

Covid-19 information for choral organisations, choirs and conductors

Information gathered by the European Choral Association - Europa Cantat, spring 2020

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Disclaimer: The articles and pages quoted do not reflect the opinion of ECA-EC!

1. Introduction

1.1. Why this document?

The current worldwide Covid-19 crisis has disrupted the lives of people almost everywhere, and the choral world has also been affected heavily in most countries. However, the situation is not the same everywhere. We are closely following the developments and listening to the needs and wishes of the sector and trying to respond to questions that are reaching us. As European association one important role we can have is to find examples of good practice and spread them within our network to avoid that each national choral association / each conductor or choir manager has to start from scratch.

At the same time we also have to be careful: While all European countries have been affected by the crisis, the countries have not been hit equally, the response of the governments partly differs and the “exit strategies” from lockdown will also differ. While in some countries people are strictly confined at home, other countries allow free movement, and some countries even continue with schooling and other group activities. This also means that we cannot tell our members that “this is the way to do it”, especially when it comes to the question how choral life can continue after lockdown and when live rehearsals and concerts may be possible again. In some countries 1 to 1 teaching will be allowed first, others are allowing rehearsals under certain circumstances but no performances, others have decided to stop music education until summer.

Whatever we may write in this document and whatever your colleagues in other countries may be doing, you will have to follow the rules and regulations of your country or your regional / local government. Also **please note that the articles and pages quoted do not reflect the opinion of ECA-EC!**

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1.2. What we have done so far - **Also see page relating to COVID-19 on our website -> [here](#)**

Initial Press Release and Facebook post “Sharing is Caring”

Mid March, when the Covid-19 crisis started affecting more and more European choirs, our Board and Youth Committee were supposed to meet in Bonn. During the last days before the planned meeting we found out that travelling would not be an option for most Board members, and the meeting was quickly turned into a 2-day online meeting. During this meeting we formulated a first [press release](#) in response to the crisis and we decided to create a platform for our network to share interesting tips and ideas (On our Facebook page, “[Sharing is Caring](#)”)

Members’ Zoom Café

Inspired by the members’ “Lounges” of the European and International Music Council we decided to set up a weekly Zoom-Café with members on Thursdays at 4 pm CEST (German time). The first editions of this café shall mostly allow our members to meet, to see members of our Board and team and to share their concerns, questions, wishes and needs. After some editions the Board of ECA-EC will evaluate the situation and consider offering more specific sessions for different aim groups or on special topics. (If you are a member and have not received this information so far, please write to info@EuropeanChoralAssociation.org and ask for the link)

A Survey - see 1.3

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1.3. Surveys

As European Choral Association - Europa Cantat we have participated in a number of German and European surveys on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the choral world, among others the surveys of the European/International Music Council and Culture Action Europe.

We have contributed with the knowledge we had from talking to people and reading information, but we wanted to be able to give a more concrete picture and also find out for ourselves how the sector has been impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak. Please share your experience with us! <https://bit.ly/2USVxD2>. It is important for us, as a European network, to have our ears “in the field” and hear from all of you involved in collective singing/choral music what impact the COVID-19 outbreak is having world-wide. [>>> You can access the survey summary document here <<<](#)

While the detail of the impacts may vary in some ways from person to person, for the majority of you the impact of COVID-19 on your choral life has been substantial.

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1.4. What you can do

On the next pages you will find an overview on resources, inspiring ideas and interesting texts. If you think you could contribute with additional links, please feel free to do so, making sure that you only share information from reliable sources that are of general interest. Thank you very much!

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2. Information and resources relevant for everybody dealing with collective singing

2.1. Preparing the return to live rehearsals and concerts

Towards the end of April, when we organised our first Members' Zoom Café, the most burning question for many choirs (and other performers) across Europe was: "When and how can our choirs go back to regular, live rehearsals?": As indicated in the introduction, the answer this will probably not be the same for all countries. However, there are some basic facts we can share and which can serve as guidance to those who need to prepare decisions or give recommendations.

2.1.1. General guidelines for activities in the near future

There are some "general rules" that seem to be considered as safety rules in most European countries for any group activity during the crisis and probably until a vaccine has been found and is broadly available or until a cure can help avoid deaths from Covid-19:

- people with any signs of illness should definitely stay at home
- people in the so-called "risk groups" have to take extra care / be protected by others
- since people are also infectious before they have symptoms,, caution is also needed with people who do not have any symptoms
- the main rule is "social distancing" or "physical distancing" as others say - you should keep a distance from any person who does not live in your household (the recommended varies from 1 meter to 2 metre / 6 feet, depending on the country). Also nothing should be shared (no shared instruments, no passing of pencils, no food presented in a plate into which different people go with their hands, etc.)
- In addition everybody should follow basic hygiene rules
- In many countries bit by bit they are also introducing the wearing of face masks

You can find an interesting **simulator** showing the effects of different measures -> [here](#)
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2.1.2. Is singing more risky than other group activities?

