



**THI-
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BIG!**

BY GRANDS
FORMATS

**THE FUNCTIONING OF EUROPEAN
JAZZ AND IMPROVISED MUSIC
LARGE ENSEMBLES**

Data for 2019

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THINK BIG!

Think Big! is a European network for jazz and improvised music large ensembles, launched by Grands Formats (French federation for jazz and improvised music large ensembles) in spring 2018. This network aims to:

- Bringing together artists from all over Europe in a spirit of exchange and solidarity
- Developing collective endeavours to strengthen the outreach and visibility of music performed in large ensembles
- Encouraging the circulation of artists and new artistic collaborations
- Making the voice of artists heard in debates regarding culture at the European level

In order to have a global understanding of the functioning of the members and to be able to contribute on the issues which concern them, the network decided to conduct this survey. Its objectives are to give a better visibility of these members, of their functioning, to encourage the sharing of knowledge and to make the voice of artists heard on a European scale.

More on Grands Formats and Think Big! on our [website](#).

METHODOLOGY

This study was created in 2021 and sent to the respondents during the end of the summer and the autumn 2021. It was sent to the European large ensembles which compose Think Big! (23 members in 2021). Members have been asked about their 2019 activity (before the covid-19 crisis).

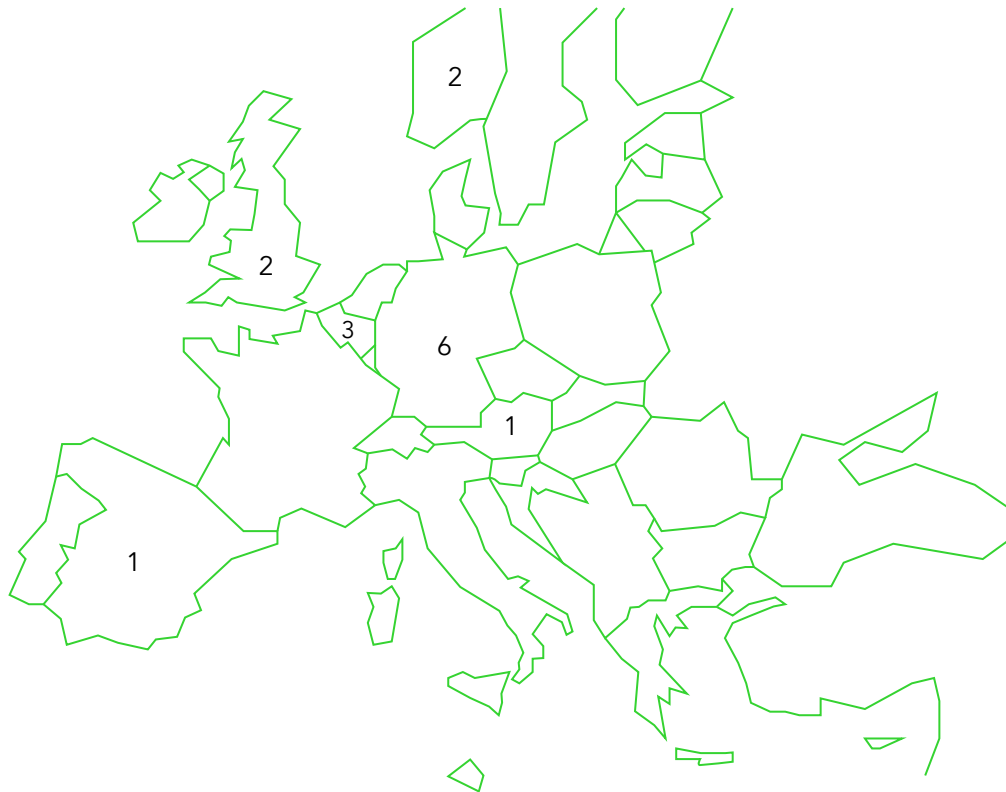
Members had to completed an online questionnaire created on Eval & Go. Results have been analyzed by September to November 2021 and first results have been presented during the *Rentrée Grands Formats*, organized by the federation, at the highlight of the event the 25 November 2021 in Clermont-Ferrand in France.

