

EUROPEAN  
CHORAL  
ASSOCIATION



EUROPA CANTAT

# EUROPEAN CHORAL MAGAZINE

**Special edition**



# VOICE

VISION ON  
INNOVATION FOR  
CHORAL MUSIC  
IN EUROPE

**Building an  
Innovative  
Choral Europe**

**The VOICE project 2012 – 2015**

**Final Report**

[www.thevoiceproject.eu](http://www.thevoiceproject.eu)



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With the support of the Culture programme of the European Union

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# VOICE

VISION ON  
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VOICE is a European project for the sustainable development and innovation of choral singing, a first-time major cooperation between choral operators, music educators and researchers.

It is a joint effort of 15 coorganisers, spread over 11 countries.

The aims of VOICE are:

- to encourage new events and methods and the creation of innovative repertoire
- promote the voice as universal instrument
- improve the quality of vocal music
- enable transnational mobility and circulation of (young) musicians and choral works
- enhance the dialogue between cultures and generations as well as the exchange of expertise
- develop new tools for the promotion of singing in music education.

VOICE invests in research on the voice in partnership with universities and collect data on choral life in Europe. The 15 partners will spread the results to develop a new vision on choral singing in Europe.

[www.thevoiceproject.eu](http://www.thevoiceproject.eu)

## What happened during the VOICE project?

### Events in 2012

- **Eurochoir session 2012** in Lomnice nad Popelkou, Czech Republic – 7 – 15/7/2012
- **Festival EUROPA CANTAT XVIII** in Turin, Italy 27/7 – 5/8/2012 (Including lectures and seminars for conductors and training session for young managers and networking and round-table discussions)
- **European Academy for Conductors** in Graz, Austria 9 – 16/9/2012
- **Polyfolia Festival** in Saint-Lô France 30/10 - 4/11 2012 (including Choral Arts Management Programme)

### Events in 2013

- **Youth Choirs in Movement** in Bonn, Germany 10 – 14/7/2013
- **Mediterranean Voices Conference** in Girona, Catalonia, Spain – 29/7 - 2/8/2013
- **Master Class for Conductors** in Vaison-la-Romaine, France 23 – 28/7/2013
- **Eurochoir session 2013** in Pécs, Hungary - 10-17/8/2013
- **Urban Youth Choir Festival** in Örebro, Sweden 05-08/9/2013
- **Choral Crossroads – Singing the Bridges II** in Limassol, Cyprus 27-30/9/2013
- **Master Class for Conductors** in Örebro, Sweden 25 -31/10/2013
- **VOICE Conference** in Pécs, Hungary 8-10/11/2013

### Events in 2014

- **Symposium on Music Education** in Budapest, Hungary 23-27/4/2014
- **Master Class for Conductors** in Vaison-la-Romaine, France 28/7 – 02/08/2014
- **EuroChoir session 2014** in Saintes, France - 17-25/08/2014
- **International Conductors' Congress** in Paris, France 12-14/09/2014
- **Polyfolia Festival** in Saint-Lô, France – 21-26/10/2014 (including Choral Arts Management Programme and International Experts Meeting)
- **VOICE Conference** in Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain 21-23/11/2014

### Ongoing activities and dissemination of results in 2015

- **"A voice for Vocal Training"** in Belgium – 2012 – 2015
- **"Singing Sofa": research programme on the singing voice of young people** in Belgium – 2012 - 2015
- **Research programme for the vocal health of amateur singers** in United Kingdom – 2014 - 2015
- **"Singing Europe" Data-collection on choral life in Europe** in Germany – 2012 - 2015
- **Communicating about the project and disseminating the results** in Germany, 2012 – 2015
- **"Lullabies of the World" International collection of lullabies** made available on a website, Germany



# Mission accomplished: VOICE fulfilled its objectives

**The VOICE project is the first ever large scale co-operation project funded by the European Union in the choral field. It has been deploying its activities over three years and all over Europe. Not only were the activities successful, but the cooperation between partners developed into a strong network of organisations. If pre-existing contacts allowed for the project to be born, the shared effective work of setting up its activities created new bonds and transnational work habits that reshaped from inside the involved organisations and set them firmly on the tracks of sustainable European cooperation methods. The subtitle of the project was promising “innovation for choral music in Europe”. Innovative contents were indeed tested and implemented, a new vision on choral music on the European level emerged.**

## How did VOICE reach its objectives?

### Objective 1: encourage new events and methods and the creation of innovative repertoire

#### New repertoire

We developed several composition competitions and commissioned new choral works in the frame of VOICE:

- At the Festival EUROPA CANTAT XVIII:
  - 7 short choral works from composers who had not composed for choirs before - further works were commissioned for workshops and Open Singing.
  - A modern children's opera developed and performed by several children's choirs singing together in one workshop.
  - The three winning works of the European Award for Choral Composers 2012 were performed in the frame of the festival in the presence of the composers Pierre Chépélov (FR), Levente Gyöngyösi (HU) and Maarten Van Ingelgem (BE)).
- Composition Award of the European Academy for Choral Conductors in Austria: The first three pieces chosen were studied and two pieces (Beati, Stardance) were first performed in a public concert by the choir of the European Academy for Choral Conductors 2012.
- The “Youth Choir in Movement” festival published a call for a small composition competition, using the theme “Singing and Movement” for children and young people. 14 compositions from 9 countries were submitted and “The Mock Turtle’s Song” by Chris Artley (UK/NZ) was performed in the frame of the festival. In addition a song was commissioned from Russian composer Alexey Larin for one of the Ateliers.
- A composition from Vincent Manac’h, Sisiwa songs, has been commissioned and performed by the Eurochoir 2014 in Saintes, France

#### New events and formats

We implemented activities and ateliers to develop the scenic aspect of choral singing through the use of

choreography and movement: in ateliers at the EUROPA CANTAT festival or during the Youth Choir in Movement festival, the Eurochoir sessions (especially in Pécs, 2013) or the Urban Youth Choir festival. This theme was also treated along the different conferences and professional meetings, like in Barcelona, or in Paris for example.

Along the same lines, we encouraged the diffusion and promotion of repertoire based on popular music, in order to help younger generations to identify in a positive way with choral music. We relied on ateliers in different festivals and proposed numerous concerts of high quality vocal pop ensembles through the festivals to showcase the “fun” potential of choral music.

We proposed innovative training for conductors, through master classes using professional choirs as clinic choir, or mixing orchestra and choir conducting.