More importantly, it seems to be fairly clear by now that Covid-19 is mostly transmitted through the air, through "Aerosols" and droplets that you spread when sneezing and coughing, but also when talking or breathing with your mouth open. Even though there is only very little specific research on the effects of singing so far ([see 2.1.3](#)), existing research with sports and normal breathing suggest that any activity where you speak loudly, shout, sing, breathe heavily / breathe in more deeply is considered more dangerous, especially when this happens in a closed room full of people. Also there are examples of a few choirs in the US and in Europe where it seems that the majority of the choir was infected during a rehearsal, though there is no proof whether the singing as such was the reason, or merely the fact that a lot of people where in a room with little air for a certain period of time (see for example article [-> here](#)). There are also studies that suggest that certain consonants would spread more aerosols than vowels and humming may be a good way for choirs to start singing.

For a collection of research on aerosols please check www.virmus.nl.

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In any case this means that currently singing (and playing wind instruments) is considered by many experts as more dangerous than other cultural activities.

As long as the opposite has not been proven, people deciding whether and how a live rehearsal may be possible again will carry a heavy responsibility in case something goes wrong. It also means that regular rehearsals of bigger choirs as well as regular performances may not be possible for quite a while and there might be a difference between professional vocal ensembles and choirs starting activities again (who are fully making their living through singing), and what will be recommended to amateur choirs (even though their conductors are partly also making their living through conducting choirs). And decisions about restarting cultural activities, and more specifically choral rehearsals and concerts/performances will differ from country to country, with some countries/regions having restarted in May, others still warning and not allowing any collective singing activities (see [2.1.4](#) below).

Our partner organisation **ACDA in the USA** together with the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS), Chorus America and a Barbershop Society offered a Webinar in the beginning of May “A Conversation: What Do Science and Data Say About the Near Term Future of Singing.” The recording is available on NATS’ Youtube Channel [-> here](#). / (there were some technical difficulties at the beginning) / Resource document shared with participants [-> here](#) / Powerpoint presentations of the speakers: [Future of Singing PowerPoint](#) / [Future of Singing PDF](#) / [Catherine Dehoney Power Point](#) / [Catherine Dehoney PDF](#) / [Donald Milton PDF](#) / [Lucinda Halstead PowerPoint](#) / [Lucinda Halstead PDF](#)

Timothy Michael Powell made a short summary on Facebook: “1) There is no safe way for choirs to rehearse together until there is a vaccine or 95% effective treatment in place, most likely 1-2 years. Perhaps occasionally outside in small groups (...). Masks and spacing DO NOT protect singers from contagion (...) 2) Though there may be some mitigation using a combination of UV lights and fan/atmosphere scrubbing inside, it is not 100% effective and the UV in particular may be both expensive and dangerous 3) No concerts or public performances this fall, (... and maybe longer). 4) Once rapid testing becomes available, possibility to rehearse with immediate testing before every rehearsal with iron-clad agreements from choir members. 5) AUDIENCE: liability insurance for your arts org. Temperature checks at the door and required masks. US government Phase THREE recommendations for actual safe return to public performances.”

Other sources of information in English:

In the US a doctor is streaming videos about the dangers of singing [-> here](#) and [-> here](#). Dr. Dr. Adalja from the Johns Hopkins University Center for Health Security did a podcast with a risk assessment [-> here](#).

You will find a collection of studies and articles in English [-> here](#).

And a well-written article [-> here](#).

In Alberta, Canada, they have published a comprehensive analysis of the situation [-> here](#) as a basis for the guidelines they formulated for choirs (see end of chapter 2.1.4 for those)

In Australia they also organised a Webinar on these topics [-> here](#) /

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2.1.3. Research needed

Please note: We are not scientists and are not giving our opinion on the existing or planned research. We are simply collecting it for those who are interested.

While there are a number of studies dealing with the probable transmission of Covid-19 through droplets and aerosols (See for example [-> here](#), [-> here](#) and [-> here](#), in French [-> here](#), German article [-> here](#)), there are a few studies saying this is the opposite or rather that the infectivity / the virus-concentration in the aerosols is not very high (see for example [-> here](#) and [-> here](#)). This does not necessarily mean that singing is more dangerous than other activities. During talks with representatives of different choral organisations in Europe we identified the need for new research about the specific relationship between singing and Covid-19. First studies are emerging in some countries, other studies are being prepared. It would be great to have some research ready by September.



Study on singing and aerosoles, Medical University Vienna & Chorverband Österreich (see below)

In the Netherlands they have gathered a consortium that would like to encourage **research specifically on the effects of music-making**. This research project initiated by the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra (RPhO) and supported by all major Dutch orchestral and choral associations is carried out by Delft University of Technology (TU Delft). The aim is to publish and review the different articles and come up with clear and scientific based advice for singers and wind musicians. See <https://www.virmus.nl/> where they have started collecting existing research, including contradicting **research about aerosols**.

They also did an interesting Study in the Netherlands on **ventilation** and singing [-> here](#).

In Germany - **UPDATE:** The most recent study relevant for singing is a study on aerosols by the Technical University in Berlin, see [-> here](#). During an interview in a news video a representative of the university also said that singing emits up to 50 times more aerosols than speaking (see [-> here](#)), though this information does not appear on the university website and the scientific proof is not shown. The video also speaks about facemasks not being very effective concerning aerosols since they are letting them out on the sides. They still consider wearing masks is useful since it reduces the intensity of the aerosols.

There is a detailed **risk evaluation document** developed by the Institute of Musical Medicine in Freiburg, based on a study done with the Bamberger Symphoniker Orchestra and Choir and Prof. Richter from the Institute, see [-> here](#) / French [-> here](#) / Spanish [-> here](#) and [-> here](#). This lead to **updated recommendations**, recommending a distance of 2 m between singers but adding that the transmission of the virus through aerosols is not well enough researched so far and additional measures are necessary such as the length of the rehearsal session, the size of the room and the number of people in the room, good ventilation. See [-> here](#).

