



Arts+ Network

Arts Plus is a relational network which comprises a group of visionary arts advocates and leaders who collaborate together to catalyse progress in the arts landscape across Europe and beyond. Inspired by previous 'Hope for Europe' conferences, it began in 2009 with leaders of Christian arts initiatives coming together to create a European-wide relational network.

The Arts Plus network and vision continues to expand across Europe and beyond and focuses on four spheres of influence: The Church, Artists, Academy/Education, and Society/Marketplace. It is a catalyst for the formation of local, national and international Arts Round Tables, a core activity in recognition of the importance of bringing together arts leaders for mutual awareness, encouragement, prayer, and potential creative collaboration.

The network is intentionally trans-denominational and open for trans-cultural connections. We currently have 11 Round Tables developing and growing across Europe and seek to expand our reach to an international level. We embrace common core values, and our Round Tables are informed by a Christian Biblical worldview and unified in the desire to see God glorified in Church life, educational endeavors, the public square, and mission initiatives.



Our aim is to see the formation and nurturing of more local, national and international Round Tables which allow for creative collaboration, exchange, mutual encouragement and cooperation.

Discovering a network of cousins

For many organizations and networks, the last two years of dealing with a global pandemic has been challenging. Due to the fact that our main focus is fostering connection and collaboration, we were faced with a major issue as to how this would continue. As a result, we experimented with online zoom meetings to see how this could enable us to gather, listen to each other, share experiences and ideas, and continue to build regional and national alliances to embrace creatives from a range language groups across Europe and beyond. We offered 4 main Zoom-Meetings from October 2020 through to November 2021 with our executive and extended leadership teams and existing members. This proved very successful and as a result we were able to broaden our network to encompass arts ministry leaders from Europe and beyond to Canada, USA and Australia. The fourth meeting was a hybrid meeting with arts leaders meeting both physically and online in Budapest, Hungary. For each meeting we tried to identify how Arts Plus could help and support arts leaders in these difficult and challenging times. The October Zoom gathering had a focus on the arts ministries within Arts Plus to enable all to see and understand the range of ministries represented and to connect people on the call. This established the sense of togetherness which was needed at the time.

The February zoom gathering was focused on ‘Kingdom Connections’ and how to foster connections with artists and creatives in other creative spheres, and encourage best practices for working together. The May zoom gathering had a focus on ‘Creative Collaboration.’ We invited a panel of arts leaders representing our four key areas of interest: The Church, Academy/Education, Artists and the Marketplace/Society, to share their current experiences and stories of collaboration with a view to encouraging and inspiring those on the call. The November zoom gathering had a focus on training opportunities and was delivered in hybrid mode. The network was introduced to a training program called: ‘Community Arts for God’s Purposes,’ with aim to encourage ongoing learning and help artists connect with the arts in their local and church communities. This hybrid conference also provided an opportunity for re-connection.



Some of the areas and questions we were addressing in the four zoom gatherings were:

- How are you managing to partner with others such as institutions, arts and faith ministries, networks, community, and individual artists?
- Why are Kingdom connections important and what are the advantages?
- How can we build and express community especially in these challenging times of national restrictions?
- How have you been collaborating creatively with others over the last year and what have you learned?
- What kind of leadership is required in this season?
- How can we build bridges into society?
- What are new ways of delivering content online?
- What new opportunities are opening up for you and your organization?

One of our panelists said: *“It’s like discovering a network of cousins you did not know, who welcomed you and invited you into their house to eat with them.”*

Through the online zoom meetings, it was possible for us to connect in a meaningful and purposeful way. The meetings opened up new possibilities on several levels which facilitated further cooperation within countries, genres and ministries. For example, participants met in language groups for the first time; a Hungarian organization was able to promote its European festival and get to know leaders of countries they wanted to extend to, and we were able to initiate 2 National Round Tables in Austria and Hungary.

Through the pandemic we were also able to create a new website which now acts as ‘hub’ in the intersection of Arts and Faith. We provide resources for a broader audience, such as articles on “Art from the Christian point of view”, “Empowering Missional Marketplace Artists”, “The Power of Healing”, “Art as Authentic Witness,” as well as book recommendations, podcasts and videos of our partners. <https://www.artsplus.info/resources>

Arts Plus continues to invite leaders, artists and representatives of Christian Art initiatives working in the sphere of the arts, faith and society to join the Arts Plus network. Our ongoing challenge is to grow and nurture more local, national and international Round Tables which allow for creative collaboration, exchange, mutual encouragement for the purposes of building God’s kingdom.



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