#### New cooperation methods

The process of the cooperation project itself appears to be creating new transnational work methods between some of the partners, who are developing strong professional bonds, exchange on topics that are not covered by the project and work on future collaborations. Thanks to the project, work methods and ideas are thus crossing borders.

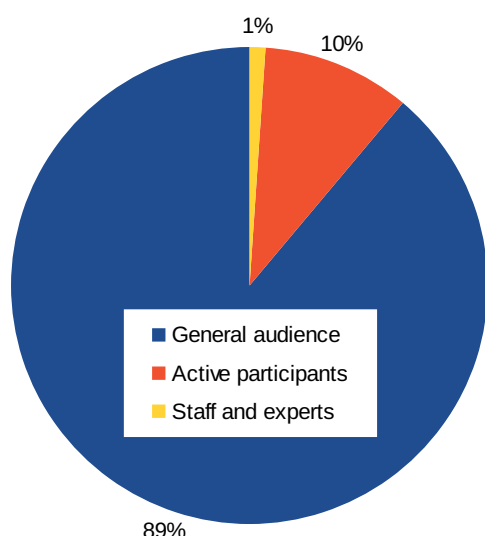
### Objective 2: promote the voice as universal instrument

#### Promote singing within the general audience of concerts.

This objective is central to the EUROPA CANTAT festival with open air open singing session, where the audience is invited to sing, thus erasing the barrier between stage and floor, between musicians and auditors. We also presented different methods during the “Reach Out” conference in Barcelona, in 2014.



© Milena Kaplan. Youth Choirs in Movement



## Key statistical figures

### Based on the available data

- **Audience (except participants): 109380 persons**
- **Active participants (except staff): 12360 persons**
- **...coming from 56 countries**
- **Staff involved (including volunteers): 1325**
- **Participants coming from another country than the country of the events: 53%**
- **Participants under 27: 46%**
- **Participants from countries participating in the EU Culture Programme: 88%**

### Promote singing in families

The project "lullabies of the world", a collection of international lullabies edited by Carus Verlag, with the help of VOICE partners was followed by the creation of an English language website where all the songs are available with translations, sound files and scores ([www.lullabiesoftheworld.org](http://www.lullabiesoftheworld.org)). The objective is to foster the use of singing in families, starting at the youngest age. The VOICE project contributed to the contents, and paid for the English website. In exchange, as associate partner, the editor is allowing the free online publication of the scores and recordings.

### Promote singing in Education in Europe

Koor&Stem created "A Voice for Vocal Training", a research project on good practice examples of singing with children in Europe. We were able to collect 112 examples of good practice examples. The project report was published in November 2013 and distributed all over Europe. The examples were also published on the website of Koor&Stem ([www.koorenstem.be/avoicetovocaltraining](http://www.koorenstem.be/avoicetovocaltraining)) and have been published on 'Doewap', the new Koor&Stem website on singing with children, as well as the Singing Cities platform.

The research results got their practical application in the form of a songbook and new didactical material for teachers at primary schools ('Do you like music?'), with input from European experts. This material was used during a whole series of test workshops and a study day for teachers and student teachers and during 'school singing days' organised at schools in four Flemish provinces. These 16 training events took place from November 2013 to February 2015 and reached approx. 300 teachers, 250 student teachers and 1.500 pupils.

European best practices on singing with children also served as a basis for a new website on singing with children, aimed at primary school teachers.

An inspirational guide for singers and choirs was edited in four languages to provide innovative tools and ideas to encourage each of them to reach out to the next generation and get "millions of children singing within the span of a generation".

### Develop tools for promotion

The "Singing Europe" research programme provides institutions and organisations with an invaluable tool to help the promotion of the voice, by providing relevant figures and statistics about the "singing" landscape of the different European countries.

### Objective 3: improve the quality of vocal music

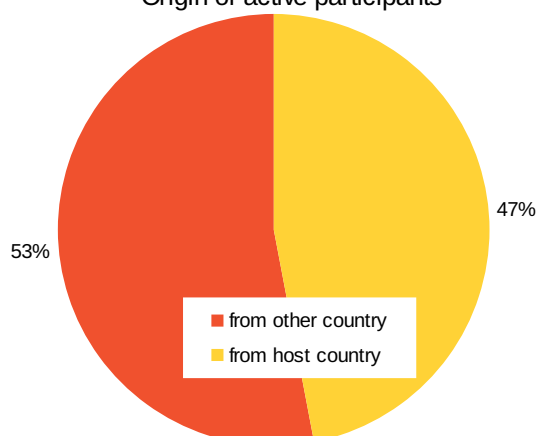
The VOICE project naturally tried to improve the quality of vocal music in Europe through a full range of initiatives and activities. Here are few examples:

The Eurochoir programme took place in three countries, allowing selected young singers from all over Europe to build a European "project choir" able to perform demanding pieces. One underlying objective was to allow for singers to improve their vocal skills from the emulation that such a choir provides, and bring back these skills to their country of origin. Since many of these singers are also conductors, they also served as multipliers, reaching out to many singers, and allowing them to benefit from the project.

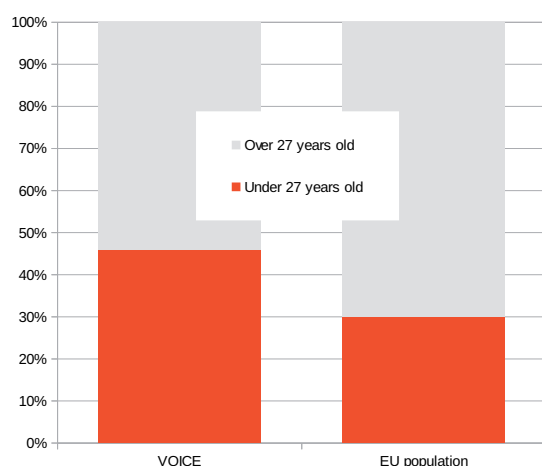
The Europa Cantat Festival in Turin gathered more than 4000 people in transnational non-competitive workshops and ateliers where they were able to learn new pieces, new methods and sing in concerts. The ateliers were organised so that every singer could be offered a work programme that suited its initial level, and build up new skills in a fun yet demanding way. On the other hand, the composers' atelier programme was aiming at providing the composers with the adequate tools to compose better music for choirs. Along the same lines, the YEMP (Young Event Management Programme) contributed to improving the quality of events around vocal music.

