

What to keep in mind when starting a national or regional youth choir: A checklist for the organisers

01. Organisational background

Where will your choir be based? How widely is your target group located? 🌐

- National Youth Choir
- Regional Youth Choir (within one country)
- Transnational Youth Choir (across multiple countries)

What will be your governing organisation?

- Independent legislative body
- Managed by local cultural/choral association
- Managed by national cultural/choral association



02. Putting together a team

What will be your **team structure**?

- Managed and organised by volunteers
- Combination of paid team and volunteers
- Organising is handled by the managing association

The most needed common role in the organisational team is a **manager** whose tasks can be divided up with time for several workers.

The core role in the artistic team of the choir is that of a **musical director or conductor**, followed by assistant conductor(s), vocal coaches and piano accompanists.

03. Setting up the artistic aims

How long can the choir work with the same conductor?

There are many possibilities; the choir might have:

- A **permanent conductor** who works with the choir for around 5-6 years. Their contract can often be renewed.
- The **same (guest) conductor** who works with the choir for several sessions (most commonly up to 2-3) but they will usually not act as the main artistic leader.
- A **new conductor** who is hired for each session. This is mostly the case with choirs that have no more than 1-2 sessions per year.
- The choir might also have a long-term **artistic director** who works on the overall musical vision but who is not usually the acting conductor themselves.

The more often the conductor changes, the bigger the turnover of repertoire.

The **repertoire** favored by NYCs is mostly contemporary or modern classical music, followed by classical and romantic music, sacred music and folk music or its arrangements.



Why should one start a NYC?

The most common **goals** of a NYC

- 1) Musical development of the singers
- 2) High musical quality
- 3) Social interaction and community building
- 4) Giving singers the opportunity to sing new kinds of music
- 5) Igniting innovation in the choral sector

The most common **impact** of a NYC for the singers long-term

- 1) They make life-long friends
- 2) They acquire musical skills
- 3) They build up a network in the musical or choral field
- 4) They can sing other repertoire than they would not normally be exposed to in their usual choir

04. Finding the potential singers

The number of **singers** is often between 30–40, with a lower age range varying from 15 or 18 to an upper range of 25 or 30, in some cases even up to 39 years.

How long can singers be part of the choir after they audition?

- For one project or session (for which they passed the audition).
 - ◆ In some cases, they can re-audition or re-apply for the next session too.
- Until they reach the age limit
- For however long they want

The most common criteria when selecting singers

- 1) Musical level
- 2) Previous experience
- 3) Regional representation
- 4) Motivation

The main ways to **advertise** the auditions are through social media or word of mouth, especially through the alumni or the conductor and artistic team of the choir.

The most common elements of an audition process

- 1) Online pre-recorded audition
- 2) A prepared solo song

- 3) A prepared choral piece
- 4) Vocal exercises
- 5) In-person audition
- 6) Motivation letter
- 7) Range test
- 8) Sight-reading task

These elements can be used combined, at the same time or in preferred order. The design of the audition process depends a lot on the artistic team as well as the choir's aims and activities.

05. Rehearsing, rehearsing, rehearsing

The NYCs usually do not have a permanent rehearsal venue. They depend on the location of a session and the availability of suitable rooms.

How many rehearsal periods do you have per year? How long is a rehearsal period on average?

- ➔ If the choir meets for 1-2 sessions per year, the rehearsal period may last from 5-8 days.
- ➔ If the choir meets for several sessions (5-10) per year, the rehearsals often last for a weekend at a time.

🕒 The rehearsals usually last, on average, **4-6 or 6-8 hours per day**.

The **activities** of a choir can vary from concerts to national tours, from commissions to recordings, from acting as choirs-in-residence for master classes and seminars, to artistic collaborations.

06. It all comes down to budgeting

What is most commonly provided for the singers?

- 1) Accommodation
- 2) Meals
- 3) Travel
- 4) Printed sheet music

Depending on the financial situation, the singers may pay a **participation fee** for the session. The longer the session, the higher the fee. Sometimes, if there is no participation fee for the choir, the singer may still have to cover some of their expenses, e.g. (international) travel.

💰 **The biggest expenses for the choir are:**

- 1) Fees/salaries of the artistic team
- 2) Renting rehearsal spaces
- 3) Accommodation
- 4) Fees/salaries for the organisational team
- 5) Meals

💰 **The most important sources of income are:**

- 1) Singers' participation fees
- 2) Support from government bodies
- 3) Fundraising
- 4) Ticket fees or other income from sales



Discover more

- National Youth Choir Managers Meeting Space in Facebook
facebook.com/groups/nationalyouthchoirs
- Read the experiences of European Choral Association's youth committee members [in their blog](#).
- [How to audition for an \(inter\)national \(youth\) choir | ECA-EC Webinar](#)
- European Youth Choir (former EuroChoir)
europeanchoralassociation.org/activities/eurochoir
- World Youth Choir worldyouthchoir.org