

Smart

Smart Coop Austria

Annual Report 2021

SMartAt e.Gen.

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Our mission statement

Smart is a solidarity-based, non-profit cooperative for freelancers, creatives and artists. We pool resources and risks and create sustainable working relationships together.

Smart facilitates employment for individuals struggling with complex, short-term, and shifting employment or who want to make their self-employment more sustainable. Smart also handles most of the administrative work. Thus, we enable:

- Full inclusion in the social security systems,
- more room for maneuver for the central activities,
- the cushioning of risks and
- longer-term planning security.

We also see ourselves as an active networking platform for our users and cooperative members.

We are an open cooperative and want to create an efficient, self-supporting and solidary structure. All cooperative members are also owners, they decide democratically how the cooperative should work. With the help of our growing community, we can provide extensive services at cost price. Future profits are fully reinvested in the expansion of services.

Smart is there for everyone outside the normal workforce. We are not restricted to certain industries. Our cooperative members and users currently include: artists, cultural workers, creatives, new self-employed people and freelancers, e.g. from the scientific field or from freelance trades such as IT or photography.

The smart model originated in the independent arts and culture sector. After its foundation in 1998 in Belgium (smart = société mutuelle pour artistes), it has become a successful project with a broad target group. Since then, independently operating Smart offices have been founded in eight other countries with solidarity support from Smart Belgium. Smart Austria was initiated in 2011 and has been operating as a cooperative since 2015. Since then, we have been working with the European Smart partners on a practice-oriented knowledge and solidarity network for new forms of work.

Structure

Smart Coop Austria consists of three legal entities:

- The cooperative SMartAt e.Gen. is the main carrier of the activities.
- The smart@work GmbH is a 100% subsidiary of the cooperative and enables the implementation of free commercial activities as well as labor leasing. The statutes and principles of the cooperative are also binding for the GmbH.
- The Work Smart association is a founding member of the cooperative and the carrier of the SmartAtMobility.com project.

Smart as a cooperative

Smart is a registered cooperative (Cooperative, 'Coop') and part of the Austrian Cooperative Association ÖGV.

Our cooperative members are also our owners. We are democratically self-governing and committed to the cooperative principles of member support, community and participation. A cooperative share is 50 euros.

The supporting body is our annual General Assembly, where each cooperative member has a vote and thus has a say in our processes and structures.

Solidarity economy

Our users are freelancers from different branches, often people in frequently changing jobs and different income phases. The complexities of labor, social and tax law often do not do justice to their work realities. The cooperative economic model offers a way out of many of the practical difficulties experienced by solo self-employed people (one-person businesses): It ensures independence and personal responsibility, creates risk minimization through the model of solidarity economy in the coop, pools resources in the community to strengthen the position of the individual, but at the same time allows for much improved social security and can prevent complications such as multiple insurance or pension gaps.

A cooperative is an economic model based on solidarity and democracy. Unlike an association, a cooperative is allowed to make profits, but unlike a profit-oriented company, Smart does not distribute future profits but invests them primarily in expanding services. All cooperative members have an equal say in how these funds are used.

Coops point the way to the future for independent and self-responsible work in a community context.

Therefore, we would like to develop Smart as a cooperative into a self-supporting and economically efficient structure that benefits all members and users. This also includes building up a financial cushion to protect our users against payment defaults and other crisis situations.

Financing

The jointly funded Smart Coop Austria is entirely financed by the Smart Fee, which is levied as a percentage of orders. In addition, Smart receives start-up financing from Smart Belgium. The cooperative does not receive any other subsidies or public funds for its day-to-day operations.

For the digitization project "Smart Portal", Smart will receive project funding from the Digifonds 4.0 of the Vienna Chamber of Labour from 2021 to 2023.

Service areas

SmartProduction

SmartProduction is the heart of the Smart Coop: users bring their orders and projects to the cooperative. In this way, Smart becomes the contractual partner of the client instead of the individual and also bears a significant part of the entrepreneurial risk by means of a payment guarantee and default liability. As a rule, the users work as employees of the Smart cooperative, which bears full responsibility for the employer and takes all necessary steps for payroll accounting. If desired, users can also continue to work formally independently, in which case Smart pays the fees.

For the users this means: better social security, timely payment with payment guarantee and default liability, massively reduced administrative effort, ongoing advice and support as well as integration into a solidary community.

Smart Fee: 10% of the net order amount brought in.

From the second use of SmartProduction on, membership in the cooperative is a prerequisite (purchase of at least one cooperative share for 50 euros).