The Polyfolia festival is based on a very efficient concept. Professional choirs and vocal ensemble from all over the world are selected by an international committee and invited to perform

Origin of active participants



Age of active participants vs age of EU population



in front of an audience that gathers promoters, journalists and professionals from the choir world (the Marketplace). But they are also performing during public concerts in front of a local audience. Since the festival also offers the opportunity for amateur choirs to perform during special time slots, these amateur singers have a chance to attend evening concerts and discover international ensembles that would otherwise never come to Normandy. Hearing high quality concerts is a fantastic motivational tool for these choirs, and it provides them with an incentive to improve their skills and repertoire.

The different training courses for conductors (European Academy for Choral Conductors, seminars and sessions for conductors at the Europa Cantat Festival, Master classes in France and Sweden, Conductors Congress in France, workshops in Bonn) ultimately aimed at improving the quality of vocal music by improving the quality of the conductors, enlarging their repertoire, teaching new methods and approaches and allowing conductors to exchange with their peers.

The VOICE project also partnered with two universities (Leuven in Belgium and York in Great Britain) to develop research that helps better understand the way singers relate to their voice, and how one should adapt their teaching, singing and conducting habits to protect and develop the voices. You can find an article dedicated to the Singing Sofa research on page 8, and an abstract of the research titled "How healthy are choral singers' voices?" on our website. [http://bit.ly/voice\\_york](http://bit.ly/voice_york)

#### **Objective 4: enable transnational mobility and circulation of (young) musicians and choral works**

##### **Enable circulation of artists**

All of the VOICE events, including the Eurochoir, EUROPA CANTAT, YEMP and programmes for conductors and composers, European Academy for Choral Conductors, Youth Choirs in Movement, Choral Crossroads and Polyfolia events are by essence European events. Their very aim is to gather singers, conductors, composers and managers stemming from all over Europe or the rest of the world. The VOICE project allowed one hand to facilitate cooperation between partners and to lower the financial barrier that very often hinders transnational circulation.

In addition almost all of the events have a differentiated solidarity system of participation fees offering lower fees to participants from countries with economical difficulties and in the case of the EUROPA CANTAT festival also lower fees for young people under 27, aiming at increasing the mobility of these aim groups.



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The statistics speak for themselves: the VOICE project has gathered 53% of participants that do not come from the host country. Allowing young people to meet one another is also paramount to the project, and this first year, the VOICE project has reached out to 46% of participants under 27 years old.

##### **Enable circulation of choral works**

Not only singers do, the music itself travels too! During VOICE there was an impressive mobility of artistic works:

- 1,415 pieces performed or rehearsed,
- coming from 61 countries
- 67% of the pieces come from EU Culture Programme countries

Choirs and conductors act as multipliers by taking the music pieces home to their respective countries.

##### **Enable circulation of young managers**

The mobility of young managers of choral events or ensembles is also an objective, three sessions gathered young emerging choral managers for on-the-job trainings and courses to help them build a European career and act as ambassadors of the European idea.

- YEMP 2012- Young Event Management Programme
- CAMP 2012 and 2014: Choral Art Management Programme

Both programmes are designed to provide young professional a mix of theoretical knowledge and intensive hands-on experience, and to immerse them in an international network of promoters, musicians and other professionals.

#### **Objective 5: enhance the dialogue between cultures and generations as well as the exchange of expertise**

About 12000 people from 56 different countries have actively taken part in the activities of the VOICE project. Over half of them (53%) had to cross a border to attend these activities. This is a major achievement in itself.

##### **Enhance the dialogue between the cultures and generations**

Bringing people together is good, having them work and sing together is even better! And if you get them to stay in the same accommodation, share meals and spend free time together, how could they not build up durable transnational relationships? All along the VOICE activities, participants had to interact despite their cultural and generational differences, they had to work together on projects and musical pieces. They also spent their free time together and exchanged information about each others' countries and cultures in bilateral and multilateral informal talks. Singers and conductors brought along their favourite pieces to share with the others, as well as typical food from their country and stories about their cultures. To that extend, the VOICE project is not only about European cooperation between the co-organisers, but also about European cooperation between the people we are bringing together. "Cooperation" is thus not only a method for running the project but is also what describes best the content of our activities.

We have set up an online survey to gain feedback from participants (see page 13 for more details). Out of the 300 answers:

- 98% had met people from other countries
- 86% had to speak a foreign language to communicate
- 65% have developed a new outlook on Europe
- 84% think that the European dimension was important for the success of the event

##### **Enhance the exchange of expertise**

The exchange of expertise has also been central to most of our musical activities: master-classes, training sessions, programmes for managers are all about sharing its knowledge and practices with fellow Europeans. But not only do the participants benefit individually from the experience, they also carry back home new expertise that they can spread and disseminate in their respective countries. A wonderful outcome of our evaluations amongst the participants is that they often claimed to have learned a lot from other participants. So we can probably say that we reached a good balance between a top-down approach (transmission of expertise from professionals) and a peer-to-peer approach (exchange between participants).

The VOICE conferences, the Symposium on Singing in Music Education or the Congress for Conductors were designed to allow for peer-to-peer exchange between the participants, with thematic workgroups and interactive presentations led by selected experts and moderators. This setting proved very successful and allowed for a better involvement and communication than traditional conference settings.

The whole process of the "A voice for vocal training" research programme was based on exchange of expertise, through online, offline and live meetings of selected European experts. At the coordination level, the partners worked together on different aspects of the project (data collection, reporting, preparation of the future events and dissemination conferences, etc.).



### Objective 6: New tools for the promotion of singing in music education

The Symposium on Singing in Music Education, held in Budapest in 2014 focused on different music education approaches that involve singing, including a strong focus on the Kodály concept. The Symposium gathered music pedagogues, professors of teacher training institutions, conductors, choirs, vocal ensembles and singers from Europe and all over the world to present and demonstrate how they use various music education methods.

The project brought together many renowned music pedagogues (65), professors of teacher training institutions, conductors, choirs, vocal ensembles and singers from Europe and all over the world, creating for them a platform of fruitful exchange of experience, offering the opportunity of spreading wide their international network, also for starting new collaborations and projects. The Symposium offered a wide range of presentations, including from VOICE partners, covering not only the innovative methods experimented in different European countries, but also assessing the status quo, both in the fields of social sciences related to singing, and in the debates surrounding the issues at hand. With over 100 well-networked participants, presentations and videos made available on the VOICE website, the Symposium reaches its target audience and will contribute to reshaping the educational landscape in Europe.

The project "A Voice for Vocal Training" as described in the objective 2 also developed a serie of tools to foster the use of singing in music education.

