

## CAREER TIPS

# Organising a Cultural Conference for Students by Students

For this interview ENCATC spoke to Andreea Gabriela Lupu, the lead coordinator of 2021 ACMC - Arts & Cultural Management Conference, a platform for the next generation to actively exchange and promote ideas in the arts and cultural management sector. This year the conference aimed to foster innovative and necessary conversations with the theme 'REvisiting Borders' where participants were invited to deepen the conversation through other key themes of Resilience, Reinterpret, and REimagine.



Andreea Gabriela Lupu



**ENCATC: What is the Arts & Cultural Management Conference? What is the story behind it and how did you get the idea?**

**Andreea Gabriela Lupu:** The [Arts & Cultural Management Conference \(ACMC\)](#) is a unique platform for students and emerging professionals to actively exchange ideas, present their research, and expand their network.

Initially called 'Arts Management Student Conference', the event was launched in January 2018 by a group of students based at Hochschule für Musik und Theater in Hamburg, Germany. In 2019, it was given a new name - ACMC - Arts & Cultural Management Conference - and a new branding that is still used nowadays. It was an initiative led by students for students. While ACMC is now engaging with emerging professionals as well, the focus should always be on students' participation.

The conference started with a strong cooperation with The Association for Cultural Management (Fachverband Kultur Management). However, over the years, it has changed its network of partners while remaining autonomous. The 2021 edition was a joint initiative with ENCATC - the European network on cultural management and policy.

The organization teams of the conference change every year giving students and emerging professionals from across Europe a chance to lead an extraordinary international platform. So far it took place in Germany, Austria and The Netherlands... and online. Originally based in Europe, the 2021 ACMC event reached a global scale, involving presenters and audiences from multiple continents. We hope it will continue to grow in thematic range, number of participants and partners, with each new edition. I invite readers to learn more about the [previous ACMC editions](#).

**ENCATC: This was the first year that ACMC was done as a joint initiative with ENCATC. What were the benefits to the project to have a European network such as ENCATC involved?**

**Andreea Gabriela Lupu:** Our strategic partnership with ENCATC has definitely taken ACMC to a higher level on multiple aspects. A key benefit was the capacity of outreaching and engaging with sector leaders from across world. As a result, ACMC 2021 featured four keynote speakers whose talks enriched our agenda and truly inspired all of our participants. ENCATC's consistent communications support was also critical in drawing large numbers of both presenters and audiences to the event. Even from a technical perspective, our collaboration ensured the smooth operation of our event's digital platform which is reflected in attendees' excellent feedback.

**ENCATC: How have you adapted/adapting the ACMC forward due to the impact of COVID-19?**

**Andreea Gabriela Lupu:** Little did we know in January 2020 that the world would be hit very hard by a pandemic. It really pushed our team to reconsider the whole event concept. We started as a group of 4 volunteers, including Lauren Wilson and Rozzy Knox, but only by June we reached a stable formula with Nicole Vasconi, Kelsey Maas and myself as the core organising team. A great team of volunteers joined our forces during the live conference to operate the technical logistics.

Resilience and creative problem-solving were the two main assets that kept us going forward while testing and implementing different solutions. In April 2020 we opted for the safer option: to organise the event in a fully digital format. This naturally changed the whole approach of the event, allowing us to break from the 'tradition' of previous editions (university-based) and set up a semi-decentralised model.

We launched a call for ACMC Localized Hubs inviting students and emerging professionals to form and coordinate a group of interest in their own physical

location, running local events as part of ACMC. We shared a written and video guidance on application, event planning and fundraising, hoping that this would enrich ACMC's program as well as equipping coordinators with practical skills. Hubs were set up in Kolkata (India), Bucharest (Romania), Manchester (UK), Groningen (The Netherlands), and Cottbus (Germany).

Along with the changes of the wider culture sector, this new direction outlined the theme of ACMC event 'REvisiting Borders' and its sub-themes: REsilience, Reinterpret, REimagine. We also aimed for a more sustainable growth of our audiences by running monthly network meetings online which helped to build momentum up until the conference dates. The network continues to regularly meet in 2021. Check out our [Facebook page](#) for the latest event announcements.

## Arts & Cultural Management Conference 2021

Jan 28, 10:35AM to Jan 30, 6:00PM CEST

186 people attending



A joint initiative with ENCATC Co-funded by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union

Description Sponsors Schedule Speakers Booths

Welcome to the 4th annual Arts & Cultural Management Conference 2021!

