

Les Concerts de Poche: bringing music workshops and concerts to rural France

SUMMARY

The charity Les Concerts de Poche holds music workshops and professional concerts in rural areas and other underserved communities across France, helping promote social cohesion, inclusion and territorial vitality. A combination of public funding, private philanthropy and earned income allows the charity to keep ticket prices low and ensure accessibility.

Workshops are co-designed with local municipalities, schools, social services and community organisations so they respond to local needs, while the concerts – of classical, jazz and vocal music – often feature local residents on stage alongside the artists.



Themes: Sports, culture and leisure; social inclusion; tourism and heritage; rural revitalisation

Country: France

Organisations:

> Les Concerts de Poche, civil society organisation

Start & end date: 01/2005 - ongoing

Budget: Around EUR 3.2 million per year

Funding sources:

> Public and private funding

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CONTEXT

Access to culture has long been unevenly distributed across France, with rural areas and disadvantaged neighbourhoods often lying far from major cultural infrastructure and receiving limited high-quality artistic offerings. Public cultural investment has traditionally been concentrated in urban centres, and rural residents face significant geographic, social and economic barriers to participating in music.

This unequal access compounds wider rural challenges of isolation, weakening social ties, limited cultural opportunities for young people and difficulties in sustaining community life. Les Concerts de Poche was launched to close this gap.



OBJECTIVES

- > Strengthen social cohesion and reduce isolation in rural territories;
- > Increase access to high-quality artistic and cultural experiences for people far from major cultural centres;
- > Empower young people and vulnerable groups through participatory art;
- > Support local communities by co-constructing projects with municipalities, schools, social services and community organisations.



ACTIVITIES, KEY ACTORS, AND TIMELINE

Les Concerts de Poche **co-designs projects** with municipalities, schools, social services and community organisations. These are **delivered directly in the community** – at village halls, heritage sites, schools and in other neighbourhood spaces. Projects can be either longer (lasting two to six months, with 17-50 hours of workshops) or shorter (around one week of intensive workshops).

Each project pairs **music workshops** – collective singing, improvisation, body percussion, creative workshops, movement and music creation – with **professional concerts** (classical, jazz and vocal music). The concerts are performed by high-level artists in the same local venues as the workshops. Local residents participate in the workshops and often appear on stage alongside the professional artists at the concerts' opening. Ticket prices are kept at up to EUR 10 to ensure accessibility.

The initiative began in 2005 and delivers around **100 projects a year** across 350 communes and neighbourhoods in France (with one project in Belgium), 55% of which are in rural areas and 30% in disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods. Implementation involves more than **300 professional artists** and **2 300 hours of workshops**.

Key actors include the charity, partner municipalities and community organisations, participating schools and social services, artists and funders (public authorities, foundations and volunteers).



RESULTS

- > Around **100 projects** delivered and approximately **40 000 beneficiaries** reached each year;
- > **350 communes and neighbourhoods** involved, of which 55% are in rural areas;
- > **2 300 hours of workshops** and **100 professional concerts** organised in local venues every year;
- > More than **300 professional artists** engaged each year;
- > 79% of facilitators report **improved group cohesion** and 94% of participants wish to maintain the relationships built through the projects.



SUCCESS FACTORS/LESSONS LEARNT

- > The charity's use of music helps **support social cohesion, reduce isolation** and create **shared spaces for participation** in rural communities.
- > Each project is co-designed with municipalities, schools, social services and community organisations, meaning the **workshops and concerts respond to local needs** and use a community's own venues and networks.
- > Workshops are combined with high quality, professional concerts, with **residents often performing alongside the professional artists**.
- > Financing includes **public funding** (approximately 30%), **private philanthropy** (45%) and **earned income** (25%). This has allowed the initiative to continue year-round over two decades while keeping ticket prices between EUR 0 and EUR 10.



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