, venues, festivals, media, etc.). Nationals and regional organisations try to complement each other.

Specificity in France: National Music Center (depending on the Ministry of Culture) discusses the situation and gathers actors for a common reflection on how to get out of this crisis. A large range of actors is represented, including the private funded music sector. FEDELIMA members are somewhere in between private & public. It is important for them to connect and exchange with both parts of the music sector.

As in many countries, music is not a priority sector in the eyes of public authorities. Cooperation amongst the sector to keep it alive without waiting eternally for the answers from the public authorities (joint manifesto from cultural organisations & artists).

A big concern is a potential increase in competition between promoters once concerts are possible again. Venues question themselves what to do and to propose if they cannot organise concerts.

Status quo on cooperation

In France, the sector is very structured, but still fractured. There is a broad range of networks and organisations on national and regional levels. Cooperation between all of them is not easy, but things improve. Now there is a dialogue, until 5 years ago there were no contacts.

The challenge for cooperation for FEDELIMA is that they need to cooperate with the public sector, as well as with private actors as their members have a mixed economic model depending on public and private funding. To make this mixed model visible and explain the general interest for people and territories is their main issue. In their experience, data work can help to open doors for cooperation with authorities and professional partners.

Italy

KeepOn Live works on two cooperation schemes:

- An informal forum reuniting representatives of other music organisations in Italy. They are working currently on a definition for exist strategies. 12 working groups work on different topics.
- They also prepare a technical report together with managers & bookers on practical actions for venues. For this, they created a task force analysing all aspects that need to be taken into consideration for a safe start.

Status quo on cooperation:

The music sector is very diverse in terms of legal status. Each venue has its specific economic and legal structure. This makes it difficult to unify request and bring forward recommendations. KeepOn Live are currently working on developing a legal framework that suits the venues and that will help to speak in one voice.

Norway

Concerning cooperation mechanisms, NKA had already a good connection with other organisations from the live music field. To manage the crisis for the sector, they have been working with existing networks, mainly with artists organisations, agents & managers. NKA is closely working with two major federations reuniting a diverse scope of cultural actors. These networks have a very good connection to government & health department.

There are no big tensions from different advocacy organisations. Common sense that they all depend on each other.

Status quo on cooperation:

Cooperation is very good, NKA is part of two networks: one bringing together all live music actors, another uniting the whole cultural sector. They work on common ground issues. These networks are also about sharing knowledge & increasing the competence of the whole sector. They do not always agree, but they are quite good at finding common grounds.

Spain

Even before the crisis the situation in Spain was quite complicated. One reason for this is that the labour law for artists and workers in the sector is outdated and not adapted to today's realities. ACCES lobbies for a music law and adapted status for the artists.

The sector reacted together to an in-adapted plan on how to reopen venues activities proposed by state government. Representatives from the music sector were not consulted on this.

About cooperation: The regions have the cultural competences in Spain. The Ministry of Culture is not the main referent and influencer. However, in the current crisis climate, the state orders measures and regions have less competence. This makes dialogue for regional music associations like ASACC more difficult. In the Basque Country, cultural organisations created a common platform: RESET.

Two years ago, an informal organisation was created to work on the artist's status in Spain: PLAM. About 1,5 years ago, a new state wide federation bringing together a large range of music associations: ES MUSICA. However, music venues are not fully recognized in this federation. They seem to have less impact compared to promoters and big festivals. They do not share the same main concerns (e.g. for venues, paying rent is a major concern right now, while festivals & promoters worry much more about ticket refunding policies). Venues also have to fight for recognition within the music sector. ES MUSICA aims to work and lobby with different ministries (culture, economics, tourism).

In Spain, it is still very hard to change the public perception that popular music is not culture. There is cooperation with other cultural organisations (cinemas, theatres, etc.) – joint statements.

Status quo on cooperation:

The development of ES MUSICA is a big challenge, for now this seems the only way to highlight the importance of pop music. Another challenge is to shift the discourse and perception: music is considered as industry (big promoters & majors). However, small venues are far from being industry. It is important to speak as one voice for the sector to get attention from governments & politicians, but cooperation cannot work at the expense of smaller actors. A common topic is to change the perception that music is not for free. In Spain, city councils organise free music events – this is conflicting for the work of live music organisers. Another common topic is to lower the VAT on ticket sales.

In Catalonia, the Catalan Music Academy gathers the whole music sector and is the official interlocutor to the government. This works quite well and gives visibility. In this Academy, different working groups work on different topics.

In the Basque Country, a new network was formed to reunite the whole industry and sector. So far, it works quite well. The network's president is a music venues director. So their voice gets heard. Network is still quite young, difficult to draw a conclusion yet.

Needs & expectations on a European level

- A European approach to manage this current crisis, and beyond, is needed. European organisations need to work together, lobby, and increase the knowledge of our importance. We truly need to increase the awareness that we are not so small.
 - Live DMA could elaborate an explanation of the music sector highlighting the role of music venues in the whole music ecosystem. This could also help in pleading for the cause of venues if Corona crisis goes on. European Commission, Parliament & Council of EU need to understand the whole ecosystem in order to truly grasp the importance of venues.
 - Live DMA Survey is important to give visibility & highlight the specificity of our sector: diverse & mixed economy, general interest. It is important to develop the data work on a European level.
 - European solidarity: put pressure on governments that are not supporting well the sector.
 - Elaborate Tools & resource. Sharing of knowledge & best practice is very important.
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Next steps

This first online session revealed that Live DMA members are at different stages regarding representation of the sector and cooperation within the sector. While we have collected some very positive experience on the example on how the Covid-19 crisis is managed in certain countries, we also noted that in other countries the state of cooperation for a stronger representation of the music sector's needs is less obvious.

In a second session, participants will work together on a practical guide that should help Live DMA members to take the next steps in their work on cooperation and representation. Based on the participants' expertise and on the needs expressed during the first session, we will use this second session to collect practical advice, tips & tricks, successful methodologies, and also warnings and advice for mistakes to avoid.



European network for live music associations representing more than 3000 venues, clubs & festivals.

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