

The Starting Musician's Encyclopedia

By Conservatorium Maastricht & Jazz Maastricht (Robert van der Padt & Pieter Schoonderwoerd)

On this online platform, we collect information for the starting musician, particularly for musicians living in the Euregion (the border area of the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany). Similar sites with more information include www.musicmotion.nl/ (Dutch) and www.beroepskunstenaar.nl

1. Taxes

1.1 Standard Expense Deduction Scheme (Total Fee Statement Form)

If you're not working in music professionally yet, the Standard Expense Deduction Scheme (KVR) allows you to earn small amounts. Clients can use this scheme to pay a maximum amount of €163 per artist without having to withhold and pay income tax and contributions. The KVR scheme is a tax-free allowance for expenses incurred. Please note, however, that this is not necessarily tax-free for you; you still have to state these earnings on your income tax return.

Advantage:

- Fast and easy payment up to €163
- No extra costs

Disadvantage:

- Not possible for fees over €163
- You include these earnings in your annual income tax return
- In the event of an audit, you need to be able to prove to the tax authorities that these costs can really be classified as expenses

1.2 Payroll service

If you're not self-employed yet, but you are doing paid work in music, you can arrange to be paid through a payroll service. This is a company that sends an invoice to the client on your behalf, and then pays you. This means that all your concerts are paid by one company, and they can deduct your income tax as if you were their employee.

- Advantage: You don't need to worry about keeping detailed records. The payroll service company does this for you and provides you with an annual statement.
- Disadvantage: You pay a small fee for each invoice. A large portion of your income is withheld in tax, which you can deduct from your income tax at the end of the year. You still receive it, but indirectly.

1.3 Self-employment/Your own business

More information on this will follow shortly. Until then, please go to www.kvk.nl for answers to your questions.

1.3.1 Invoicing clients abroad (as a Dutch business)

If you invoice clients within the EU, there are two things to look out for.

1. Your invoice must state your own VAT number *and* the VAT number of the business you're sending the invoice to.
2. On your invoice, you do *not* charge VAT, but state 'VAT reverse-charged'. The business will calculate and pay VAT to the tax authorities itself.

See:

https://www.belastingdienst.nl/wps/wcm/connect/bldcontenten/belastingdienst/business/vat/vat_in_the_netherlands/vat_relating_to_services/

1.3.1 Invoicing clients in the Netherlands as a foreign business

T.b.a.

1.3.3 Sample invoice

T.b.a.

1.3.4 Model agreement

Since the Declaration of Independent Contractor Status (VAR) was abolished, independent contractors are required to use model agreements when invoicing. This is a mutual declaration that your arrangement is not employment, but contracted work. At the end of 2016, it was decided that since this change in the law was very difficult to apply, small entrepreneurs like musicians won't be fined for not using this method.

Copy the following text to your invoice:

This performance does not lead to employment, to which the tax facility for performing artists of Section 5a of the Wages and Salaries Tax Act 1964 (Wet LB) and Section 4 of the Decree of 24 December 1986 (social insurance) would apply. As an artist, I choose not to use this tax facility for performing artists, and thus not to have any income tax and national insurance contributions withheld, nor to be covered by employee insurance schemes. This is in compliance with Section 3a of UR LB and Section 4 (2) of the Decree of 24 December 1986. As a result of this choice, the client is permitted to pay me the fee for the performance gross.

1.4 Sickness Benefits Act (ZW)

If you don't have a permanent job and you fall ill, you may be entitled to sickness benefit. If you contact the Dutch Employee Insurance Agency UWV (www.uwv.nl), you can check whether you are entitled to this.

1.5 Unemployment Insurance Act (WW)

If you lose a permanent job, you're probably entitled to unemployment benefit. If you're starting your own business after having been in employment, you can apply for unemployment benefit, but this only relates to your former rights as an employee. In principle, this scheme doesn't safeguard entrepreneurs against disappointing revenues.

1.6 Insurance

As a musician, you can insure your instrument against damage, loss and theft. The rates you pay largely depend on whether you play the instrument professionally (conservatoire students with few paid performances count as private individuals with low rates), and on the value of your instrument. For example, as a professional musician with an instrument worth €10,000, you would pay around €80 per quarter.