Of the 23 European members of the network, 15 large ensembles (65%) completed the survey and are thus taken into account into this study.

1. GENERAL ORGANIZATION OF THE ENSEMBLES

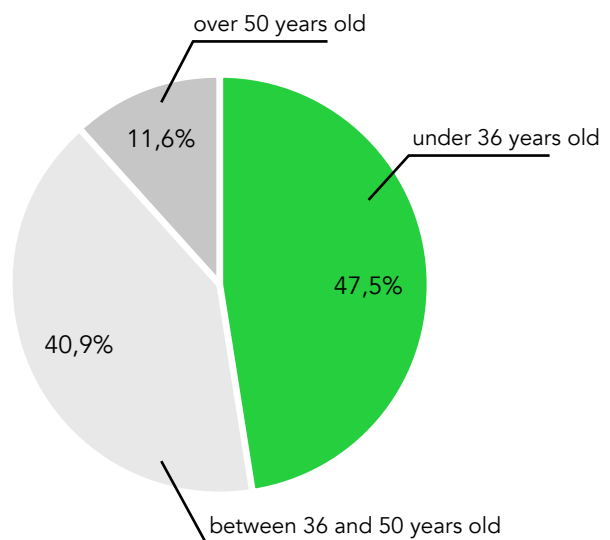
Think Big! respondent bands are professional large ensemble that gather from 8 to 30 musicians. Most commonly, they are led by one artistic director (67%). Otherwise, they have a dual or collective artistic management (33%).

They are based in various countries throughout Europe, distributed as follows:



THE ENSEMBLES BRING TOGETHER MULTIPLE GENERATIONS OF MUSICIANS

On average, about one in two band members are under 36 years old. Although this percentage is slightly higher among ensembles that are less than 10 years old, the proportion of young musicians remains consequent in older ensembles, indicating that ensembles of all ages tend to be eager to recruit young talents as they enter the professional market.



Average age distribution of musicians in european large ensembles

BOTH DIRECTORS AND MUSICIANS MOSTLY COME FROM A FORMALLY EDUCATED BACKGROUND

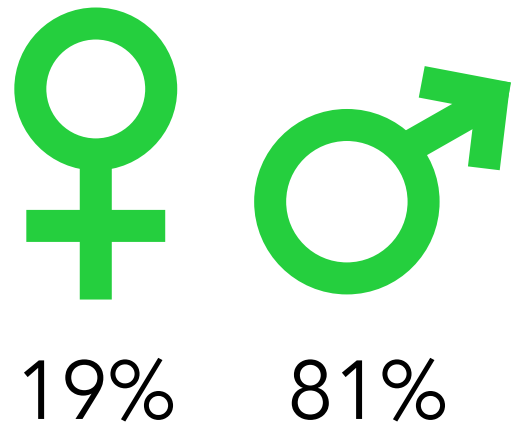
A very strong majority (80%) of the ensemble's directors (one ensemble declaring two directors) have received an education in jazz music through a conservatory. Only one is self-taught in music.

This is also true for the band members. All 15 respondents declared (multiple choice answer) that their musicians had received a formal education in a jazz conservatory (14 ensembles, 93%), a classical conservatory (1 ensemble, 7%) or a music school (1 ensemble, 7%). Only one respondent pointed out that some of its band members has received no formal education.

A PREDOMINANTLY MASCULINE ENVIRONMENT

The ensembles gather from 8 to 30 musicians, for an average number of 16 musicians per ensemble. On average, 3 of these musicians are women – that is, less than 20% of all band members.

3 out of the 15 ensembles (20%) only employ one female artist in their team, and two ensembles (13%) are strictly masculine.