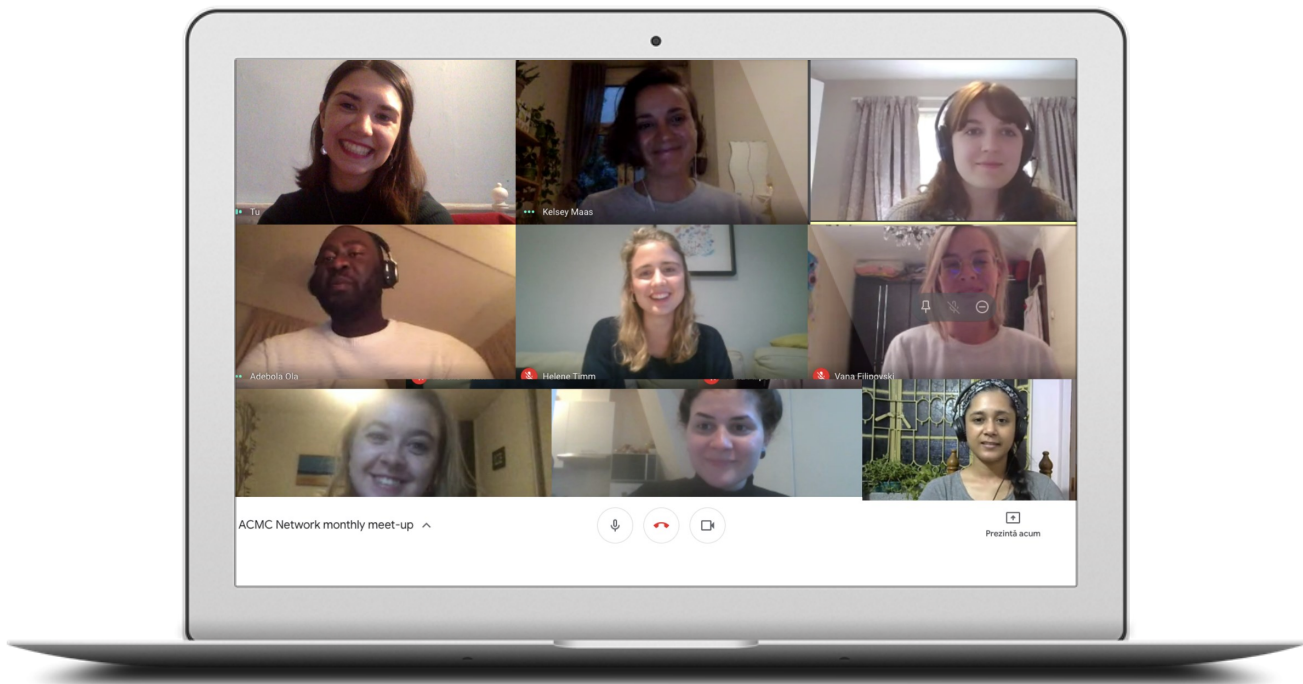
Screenshot from the conference live session on 28 January 2021.

**ENCATC: Can you give us some background into your education and professional experience that has led you to where you are today with this project?**

**Andreea Gabriela Lupu:** I've always been passionate about arts, starting my education journey in fine arts. My ambition to initiate and promote arts projects to the world led me to obtain a Bachelor degree in Communication & Public Relation from the National School of

Political & Administrative Studies (SNSPA) in Bucharest, Romania, in 2016. During my undergraduate degree I also studied in Lyon, France, thanks to an Erasmus+ scholarship. I then continued my studies at Birmingham City University, UK, where I graduated the Master's course in Arts & Project Management in 2017. I am also a PRINCE2 Project Management qualified professional with over six years of work experience in the arts and culture sector.

I worked in various roles and organizations, from contemporary art to theatre and cultural heritage, as well as in the education sector (at Erasmus+ UK National Agency). I'm currently working in



ACMC team meeting collaborating virtually due to the COVID-19 restrictions.

communications at Voluntary Arts - an organization that supports, encourages, promotes and advocates for creative cultural activity across the UK and the Republic of Ireland. Moreover, I helping to plan and deliver a European event as part of the Amateo network, in autumn 2021. When time allows, I enjoy supporting smaller projects on a freelance basis. I've always been interested in working collaboratively at an international scale and within diverse teams, so ACMC was a perfect opportunity to get involved in.

