

Smart

Creating new forms of work together

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SMartAt e.Gen.
Gumpendorfer Straße 63b
1060 Wien

+43 1 997 44 66
smartat@smart.coop
www.smart.coop

FN 435661 d
ATU69905089
IBAN : AT74 1400 0100 1020 6966
BIC : BAWAATWW

Smart Austria – mission statement

Smart is a solidarity economy, non profit cooperative for artists, creatives and freelancers. We pool entrepreneurial resources and risks to establish sustainable working conditions for us all.

Smart facilitates **regular employment** for people struggling with complex, short-term and changing work conditions, or helps restructuring their self-employment in a sustainable manner. Smart also takes on the greater part of administrative work. Members and users benefit from the coop through:

- Full integration in social security systems
- More freedom for their core work activities
- Protection in major risk areas
- Long term planning security

Lastly, Smart creates a network of communities sharing knowledge and skills.

We are an open cooperative striving for an efficient, self-sustaining and solidarity-based structure. All coop members are co-owners and participate in democratic decision making regarding structures and processes. This growing community makes possible a wide range of services for its members, at cost. Future profit will be fully reinvested in broadening our services.

Smart is here for everyone who's working life has little to do with 'standard employment'. We are not limited to any specific branch. Members and users of our cooperative are artists, cultural professionals, creatives and 'new' self-employed, for instance, in science, research, and the health sector. Increasingly, Smart is an alternative for licensed practioners such as professionals in IT and photography.

We are rooted in the independent arts and culture sectors. Founded in 1998 in Belgium (Smart = société mutuelle pour artistes), Smart has rapidly succeeded in winning a broad target audience. Eight countries have established independent Smart coop offices with the solidarity and support from Smart Belgium. Smart Austria began in 2011 and is an active cooperative since 2015. Since then we are integrated into a network of knowledge and solidarity with Smart partners throughout Europe, discovering and developing new ways of working together.

Services and cost

Our services are calculated at cost. Smart only retains the necessary funds to keep running. There is no extra profit won.

SmartProduction

Comprehensive management of orders and projects: employment of user (from minimal to fully insured according to sum of order), timely payment of salaries and fees with guarantee of payment (whether or not and when or if the contractor pays and also in cases of insolvency). Billing, payments made (fees, business expenses, royalties, etc.). Documentation (available 24/7 online in secure cloud system), continuous counseling (e.g. social security insurance, taxes, labor laws, copyright).

- Cost : 10% of net contract sum

SmartAdmin

Administrative support for coop members projects : budget planning, grant applications, submissions check, daily bookkeeping, income-expense calculation, documentation, advice.

- Cost: 35 – 45 Euros per hour

Cooperative

Coop members are owners and participants in the democratic self-governing cooperative. Membership is mandatory upon first use of SmartAdmin or the second use of SmartProduction services.

- Cost: onetime 50 Euros per share of the cooperative

Numbers

- Founding of cooperative: 2015
- Staff: 8 employees
- Users: 1.300 (2021)
- Turnover: 1.7m Euros (2021)

Team

Management:

- Sabine Kock (CEO)
- Angela Vadori (CFO)
- Lisa Pointner (attorney/authorized signatory)

Advisors:

- Robert Eichhorn
- Andrea Wälzl
- Natalja Kreil

Accounting: Hanad Jouja

Communications: Xenia Kopf

Background

Smart's beginnings

Smart Belgium was founded in 1998 by Julek Jurowicz and Pierre Burnotte as a charitable foundation in Brussels. The goal was to combine the freelance work of artists, creatives and other groups with social security, by means of employment, pooling resources (i.e. affordable studios) and financial support (leasing options, micro credit). Smart Belgium established structures, some non profit (studio rental, scholarships, art collections, work foundation) and some on a legal basis as entrepreneurial endeavors (leasing equipment, micro credit).

In 2017, Smart Belgium became a cooperative. Today they number 75.000 users, 22.000 coop members, 170 employees and have a total turnover of 167 Mio. Euro. The target audience has expanded far beyond the core of arts and culture and now includes all manner of so-called autonomous workers. Through employment, Smart Belgium has been able to help tens of thousands to security in social services (social resp. health, unemployment, and pension insurance). Because it is worthwhile for users to officially register their activities, the Smart model promotes the legalisation of labor.

European Network for Knowledge and Solidarity

Smart Belgium lends financial and structural support to independently active Smart offices in seven other European countries; Germany, France, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and Austria. On the EU level, the Smart network promotes social inclusion for anyone in atypical working conditions.

Building Smart in Austria

Smart Austria was initiated in 2011 in close contact with the Association of Independent Theatre (IG Freie Theater) to create better employment opportunities for the independent theater, dance and performance scene. In 2012 it was converted into a stand-alone organisation with an enhanced mission and broadened target audiences, the association Work SMart. The association to this day still runs the publicly funded online portal SmartAtMobility (www.smartatmobility.com) which advises artists on incoming and outgoing mobility questions.

In 2015, the cooperative SMartAt e.Gen. was established for day-to-day operative business. We deliberately chose the legal entity of a cooperative to permit democratic co- and self-determination within our organisation. Thus, we create a new work form: Self-determination and social security no longer cancel each other out but work together in the coop!

Smart and the Covid-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic posed many challenges to Smart Austria from 2020. Many of our users and members were hard hit by the cancellation of projects. Here is where our solidarity mechanism directly helped; through contingent liability, access to „short work“ solutions resp. unemployment benefits for users currently employed by Smart, and through intensive information and advisory work about support programs we were able to ease the blow, recover some financial losses and support the community in pulling through.

Together with our Europe-wide Smart network, we are working across borders on a Corona plan for longterm assistance and economic recovery for Smart users. We also want to give voice to each and everyone whose complex working conditions exclude them from public assistance. We are convinced that the time is right for bringing more fairness and social security into our work systems.

Digitization at Smart

Digitization and automation in the service of Smart freelancers are essential to the cooperative. From 2021 to 2023, the Smart Portal will be created in a participatory development process: an integrated online tool for work management, community and governance. In the portal, all user functions will be accessible via a central user interface, such as forms, budgets, documents, etc., while in the backend, advisors will be able to work with optimized tools. The portal also expands the possibilities for networking and participation: users can make themselves visible, get to know each other, share projects, find cooperation partners and make suggestions for the further development of the cooperative. Funded by the Digifonds 4.0 of AK Vienna.

Press materials

Photos



Sabine Kock (CEO)



Angela Vadori (CFO)



Lisa Pointner (attorney/auth. sign.)

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Logos

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