2. ARTISTIC ACTIVITY: PERFORMANCES

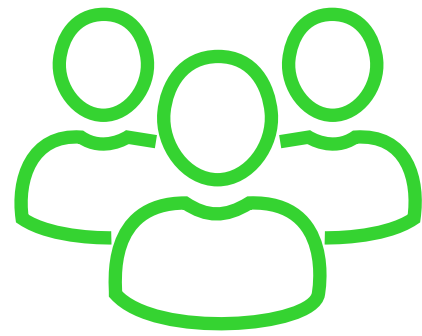
A HIGHLY CREATIVE ENVIRONMENT, REACHING LARGE AUDIENCES

Throughout their lifetime, the ensembles have created a total of 339 different performance programs (minimum: 2, maximum: 90). They have performed an average of 8.7 concerts per ensemble each year (median number: 7).

Since their creation, we estimate that respondents have given 1018 concerts. This represents an average of 3 concerts per performance program created. In 2019, they have created 46 different programs, with an average of 3.1 programs per ensemble and a median number of 1 new program per ensemble (minimum: 0, maximum: 12). These programs were performed during 99

concerts, with an average of 6.6 concerts per ensemble in 2019 (median number: 6, minimum: 0, maximum: 15).

A total of 11,375 people is estimated to have attended concerts performed by the 13 ensembles that responded to this question in 2019. On average, the ensembles have played in front of 122 people per concert (median: 100).

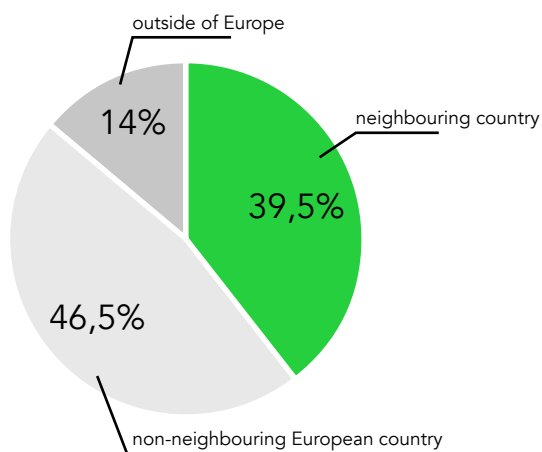


122
SPECTATORS
PER CONCERT

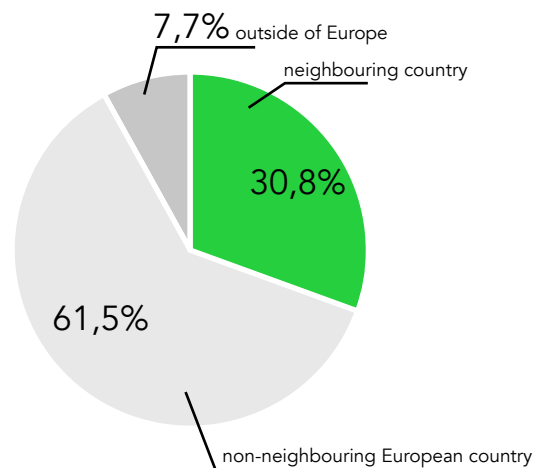
A STRONG INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITY, MOSTLY CENTRED IN EUROPE

60% of the respondents have declared having already toured outside of their own country at least once during their lifetime. These ensembles estimate that since their creation, they have toured, on average, 1.8 foreign countries each year, amounting to 18.9% of their estimated activity and to 14% of the total number of concerts performed yearly by the 15 respondents.

In 2019, 40% of large ensembles had performed abroad an average number of 1.4 concerts per ensemble, amounting to 20% of their overall activity and 14% of all concerts performed by the 15 respondent ensembles in 2019.