Non-commercial activities are handled by the cooperative itself. Production orders, which include free commercial activities as well as labor leasing, are handled by the subsidiary smart@work GmbH.

SmartAdmin

SmartAdmin takes over the monitoring and administration of projects for members: Support with budget planning for funding applications, review of applications and submissions, support for ongoing association accounting, ongoing maintenance of income-expenditure statements, filing and documentation of project-related documents. As with SmartProduction, SmartAdmin provides ongoing support, advice and guidance through the rights jungle.

The users can invest the working time gained in this way in their core activities.

Smart Fee: 35 euros to 45 euros per hour.

Prerequisite: Membership in the cooperative (purchase of at least one cooperative share for 50 euros).

Smart Team 2021

Smart Team Management

- Sabine Kock, Management
- Angela Vadori, Management/Finance
- Lisa Pointner, lawyer/authorized signatory

Advisors

- Robert Eichhorn, SmartProduction
- Andrea Wälzl SmartProduction
- Lara Rainer, SmartAdmin

Accounting: Hanad Jouja

Communication: Xenia Kopf

News/Changes 2021

Angela Vadori follows Andrea Wälzl as CFO Managing Director/Finance

New in the team: Hanad Jouja

Cooperative

Management Board: Dr. Sabine Kock and Mag. Angela Vadori, **Authorized signatory:** Mag. iur. Lisa Pointner

Supervisory Board:

- Univ.-Prof. Dr. Oliver Fabel (Director of the Institute for Business Decisions and Analytics at the Faculty of Economics of the University of Vienna)
- Sabine Mitterecker (Director at THEATER.punkt)
- Sébastien Paule (Director Innovation and Development, Smart Belgium)

Due to the pandemic, the **General Assembly** was again held online via Zoom on June 14, 2021. Fortunately, the number of participating members increased to 17. Economist Oliver Fabel, director Sabine Mitterecker and Sébastien Paule were again confirmed in the supervisory board.

Smart Network 2021

Smart in Europe

Smart Austria is part of the Europe-wide Smart network and maintains a multifaceted exchange with Smart Belgium and the other Smart partners in Europe. We cooperate primarily in the areas of strategy development and knowledge transfer, and since 2021 also increasingly in the area of digital development.

For the first time since the pandemic, a live meeting of all Smart partners took place again at Smart Belgium in Brussels in November 2021. The joint strategy development on the occasion of the pandemic has significantly strengthened the exchange and networking among the Smart partners. In 2021, Smart Austria exchanged views with the Smart Partners – partly in dialogue, partly in the group – on the overall strategy, community building and cooperative vision, digitalization, and marketing opportunities, among other topics. Since then, a lively exchange has taken place both on the issue of digitization and in the area of community development. In the fall of 2021, Smart Austria started a concrete cooperation with Smart Germany in the implementation of digitalization as a merged project.

Smart Belgium

The Smart model was launched in Belgium in the late 1990s. Smart Belgium has since provided financial and structural support for the establishment of independent Smart offices in several European countries, including Austria.

Due to the global Corona crisis situation, which also affected Smart Belgium, a process of reorganization of Smart Belgium's investments for all Smart partners became necessary, which since then has taken the form of a fund.

Business activity 2021

Milestones

New Smart Fee

Based on an in-depth evaluation of the development forecasts for the Smart Cooperative, it became clear as early as 2020 that the original Smart Fee of 7.5% was too low and would not be sufficient for a self-sustaining structure in any scenario. Therefore, at the beginning of 2021, an open discussion process with cooperative members and users about an increase was announced and started at the same time. After many one-on-one meetings and two open discussion forums, where the background was discussed and different options were played out, the new rate was voted on at the General Assembly. The decision fell on the middle option of 10%, a positive signal for the team. Since July 1, 2021, the new Smart Fee of 10% is in force.

Digitization project "Smart Portal"

Digitization continued as a focus in 2021. In the summer of 2021, Smart was able to acquire a grant from the Digifonds 4.0 of the Vienna Chamber of Labor. This will be used to develop the "Smart Portal," an integrated online tool for work management and participation, from July 2021 to June 2023. The project has a strongly participative design and is therefore being developed in a participative process together with the Smart Team and the users of the Coop. In the future, it will offer users all functions in one place, and advisors optimized tools in the backend. It also expands the possibilities for networking and co-determination through dedicated areas for "Community" and "Governance". In addition, the project design includes networking and exchange with surrounding IT cooperatives.