## What could be the long term impact of the project?

### Multiplication effect on direct cooperation between choral and cultural operators in Europe

We can definitely claim that the project developed new habits of European cooperation between coorganisers and associate partner. The whole choral world has been following the VOICE project with great interest, and now feels empowered to set up small, medium and large scale European projects (with or without EU funding). To that extend the project contributed to the slow shift from top-down networking to peer-to-peer cooperation that the ECA-EC is trying to foster.

### Networking of artists, facilitating the circulation of artists and works of art.

The artists involved in the different activities had a chance to broaden their network, hopefully allowing them to develop their career on the international level (and we are also including here amateur choirs, and singers which are very actively travelling to events across Europe, often being accommodated by their local counterparts, which they met during our activities).

### Dissemination of innovative methods, on the musical, organisational, and pedagogical level

The collected, evaluated, shared knowledge and experiences on the European level will help renew the pedagogical, musical and organisational methods in a large number of institutions. The VOICE project contributed to address the role of singing in general and in musical education, by providing usable tools and impulsing discussions amongst and between the education, musical and scientific worlds.

### Prove and foster the growth of collective singing in Europe.

The Singing Europe research, operated in cooperation with all the coorganisers, should allow for a better public perception of the importance of collective singing in our societies. We already discovered that having such data covering Europe gives us a wonderful tool to address partners, media and policy makers with evidence-based figures that show the importance of the singing phenomenon that tends to be underestimated (see the pages dedicated to Singing Europe in this special edition).

VOICE already helped to initiate new types of events and innovative ideas. More innovative elements will be elaborated and the dissemination of the results including the research will inspire others who are not participating directly in VOICE.

The long-term benefits of VOICE therefore lie in

- greater knowledge about the voice
- more singing in schools
- improved quality of vocal music
- sustainable development and advanced innovation in the choral world
- improved cooperation within the choral world and the world of music education as well as research

The project was developed to fulfill specific objectives in the field of choral music at the European level. Looking back at the initial objectives, it is a success.

## Conclusion

The VOICE project was a challenge from the start, with an ambition to develop new visions on choral music in Europe not only through theoretical discussions and expert talks, but by experimenting on the field, with a very broad focus ranging from singing in general education to professional training for tomorrow's leading artists, from global statistical research to state-of-the-art laryngological inquiry into the voice of young singers. We laid down a transnational ground work on which future projects and developments can build upon, using their own strengths to further the European legacy of the VOICE project. And along the process, we created strong professional bonds between staffs, and fostered the European identity amongst singers and conductors of all generations.



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# The Singing Sofa, sit down & play

**For the first time, singing children and youngsters themselves were asked about their opinion, attitude, habits, experiences, emotions, thoughts and expectations concerning singing and singing in a choir. The result is a surprisingly thoughtful insight in their life as a chorister. Although subjective, these data are very powerful in addition to the scientific research data arising from measurements and from adult interpretation of children's singing behavior.**



Within The VOICE Project, the Centre of Excellence for Voice (KU Leuven, Research Group ExpORL) works on a project called The Singing Sofa. The project has three topics: a survey for both juvenile singers and their conductors, an online information platform, and the development of a game for youth choirs containing all main information covered in the project. In this article, we mainly focus on the results of the survey.

## Ask the children: the European Young Singers Inventory

During the project, the Centre of Excellence for Voice organised an extensive questionnaire for young choral singers and their conductors. This European Young Singers Inventory (EYSI) was online from December 15th 2014 until February 15th 2015 in English, French, German and Dutch. The edition for young singers was also available in Catalan. The content of the survey focused on the physical, cognitive, social and psychological aspects of development. There were also some questions to query the vocal awareness among the respondents. In the questionnaire for singers, there were 300 respondents, all between 4 and 21 years of age. They come from 12 countries and 72 different choirs. Among the conductors, there were 94 respondents between 17 and 72 years of age. They have 18 different nationalities. The Centre of Excellence will do further analysis of that collected data. Since the number of respondents is relatively small, some results might need to be nuanced.

## What do the young singers say?

In the survey for singing children/youngsters, many respondents asked for information on topics such as

- voice mutation (what, features, when, how)
- what to do with and how to prevent voice problems
- information concerning healthy voice use and voice wellness.

In their rehearsals, the singers like to have exercises on both high and low tones. They also prefer to rehearse frequently and to spend enough attention on the analysis and comprehension of the texts that they are singing. Additionally, they appreciate solo singing in alternation with choir singing. The melody - and not the text - of new repertoire is the most deciding factor for their appreciation of that music. Moreover, they find it valuable to do group activities with the choir next to the singing and rehearsing in a good room is important for them. They indicated to be uncertain about their growth and healthy development. Several young choral singers feel that singing in a choir has had a positive effect on cognitive skills as memorisation

and concentration. The choir also improved knowledge of their mother tongue and their musical knowledge. The singers are also more interested in other people since they sing in the choir. Socially, choir singing has helped them to make contacts more easily; they take more initiative and find it easier to express feelings and ideas than before they had sung in a choir. In general, the choir singers feel more relaxed, experience more self-esteem than before entering the choir. They emphasise that they experience lots of positive feelings as joy, happiness and self-confidence. The singers also handle feelings more consciously.

## What do the conductors tell us?

In the survey for conductors, the respondents show the need for information concerning vocal development in puberty related to growth and how to detect symptoms and signals. They also want to know more about the influence of stress on voice and performance, and the importance of emotions in singing. Several conductors question how and why to optimise the rehearsal room and ask for do's and don'ts for voice care. Most conductors are familiar with extensive vocal warm-ups. When it comes to the cooling down of the voice, there is a clear need for information. In addition, they request advice for multidisciplinary cooperation. Spreading these kinds of information through the communication channels of choral federations in the future might be useful.

Conductors report that singing children and youngsters enlarge their voice range, have a higher degree of flexibility and pick up tones more easily since they sing in the choir. They also report that the youngsters develop a better comprehension of texts, the enhancement of their memory skills and an improvement of music-reading skills. Furthermore, they indicate that the choir is socially very important for the singers, and that singing in the choir gives the youngsters more opportunities for social contacts and entering into friendships. When it comes to psychological aspects, the conductors confirm what the youngsters indicated: more self-esteem, positive outlook on life, less fear of failure, more empathy, beneficial influence on emotional development, ...

