

Climate Action: Music as a Driver for Change

Concepts of environmental sustainability for the music sector in Europe

by Carolyn Auclair, Project Officer at the European Music Council



It is not only since the COVID-19 pandemic that the need for sustainability at different levels has become obvious. However, the pandemic has revealed that, once more, inequalities between populations have been getting wider and that the disruption of nature has had a hand in the development of global diseases.

To act in an environmentally sensitive way is essential for the preservation of our (bio)diversity, and, of course, culture and music must play their part. Therefore, this article will shed light on current climate action and discourse in the music sector in Europe.

The music sector in Europe encompasses a very broad spectrum of activities, professions, forms and performance venues, including formal and informal music education, the production of music, live events and the dissemination of various music genres. These are but a few examples of how diverse and rich

the music sector is, not to mention the diversity that exists within the choral and collective singing fields. Reactions to climate change and working towards environmental sustainability are equally diverse, both in terms of actions and geographically. The UK in particular, with the organisations Julie's Bicycle^[1] and Creative Carbon Scotland^[2], has been at the forefront of the movement for many years by guiding and pushing cultural organisations towards climate action.

Mobility in the music sector

A recurring key topic for the sector is touring and the environmental cost of mobility. Touring is an important step in the career of a performer and their recognition as such. It is very enriching and fosters diversity and creativity, as well as being a source of income for artists. However, the environmental cost of touring is high, particularly air travel. Initiatives to overcome this challenge vary from not touring at all to not touring by plane to "slow" travelling via a less polluting means of transportation (such as by bike). Measuring the carbon footprint of touring is indispensable in order to set tangible measures and targets to achieve. Activities by EMC members such as Take the Green Train^[3] by the European Jazz Network looked at the challenges of environmentally sustainable jazz international tours, while the initiative Going Home^[4] by Live Music Now Scotland aimed to use alternative ways of touring while reaching less accessible audiences. Studies on mobility and sustainability have also been conducted by Julie's Bicycle and On the Move^[5] as well as the Green Touring Network^[6]. It is essential not only to develop a sustainable alternative for the cultural sector but also to preserve its diversity and prevent some parts of Europe and the world from being left out (islands, remote populations, etc.). Finally, one often tends to forget that

audience travel also contributes in a huge way to carbon emissions and that educational work and better infrastructures are also needed for our audiences.

Music events

A second crucial goal for the music sector is to reduce the impact of its events, whether they are concerts, festivals, conferences, fairs or workshops. Events produce a considerable amount of waste: energy, food, water, plastic and so on. Festivals, conferences and fairs can be the size of a small city for several days and it is therefore key to make sure their impact on the environment is drastically reduced. Initiatives range from serving only meat- and dairy-free meals made with local produce to using alternative ways of producing energy (wind, solar, piezoelectricity, etc.). Different steps taken together with sponsors, creators, artists, partners, suppliers and all elements of the production cycle are important to be able to achieve a circular, zero-waste event. Various toolkits and useful resources have been developed by A Greener Festival^[7] and the German Umweltbundesamt^[8].

What are some other important aspects?

Other dimensions of the music sector should also be looked at, such as the fair and ecological production of **musical instruments**. Safeguarding the diversity of musical instruments by preserving nature is another way of acting in an environmentally sustainable way. Music artists and their **labels/management/performing rights organisations** should also respect the environment in the production and dissemination of their artistry. According to a study by Kyle Devine^[9], it seems that **streaming** and online events/rehearsal tools produce a big share of greenhouse emissions (through data centres). This topic is connected to the issue of fair pay; in the times of

the pandemic, this is very important, since digital means are almost the only ones we can use to distribute and receive remuneration for music.

Music education can play a key role in publicising best practices, raising awareness and creating the environmentally responsible music artists, singers, managers, conductors, composers and amateurs of tomorrow.

Last but not least, music artists can also make a big difference by **raising awareness** of issues through their musical projects and by reaching out to people and touching their hearts. The Music Declares Emergency^[10] group, formed in 2019, is one example, as is the environmental choir Ecopella^[11] in Australia.

WHAT ABOUT THE EUROPEAN MUSIC COUNCIL?