There is a similar research by the Institute of Aerodynamics of the University of the Bundeswehr in Munich, see [-> here](#) and [-> here](#), English summary [-> here](#). They are coming to a similar conclusion and recommend a distance of 1,5 metres and some other measures. A doctor in Munich quoted this research after listing all the health benefits of singing which would seem especially good in times of Covid-19 [-> here](#).

A third study by the Charité in Berlin only looked at instrumental music but came to a similar conclusion, see [-> here](#), and published recommendations for singing [-> here](#)./ And there is a new study by Bayerischer Rundfunk, see [-> here](#), where they also want to investigate singing and aerosols.

There are good articles on the situation in Germany [-> here](#), [-> here](#).and [-> here](#)/ However, the German institute for music physiology and musical medicine comes to another conclusion and currently **does not recommend group singing**, see [-> here](#). Also in Germany a conductor is experimenting with **a machine in a church that sucks out the air** from in front of the singers so that infected particles cannot reach other singers. See article [-> here](#)



In Austria the Wiener Philharmoniker also did a similar study, see [-> here](#), Spanish translation [-> here](#), French [-> here](#). The Chorverband Österreich commissioned a study with the Vienna university on aerosols and singing, see [-> here](#). They only observed the emission of aerosols, not their distribution in a room over time and not the role they can play in infections, but they showed with the pictures they made that aerosols are not distributed over a significant distance. They recommend wearing facemasks for singing.

In Norway, where rehearsals of some choirs have started again, Thomas Caplin is conducting a **quantitative research project**, gathering data from some choirs in May and June. He hopes that his findings after 8 weeks will prove that, under given and carefully monitored conditions, it is safe to start singing together.

In the UK Martin Ashely from ABCD has reviewed a lot of research, see [-> here](#) and [-> here](#).

In Catalonia, Spain, they have decided to do some research with different types of **face masks and shields**, in order to test how many aerosols get through which type of masks, and how they modify vibrations. They also looked at existing research [-> here](#) and [-> here](#).

In the USA ACDA will participate and help fund a study beginning June 1 on the effects of covid-19 on the return to the rehearsal room, which ECA-EC will support, see [-> here](#). They may also look at air-filtration devices which are supposed to filter out aerosols.

In France France Musique translated a number of articles quoted here into French, with a reference to this document, see [-> here](#).

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First rehearsal of Calmus Ensemble in a church with the required distance to each other

2.1.4. Guidelines and recommendations in different European countries

Please note: As European federation we are not in the position to recommend a specific protocol / specific guidelines. We are simply collecting and sharing the documents we are aware of as inspiration for those who are looking for examples.

Some organisations in different countries have already collected information on music or specifically on choral singing or published documents which you can find below (using google translator or DeepL translator you will be able to understand most of these texts):

In Austria choir singing was allowed again since end of May. Chorverband Österreich published detailed recommendations for choirs [-> here](#). Already before they published guidelines for choirs based on the studies made in Germany (see research in [2.1.4](#)), recommending a 2-metre distance for singers, rehearsing outside and for inside rehearsals 5m² per person see [-> here](#).

In Belgium Koor & Stem advised its members to cancel all rehearsals, events and other gatherings until August 31st, see [-> here](#). Also the Fédération Chorale Wallonie - Bruxelles, A Coeur Joie Belgique has sent a message to the conductors and presidents of its member choirs see [-> here](#). In June they announced rehearsals can restart on 4/6, see [-> here](#).

In Estonia public concerts and other public events (meetings, conferences, performances etc) are allowed from June 1st - with max 50 persons as auditors inside and with max 100 persons as auditors outside. Distance between people has to be 2 m and max half of the seats in the hall can be filled. From May 18-31 choir rehearsals were allowed with max 10 persons groups. From June 1st choirs can rehearse with up to 50 persons in one room, but still 2 m away from each other. From July 1st public events in Estonia are allowed with max 500 people indoors (still with 2 m distance and max half seats filled) and 1000 people outdoors (same rules). Organiser is responsible for following hygiene rules, providing hand sanitizer etc. Government has produced special manuals for organisers of public events, youth camps etc, so it is easy to find and follow the rules.

In France A Coeur Joie published a press release with an evaluation of what will be possible or rather not be possible in the near future [-> here](#). End of May they asked their members to share if and how they are restarting rehearsals, see [-> here](#).

In Germany there are no national recommendations so far, but first regions have permitted rehearsals again, in others it's still forbidden even outside. Deutscher Chorverband published general recommendations, [see -> here](#). Nordrhein-Westfalen published hygiene rules saying that singers have to stand at least 3 metres apart from each other and there should be a distance of 4 metres between performers and the audience, and there are also clear rules on audiences in, see [-> here](#).

You will find an example of guidelines from a choir in Nordrhein-Westfalen (not yet updated to new rules that actually require less distance/space) [-> here](#).

In Niedersachsen they have also developed first guidelines for choirs restarting, see [-> here](#) in Rheinland-Pfalz they will allow singing from June 10th based on guidelines provided by the regional choral association that foresee 3 metres between singers on all sides, regular breaks and wearing masks when not singing see [-> here](#), and Berlin has also published guidelines [-> here](#).