If you're self-employed, it may be worthwhile taking out disability insurance. A new variation on this which has become increasingly popular in recent years, particularly in the creative industries, are the so-called '*broodfondsen*' ('bread funds'). This is a scheme in which self-employers support each other on a voluntary and equal basis.

1.7 Other forms of income

1.7.1 Grants and subsidies

T.b.a.

1.7.2 Crowdfunding

Crowdfunding has become increasingly popular among artists and musicians over the past few years. The biggest website in the Netherlands is www.voordekunst.nl, and frequently used international platforms are www.pledgemusic.com and the more general www.kickstarter.com.

- Advantages:
 - The money is a donation, so unlike an investment, you don't need to pay it back
 - Private individuals and foundations can donate quickly and easily
 - If your proposal is approved, you get support throughout the process
 - Donations may result in tax advantages for private individuals
 - It's a chance to boost your following by offering nice services in return

Disadvantages:

- You need supporters who are prepared to invest in you
- Effective crowdfunding requires a lot of time and energy
- If you don't collect enough, you may not get anything

1.7.3 Sponsorship

Dutch Musical Instruments Foundation (NMF): www.muzeikinstrumentenfonds.nl

T.b.a.

1.7.4 Endorsement

A question frequently asked by musicians is how to get an endorsement deal. Many people mistakenly believe that it's simply a way to get free stuff. In order to get a company interested in sponsoring you, you have to convince them that you can offer them equal value in the form of promotion. So the first question is mainly; what can you, as an artist or band, offer a company?

<http://www.beroepkunstenaar.nl/en/music/step-by-step/?cirfaq=42135&cHash=a7dccd128a5d0df5eff4dac8563b98d5>

3 steps towards an endorsement deal: <http://diymusician.cdbaby.com/musician-tips/questions-from-sxsw-pt-1-as-a-musician-how-do-i-get-an-endorsement-deal/>

8 tips for getting an endorsement: <https://soundbetter.com/kb/8-tips-for-getting-endorsements-as-a-musician-or-producer>

Interview with a musician with an endorsement deal:

- Who are you?

Tijn Wybenga

- What company is sponsoring you?

Nord Keyboards through the distributor Algam Benelux

- How did you end up with them?

I looked them up and emailed them. They asked for proof that I perform a lot. I had to provide examples, show a lot of photos and videos and draw up a CV.

- What deal did you get?

I got my own page on the Nord Keyboards website. I can also buy Nord keyboards at cost price (so a discount of around 20% on top of the deductible 21% VAT). I get free parts when needed, and extra service, they keep in close contact.

- And in return?

I recommend Nord to my audience, and I always mention that I prefer to use Nord keyboards. I don't have an exclusivity contract, but Nord wants you to be convinced that Nord is the best choice for you. Once every two weeks, I post something on Facebook with Nord Keyboards tags.

1.7.5 Jazz Awards / prize money (suggestions for competitions in the Benelux)

B-Jazz International Contest (<http://www.b-jazz.be/>)

Jazz Award Maastricht (<http://www.jazzmaastricht.com/awards/informatie>)

Jazz Contest Mechelen (<http://www.jazzcontestmechelen.be/>)

Conservatorium Talent Award (<http://www.jazzinduketown.nl/talent-award/>)

Prinses Christina Jazz Concours (<http://christinaconcours.nl/concoursen/>)

Bucharest International Jazz Competition (<http://jazzcompetition.ro/>)

Leidse Boonekamp Jazz Award (<http://www.leidsejazz.nl/>)

Laren Jazz Award (<http://www.larenjazz.nl/index.php/de-laren-jazz-award>)

Keep an Eye: The Records (<https://www.keepaneyeye.nl/projecten/7/the-records-vanaf-2014.html>)

1.7.6 Copyright

Buma/Stemra is the copyright organisation for music authors and publishers in the Netherlands, and it represents its members' interests around the world. Visit www.bumastemra.nl for more information. Sabam (www.sabam.be) is a similar organisation in Belgium, and Gema (www.gema.de) is the German equivalent.

2. Education & training

2.1 Erasmus & exchanges

For more information about possibilities within Conservatorium Maastricht: email Jane.smeele@zuyd.nl

2.2 Further training

Keep up to date with public workshops and masterclasses at Conservatorium Maastricht via the website and social media, and register for the newsletter.

T.b.a.