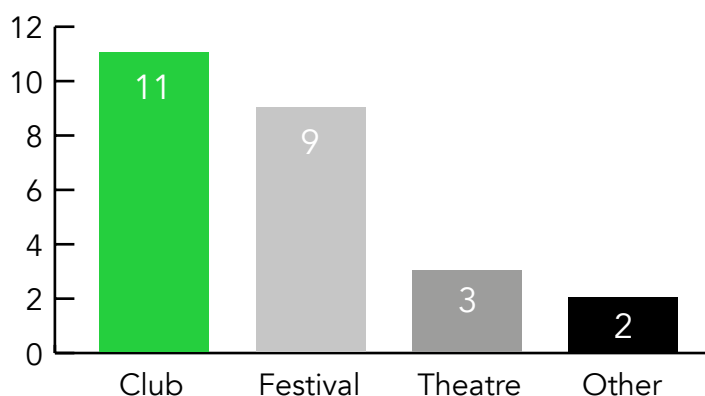
Distribution of countries the bands have toured during their lifetime (9 ensembles)



Distribution of countries toured in 2019 (6 ensembles)

As shown in these two diagrams, the international activity of respondents is predominantly based in other European countries (86% of countries toured during their lifetime and 92% of countries toured in 2019), but does not only consist in neighbouring countries.

JAZZ CLUBS AND FESTIVALS, THE BIGGEST PARTNERS OF LARGE ENSEMBLES IN EUROPE



This figure shows that respondent jazz ensembles in Europe mainly perform in dedicated venues, such as jazz clubs and festivals.

In most cases, for 80% of the ensembles, the venues buy performances through a fixed-price sales contract. Co-production is only used most commonly when venues host performances for 2 ensembles (13%).

TRADITIONAL FORMS OF PERFORMING ARE THE MOST COMMON PRACTICE

27% of the respondents have declared streaming at least one of their concerts in the year 2019. Digital broadcasting of concerts seems not to have been a widespread practice at the time, although the advent of covid-19 may have changed practices starting from 2020.

Very few ensembles engage in performances dedicated to young audiences (7% has already created such a program) or multidisciplinary programs, involving another form of art such as video, circus, dance... (7% has created such a program in 2019).

Furthermore, developing community projects (a project created with a specific audience or territory in mind) is not a practise that all ensembles share. Only 4 out of the 15 ensembles (27%) have already developed community projects since the start of their activity. However, all ensembles that engage in this practise have developed at least one community project in 2019, indicating that ensembles that do develop them are strong advocates of this practise.

A lot of large ensembles would like to develop community projects but they are facing to multiple difficulties: financial means allocated to this type of action, existing training for musicians, adapted content, etc.

3. ARTISTIC ACTIVITY: RECORDINGS

RECORDING IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE ENSEMBLES' LIVES

93% of the ensembles having completed the survey have released at least one album during their lifetime.

In total, 42 albums have been released by the 15 ensembles over the years. On average, each ensemble has released 2.8 albums during their lifetime (median: 2 albums), releasing one album every 3.2 years (median: 2.8 years).

In 2019, 20% of the respondents have released a new album.

8 out of the 15 ensembles (53%), are under contract with a record label to produce and distribute their albums. 3 ensembles have created their own record label.



**ONE ALBUM
EVERY 3, 2 YEARS**

A STRONG PRESENCE OF DIGITAL RELEASES FOR NEW ALBUMS

Out of the 14 ensembles that have released albums, 79% of them (11 ensembles) have declared having released their albums both physically (CD) and on digital platforms.

20% of the ensembles have also chosen to release their albums as a Vinyl (in addition to CD and digital).

4. ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE ENSEMBLES

A LOW LEVEL OF ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE THAT MAY HINDER THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENSEMBLES

In 2019, only 40% of ensembles declared some form of structured management, be it by being attached to another organization (4 ensembles) or by directly or indirectly employing an administrator or manager (3 ensembles). Among the respondent ensembles, only those that declare a form of administrative structure also use the services of agents to help with their booking, be it on their national territory or internationally.