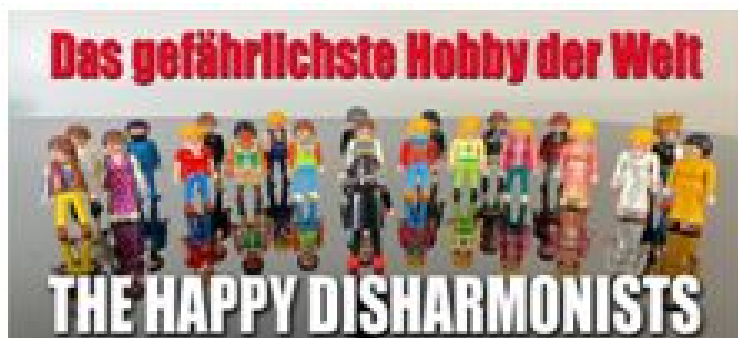
The VBG (work insurance) published [guidelines for theatres](#) etc. where for the professional performing arts sector - which originally recommend a distance of 6 metres between singers and 20m² per person for rehearsal spaces - updated its standards after recent research to a distance of 3 metres between musicians including singers

UPDATE: the middle of May the Music University (Musikhochschule) in Freiburg together with the Institute of Musical Medicine in Freiburg updated its recommendations a second time, see [-> here](#). The new update is based on the fact that the Robert-Koch Institute stressed the possible importance of aerosols for infections. After previously recommending a distance of 2 metres based on tests which mostly dealt with droplets, they are now recommending big rooms, short rehearsal slots and if possible the wearing of face masks.

One of the German Choir association VDKC published their own guidelines [->here](#) (A choir in Hamburg consulted different experts and came up with rules saying: maximum 20-25 people, singing with face mask, singing at 5 m distance from each other and some additional rules).

The German orchestra association published suggested guidelines for re-opening orchestra and choir life, available in English, saying that these should be checked by doctors and hygiene experts [-> here](#)./ A German conductor has created a page where he is compiling all relevant texts for Germany [-> here](#), another link collection can be found [-> here](#).

When church services were allowed again, a warning was issued that loud singing should not happen during services. Music Schools reopened on May 4th in some regions, only with individual classes and in some regions groups of 6, for most instruments there have to be min. 5m² per person, for wind instruments and singing 10m² per person.



Black humour: Song by the "Happy Disharmonists" about choir singing being the most dangerous free-time activity in the world see [-> here](#)

In Ireland the association, Sing Ireland has issued a statement on choral activities and recommends that group singing cannot take place, face to face, until at least the 10th August. See the statement [-> here](#) Sing Ireland also has a dedicated website for choirs and Covid-19 [-> here](#)

In Italy Feniarco is collecting and sharing information [-> here](#), no concrete protocols yet.

In The Netherlands the association Koornetwerk was asked by the government to work on possible guidelines on how choral singing may be possible again after lockdown. They are regularly posting updates on their Website. Latest update [-> here](#). They stress the latest government rules are not clear enough for choirs They will seek clarification. End of May the Dutch government banned choir singing for amateurs.

In Norway the Norwegian directorate of health published guidelines for music rehearsals (Update from April 30th [-> here](#) / Some general guidelines from this text are for example calculation methods on how you could calculate the space needed for rehearsals keeping a distance from each other of minimum of 1m (instead of 1,5m which was mentioned before) :

Group size	additional buffer	3m2 per person	minimum m2 in total
< 5	10 m ²	15 m ²	25 m ²
< 15	20 m ²	45 m ²	65 m ²
< 30	30 m ²	90 m ²	120 m ²
>50	30 m ²	150m ²	180 m ²

ATTENTION: these are GENERAL guidelines for musicians, not specifically for singers! There is an English summary for choirs (however, still with the rule of 4m2 person and no mention of special risk for singers compared to others) [-> here](#)

Several Norwegian choirs have started rehearsing and performing since the end of April, standing at a distance but without wearing face masks, see [->here](#), [-> here](#) and [->here](#)

In Portugal the choral association has published a recommendation to continue rehearsing online until more scientific studies are available. They think that singing with face masks is not really feasible. They are planning an online conference later in June, see [-> here](#).

In Spain there are different regulations in different regions:

The federation of choirs in Madrid (Spain) has created a new Facebook group to share information related to choirs and Covid-19 [-> here](#).

A Spanish choir has restarted singing and published guidelines for rehearsals and performances [-> here](#).

In Catalonia, Spain, **UPDATE**: FCEC has now published a very detailed document with clear rules for choirs for the possible return to life rehearsals, see [-> here](#). This includes hygiene regulations including the obligation to wear face masks, recommendations on which singers should be able to attend rehearsals and which not, recommendations on the space needed (2 m distance between singers or if in 2 rows, 1,5 metres between singers' shoulders and 2 metres between rows, at least 2 m between conductor and 1st row), FFP2 masks for singers plus a face shield for the conductor, hygiene protocols to follow etc.

In the Basque Country EAE has also published guidelines which you can find [->here](#). They include some drawings on how to place singers and the audience (we will share a link to a PDF as soon as it will be available online).

