

## CAREER TIPS

### How to speak the language of a community?

ENCATC spoke to Natalie Mets, who is one of the initiators of IDA, an online-radio and event producer based in Tallinn and Helsinki. IDA is a platform for musicians, creators, artists, curators, and activists to introduce their work and thoughts. Since its creation on 1 May 2018, IDA Tallin now has more than 170 regular show hosts offering a wide range of music shows from classical, jazz and folk to various forms of modern contemporary dance music and educative talk shows from local art institutions, progressive activists, writers, and cultural influencers.

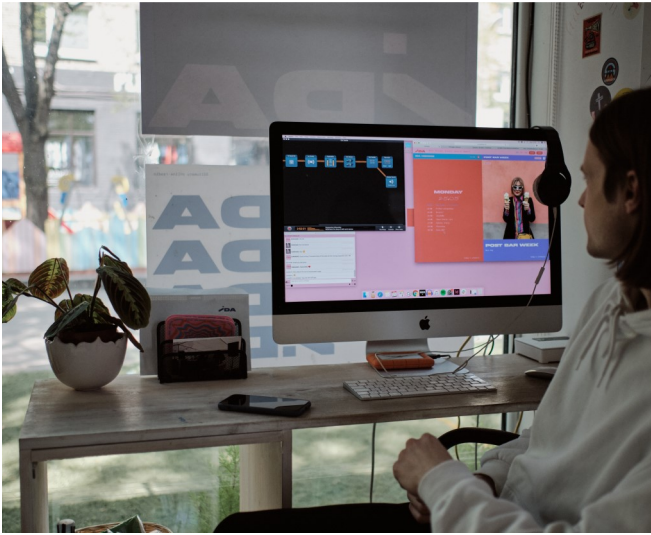
Portrait by Patrik Tamm



**ENCATC: What is the story behind IDA radio? Why did you want to start this company?**

**Natalie Mets:** IDA is not a company, instead it is an independent cultural platform operating as an online radio and event producer. The concept of an online radio operating out of a shipping container isn't that original. Similar formats can be found all around the world - take NTS in London, Red Light Radio in Amsterdam, LOT radio in New York, Mutant Radio in Tbilisi, etc. All of these bring together the most interesting local talent and give them a free democratic space to express their thoughts, ideas and knowledge. This is also why IDA happened - I along with my two partners Robert Nikolajev and Ats Luik had the feeling that Estonia was lacking a platform where the representatives of the local alternative scene could introduce themselves.

From the beginning it was really important for us to involve as many genres as possible - this is how we ended up with more than 170 regular show hosts offering a wide range of music shows from classical, jazz and folk to various forms of modern contemporary dance music and educative talk shows from local art institutions, progressive activists and writers, etc. We knew from the beginning that we would do more than streaming and recording shows, but even to our own surprise the organic growth has been really fast. We organise an event at least every quarter where we collaborate with local designers for joint-merchandise, organise international sound residencies, host stages at festivals, and operate as a record label.



**ENCATC: What differentiates you from other similar community radio platforms?**

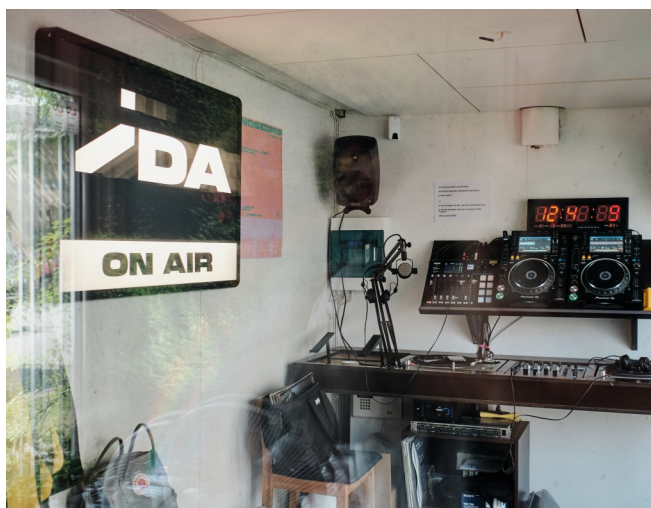
**Natalie Mets:** I assume the essence of all community radios is very similar - they are made by the community for the community. The biggest differences are probably cultural and depend on the location. Therefore, there is no point or need for us to try and get as big as similar organisations in London or New York and we are very happy to function as a springboard. A bunch of our hosts have been invited to host a show in different foreign stations and in the Estonian national radio station Raadio 2. Others have been invited to perform at events or participate at roundtables.



