

Meeting summary (29/04/2026)

Cultural Organizations' Youth Engagement Challenges

We opened the webinar with a focus on how cultural organizations across Europe are facing similar challenges with aging membership and decreasing long-term commitment from younger generations. It was emphasized that the focus should be on rethinking organizational structures and formats rather than just attracting young people, as younger generations are not turning away from culture but from formats that don't align with their reality. The webinar aimed to explore relevance and shared ownership, moving towards a sense of collective movement beyond traditional membership models. Youth representatives from Pueri Cantores shared about their organization's efforts to engage young people through a youth council and participatory projects, including work with the board and working on their own initiatives.

Building relevance for all generations

The group explored ways to connect with young people beyond social media, including personal involvement at festivals and events, and emphasized the importance of not making assumptions about what young people want but rather actively asking and building together. Key recommendations included creating multiple entry points for engagement, starting low-profile initiatives to gather ideas, and organizing informal hangouts to build trust and lessen the pressure on new participants.

Strategies for Youth Engagement in Cultural Organizations

The meeting focused on discussing challenges and opportunities in engaging young people in creative activities and supporting their involvement in organizations. Participants discussed creating structured ways to involve youth, including youth representative groups and boards, with specific mention of ensuring these positions are paid when they require significant time commitments. Our young participants also emphasized that an organization feels more inviting if such a structure is already in place and there is already a seat at the table for young people who want to be more intensely involved.

One useful strategy for bridging the gap between only having young people involved on paper and their active creative involvement could be a »link person« communicating between youth representatives or youth board members and the board of trustees or other governance structures within cultural organizations. An important thing to keep in mind seemed to be the difference in skill and experience between young people and the older generations who are predominantly running organizations, which could be addressed by having a sort of mentoring program such as the one being implemented by The Mighty Creatives. Conny Groot from Music Generations emphasized the importance of connecting people of different ages, cultures, and backgrounds through shared values and cultural interests, highlighting successful programs in refugee neighbourhoods across the Netherlands and Europe.