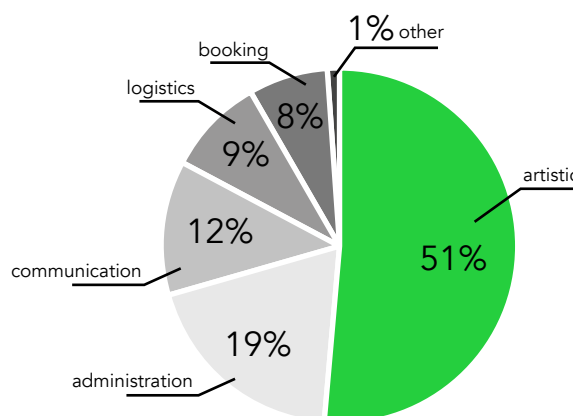
The other 60% of ensembles internalize most of their administrative work, management and booking, with on some occasions the help of exterior service providers for PR or help in grant-writing and controlling finances.

A VERY STRONG IMPLICATION OF ARTISTIC DIRECTORS IN MANAGING THEIR ENSEMBLE

This overall lack in administrative structure leads artistic directors to be strongly implicated in the administrative needs of their ensemble, and having less time allocated to their art.

Economic situations, structures, artist remuneration, etc., are very different from one country to another, and require artistic directors to take on a variety of tasks in addition to their artistic work.

On average, the ensembles estimate that their artistic director spends 51% of their time doing artistic work for the ensemble. However, it is important to note that this number drops to an average of 42% (median number 40%) for ensembles that declare no form of administrative structuring, which means no or little help on these vital matters.



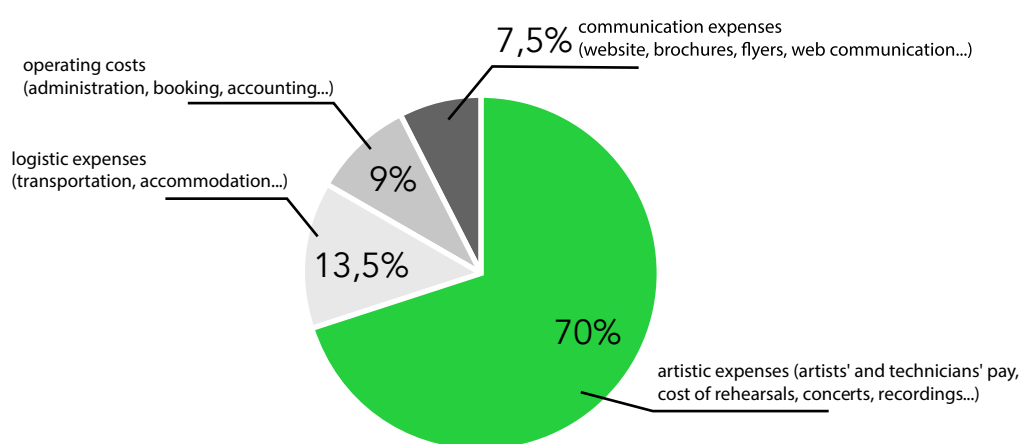
Estimated distribution of time spent by artistic directors on various tasks for their ensemble

5. COSTS AND FINANCES: THE ECONOMICS BEHIND LARGE ENSEMBLES

VARYING REALITIES BETWEEN ENSEMBLES REGARDING BUDGETS, BUT SIMILAR DISTRIBUTION OF COSTS

Economic structures greatly differ between ensembles, as all do not face similar realities in terms of size, access to resources and exterior funding, national laws etc.

The average 2019 budget of ensembles was 46,837€ (9 ensembles answered this question), however the median budget was 35,000€ – highlighting this disparity between ensembles. The lowest budget declared for the year 2019 is of 8,400€ and the highest of 195,000€.



Average distribution of costs in the ensembles' budgets
(13 respondents)

Although realities differ for ensembles in terms of the amount of their annual budget, they have similar cost structures: the most important expenditure item is, unsurprisingly, artistic costs for all ensembles. Moreover, as logistics expenses are also directly linked to the performance of concerts, we can estimate that 83,5% of overall expenditures of the ensembles are dedicated to the production of their artistic projects.