In Valencia Music Bands are asking for advice because there are no government instructions for bands (or choirs), see [-> here](#)

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In Switzerland rehearsals and concerts will be allowed again from June 6th under conditions. The Swiss choral federation still recommends not to go back to rehearsals until mid-August because research results are still not clear enough when it comes to the potential dangers of singing. See text in German [-> here](#), and in French [-> here](#).

In the UK, a research review done by Professor Ashely (see [-> here](#)) and a paper he published on aerosoles and singing (see [-> here](#)) were used as referenced as choirs plan their way out of lockdown. Also ABCD offered a Webinar on the topic of “The changing face of choirs - adapting to Covid-19”, where the scientific situation and the recommendations drawn from it were very well explained [-> here](#)

And some examples from outside Europe:

In the US they published rules about how audiences can be distributed in concert halls - see the article on what this means regarding income from concert ticket sales [-> here](#)

In Canada (Alberta), they have developed guidelines [-> here](#), and there was a Webinar Webinar on COVID-19 and Choral Music in Canada [-> here](#).

New Zealand has had no new cases since mid-May. They published guidelines for choirs, see [-> here](#), and guidelines for singing teachers [-> here](#) and singing has restarted in June.

For South-East Asia there was an online discussion available as recording [-> here](#).

During a meeting with advisors of the [Singing Network](#) we also heard choirs in Lebanon are singing again, also in Israel with part-choirs or outside where some sing with shields.

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2.1.5. **Some examples from different countries concerning collective music-making**

Some examples and ideas discussed on Social Media by different groups in addition to the rules indicated above are:

- Singing outside with 1,5 to 2 m distance from each other (example [-> here](#))
- Singing with a part of the choir in the garden [-> here](#)



- Singing on a field in Germany (a bit of black humour) [-> here](#)



- Rehearsing on a beach



- Examples of choirs in Norway singing in parking garages [-> here](#)
- Example of a choir singing with physical distance and facemasks [-> here](#) and [-> here](#)



- Organising sectorial rehearsals e.g. in big rehearsal halls
- Organising rehearsals of small groups, e.g. octets with 2 singers from each voice to offer the experience from live singing at sufficient distance
- In Austria 1 to 1 music lessons are allowed again , but there will be no music classes in school until the summer holidays.
- A choir in Basque country started rehearsing in a big hall with social distancing and face shields - see [-> here](#).



- In Germany the Berlin Philharmonics played their first concert on May 1st, as chamber orchestra and without audience - see [-> here](#)



- The Chœur de l'Opéra du Rhin (a professional choir) rehearsing between Plexiglass partitions [-> here](#)



- Also Rundfunkchor Berlin started rehearsing at a physical distance



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2.1.6. Worrying about the future

- Something to be seen on the long run will be: How are and will conductors, choirs and choral organisations be financially affected by the fact that rehearsals and concerts are not possible at the moment and may not be possible for a while? / How will the economic situation of the countries after Covid-19 influence the funding possibilities for choirs and choral events?
- Also choral organisations will have to start thinking about the future of collective singing during the “new normality” until a vaccine can be found and after this
- Can we develop new outside the box concepts of what collective singing means? Can there be other forms than rehearsing once a week and doing 2 concerts a year. Can composers write music for the “new normality” / singing with social distancing?
- How can we spread a positive message about (the benefits of) (collective) singing?
 - E.g. spread the message that we think about our members / about the choirs, conductors and singers, we care about them, we are aware of the challenges

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2.2. International events in the (near) future

The first tough decisions that had to be taken by many organisers of festivals and other choral events was: Can our event take place as planned? If not, should we postpone? Until when? Or do we have to cancel? These decisions are very difficult to take and they have a huge impact on the organisers with teams having worked for these events sometimes for several years, and the finances of the organisation possibly put in danger by the cancellation of an event.

While for national and regional events the organisers can mostly look at what their country / region / city decides about regulations for smaller and bigger events, international events in the coming months and year(s) are more difficult to plan since they also depend on the following questions:

- When and how can choirs in the different countries rehearse (and thus prepare for the event) again? (See point 6)
- Will hotels be allowed to put 2 or more people who are not a couple together in 1 room?
- When will there be international flight connections between different countries? (Probably not at the same time for all countries)
- What will tickets cost then? (with Airlines now struggling immensely and some probably going bankrupt soon)
- Under which conditions will people be allowed to fly internationally? Only for work? Only if they go into quarantine for 2 weeks both ways?
- What will be allowed in terms of bus travels? Only 1 seat in each row occupied? (Which would mean a doubling of travel expenses for those traveling with buses)
- And mid-term to long-term: How will the economic consequences of the current crisis affect the possibility of singers and conductors to participate in such events, in view of the fact that there will be many more unemployed people for example

Some international festivals have decided to postpone the actual festival, yet also organise a **virtual / online festival**. One example done very professionally can be found [-> here](#), another example from the field of rhythmic music [-> here](#). In Estonia they did a very special

virtual/online concert on Song Celebration grounds, see [-> here](#). And the Zürcher Kammerchor is offering “house concerts” or “garden concerts” with quartets, see [-> here](#). Organisers of international and national events are also confronted with many **legal questions** - will the participants be refunded by airlines and hotels for bookings they have already done? (see point [2.3](#) below). How is the legal situation with halls and other service providers you may already have booked and to which you may already have made advance payments? Usually the situation is easier if you have to cancel an event because it has been forbidden by the national / regional / local authorities and the service providers cannot provide the service you booked because they are not allowed to - then it should be easier to reclaim any advance payment you may have made. In case of international events things may be a bit more complicated if events are allowed in the country / regionally / locally but you have to cancel the event because foreign participants have no possibility to come. It is best to get some legal advice or help from public authorities to know what are your rights in this situation.