**ENCATC: What have been some recent innovative projects you have worked on that you are most proud of?**

**Natalie Mets:** We're really happy about the sound residency we'll organise in September 2020 for the second time. The first one took place in 2019 thanks to our funder Baltic American Freedom Foundation (BAFF) - we did an open call to find one artist from the Baltics and one from the United States of America. The two artists ended up being Maarja Nuut (EST) and Sun Araw (US) - both very well known in their circles. We put them into a pop-up sound studio in Narva for five days and asked our friend Jackson Bailey - aka Tapes - to record everything they played. One year later we are ready to release the material on a vinyl record. This is very exciting and the material they created is very special.

The second sound residency will take place in September 2020 and is made possible by the British Council. This year, the residency will take place in Viljandi and through an open call. We're looking for two Estonian artists who will get the chance to work together for a week in an equipped studio and record their music together.



**ENCATC: Can you give us some background into your educational and professional experience that has led to where you are today leading IDA?**

**Natalie Mets:** I started throwing parties at a pretty early age which followed by helping some musicians and bands with everything organisational. I've also studied Cultural Management, but experience and drive are crucial - you either are an organiser at heart or not. All the know-how in these fields comes only with practise and networking. When it comes to studying then I'd also suggest to look into cultural theory, history, sociology or in other humanities.



I've also lived, learned, and worked in many foreign cities (Riga, Helsinki, Reykjavik, New York, Berlin) which all are priceless experiences - living abroad is a must for anyone who really wants to create a difference, even if they want to do it locally.

**ENCATC: What skills or personal attributes do you think you have that have helped you to run your company?**

**Natalie Mets:** I guess I am very determined and really do believe that there is a solution for everything. It's as easy as that. Recently I've also noticed that I believe that people are kind by nature - it's way easier to communicate with others with this mindset.

**ENCATC: What do you wish you had known before starting IDA?**

**Natalie Mets:** Nothing. Learn as you go.

**ENCATC: What have been the most difficult challenges you have encountered? How have you been able to overcome them?**

**Natalie Mets:** Unfortunately, it is very boring - the most difficult challenge is finding funding. Estonia is still very conservative in cultural funding and both the state and private money goes mainly to representatives of academic and "professional" culture. But the key here is communicating, convincing, explaining, and just keep on working until the goal is reached. And then set a new goal.

**ENCATC: How did you go about getting start-up funds and how did you use them to get your project up and running?**

**Natalie Mets:** I just talked about IDA a lot and sometimes it works - people get interested and find a way to support the project. We've been lucky with private sponsors, different project funding, and also crowdfunding. But it could be so much better and I'm sure the future is bright for IDA and other similar non-commercial projects. As IDA is 100% monetised by donations, project funds, and supporters, it is constant work and I'm always on the lookout for potential funding schemes that could work for us.

**ENCATC: What advice would you give to students or early career professionals looking to start their own creative project?**

**Natalie Mets:** Just go for it. If it's worth then it will realise, if not then you'll come up with a new idea soon. Don't be afraid to fail.

**ENCATC: What keeps you motivated and going?**

**Natalie Mets:** A belief that it's possible to create art and culture without making uncomfortable compromises.



IDA is an online community radio based in Tallinn & Helsinki.



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