

IFCM European Regional Office based at European Choral Association – Europa Cantat office

Report by Sonja Greiner, Secretary General, European Choral Association – Europa Cantat

The European Choral Association – Europa Cantat (ECA-EC) is the biggest choral association in Europe, with members in 40 European countries, as well as the biggest founding member of IFCM in Europe. The two other European founding members are AGEK, which merged with Europa Cantat in 2011, and Nordisk Korforum, active only in the Nordic countries. When IFCM reviewed the system of regional offices in 2017/18 it therefore seemed logical that a “European Office” of IFCM could be based at the office of ECA-EC in Bonn, Germany, and a corresponding agreement was signed by both associations in 2018, to be reviewed by the Board of both associations after their respective elections.

Since September 2017, ECA-EC has been co-funded by the European Union Creative Europe programme for a project called “Upgrade – Connect – Reach Out: Raising Awareness for Collective Singing in Europe,” running until October 2021. As a result of this funding, as well as local funding for projects in the context of the Beethoven anniversary year 2020, ECA-EC was able to employ additional full-time staff members, so that the office staff currently consists of:

- Secretary General Sonja Greiner
- Office Manager Sylvia Kerutt
- Communications Manager Estera Mihaila
- International Project Manager Sophie Dowden

- Local Project Manager Alfred Jürgens

As a Founding Member, ECA-EC has also always tried to support IFCM in different ways, promoting IFCM events, supporting the WSCM organisers at several world symposia, exchanging information between the two offices, co-organising activities in Europe in cooperation with IFCM, providing proposals of choirs and choral experts for different IFCM activities, etc.

Since November 2018, ECA-EC as founding member of IFCM has been represented on the IFCM Board by Burak Onur Erdem from Turkey, ECA-EC Board member.

Within the framework of the EU funded project under the keyword "connect", ECA-EC was able to extend its international work which included playing a stronger role within IFCM and supporting activities such as AfricaCantat and the World Symposium on Choral Music.

The Secretary General of ECA-EC thus accepted the position of Governance Advisor to IFCM and played an instrumental role in helping the IFCM Board recover IFCM's non-profit status in the US, based on new bylaws and a new internal IFCM Membership Policy Document. She also contributed to drafting the cooperation agreement for the 2023/24 World Symposium on Choral Music in Qatar and making sure that all other IFCM agreements and contracts were revised where needed, and she was involved in the selection process for the new Operations Manager of IFCM.

In addition, the office of ECA-EC has been offering the following services as European office of IFCM:

- Being the first contact point for Europeans interested in IFCM and its activities
- Promoting IFCM activities within Europe, both to the members of ECA-EC and to others following ECA-EC through its newsletter, social media
- Actively approaching European choirs and choral experts

to apply for participation in different IFCM events such as the World Symposium on Choral Music, the Festivals in China etc.

- Searching for conductors who would be happy to contribute to the Conductors without Borders programme as volunteers / not asking for a fee
- Offering information about choral life in Europe to anybody from Europe or outside Europe searching for information, contacts,
- Pointing Europeans looking for contacts / information from outside Europe to the other regional offices or other contacts on the different continents
- Cooperating with NKK as the other European Founding Member of IFCM
- Offering certain activities in Europe in cooperation with IFCM, such as the Leading Voices event in Utrecht in 2022
- Including a section with IFCM news in all newsletter editions of ECA-EC
- Sharing the online calendar of events of ECA-EC with IFCM to avoid having to double the efforts. IFCM includes the events from this database in the calendar published as part of the ICB every three months

Also, ECA-EC is displaying in its communication tools (including Website, Social Media, Powerpoint presentations) that it is the “Regional office of IFCM for Europe”.

Edited by Taylor Ffitch, USA