**ENCATC: What skills or other personal attributes do you think you have helped you develop and grow ACMC?**

**Andreea Gabriela Lupu:** I would emphasize communications skills. Since everything had to be 'translated' into a digital format, we had to focus on growing the reach and engagement levels of the conference via our online communication channels. My background in this area proved highly beneficial to the conference, raising ACMC's profile at a global scale by carrying out an integrated campaign of audience development through strong branding, advertising and stakeholder management. Equally important are organization skills - the ability to outline and follow plans, schedules, and to administrate data responsibly.

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

**Andreea Gabriela Lupu:** At the very moment when I said 'Yes' to organizing the 2021 edition of ACMC, I wish I had foreseen the eventuality of a pandemic.

However, I tend to see challenges as opportunities and I am glad that our team found viable solutions in this context. We started the planning process by analyzing feedback from previous editions and getting insights from former ACMC organizers. This really helped us to prioritize networking and commit to constant and transparent communication long before the live event.

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

**Andreea Gabriela Lupu:** Access to funding was an important issues that we managed to solve via a donation-based ticketing system and crowdfunding. Living in different locations and time zones and collaborating remotely was another challenge that we overcame by committing to a set schedule of weekly phone calls and virtual meetings, while also keeping in touch daily via WhatsApp messaging. Our team members really bonded over the last year due to close liaison and occasional informal meetings.

The experience of organizing and delivering a fully digital event of a large scale was new to all of our team members and by supporting each other, we managed to considerably boost our digital skills. I am very grateful for my colleagues commitment and perseverance in volunteering for ACMC despite personal and professional issues alike.

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

**Andreea Gabriela Lupu:** Fundraising was the biggest challenge from the beginning of our planning process. Unlike previous editions, where students could access funding from the hosting university, we were not supported by any academic institution. This was due to a number of reasons, such as the closure of campuses during Europe-wide lockdowns and the fact that the initial organizing team consisted largely of emerging professionals rather than students.

We started by contributing from our own pockets to cover certain digital costs (for website, mailing system and social media advertising). We were looking into different other ways to raise funds, such as applying to specific grants, but the lack of having the right bureaucratic set-up led us to the solution of donation-based tickets. Fortunately, we were able to raise double the targeted amount thanks to the strong interest and generosity of our contributors. We are now able to reimburse our initial expenses and to invest the remaining amount into the infrastructure of ACMC.

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

**Andreea Gabriela Lupu:** Be proactive! I believe that nowadays, students and emerging professionals have the advantage of flexibility and adaptability, being able to seek and create their own opportunities. This can allow them to either test different ideas or experience before making long-term commitments or really pursue that one thing they want. Be always aware of the latest trends and developments in your sector and identify needs or gaps to design responsive initiatives. Use the wide range and accessibility of communication means to build and expand your network in order to find collaborators and, thus, to better run your projects.

Finally, don't be afraid to fail or make a change. These are usually more constructive than success could be at this stage in life.

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

**Andreea Gabriela Lupu:** I have always been a curious and proactive person, constantly seeking opportunities to develop and connect. This attitude has urged me to get involved in a wide range of projects. After having a very good experience presenting at ACMC 2020 in Groningen, I was keen to help plan the next event.

However, this experience has helped me even more than I had thought, keeping me positive and active at a difficult time where the art gallery where I was working at closed for several months because of lockdown restrictions. Working collaboratively on ACMC with peers from Europe and beyond gave me a new sense of purpose. As plans progressed, I was very motivated to see the ever-growing enthusiasm around the conference - with more people attending our monthly network meetings and responding to our calls via social media. The multiple partnerships forged in support of ACMC were also a boost of confidence and ambition.



The **Arts & Cultural Management Conference (ACMC)** is a unique platform for students and emerging professionals to actively exchange ideas, present their research, and expand their network. It is an annual event launched in 2018 by a group of students in arts and cultural management disciplines.

**SPECIAL THANKS**

Myself and my colleagues Kelsey (@kelseymaas) and Nicole (@veescone) would like to give special thanks to ACMC 2021:

- **tech volunteers:** Shari Bone, Augustina Vasile, Lucca Alina Meinke, Lynn Morna, Kimalea Campbell
- **strategic partner:** [ENCATC - the European network on cultural management and policy](#)
- **media partners:** [The Network of European Museum Organisations \(NEMO\)](#); [Arts Management Network](#)
- **localized hubs:** [The University of Manchester](#), [The College of Communication & PR Bucharest](#), [Jodi Bolo Rongin](#), [The University of Groningen](#), [The Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus-Senftenberg](#)
- **crowdfunding contributors**
- **Attendees**
- **the wider ACMC network, including former organisers**

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