## Sit down and play!

All information will be attainable online at [www.thesingingsofa.eu](http://www.thesingingsofa.eu) in English. Availability in other languages can be discussed, in case the Choral Federations desire this and can offer help in the translation to their language. Next to the results of the EYSI, the online platform will contain accompanying information on all topics mentioned. This information will be very accessible, usable and understandable for all choral conductors.

The Singing Sofa translated the information into a group game for youth choirs called "The Singing sofa, sit down & play" based on all main information from the project. The Centre of Informative Games (Leuven) - was a partner in both the development and production of this game. It ensures a very pleasurable group activity for rehearsals, choir weekends, etc. All game materials will be available for download. It is designed so that the printing costs and amount of time needed to prepare the game is minimal. A very clear manual for the choir director / game's master is included. This manual also contains background information on all topics that are covered in the game.

**Wivine Decoster, Ayla Benoy, Hans Helsen**

[www.expertisecentrumstem.be](http://www.expertisecentrumstem.be)  
[www.thevoiceproject.eu](http://www.thevoiceproject.eu)  
[www.thesingingsofa.eu](http://www.thesingingsofa.eu)



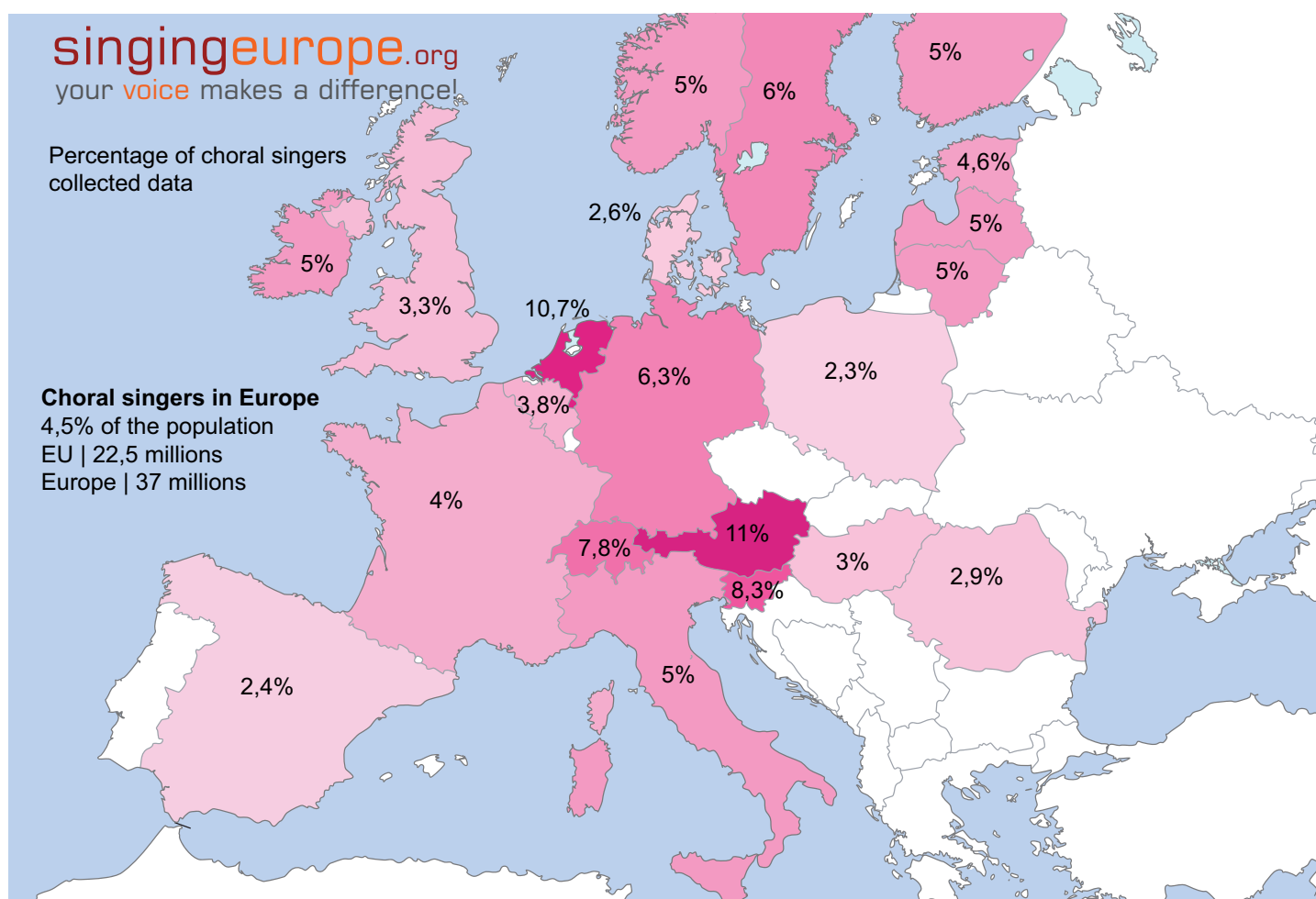
# Singing Europe: astonishing results from a pilot study

## The starting point: How many choral singers in Europe?

Quite often, people would ask the European Choral Association – Europa Cantat a very basic question such as: “But, by the way, how many people are singing in choirs in Europe?”. Indeed, shouldn’t the main European choral network be able to answer this seemingly simple question? A question that, of course, also defines its own field of action?

Unfortunately, there was no evidence based research ever made on the question at the European level. So the answer we usually provided was to claim about 20 million choral singers for the whole continental Europe, based on a loose evaluation of the situation of the different European countries.

But everybody knew that, however impressive, this was not a satisfactory answer, that it may be an over- or an underestimation. So, instead of waiting for the perfect research to appear on the European level, we decided to try and answer this question in the frame of the VOICE project, with a pilot study called Singing Europe.



## Aims of the Study

The aims of “Singing Europe” are to:

- gather up-to-date and accurate statistical and qualitative data regarding people singing together in the different countries of Europe,
- help national and European organisations to set up programmes that are more relevant to the reality and needs of the singing community,
- empower the choral world with a clearer vision of its own realities, based on comparable data
- provide efficient data to convince decision makers to support the development of singing in our societies.

## Singing Europe: first results

After two years of research, we will publish a complete report from June 2015, freely downloadable from the VOICE website. Here are a few significant findings that may help change the perception of the choral realities in Europe and beyond.