In the last few years, the European Music Council has joined other organisations and projects in taking action on the climate emergency - striving to become a leader in sustainability within the sector. From administrative work and events planning to publications, the EMC aims to achieve a more sustainable way of working that will inspire others to change their practices and behaviours. Here are a few examples on this topic:

- **European Forum on Music (EFM)**

- ◊ The 2016 EFM in Oslo addressed global warming in a conference session with an accompanying conference reader.
- ◊ At the 2019 EMC Annual Meeting, EMC members decided that the EMC should take action to help achieve a climate-neutral world by the middle of the century, as outlined in the Paris Agreement.
- ◊ At the 2020 EFM, environmental sustainability was placed as a central theme, "Climate Action: Music as a Driver for Change" Activities carried out:
 - Panel discussion "Act Now: Music & Climate Change" organised in cooperation with STAHN2020, partner of the Goethever Platoné Project and supported by RAMM.
 - Online workshop "Music and Sustainability" organised in cooperation with GO Group and the Green Music Initiative.
 - Conference reader, including articles on the relationship between music and climate change from different points of view.
 - Members' initiatives and projects featured on the EMC website.

- **Cooperation projects co-funded by Erasmus+**

- ◊ STAMP (2016-2018): Coordinated by the EMC and developed together with EMC members and other organisations, one of the guidelines issued for the project was on how to organise environmentally friendly events.
- ◊ SHCT (2016-2020): The aim of the project, coordinated by the EMC, is to provide training for cultural leaders with regard to the UN SDGs. On the theme of environmental sustainability, some challenges affecting cultural organisations have been targeted and some workable solutions on how to reduce the impact of the sector are being identified.

For further information, please visit our website:

<https://www.emc-euro.org/projects/environmental-sustainability>



The European political environment

The European Commission has launched the European Green Deal^[12], its plan to enable the EU member states to attain environmental sustainability. The Green Deal will be rolled out in all of the EU's programmes, regulations and actions. The European Parliament (EP) has therefore adopted a resolution^[13] on how to green their cultural programmes, among them the future Creative Europe, Erasmus+ and Solidarity Corps

programmes. At the same time, the resolution warns against compromising the programmes' original content and values: mobility, learning and creativity. The already extremely limited budgets of these programmes should also not be eroded. The EP points out that Creative Europe projects can be an opportunity to exchange good environmental practices and calls for an environmental charter to be developed with cultural and creative sector stakeholders.

On a global scale, the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a global framework with 17 Sustainable Development Goals^[14] (SDGs), was adopted by all UN Member States in 2015. The SDGs include goals relating to environmental sustainability, such as climate action, affordable and clean energy, responsible consumption and production, as well as other goals such as no poverty, zero hunger, gender equality, etc. each to be attained by 2030. Although culture and the arts have not been integrated as an explicit target of sustainable development, we believe that the cultural and creative sectors can perform a key role in attaining the SDGs as well as becoming more sustainable themselves.

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Music Council (EMC) since 2017 and is currently Project Officer of the Erasmus+ co-funded project SHIFT, which highlights three UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This ongoing international cooperation project with eight other cultural networks focuses on the following themes: cultural leadership, environmental sustainability, gender and power relations and inclusion. Since finishing her studies, Carolyn has dedicated a lot of her work to achieving a more environmentally sustainable way of working in the cultural sector. Carolyn studied German, English and arts management in France, Germany and Australia.

Edited by Kelly Harrison, UK

[1] <https://juliesbicycle.com/>

[2] <https://www.creativecarbonscotland.com/>

[3] <https://www.europejazz.net/activity/take-green-train>

[4] <https://www.creativecarbonscotland.com/resource/case-study-going-home-with-live-music-now/>

[5] <https://juliesbicycle.com/resource-otm-green-mobility-2011>

[6] https://www.greentouring.net/downloads/GreenTouringGuide_EN.pdf

[7] <https://www.agreenerfestival.com/knowledge-base/>

[8] <https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/publikationen/guidelines-for-the-sustainable-organisation-of>

[9] <https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/decomposed>

[10] <https://www.musicdeclares.net/>

[11] <http://www.ecopella.org/>

[12] https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

[13] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-0211_EN.pdf

[14] <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>