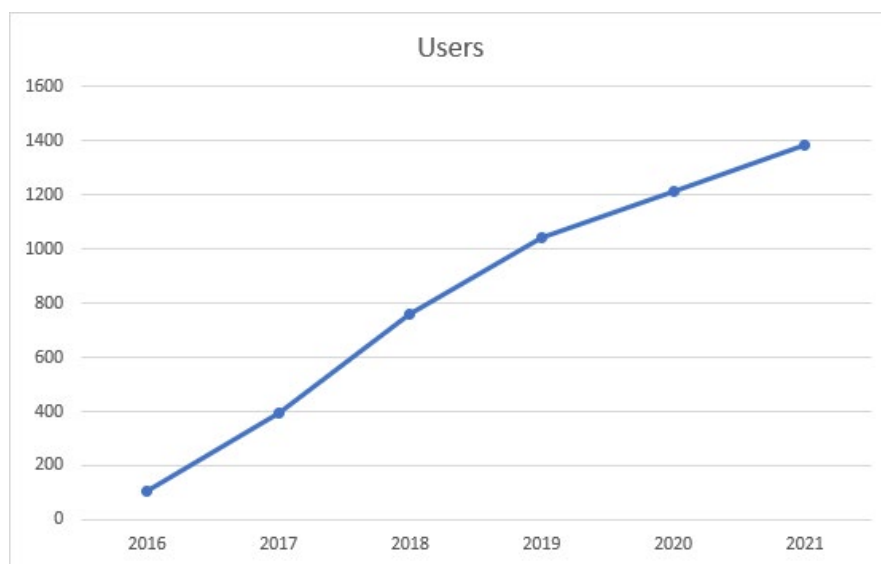
The fall of 2021 was characterized by intensive work on preparing for the commissioning of programming (visualizations, user stories, etc.) on the one hand, conceptualizing and implementing the participatory aspect of the project in the form of an open invitation to all smart users, several participatory workshops with the smart team, and concrete collaboration with a focus group of users.

Numbers and details

Members and users

In 2021, Smart had:

- 261 members (2020: 217, +44 or 20%) and
- 1,367 users (2020: 1,209, +159 or 13%), of which
 - 300 active users¹ (22%) and
 - A total of 144, on average 65 employed users per month (annual average, 2020: 48, +17 or 35%).



¹ Number of users with at least one job per year. Since Smart users switch between projects and types of employment, only some of them ever use Smart's services.

Turnover and orders

Smart Coop Austria – SmartAt e.Gen.

In 2021, the business activity of the cooperative (from a turnover that dropped to 1,057,842 euros in 2020 due to the Covid crisis) recovered to a turnover of 1,464,235 euros.

smart@work GmbH

Together with smart@work GmbH, which has been in existence for one year, with sales of 283,034 euros, total sales in 2021 rose to 1,747,269 euros.

Smart recorded 2021:

- 1.7 million euros in sales² (2020: 1.3 million, +400,000 or 35%)³ and.
- 1,323 orders (2020: 1,170, +153 or 13%).
- About a quarter of the invoices were placed with international clients.
-

In 2021, the revenue trend turned positive again: with 1.7 million euros and a plus of 35% compared to 2020, the annual revenue was now fortunately also significantly above the pre-crisis level and previous peak (1.4 million euros in 2019). At 65, the average number of employed users per month was also well above the previous year's figure (+35%). Cooperative members (+20%), users (+13%) and orders (+13%) continue to show stable growth. Geographically, most orders, about three quarters, continue to be placed for Austrian clients.