EMPLOYMENT OF THE ARTISTS AND COSTS OF CONCERTS

Between ensembles, the artists net pay varies from 50€ to 460€ per concert. On average, artists were paid 180 € per concert (median: 175€) in 2019. In most countries, they have a free-lance status or are self-employed (87% declares this is the case for their artists), which means that the amounts declared does

not match the amount the artists actually earn, as they still have to pay social contributions (the amount of which depends on national laws).

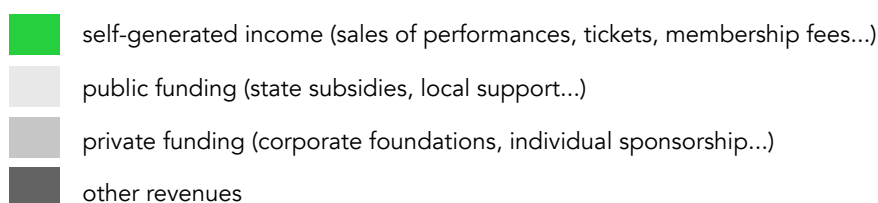
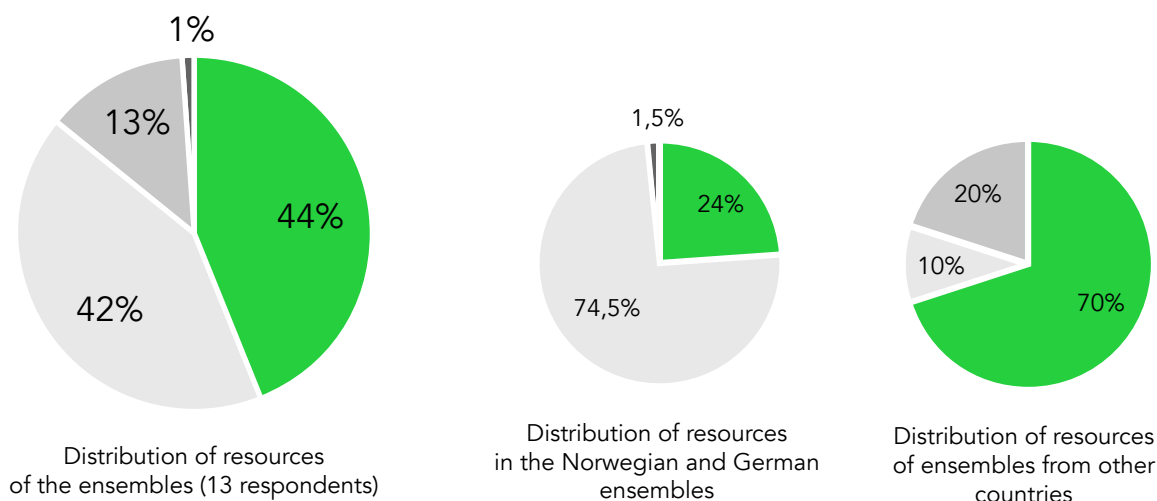
In 2019, the average cost of a concert amounted to 8,639€ (median: 4,000€, minimum: 500€, maximum: 40,000€). However, the average selling price asked of venues was 3,511€ (median: 3000€) and the average fee effectively obtained was 3,083€ (median: 2600€).

This significant gap between costs and selling price thus needs to be filled with alternative funding resources, which also need to cover all other expenses the ensembles face (operating and communication costs...).

COSTS MOSTLY COVERED BY SELF-GENERATED INCOME AND PUBLIC FUNDING

Differences in national contexts and public policies can create discrepancies between the types of resources the ensembles can access. Large ensembles that come from Norway or Germany (7 ensembles), for example, declare a significantly higher percentage of public funding in their overall finances than ensembles from other countries (7 ensembles declare an average of 69% of public funding).

The figure below gives an idea of the distribution of the ensembles' sources of income, however we have also separated the Norwegian and German ensembles from the other 6 ensembles so as to show the difference that exists in their sources of income. It is important to note that all European countries represented by the respondents offer some form of public funding, be it by the state, region, city etc.



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