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2.3. Traveling, participation in festivals / legal issues

Many choirs had registered for festivals or had arranged for choir trips that now had to be cancelled. We are getting questions about how far they have the right to be refunded. On the other hand organisers of choral events also need to know what their obligations are if their event is cancelled.

When choirs have paid a pure **participation fee** that does not cover accommodation and meals, the legal situation in the case of cancellation is fairly clear - the organisers are not able to deliver the product for which the choirs paid, and the choirs have the right to be refunded 100% (like in the case of people buying tickets for concerts that are cancelled). They can ask the participants to accept a voucher instead, or if the event is postponed to another year, to keep the money for that year, or they can ask not to have to refund the fee fully. However, this would be a volunteer decision on the side of the choirs. If participants cancel their participation because they are afraid to travel, even though the event has not been cancelled, the organisers do not need to refund them but can of course decide to do so.

If conductors, soloists, instrumentalists, speakers etc. have been invited and cannot perform because the **performance was cancelled** due to Force Majeure, there is no legal obligation for the organisers to pay a fee. Some organisations are paying a partial fee as a sign of solidarity with freelance artists, others who had to postpone the event are paying out a part of the fee in advance.

If choirs have booked a “**package deal**” through a travel agency, the agency is normally obliged to refund the full payment. However, travel agencies have been suffering from economic difficulties for a while and they often do not get their money back from hotels. They will therefore often also offer a voucher, but if you are not sure you will be able to travel with the same company again you can insist on being refunded. Germany made a suggestion at EU level to make it obligatory to accept vouchers instead of money (with the State giving a guarantee in case the company goes bankrupt in the meantime), but so far this was not accepted at EU level.

With **hotels and airlines** it's more complicated - if you bought a non-refundable ticket you may not get the money back. If the flight is cancelled, the airline should normally refund, but many also offer vouchers instead. If a hotel was open and could have hosted the group, and the rooms were booked without refund possibilities, the hotel does not need to refund. They will also often offer vouchers instead. ..

The European Union is now trying to strengthen the rights of the customers so that they cannot be obliged to accept vouchers instead of money back and that they can also ask for the money back shortly before the voucher runs out in case they could not use the voucher.

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3. **Tools, resources, tips and tricks for conductors / vocal leaders / music teachers**

Also see Webinar of ACDA, NATS and other partners on “what we CAN do” -> [here](#).



3.1. **Online rehearsals**

The main question we saw on Social Media once rehearsals had to stop in different countries was “How can we do online rehearsals? Is there a software that will allow our choir to sing together online?” For the moment the clear answer to this is: No, so far no software allows a full choir to sing together online due to latency issues. However, it is possible to do online rehearsals during which mostly the singers’ microphones are muted and the conductor sings / plays the piano and all singers sing along at home (only hearing the conductor and their own voice). Some conductors will also let one or two singers sing along with their microphones on, trying to correct latency, but “singing together” as in a normal rehearsal is not possible.

Also there are several developers who are currently working on possible options that will take care of the latency problem. However, it is possible that these solutions (which partly already exist for smaller groups, see below) will not work for normal amateur choirs, since many of them require a person with high technical skills, and often the quality of the wifi connection at your singers’ homes as well as the quality of the devices they are using will mean that singing together will remain impossible.

3.1.1. Current options

Here is a list of possible tools you can use (also check a good overview [-> here](#))

- For online rehearsals:

Any programme that you can use for video conferencing can also be used for online rehearsals, though there are differences in quality, whether singers have to register individually or not and in the number of people that can be in one meeting together.

The most popular programme in the choral world is **Zoom** where only the conductor needs to buy the pro version (free for sessions up to 40 min, around 16 EUR per month for longer sessions with up to 100 people) and the conductor can optimize settings -> See different tutorials by Jim Daus [-> here](#). It is also possible to rehearse in parallel breakout groups / Germans will find a good overview [-> here](#) or [-> here](#). In May there were some technical issues with zoom - you can check the status [->here](#) / There is an instruction on sound settings [-> here](#)/. However, you can also use other programmes such as **Facetime / Skype / Hangout / Jitsi / Discord** etc.

There have been some worries about Zoom not being “safe”. However, they improved their safety measures in April 2020 and it seems that none of the other broadly available programmes is more safe, and many of them have restrictions in numbers of participants. There is a careful evaluation of the Zoom security issues in German [-> here](#), also comparing with some other programmes.

Zoom can also be combined with other programmes: combining Zoom with different platforms, e.g. **Soundtrap** (see below) / The Azioulukas choir in Lithuania combines Zoom with **Google Classrooms**.

