

Environmental protection and Climate Change: Food for thought for Associations, Choirs and Singers

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2019 will go down in history as the year of the *Fridays for Future* Movement, where young people all around the world took to the streets to demand more involvement and action in the fight against climate change. A similar demand towards the political parties could be seen through an analysis of the results of the EU election. Therefore, in the year 2019, it's now up to the choir associations and institutions, as well as the choirs and individual singers to think about if and how they can contribute to climate- and in general environmental protection and if these goals are compatible with the goals and guidelines of the community. / The European Choral Association – Europa Cantat has started, but hasn't concluded this process, which is why we can't offer an official position paper just yet. This paper however, is designed to offer some food for thought and can help to prepare the discussion in the choir scene: What are the questions that the associations need to face? What are the possible consequences of new measures? Which sources of information can be helpful for the discussion?

Some of the questions were inspired by the paper „Tips on how to organise environmentally sustainable events“, which was published by the European Music Council in the frame of the “STAMP” project.



CENTRAL QUESTIONS ...

... FOR ALL

- Is this discussion solely about climate protection / our ecological footprint?
- Or do we also want to discuss other environmental topics, such as plastic reduction (not just because of its production but also to help protect fish and other marine animals), resource conservation (e.g. clean water), protect the diversity of species, etc.
- How do we cause the biggest biological footprint? How can this be measured? (e.g. for international associations it's most likely the travel emissions to meetings, events, etc.)
- Before we start pointing fingers and asking others to act – can we be sure that we're doing enough ourselves, to avoid being seen as hypocritical?



... FOR ASSOCIATIONS / INSTITUTIONS

- Do we want to turn this topic into a priority in the work of our association?
- Do we want to set ourselves concrete climate protection goals?
- Could it be useful to specifically appoint a staff member to work on these topics? Should we plan advanced training programs in the frame of this topic with/for our staff? Where is this possible?
- Could some of our physical meetings be replaced through digital meetings (also reduces costs)? How many physical meetings will we need in the future and why? Are we willing to pay more for train rides or pay a compensation fee towards the CO2 emissions on flights? Is this in reality a helpful measure (see below)?
- What's more environmentally friendly: a meeting without paper, where all board members use their laptops, or a laptop/cell-phone free meeting where everyone receives a printed version of the important documents?
- Is it possible for our office to switch to environmentally friendly office material and complimentary gifts (no plastic), to lower the use of paper, use recycled paper and print fewer copies in colour?
- How much electricity can we save in our office (do without air condition systems, turn off electric devices instead of leaving them on stand-by, reduce disk space, etc.)? Can we save electricity online e.g. by using eco-friendly search engines (Ecosia)?
- Is it acceptable to offer visitors tap water in glass carafes instead of beverages in small bottles? Is it possible at meetings to offer vegetarian food as standard and meet only on demand?
- Can we avoid/reduce packaging for the cater service of meetings and events?
- Can we refrain from using coffee machines with aluminium capsules as well as beverage dispensers?
- Are we ready to mobilise our network to communicate about these topics of climate- and environmental protection? Are we ready to support initiatives from musicians within our network?
- Are we ready to officially support Friday for Future initiatives and others? Do we allow our staff members to participate in the demonstration? During their normal working hours?
- Are we ready to make demands to our governments (e.g. to make train rides cheaper than plane trips, to increase sleeping coaches on trains again, to prohibit the production process through which products automatically break after 2-3 years)
- Are we in a position where we can encourage our staff members to make changes in their daily life (see next page „for staff members and individual singers“)
- Are we willing to invest in jobtickets/monthly train passes for our staff members?

... FOR CHOIRS

- Can we focus on planning choir trips to countries that can be reached by bus/train?
- Are we willing to completely abstain from choir trips in countries that can only be reached by plane?
- Do we want to use our concerts to raise awareness for the topics climate change / environmental protection? E.g. by singing songs that are focused on these topics and/or raising awareness on our website or the program booklet to possible measures that people can take? Could we see ourselves even raising our voices and singing our songs collectively as choir at a Fridays for Future demonstration?
- Are these goals compatible with the general goals of our choir?
- Can we minimise the energy consumption in our rehearsal space?
- Are we in a position where we can encourage our singers to make changes in their daily life (see next page „for staff members and individual singers“)

... FOR STAFF MEMBERS AND INDIVIDUAL SINGERS

- Can I personally refrain more from travelling by plane or car?
- Can I refrain from using disposable products in my lunch break or on the go? Can I switch to reusable products instead and/or prepare my lunch already at home, before going to work?
- Can I refrain from using Coffee-to-go cups altogether or bring my own cup with me instead?
- Can I use a reusable water bottle?
- In general, can I be more aware of reducing my ecological footprint while shopping (e.g. buying more regional and unpackaged products)?