Sectors

Turnover by sector⁴

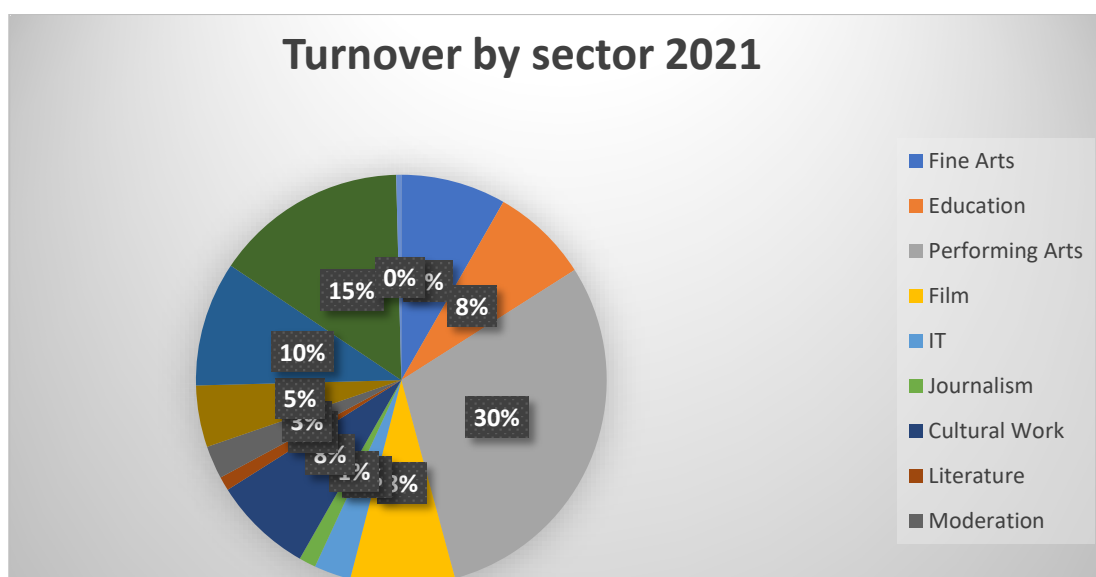
- Performing arts (approx. 29%) and "other" (15%) account for the largest share of turnover.
 - The "Other" sector includes fields of activity that have not yet been recorded in a differentiated manner, some of which are new.
- Also larger sectors are music (approx. 10%), visual arts (8%), film (8%), cultural work (7.8%) and education (7.7%)
 - Sectors with above-average contract amounts are science, cultural work, film and visual arts (all above 2,000 euros).
- Smaller sectors include IT, journalism and multimedia, literature, moderation, and science.
 - The IT sector accounts for only a few contracts, but with higher contract sums (on average at 6,600 euros).
 - In the education sector, the order sums are rather low (just over 500 euros).

² The turnover is the sum of the invoiced amounts for orders and projects processed via Smart. This sum reflects the sales volume of the users. Wages, taxes and social security contributions of the users as well as the Smart Fee are paid from this amount. Only this last item remains with Smart and secures the operation of the Coop.

³ Total sales in 2021 according to balance sheet (balance sheet figure by performance period), consolidated (i.e. includes sales of cooperative and limited liability company GmbH)

⁴ The evaluation of sales by sector relates only to the SmartProduction area.

Turnover by sector 2021

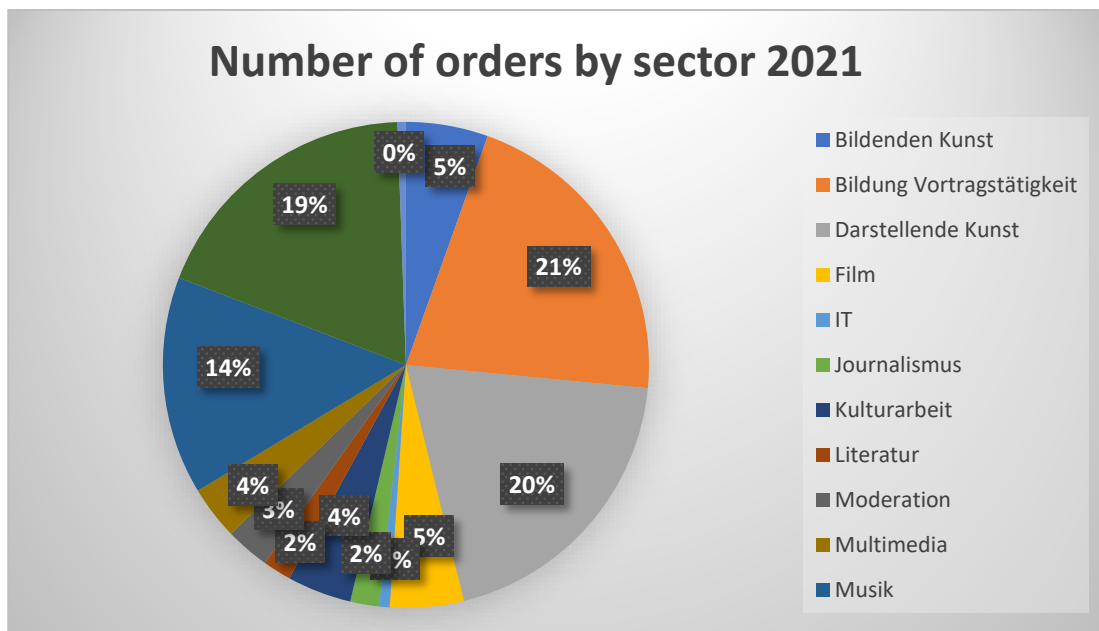


The overview of the average order size below shows that the order volume varies greatly in the different segments. As expected, it is significantly high in the IT sector, followed by film, cultural work and science, while orders in the education sector are lower on average than other sectors. The reason for this is largely that in the education sector it is often a matter of individual lecture activities or workshops, while in other sectors there are larger orders and projects.

