



European Network for Active Participation in Cultural Activities

Active participation for Creative Europe

Amateo's Manifesto for European Parliament 2019 - 2024

This manifesto, addressed to European policy makers as we approach the European elections in 2019, is written to profile the **amateur and voluntary arts sector**. The sector is not only fundamental to culture and civil society. It **helps build a more inclusive Europe, supports innovation and builds cohesive societies. Therefore, our sector contributes immensely to the new European Agenda for Culture.**

AMATEO is a young and diverse European network with more than 40 member organisations from 18 different countries. **We are the voice of the millions of amateur artists who passionately engage in the arts in their free time.** They sing in a choir, make drawings or paintings, dance, play music or perform theatre. They learn new skills and express their own artistic passion. But taking part in arts also creates a sense of belonging. Actively engaging in the arts promotes cultural cohesion, social inclusion and active citizenship.

"Culture has always been at the heart of the European project. It is what brings people together. The cultural and creative sectors also have a crucial role in driving economic and social development, and they enable us to build strong international relations. We have big ambitions for culture, and a strong Creative Europe will enable us to make them a reality. I call on all Member States and the European Parliament to back this approach."
Tibor Navracsics, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport

The amateur arts sector and the new European Agenda for Culture: a match made in heaven

SOCIAL DIMENSION

→ Amateur arts create social cohesion

Amateur arts practice contributes directly to **social cohesion** and inclusion and work against tendencies of fragmentation and polarisation. Amateur arts work as a binding force between individuals, cultures and communities. There are fewer barriers to actively take part in the arts that exist to being part of an audience, where there are considerable barriers, like cost, travel, inaccessibility and lack of understanding. Cultural participation is associated with a more active lifestyle; those who are excluded from participating in cultural activities also have lower level of social cohesion (Morrone, De Mauro: 2008).

→ Amateur arts contribute to cultural participation

The amateur arts are egalitarian and democratic and available to everybody, regardless of ability, age, gender, sexuality, race, ethnic origin, belief system, economic status or social background. By focussing on cultural capability as the guiding principle in the new European Agenda for Culture, and thus promoting opportunities for all to take part and to create, we believe that our work is more

important than ever. Numerous projects that are developed within the amateur arts sector all over Europe reach out to specific target groups and tackle the inequality in access to culture.

- In Croatia, the project 'Back pack full of culture' enabled young children in rural areas access to culture.
- In Belgium, the project 'Sing Me In' fostered the inclusion of migrants into the choir world and the local community.

→ **Amateur arts contribute to intercultural dialogue**

Discover the voluntary arts throughout Europe and you experience the European identity in all its diversity. People who practise or perform in the arts seek out similar-minded people to create, interact, exchange and collaborate. The numerous international exchanges, emerging friendships and intercultural learning experiences within and beyond Europe between amateur artists, open the door to new cultures, help to understand cultural diversity and build bridges across European communities.

→ **Amateur arts contribute to the quality of life and have positive effects on health and wellbeing**

The Associations Monitor, a research report by LKCA in the Netherlands, concluded that 'the many performances, shows and expositions contribute to the quality of life of small villages, neighborhoods and cities.' For older people arts practice helps to remain active and healthy longer, boosts self esteem, ensures social interaction, provides personal support networks and stimulates creativity. With an aging population in Europe active cultural participation offers huge potentials for elder citizens in sharing experience and in addressing cross-generational issues. 'The voice of my memory' from Belgium started many choirs for people with dementia.

ECONOMIC DIMENSION

→ **Amateur arts contribute substantially to the economy**

38 % of the European population is engaged in the arts in their free time. They invest in their artistic hobby by buying musical instruments, costumes, books and other materials. They pay for training and education. Amateur art groups often travel abroad to take part in festivals, events and workshops. All together, they make a substantial contribution towards national economies.

→ **Amateur arts is a source of innovation and creative thinking**

Amateur arts lay close to the field of cultural education; by practicing amateur arts, people learn new skills and continue to develop these skills throughout life. Research shows that learning is a key motivation for people to engage in arts practice. Through active participation, people gain and develop skills that are useful to different areas of life.

→ **Amateur arts provide jobs for professional artists by employing instructors and teachers**

The levels of education of amateurs arts have risen over the years. The training and education of dancers, writers, performers, painters, musicians involves professional artists which raises the standard of the work and the quality of the experience as well as creating employment opportunities for this artists themselves.

→ **Supporting active participation in arts is supporting the audience for professional arts**

Research has shown that active engagement in the arts as a child results in both receptive and active participation in cultural activities in later life.

From stakeholders in European policy we ask to:

1. Recognise and promote the value of active cultural participation

The intrinsic value of culture and participation is reflected in the new European agenda. To support and sustain the amateur arts sector, European policy and politicians could:

- a. secure easy access to funding for it's participants in all EU programs (Horizon 2020, regional funds...)
- b. give us more exposure by your attendance at the annual Amateo award ceremony and handing the prize over to the winner
- c. stress the importance of national support, since many Amateo member organisations experience a decline in support for culture and participatory arts on a national level.

2. Support Amateo in gathering comparable data on amateur arts practice throughout Europe

Several member countries have already conducted research on amateur arts. However, due to differences in research scale, design and concepts, the results are difficult to compare. The special Eurobarometer, which investigated the number of EU population engaged in arts in their free time, dates from 2013. Up-to-date data and a resumption of the special Eurobarometer would be essential to create a pan-European picture on the practise of amateur arts and the need for support on a national and supranational level.

3. Create opportunities for professional artists (e.g. coaches, teachers, directors...) that work with amateur artists within the new mobility funding scheme under Creative Europe

The new Creative Europe programme will contain a funding scheme for the mobility of professional artists. There is a vast number of paid staff and artists that work in and for associations to provide art- based activities for non-professional artists. Promoting the new funding for this kind of artistic work, would create an added value for the professional artist (who is challenged by working in a different cultural context) and for the amateur artists (group).

4. Create opportunities for small-scale projects and transversal projects to get support

New practices and methods, innovation and experimental work often grow bottom-up. Amateur art associations often work transversal with, e.g. the health sector; innovation and technology sector; education; civil society. By merging the expertise and experience from different domains, the output and impact of the project can be even bigger. While micro-organisations make up 95% of the cultural and creative sector, they barely get funded by EU. Creating possibilities for fair funding for the smaller NGOs would value the work of these important pioneers.



As the European network for amateur arts we are committed to stimulate the debate and dialogue on the value and role of amateur arts and culture in society. Reflections on this memorandum and opportunities to engage in conversation on its content will

be welcomed and appreciated.

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Amateo is a membership organisation that works as an advocate and provides support and opportunities for exchange and collaboration amongst its members, who are national and regional organisations working in the field of amateur, voluntary and participatory arts and culture. We currently have 41 national and regional umbrellas and associations from 17 EU member states and three programme countries.