### Number of collective singers in Europe

- 4,5% of the European population
- 22,5 Million singers in the European Union (EU28)
- 37 Million singers for the whole European continent, including Russia

This figure provides a totally new outlook on the importance of choral singing in Europe:

The figures used by the European Choral Association were revolving around 20 Million choral singers on the European continent. The study Singing Europe thus generates a leap of +85% of the perceived importance of choral singing in Europe, based on solid, reliable data.

This information should help policy makers better assess, and finally, better address the importance of collective singing in Europe.

### How many ensembles or choirs in Europe?

- 625.000 Choirs or Ensembles in EU28
- 1 Million Choirs or Ensembles on the European continent

Having percentages on choral participation on one hand and a prediction for ensemble's size on the other hand, we can estimate the number of ensembles for Europe as well as for a given country.

To approximate an average size for choirs/ensembles, we rely on the results of the online survey Singing Europe. It was administered to all kinds of singing groups and was spread mainly through choral and singing-related organisations as well as social networks. Over 4100 usable answers from the survey let us calculate the average size of an ensemble in Europe at 36 members. This figure seems coherent with other existing sources on the national levels.

### National figures for choral practice

We collected as many national statistics as we could find in the timeframe we had for this pilot study. The quality of the data is very diverse depending on the source. We kept the data that reached a certain methodological threshold and that were not too dated. From this trove of information we were able to map out collective singing practices in Europe.

Country	Percentage of choral singers / population	Choral singers	Part of the EU28 choral singers	Part of the European choral singers
<b>with available data</b>				
Austria	11%	925 000	4,10%	2,50%
Belgium	3,80%	418 000	1,90%	1,10%
Denmark	2,60%	145 000	0,60%	0,40%
Estonia	4,60%	61 000	0,30%	0,20%
Finland	5%	268 000	1,20%	0,70%
France	4%	2 630 000	11,60%	7,10%
Germany	6,30%	4 813 000	21,30%	13%
Hungary	3%	299 000	1,30%	0,80%
Ireland	5%	229 000	1,00%	0,60%
Italy	5%	3 021 000	13,40%	8,10%
Latvia	5%	118 000	0,50%	0,30%
Lithuania	5%	170 000	0,80%	0,50%
Netherlands	10,70%	1 786 000	7,90%	4,80%
Norway	5%	246 000	Non EU	0,70%
Poland	2,30%	885 000	3,90%	2,40%
Romania	2,90%	583 000	2,60%	1,60%
Slovenia	8,30%	170 000	0,80%	0,50%
Spain	2,40%	1 131 000	5,00%	3,00%
Sweden	6%	561 000	2,50%	1,50%
Switzerland	7,20%	560 000	Non EU	1,50%
United Kingdom	3,30%	2 047 000	9,10%	5,50%
Other EU28 – no data	4,5% (extrapolation)	-	10,30%	-
Other all	4,5%	-	-	43,30%
European Continent – no data	(extrapolation)			

*Taking into account all the "collective singers" in Europe, a new outlook is possible, showing the importance of the different countries of residence of the singers amongst the global "Singing Europe". For example, it shows that 13,4% of the EU28 singers are in Italy, or that one singer out of five in the EU28 is located in Germany.*



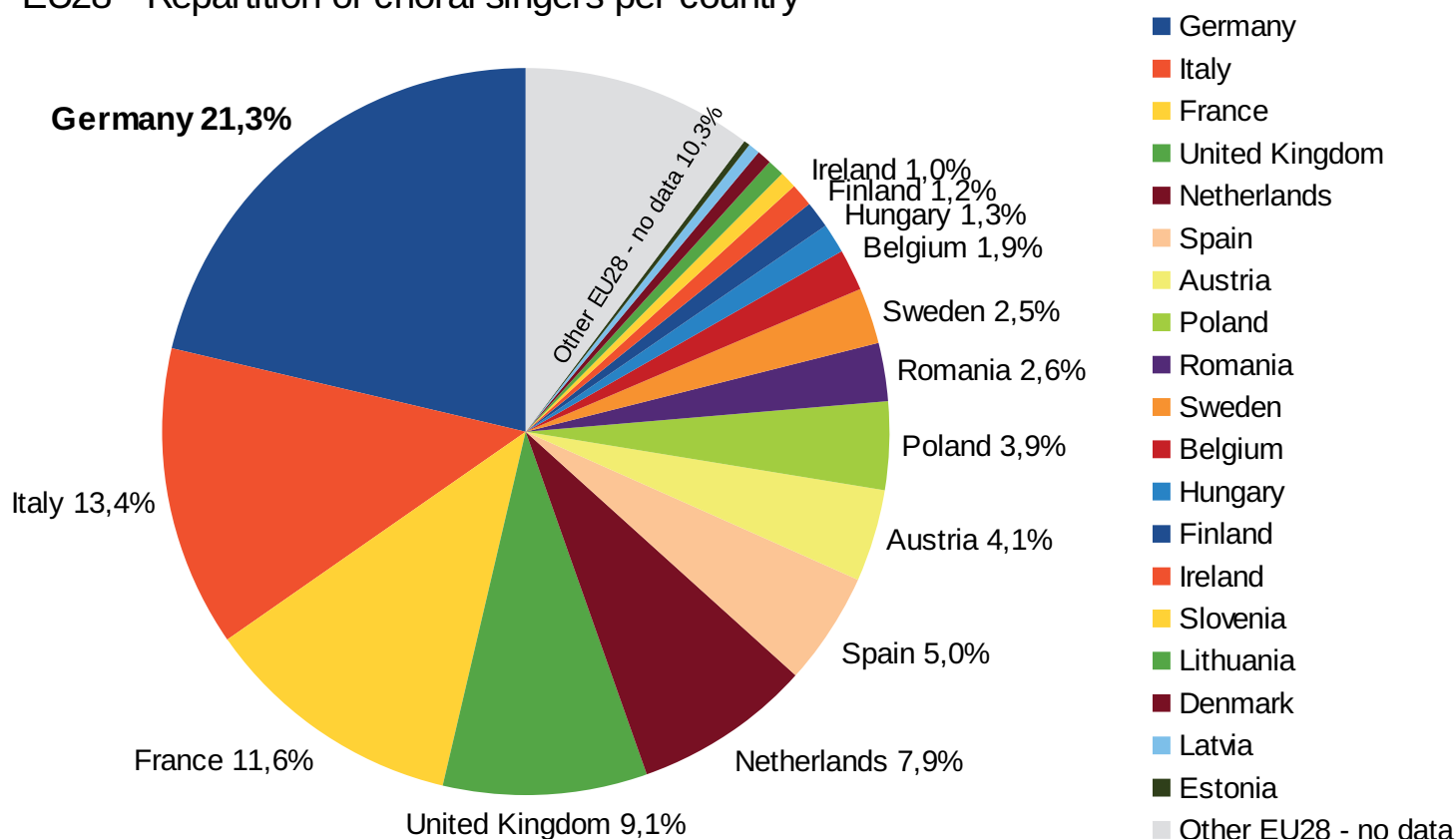
© Pavlos Vrionides. Choral Cossroads.