Production by sectors				
Sektor	Net revenue 2021	%	Average order amount	Number of orders 2021
Fine Arts	139879,87	8,28%	2228,46	69
Education	130316,28	7,71%	534,47	266
Performance	503326,85	29,79%	1944,14	248
Film	139075,81	8,23%	2489,94	62
IT	48781,95	2,89%	6634,83	9
Journalism	22468,56	1,33%	1546,66	24
Cultural work	131843,84	7,80%	2283,69	54
Literature	18662,41	1,10%	761,53	24
Moderation	43809,62	2,59%	1256,08	37
Multimedia	81984,02	4,85%	1564,71	45
Music	165935,89	9,82%	916,70	183
Other	256644,26	15,19%	1155,79	235
Science	6820,89	0,40%	2299,91	7

Number of orders by sector

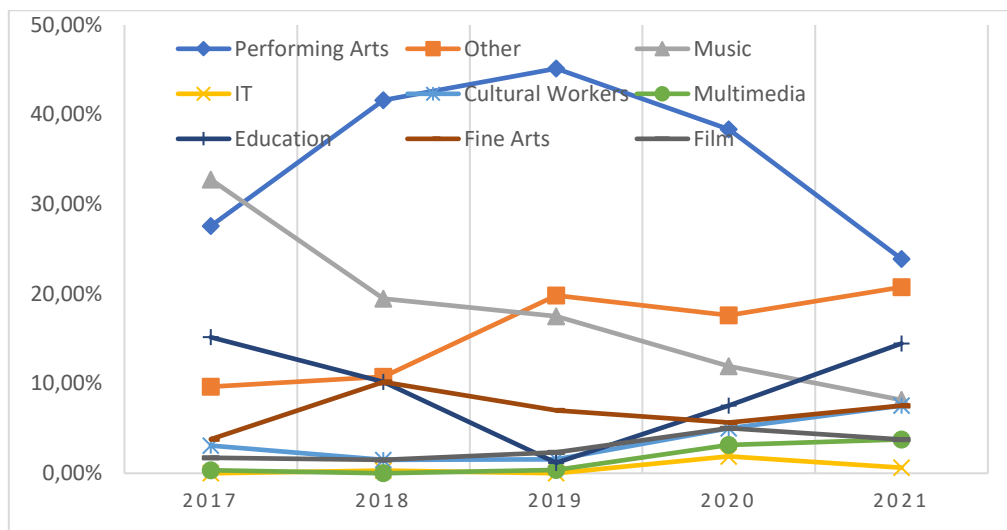
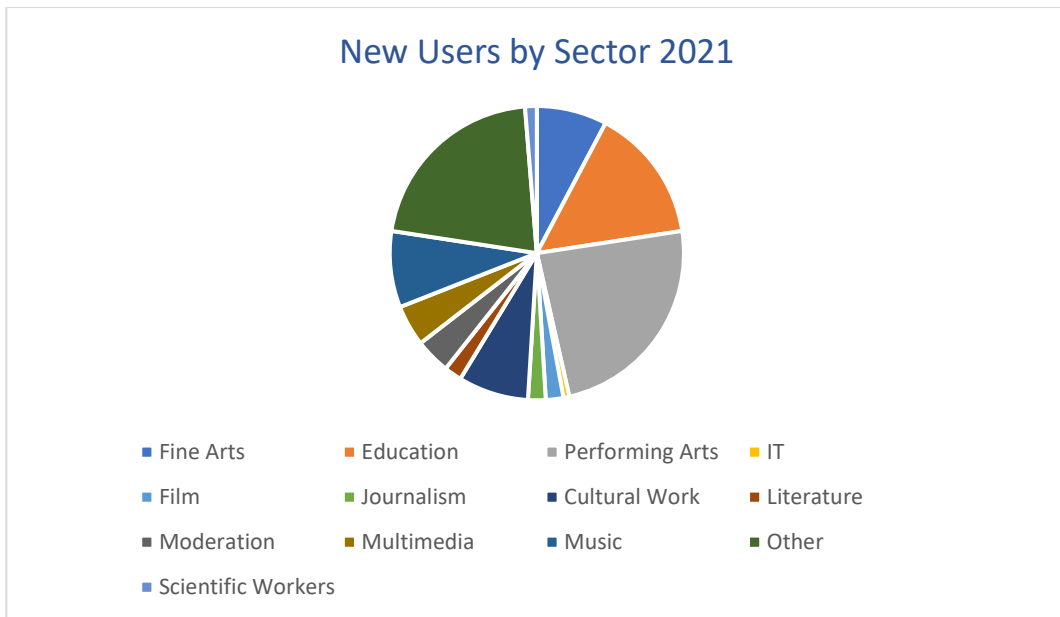
What is striking about the following table is the Other sector (19%), which has increased significantly. This includes, for example, the new orientations of users mentioned above. The chart shows that the overall number of commissions in the education sector (21%) was even higher than in the performing arts (20%) or music (14%). However, as described above, the volume of orders per order is much lower, so the total revenue from this area is less pronounced.