... FOR (INTER)NATIONAL CHOIR EVENTS / THEIR ORGANISERS (e.g. EC Festival, chor.com)

- There's one main question that national and especially international organisers need to face: if our vision and goal in our events is to connect people of different cultures and heritages, how can we make this possible, if flying is so bad for our climate?
Will the future even provide the possibility for such events or will we have to start thinking more local/regional?
- Can we offer free public transportation within our event or special conditions for participants that want to use / rent bicycles?
- While choosing our venues and rooms, can we pay more attention to ecofriendly aspects (less energy consume when it comes to air conditioning systems, light and sound aspects, etc.)?
- Could we ask the catering to offer more vegetarian options (also in regard to „flexitarians who want to eat meat sometimes, but not twice per day), or even turn things around (vegetarian option is the norm and who wants meat needs to remark that on the registration form)? Could we pay more attention to using regional products only? Is there a possible solution to pass on food that wasn't needed?
- Can we abstain from using plastic dishes, cutlery, straws etc. (the ban from the EU is on its way anyway)? Can we abstain from using single wrapped food and sweets in our catering?
- Can we use recycled paper only or try to use as little paper as possible in general (for instance there are events where you have to decide in your registration form whether you want a printed program booklet or not)?
- Would an app help to reduce the amount of paper or would this just lead to a higher waste of energy?
- Can we set up water fountains on the perimeters and ask people to refill their reusable bottles there? Do we really want to produce headed reusable bottles for all participants or wouldn't it be more sustainable to ask the participants to bring their own bottles?
- Can we suggest to exhibitors at our expo to avoid using/bringing plastic as much as possible and ask them to support our cause?
- Can we reuse or avoid name tags made of plastic?
- Can we reuse lanyards, banners, roll-ups, bags, folders etc. for events that happen on a regular basis and thus print them without a year or date, to avoid throwing the material away every single time?
- Can we encourage our participants to arrive with public transportation / by bicycle, if possible/reasonable? Can we ask them to form carsharing groups or pay the compensation fee for CO2 emissions when arriving by plane?
- Do we want to add music to our festivalprogram that raises awareness to important topics (e.g. the Fridays for Future symphony: "Music that supports a healthier planet", songs about nature/animals, concerts that raise awareness for the fires in the Amazon forest/California/Antarctica/Australia etc.)?

Helpful links, articles and discussions

-) The impact that flying has on our environment/climate (European Environment Agency. 24 Jan 2019) <https://www.eea.europa.eu/highlights/environment-and-climate-impacts-of>
-) "European Aviation Environmental Report." European Aviation Safety Agency: <https://www.easa.europa.eu/eaer> / Atmosfair: <https://www.atmosfair.de/de>
-) Article (in German): 'The climate neutral bluff: Compensations of CO2 emissions are only the second best solution', Interview with the atmosfair-boss: <https://taz.de/!5102262> / a debate regarding the efficiency of CO2 compensations: a statement by atmosfair: <https://www.atmosfair.de/wp-content/uploads/brief-atmosfair-schirmherren-report-mainz-co2-kompensation-052019-3.pdf> a statement in Report Mainz (ARD): <https://www.atmosfair.de/wp-content/uploads/20190523-report-mainz-antwortschreiben-edited.pdf>
-) Article (in German): business trips: flight vs. train: <https://www.spiegel.de/karriere/ohne-flugzeug-auf-dienstreise-gibt-es-den-greta-thunberg-effekt-a-1264555.html>
-) Article (in English): No self-incrimination when flying: <https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/5/28/18629833/climate-change-2019-green-new-deal>
-) UN guidelines for conferences etc.: <http://musicdriveschange.com/eco-artist>
-) Article (in English): Get in touch with other festival organisations and networks: <http://www.powerful-thinking.org.uk/get-involved>
-) Guidelines to energy saving light- and sound equipment: http://greener.liveperformance.com.au/uploads/pages/10/design_guide_-_energy_efficient_stage_lighting.pdf
-) As example on the energy used by online tools: <http://www.janavirgin.com/CO2>
-) Article (in French): Helpful givaways that can be useful in saving the climate: <https://www.objets-de-communication-responsable.com/goodies-ecologiques-pour-une-communication-responsable>
-) Article (in English): Urgent changes needed: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/oct/08/global-warming-must-not-exceed-15c-warns-landmark-un-report>
-) Calculate your own ecological footprint (in German): <https://www.wwf.de/themen-projekte/klima-energie/wwf-klimarechner> / Essai: Lenzen, M. et. al., 'The carbon footprint of global tourism', Nature Climate Change 8, 522-528 (2018). <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41558-018-0141-x> , paid content
-) Article (in German): Suggestions for sustainable youth trips: <https://dbjr.de/artikel/faire-freizeiten-in-der-jugendverbandsarbeit/>
-) „Justice Choir“ (USA), Songbook with fitting songs for (environmental) demonstrations: <https://www.justicechoir.org/>