- Teaching through videos (using Youtube, Vimeo or other Video sharing platforms) with private sharing settings (not public)
- For online rehearsals of smaller groups with good technical knowledge:
 - **Source elements** (<https://source-elements.com>) - recommended by PFI, not tested by us so far, you can also be used combined with Zoom etc.
 - **Soundtrap**, Chrome Browser needed (see video with Jim Daus [-> here](#))
 - **Jamkazam**, www.jamkazam.com - only works with small groups, you need people with technical skills, still some latency problems
 - **Jamulus** ([Open Source Software](#), see examples [-> here](#) and [-> here](#). Also seems to require technical skills but one choir in Madrid has good experience and is rehearsing online with 22 people and an international group of singers published [-> this video](#) and there is a tutorial for conductors on Jamulus (in Dutch) [-> here](#) and an English one [-> here](#)
 - **SoundJack** (<https://soundjack.eu/index.php>)
 - **Jammr** (<https://jammr.net/>)
 - **Cleanfeed** (<https://cleanfeed.net>)
 - **Sessionwire** (<https://www.sessionwire.com>)

A German conductor suggested the combination of different tools and approaches for online rehearsals [-> here](#).

None of these solutions seems to be perfect so far, though with most of them it is possible to make music together online, and depending on your equipment and the online connections, have a very reduced latency. Using good equipment and cable internet connection rather than Wifi helps to improve the quality of the experience.

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Hackathon Solution enablers (taken from www.digital-stage.org)

3.1.2. The possible future

- **LOLA** (not working for the moment unless two music universities are connected through LOLA. However, “Low Latency Jam session with only 15 milliseconds lag. Soon this will also be an option at home! So said the LOLA company last week. But how soon? Fingers crossed! See [-> here](#))”
- **Digital Stage** (under development): <https://digital-stage.org/?lang=en> / also see [-> here](#) / and short video [-> here](#) / Report of a test (in German) [-> here](#)
ECA-EC has decided to support this initiative which currently looks to be the most promising development that may lead to latency-free collective singing for possibly up to 20 since it would be a great service for the choral world if it is successful

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3.2. Online teaching

- Distance Learning Softwares for Choir-intine -> [here](#)
- Overview on material for online teaching -> [here](#) or -> [here](#)
- Distance Learning Softwares for Choir-intine (Quarantine) from Matt Woodward + Anna Osterman, ->[here](#)
- **Match My Sound**: A tool for remote teaching or online rehearsal: <https://matchmysound.com/> recommended by the director of ACDA
Also see **Dohrey.me** <https://dohrey.me/>
- Mostly for **one-to-one singing lessons** -> [here](#)
- **Google Classrooms** (free for schools): <https://classroom.google.com>
- **‘Our Asynchronous Choir’** (Hannah Knauss and Marci Major)
free download -> [here](#) . (*pedagogical framework options when planning for asynchronous choral activities.*)
- **NAMM** offered a series of **webinars on Music Education** / for Music Educators which partly also focus on ensemble music making, see -> [here](#), ->[here](#) and ->[here](#)
- Also **ELIA** offered some **webinars on Arts Education** online -> [here](#), and their list of useful tools -> [here](#) also includes tools for virtual teaching.
- For both NAMM and ELIA you can also watch the **Zoom Lounge of the European Music Council on Music Education** -> [here](#)

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3.3. Alternative ideas for staying in touch with singers / pupils

- **Live contact**, e.g. visiting your singers one by one and talking to them at a secure distance, distributing “analogue” material (e.g. for children musical games or instructions how they can make them themselves, e.g. a musical memory etc.)
- If you have a children’s choir - **encourage parents to sing** with their children and home, sharing some helpful tools such as sing-along-accompaniment recordings
- For older singers without PCs, tablets, smartphones it is also possible to organise a **telephone conference** that can work like zoom, just without video (and it is also possible to have people join Zoom through their phones, though the procedure is a bit more complicated to explain). They only have to dial a number and a code (e.g. <https://meetgreen.de/> [DE] <https://meet.green/> [EN] -> costs are similar to Zoom, around 16 EUR per month.
- Producing **Midi-files or other recordings** of individual voices, 2 voices together, all voices together, with some programmes you can also have one voice louder and the others less loud, and putting these at disposal of the singers who can then rehearse at home alone. / If you sing major choir-symphonic works there are also publishers who have produced sing-along material for singers.
- Produce **audio files** with the help of some singers, edit different versions, each one with one voice missing so that all singers can hear the other voices and can sing along their own part, get a feeling of ensemble singing and can practice their lines.
- **Bandlab**, voices are added one by one to the record of the whole choir, <https://www.bandlab.com/>
- **Smartmusic** www.smartmusic.com - see choir tutorial -> [here](#) (several hundred pieces of music with accompaniment for people to sing along with possibility to change speed, record and get feedback)

- **Car rehearsals** Everyone came by car, we gathered on a parking space, every singer got a microphone and headphones - and we could really sing together. It all took some effort as we needed financial support for the technician and the approval from the municipality - but it was worth it. It was so good to see and hear each other again in real time! (see an example in German [-> here](#) / and [-> here](#), low-budget example/ Another example with video [-> here](#)), and a car open singing [-> here](#).