Users by sector

- New users in 2021 continue to come largely from the performing arts (24%). However, the share has been declining since 2019. (2020: 39%),
- The share from music is also declining (8%; 2020: 14%).
- In contrast, the proportion of users who generate their revenue from educational commissions has grown strongly to 15% (2020: 6%)
- 21% Other

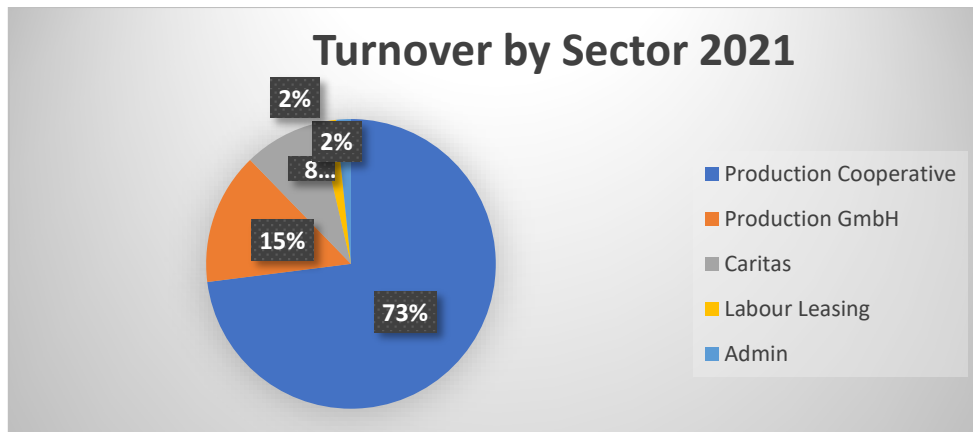
New Users by Sector 2021



In the progression chart over the years, it can be seen that since 2020, the proportion of new users in Performing Arts as well as Music has decreased significantly in the two years of the pandemic, while Education as well as the category "Other" have grown significantly. A clear strengthening of the multimedia area could be observed in the past year.

Service areas

- The majority of sales (73% Coop plus 15% GmbH plus 8% Caritas) are attributable to Production (cooperative and GmbH).
- The Admin and Labor Leasing divisions each account for 2% of sales.
- Of the total turnover, 21% is accounted for by the GmbH and 79% by the cooperative.



The core activity of Smart Coop Austria is in SmartProduction. In addition, the importance of smart@work GmbH, through which many new areas and sectors can be covered that were not previously accessible to the cooperative, is strengthening the offering. SmartAdmin is a specialized offer for cooperative members, which significantly complements the profile of the Coop, especially in the core sectors.

Details about SmartAdmin

SmartAdmin continued to grow to a turnover of EUR 27,885 euros in 2021 despite Covid-19.

Supported were:

- 2 EU projects
- 18 associations
- 1 GmbH
- 1 GsbR and
- 13 individuals.

For our members and users, 4 workshops were offered on the topic of taxes (employee assessment, income-expenditure accounting and two Tax Together).

Details about the smart@work GmbH

The turnover of the GmbH in 2021 was 283,034 euros with 29 employment relationships and thus contributed significantly to the recovery of the total turnover. The area of labor leasing included only a few projects in 2021. The majority of orders and projects carried out in the GmbH involved activities within the scope of independent trades.

Subsidies 2021/Special Subsidies Covid-19

Grants

A majority of the grants in 2021 were for tools to mitigate the Covid measures:

Up to and including June 2021, Smart was in a short-time work scheme for team and users. For the year 2021, a loss compensation of 21,000 euros could be claimed retroactively. It was possible for Smart to receive cost compensation for quarantine periods for users and employees.

Subsidies for short-time work

The grants for short-time work for both the Smart team and users totaled 225,225 euros in 2021 for the period from January to June. The possibility of short-time work has brought about a great deal of stabilization for the active users as well as for the Smart Team and has contributed significantly to Smart being able to act as a sustainable model during the crisis.