But these national global figures are also misleading and cover very diverse local realities. For example, available data shows that German residents sing more when they reach retirement, whereas in Slovenia, younger people are more active in choirs. Only a full scale European study could offer a complete comparable data set.

The final report on Singing Europe, including the findings related to our online questionnaire, will be available in June 2015

www.singingeurope.org

## EU28 - Repartition of choral singers per country



**Choral singers in Europe**

**37 Million**

**4,5%  
of the population**

© EUROPA CANTAT Torino 2012

© Dolf Rabus



# I found my voice through VOICE

**VOICE offered wonderful opportunities to singers, conductors, composers to meet and share visions and experiences. But the project also aimed at building the future of the choral network through a new generation of choral managers. Réka Balog, from Pécs, Hungary, participated and worked on different activities of the VOICE project, and she kindly contributed with this first person account of her VOICE experience.**

In the beginning of 2011 ECA-EC proposed the Pécs Cultural Center to join a multiannual EU programme application. We earned the trust of the association after the successful realisation of the „Pécs Cantat 2010 – The Singing European Capital of Culture” festival, a singing week organised in cooperation with ECA-EC, which turned out to be one of the most visited events of the Pécs 2010 European Capital of Culture year. We decided to join the application with the EuroChoir project and I was appointed to coordinate the application.

This preparation phase was already a great experience to see how to schedule, build up and handle successfully the application of 14 partners coming from 11 countries. This process took around half a year, with plenty of emailing, Skyping,

getting to know more and more about the other partners. We were all really proud once the application documents were finished and I was excited to read the final version of the project.

In spring 2012 we learned that VOICE was accepted and that we can realise EuroChoir in 2013 in Pécs. Soon after I found myself in the tiny city of Lomnice nad Popelkou in the Czech Republic, visiting the EuroChoir 2012 session, as the first official event of VOICE. This visit allowed me to learn more about building up such an event and to meet the participants and invite them directly to the next session in Pécs. A month later I was already in Turin, Italy in the EUROPA CANTAT XVIII festival. I participated in the Kick-off meeting of VOICE where I could finally meet all the project partners in person. I worked as an international volunteer in the EUROPA CANTAT Festival and gained a life-time experience.

Autumn 2012 started in Saint-Lo, France, with the CAMP – Choral Art Management Programme, where I could get a first-hand insight into the organisation of the unique Polyfolia international vocal festival. I was one of the lucky ones, among the 12 other participants coming from 10 different countries and 4 continents to listen to the lectures of the organisers and going to the concerts of the invited ensembles.

In November 2012 I participated in the General Assembly and VOICE meeting in Toulouse to learn about the development of the project and meet with the partners again.

In 2013 I was busy preparing the EuroChoir Pécs session. Before the event I participated in a VOICE meeting in July in Vaison-la-Romaine, France, in the framework of the International Masterclass for Choral Conductors.

EuroChoir Pécs was realised between 10-17th August, 2013, with 63 singers coming from 22 different countries, who learned a repertoire from conductors Tamás Lakner from Pécs and Alessandro Cadario from Italy. The choir gave two full house concerts in the Kodály Centre in Pécs and another one in the city of Szekszárd. The previous session had difficulties to recruit singers,



“How can Singing belong to everyone” in the renovated beautiful Liszt Academy in Budapest.

Later on I was asked to become the “chaperon”, the guide of the next CAMP programme of Polyfolia in 2014. This is way the autumn of 2014 started for me again in Saint-Lo, France, guiding the CAMPers to follow the events of the festival.

In November I flew to Barcelona to participate in the VOICE Conference. Finally, I participated in the closing meeting of the project in Bonn in March 2015. In overall I can say that VOICE helped me to experience how to prepare, build up and realise together with 14 partners a multiannual European project. Between 2012 and 2015 I participated in 11 events in 6 countries, meeting a truly international circle of choral music. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of personal meetings through these visits and events. I chose the title “I found my voice through VOICE”, because I think it’s thanks to this programme that I grew up to this international cooperation level. I use these experiences and this network in my work on a daily basis, now to prepare the next EUROPA CANTAT festival, to be held this summer between 24th July -2nd August.

Thank you VOICE, thanks to all the partners and all the persons I met through the programme, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship. I hope that we will continue to realise the vision together.

**Réka Balog**  
 Festival office manager of EUROPA CANTAT XIX Pécs 2015

In spring 2014 I helped the partner Kóta in the realisation of the Symposium On Singing in Music Education



# Listen to the VOICE participants!

We conducted a survey\* amongst the active participants to some of the activities of the VOICE project. Here are some statistical insights on the findings and some testimonies by the participants themselves, to read about VOICE in their own words.

\* Online survey, in English, with 300 usable answers.

## Europa Cantat 2012 / YEMP – Turin IT, Eurochoir 2014 - Saintes FR

*I am from eastern part of Europe, I study choral conducting in Moscow. That's why Eurochoir was extremely new experience for me. Singers and conductors represented „european“ way of sound, musical mentality and another way of conducting. Of course, it opened my mind. I understood that although I love russian music most of all, to be involved in west european music culture is so exciting that I would like to know about it more and more. Everything is relative. Eurochoir gave me the chance to choose where to study, to work. In particular I thought a lot about intonation in choir and about different methods of work in Russia and Europe. Warm-up is perfect thing, and is NEVER done here, in Moscow. I often miss it. So... Eurochoir is unvaluable for me and my future.*

## Polyfolia Festival 2014 - Saint Lô FR

*The festival was a great chance for me to improve my arts management skills in action, having to liaise with a variety of stakeholders (the networking lunch was very useful experience) and attending a showcase style format which I had never been to.*

*I find that choral music has always opened doors for me to Europe in particular, especially eastern Europe which has such a strong choral tradition in comparison to Ireland (which only has the relatively recent influence of UK choral tradition). With choirs I have travelled to cities and countries in Europe that I might not otherwise see and it is always interesting to meet singers from other cultures and yet have such a strong sense of bond and understanding because of a shared interest in something as collaborative and community-focussed as choral singing.*