- Rehearsing open-air
- Starting rehearsals (when allowed again) with small groups, quartets, 2 or 3 per voice or with sectorial / voice rehearsals
- The Freiburg Institute for Musicians' Medicine, Germany – at the University of Music Freiburg, <https://fim.mh-freiburg.de/en/> has published some **tips on how singers can keep their voice fit** (<https://fim.mh-freiburg.de/aktuelles/uebungen-stimme/>) and keep fit and in balance (<https://fim.mh-freiburg.de/.../uebungen-vitalisierung.../>) - these tips can be shared with choirs.
- The French choral Association A Coeur Joie organised an **Online Open Singing** with repertoire from the last choral festival, the conductor who did Open Singing at that festival, and audio files so that participants could sing along with a full choir sound, see [-> here](#). / Also the German Radio WDR organised such Sing-alongs, see [-> here](#)

- **Do you have any other ideas?**

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3.4. Virtual choirs / Streaming

On Social Media you see a lot of performances of choirs with lots of small pictures shown together on the screen. These “virtual choirs” became famous many years ago by Eric Whitacre who produced several sophisticated editions. What you see is, however, not “collective singing” but rather a technical solution to turn many individual singers into a choir for the audience / those watching the video. For such a virtual choir each individual singer records his/her voice alone at home, usually listening to a recording at the same time (to make sure everybody sings on the same pitch / in the same rhythm). Then all these videos are combined through a software into one “choir” (there are different programmes available). There is a dedicated page for Virtual choirs on Facebook [-> here](#). You will find many **instructions** on Social Media in different languages, here are some examples:

- in English [-> here](#) or [-> here](#) / in French [-> here](#)
in German [-> here](#) / in Spanish [-> here](#)

Facebook is working on a new app, available for Iphone via waiting list for the moment, that will allow producing music videos with musicians in different places, see [-> here](#).

There are also full “virtual choir concerts”, for example one in Austria [-> here](#) (lange Nacht der Chorantäne)

An American conductor has started a Facebook Group [-> here](#) because he would like to encourage the development of a new app. The idea is for the app to “display the conductor video on the screen while recording the singer...from one device! This will also ensure that all videos are identical in length and frame rate and size, meaning sync will be a dream in audio and video editing software as well as setting you up for a good project visually.”

To keep your audiences interested you can also decide to share video or audio recordings of past concerts. Legal aspects: Please note that whenever you publicly share music in a recorded form you will have to respect intellectual property rights and performers’ rights. If you already have recordings on youtube you may choose to share those, but you must be sure that all musicians gave their consent to publishing recordings (also soloists, accompanying instrumentalists etc.) and that any rights for composers / publishers etc. have been paid. Since the legal basis may differ between countries (e.g. what is covered through global agreements between the collecting societies and platforms such as Youtube and Facebook) it is best to consult your national collecting society. You can also ask singers to record their voice individually and then mix the voices (without video) together by using a programme such as Mixpad (Freeware)

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3.5. Teaching or performing online - finances

One of the challenges that is emerging is that while many musicians are sharing musical contents online, most of these contents are offered for free, so the musicians cannot earn any money with it. Also freelancing conductors often offer Zoom rehearsals mostly to make sure that their choirs will continue paying them because they are afraid that their choirs will otherwise stop paying them. While solidarity is working well in some cases, other choirs have already stopped paying their conductors or may do this after some months if they feel they are not getting “value for money”. Also freelancing musicians are often not covered fully by the emergency funds that exist in different countries. If live music-making will not be possible for a longer period of time, models may be necessary that allow musicians to also earn money with online offers. There are already some examples of virtual concerts for which you can buy a virtual ticket, or virtual performances for which you can donate money (just as if there was somebody with a basket collecting donations at the exit of the concert hall or church). Also training courses (voice training, conductors’ training etc.) can be offered online against the payment of a fee.

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3.6. Some useful overview pages

- ACDA list of online resources [-> here](#)
- List of documents / articles distributed during the ACDA Webinar on May 5th [-> here](#)
- The Big Covid Survival Choral Doc (by Lauren Peithmann) [-> here](#)
- Choirs-Unite Facebook Group [-> here](#)
- List of resources collected by the Singing Network [-> here](#)
- Good overview by German radio Deutschlandfunk on how choirs are reacting to and working during the Covid-19 crisis [-> here](#)

4. Tools and resources for managers and choral organisations

4.1. Remote administration for organisations

During the Covid-19 crisis most choral organisations have to work with their teams working from home. This may require new ways of working together and the use of new tools. Also Board and General Assemblies have to be organised online. Below you will find some useful tips, tools and tutorials

- ELIA, the European association of Arts Schools, has published a great overview on tools that you can use for remote cooperation [-> here](#)
- ECA-EC online Board meeting (mix of Zoom and Basecamp with some online voting and online discussions combined with live meeting and live discussions on zoom - discovered later that in Zoom pro you can also indicate in the advanced settings that people can use symbols for raising their hand or voting
- Tutorial for online General Assemblies (in French) [-> here](#)
- Guidelines for online General Assemblies of choirs [-> here](#)
- Legally it is difficult to give a recommendation valid for all European countries and even less for countries world-wide. Every organisation or choir that needs to organise a General Assembly in the coming months should check their statutes and specific legislation (in France for example there is a decree to allow associations to hold remote General Assemblies during the crisis period irrespective of their statutes).. If online meetings for the Board and online General Assemblies are allowed there is no problem. If they are not explicitly allowed they may have to get some legal advice to protect themselves from being accused by members. *However, in many cases, if all members agree with an online General Assembly you can also decide to run one and start with an explicit decision on this*
- [On the Move](#)'s link collection on the legal and economic consequences on arts and culture can be useful for all choral associations: <http://bit.ly/3d5stzh>

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Covid-19 information for choral organisations, choirs and conductors

Information gathered by the [European Choral Association - Europa Cantat](#), spring 2020

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