In the first half of 2021, the team and users continued to work short-time with Smart. At the end of June 2021, Smart ended short-time work for the team and users.

Year 2021	Team	Users
Wage subsidies		
Short-time work	47.255	177.970
AMS	26.196	36.186
Quarantine replacement	689	1.125
Digital Project		
Chamber of Labor	25.140	
Covid Subsidies		
Loss replacement	21.452	
Total	120.732	215.281

Labor market subsidies

As in previous years, Smart employs both team members and users who are entitled to labor market subsidies due to their situation.

Support from the Vienna Chamber of Labor

The pro-rata project funding for the digital portal also made an important innovative contribution.

Reorganization of internal procedures

In connection with the new management structure in 2021, the areas of responsibility and communication channels were redesigned, and many internal procedures were reconsidered and

reorganized. In addition, the first digitization step before the start of the Smart Portal project achieved a de facto reduction in the workload for advisors and greater efficiency for the service.

Communication

Community Building

User portraits

The series "For a coffee with...", which started in 2019, features portraits of users from a wide range of working environments. In 2021, two portraits were published again: of filmmaker Cordula Thym, who was the 1,000th user at Smart in 2019; and IT specialist jackie* Andrea Ida Malkah Klaura, who has also been accompanying the digitization project since 2021.

Cordula Thym

"I worked as an assistant editor for a while, but wanted to do my own projects. Then I worked in a 'mishmash' of employment, self-employment and wage replacement. That was pretty grueling. Luckily, I ended up joining Smart - the co-op saved me a lot, especially during the pandemic. I'm glad it didn't catch me in the middle of self-employment, and that I always get good advice at Smart."

jackie*

"I have a 30hr job plus three to four side projects. However, I didn't feel like solo self-employment for these projects - Smart makes the step into self-employment easier because it's a very pleasant service and a safety net in the start-up process. I've also always found communication with [Advisor] Robert [Eichhorn] to be transparent, open and honest."

To read the portraits: <https://www.smart-at.org/smartat-2/users/testimonials/?lang=en>

Workshops

The range of workshops and trainings for users is constantly being expanded and adapted. In 2021, they were mostly conducted online again.

DIY Income and Expenditure Accounting

Workshop for the introduction to income-expenditure accounting (differentiation of income, sales and profit, tax deductibility of expenses, insurance limits, tax declaration, multiple employment, etc.). Incl. practical instruction. Direction: Angela Vadori.

- 18.03.2021

Tax Together

Working together on the current tax return, accompanied by professional support and exchange between smart cooperative members and users. Direction: Angela Vadori.

- 08.04.2021
- 18.05.2021

For Production Users: Employee assessment 2020

- 16.03.2021

Internal communication regarding Smart Fee

At two open discussion forums on April 29 and May 19, 2021, the need for the Smart Fee increase, which was decided at the General Assembly on June 14, 2021, was discussed. Users and members had the opportunity to express their needs, wishes and concerns.

Activation of the Smart Portal community, design and support of the participation process

The "Smart Portal" digitization project is in full swing. After the initial conception phase over the summer of 2021, the participation process was launched in the fall. In two workshops with the internal team and one intensive workshop with a group of users, the project was presented, discussed and input was gathered. The various needs were elicited, proposals jointly prioritized and their feasibility clarified.

IT campaign phase I and II, landing page, one-minute explanatory video, social media

In 2021, external marketing measures were used for the first time to approach the target group of IT workers.

Following a survey, an external team personally contacted 200 potential IT users. Ultimately, the campaign did not result in any new hires at Smart. However, the discussions held with existing Smart IT users in the run-up to the campaign were very encouraging and helped to ensure that they carried out new orders through Smart.

In the second half of the marketing effort, a landing page was created for the campaign, a one-minute explainer video was created, and social media channels were promoted for potential collaborations with Smart. The concept of the landing page is potentially transferable to new target groups, the one-minute explanatory video as a new feature promotes Smart directly and gives Smart users the opportunity to present the Smart principle concisely to third parties, and the social media work resulted in the offer of the Coding School Klagenfurt to Smart to hold seminars starting in 2022. This part of the campaign can therefore be considered sustainable in its output.

One-minute explanatory video

In December 2021, the German version of the Smart explainer video went online. The English version followed in March 2022:

Desktop GER: youtu.be/M7kdyLrCo4A // **EN:** youtu.be/eXodkyLEXu4

Social Media GER: fb.watch/cuuPVF2pSX/ // **EN:** fb.watch/cuuNZEWQn

Public Relations

Dream.Career Freelancer – a guide to the art of freelancing

The content of the public workshop format was relaunched and strategically aligned before the end of 2019. In 2020, it was primarily aimed at art universities and multipliers. However, there was a slump here as well due to Covid.