## Europa Cantat 2012 / YEMP – Turin IT

*The experience at Europa Cantat was important and it allowed me to challenge myself in a multicultural and very busy environment, planning and managing music events with people coming from all over Europe and beyond.*

*EC certainly helped me having a broader understanding of the music world in Europe, also learning different repertoires. It was great seeing how many pieces go beyond borders and are well-known everywhere.*

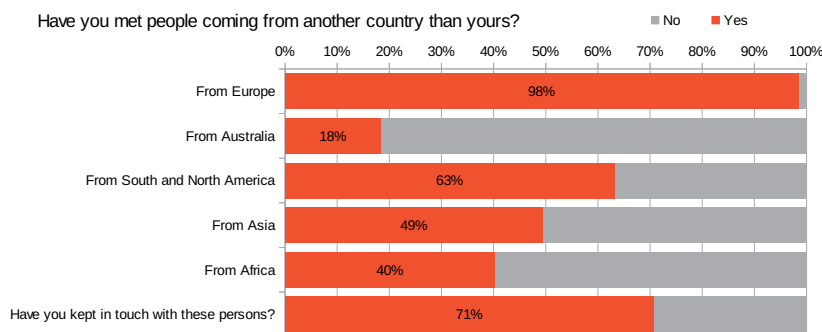
## European Academy for Choral Conductors in Graz 2012

*It changed my way of thinking and performing in a wonderful way!*

## Eurochoir 2012 – Lomnice CZ, Europa Cantat 2012 – Turin IT

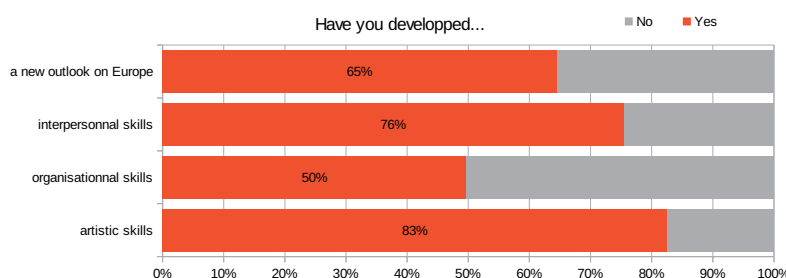
*It was great to sing with so many talented conductors. And all the pieces I have sung will stay with me, and maybe I will arrange a performance of some of them in my own choir. It was great to see that although we had different nationalities, singing united us to a group of close friends.*

Have you met people coming from another country than yours?



- 94% of the participants declared that the VOICE project reached their expectations.
- 94% expect long-term benefits to their participation.
- 68% of the active participants who are professionals discovered “new ways to do their job”

Have you developed...

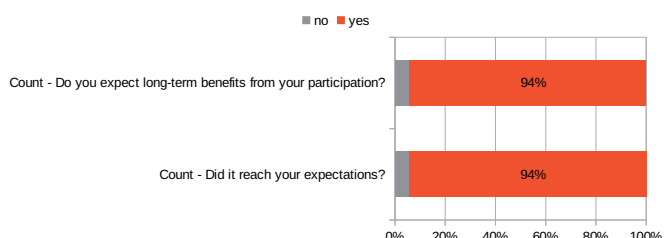


## Eurochoir 2013 - Pécs HU

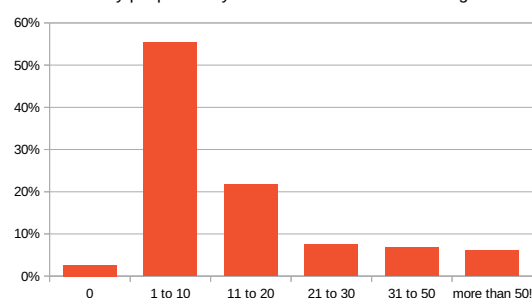
*The week in Pécs made me more free in singing, and was a great experience of emotion-full singing. The contrast of the two conductors enlarged the importance of the emotions in the choir work. It was a determining treat, when the instructions from a conductor from another country were the same as my everyday conductor use to say. And of course I felt that an Italian make Italian music much better, and we could learn a lot from each other.*

*It's really good, that I know real individuals almost from all country of Europe. It weakens the stereotypes, and of course sometimes enhances.*

Evaluation by the VOICE participants



How many people have you met and would like to meet again?







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## Who are we?

- We are a network of organisations, choirs and individuals in the choral field in Europe
- We are the largest choral organisation in Europe
- We gather over 50 national and regional member organisations in 29 European countries and Israel, plus several hundred member choirs and individual members
- We reach out to more than 2.5 million choral singers in more than 50 countries through our network
- We are the result of a merger between Europa Cantat European Federation of Young Choirs (EFYC), founded in 1960/1963 and the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Europäischer Chorverbände (AGEC), founded in 1955, a merger completed in January 2011. We incorporated the archives and history of IDOCO (Internationale des Organisations Culturelles Ouvrières) in 2014.

## What do we offer?

- We offer activities for choirs, young singers, conductors, composers and managers on all levels from Europe and beyond
- We offer information and services about the choral world in Europe
- We invest in capacity building and training, in connecting people from different communities and in raising awareness for the benefits of singing
- We help to strengthen the choral network and offer opportunities to people who like singing and learning from each other.
- We are also connected to the choral world outside Europe and to other music and culture organisations

## Learn more about (y)our association!

### Visit our website [www.EuropeanChoralAssociation.org](http://www.EuropeanChoralAssociation.org)

- Get the latest news from the choral world
- Access resources and publications
- Discover (y)our online calendar of choral events, where you can find (or insert your own) festivals, competitions, trainings or other opportunities everywhere in Europe and beyond: <http://bit.ly/ChoralEvents>

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Stay updated with useful information about the choral world.

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[www.facebook.com/EuropeanChoralAssociation](https://www.facebook.com/EuropeanChoralAssociation)

## Grow your network, join the association!

We are happy to welcome new individual members, choirs or organisations!

Call us, send us an email, or check out our website:

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[www.EuropeanChoralAssociation.org](http://www.EuropeanChoralAssociation.org)

Telephone: +49 228 912 56 63

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The VOICE project is a cooperation project coordinated by the

- European Choral Association – Europa Cantat (Germany) | [www.europeanchoralassociation.org](http://www.europeanchoralassociation.org)

in partnership with 14 coorganisers:

- Chorverband Österreich (Austria) | [www.chorverband.at](http://www.chorverband.at)
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