- 26.04.2021
- 29.10.2021

Covid-19 Support Workshops

With the outbreak of the pandemic, the need for consultation increased massively. Over the year, in addition to individual consultations, dedicated online workshops in German and English were conducted by Sabine Kock and Lisa Pointner.

- 02.06.2021
- 29.10.2021
- 20.12.2021

Info events on Smart

- Every first Tuesday of the month

Other public events

- Fairness Symposium (BMKÖS), 30.09.2021
- Business Treff: Genossenschaft 2.0 (Vienna Business Agency), 14.10.2021
- Transform Symposium Vienna (University of Applied Arts), 27.10.2021
- Platform Coops Conference 2021, 12.11.-18.11.2021
- Conference Digital Working World - Ticket to the Precarious, 18.11.2021

Press

A press release at the beginning of 2021, combined with subsequent press and media work, resulted in an APA report that was picked up by various media. In addition, there were two interviews for an article and a TV broadcast.

Dispatch:

Cooperative as crisis management for cultural workers - and many others (Feb. 9, 2021)

Coverage

- Der Standard: Call for regulation of gig work (Anika Dang, 26.11.2021)
- Futurezone: How freelancers can protect themselves via a cooperative (8.11.2021)
- Geno creates: Smart Coop Austria: Working together for more security (Gregor Rabong, 6.11.2021)
- NHK Japan: What is a "Platform Cooperative"? (25.5.2021)
- Okto / Musica Femina: Entrepreneurial sides of being an artist (Irene Suchy, 26.4.2021)
- Cooperativ: Support in the crisis for cultural workers (April 2021)

- Der Standard: The Future of the Cultural Precariat: Solidarity through the Crisis? (Stefan Weiss, 2/27/2021)
- APA report: Report from the Culture Lockdown: Smart Austria Hires Artists (2/22/2021).
- Under the title "'Smart Austria' as a 'solidary roof' for artists" taken over by Salzburger Nachrichten, Kleine Zeitung, Tiroler Tageszeitung, Vorarlberger Nachrichten, vienna.at, vol.at, oe24.at, among others
- period.at: Ahoy Comrades! (Kristian Davidek, 18.1.2021)

Press releases and coverage

<https://www.smart-at.org/smartat/presse/>

Cooperative

Discussion and increase of the Smart Fee

Following a complex moderated process, the Smart Fee was successfully increased from 7.5% to 10% at the 2021 Annual General Assembly. In fact, the successful implementation of the Smart Fee increase (implementation July 1, 2021) contributes to a realistic perspective of reaching break-even in 2024 with a reasonable revenue development.

Participation and activation of users

Both in the discussion about increasing the Smart Fee and in the digitization process, users participated actively and with commitment in a way that is new for Smart Coop Austria. Overall, this has led to a stronger identification with the Coop and, together with the development of the community and governance tools as part of the digital project, is seen as a starting point for activating and networking the Smart Community more strongly.

Increasing visibility

In terms of increasing the visibility of Smart Coop Austria, there has been a welcome development in 2021. For the first time, external inquiries were the reason for all public presentations and invitations to events, which led to a pleasing density of events in the fall of 2021. In addition, there were invitations to interviews and, in some cases, prominent article formats.

Conclusion 2021

- Although 2021 continued to be heavily influenced by the Covid-19 strategy, Smart's business activities recovered significantly and showed a pleasing overall development together with the GmbH.
- While overall revenues declined in the previous core area of performing arts and in the area of music, the development of the order situation (as in 2020) showed a flexibility and mutability of the users to new areas of activity.
- Funding in connection with Covid-19 also had a stabilizing effect in 2021 and was used to support the sustainable activities of the Smart Coop team and users.
- The successful acquisition and implementation of the digital project contributes significantly to the achievement of greater and necessary efficiency, and at the same time will provide as a tool the potential of the cooperative to strengthen and activate the community.
- The development of the Smart Portal practically contributes to the self-determination of the users and increase of usability. The low-threshold nature of the service makes it more attractive.
- The successful increase of the Smart Fee also contributes significantly to a realistic perspective of reaching the break-even target 2024 for Smart Austria.
- The active participation of the users in the discussion about the increase of the Smart Fee and in the digital project are a welcome starting point for the development of Smart as a living Coop.
- Increasing the visibility and thus the awareness of Smart is an important starting point for the development of new target groups and potential users.