2.3. Student finance/masterclass funding TBA

3. Artist Toolkit

Biography

One of the most important pages on your website is your bio page. Here you'll tell the story about your band or yourself to a programmer, booker or journalist. A great bio will inform, inspire and answer questions about your music, message, audience and reasons why and how you make music. It satisfies several needs from (potential) fans, to dedicated jazz press and promoters that need to sell tickets with your story.

We've pinpointed some essentials to include when writing your own bio.

- Who are you?
 - Your (band)name
 - Formation
 - Located
- What's your story?
 - Why does this band exist/why do you make music?
 - What's your influence?
 - Sounds like (name around 3 similar artists)
 - What's your vision on music and art?
 - F.e. Christian Scott: *"If I can show the compatibility of all those seemingly disparate groups if I can marry the sound of these different genres, then it shows that, in reality, people are not just compatible, we're the same. Our heart is the same."*
 - Which music scene do you belong too? (Be specific - punk-jazz like Tortoise, The Ex).
 - About the music, live experience etc..
- Quotes and accomplishments
 - Released albums
 - Press / Other Artists or Promoters quotes about you
 - Festivals/venues you've played (highlights)
- What's happening now/in the future?
 - Why are you relevant to book/review/listen to now?

General tips:

- Keep it current, update frequently
- Have several versions ready (long, medium, short, elevator pitch)
- No typos
- Keep a good layout
- Focus on the emotion, on the 'why' of your story as explained in the Golden Circle (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XNqKZybldv4>)

Links:

- Example biography (veteran musician):
 - www.duaneubanks.com/biography
 - <http://goodmusiccompany.com/artist/avishai-cohen-t>
- Example biography (starting musician): <https://www.gijsidema.com/home>
- 'How to write an effective musician bio': <https://bandzoogle.com/blog/how-to-write-an-effective-musician-bio-with-examples>

Photo

Great promo photos grab attention and get more people to check out your music. A great photo can be the difference between having or not having a gig, magazine feature or a new fan.

We've pinpointed some essentials to include when shooting your promotional photos.

- Professional quality
 - High resolution (300 DPI)
 - Don't make the surroundings more important than you. Organisers are not looking for a beautiful landscape with a small trio in the distance.
 - If it's a live photo, make sure there are no "bored" people in the picture.
 - Have several photos ready in different formats: portrait/landscape, color and black&white.
- Consistent with your style
 - It needs to fit your story
 - Atmosphere & energy fitting to music/identity
 - Giving an impression of what music to expect
- Clear
 - Main focus on the band/artist
 - Face(s) clear and visible
- Eye-catcher
 - Make sure you stand out amongst other band photos

When:

Promoters easily can be booking 6 months or more in advance, so make sure you have your promotional photos ready. When you're finishing a record, you most likely have a good sense of what the vibe will be like and what title you'll be using. This is a great time to immediately follow up with a new photoshoot to capture it.

Why:

Just like your biography, your photos often are what people get in touch with before actually hearing your music. When performing at a (showcase) festival, having a striking band photo could just make that one booker check you out instead of someone else.

Also, musical events and articles will use photos of artists involved, and them using your photos instead of your colleagues will give you tons of free promotion. You could be on *posters, festival brochures, newspapers, magazines, websites* and in *personal emails to journalists*.

Who:

When starting out you could of course start by doing it yourself or asking a friend for help. Having a good concept beats the better camera. When you're ready to hire a professional you can search for similar artists as yourself and see who've made their pictures. These days we're sure you'll find someone using your social network or by searching online.

Links:

- 'Why Great Promo Photos Will Get You More Gigs': www.jazzfuel.com/great-promo-photos
- '11 Tips for Band Promotional Photography': <https://digital-photography-school.com/11-tips-for->

band-promotional-photography/

- 'Top Photoshoot Ideas for musicians and bands: <https://www.musicindustryhowto.com/top-photoshoot-ideas-for-musicians-and-bands/>

PR text

There is a lot in common between a proper bio and your PR text. The main difference is the length in text, since your PR text will be used in festival brochures, event flyers and websites to promote your concert or music. Keep the following in mind when sending your PR text out:

- Focus on the importance of *that* event, why are you here and why should they check you out?
- Most important information first. If it's too long, they will cut the paragraph.
 - Reason of tour/concert (Album release, featured guest etc.)
 - Your story (short) to create interest
 - accomplishments
 - etc.

If it's up to you to announce the concert in your PR text, don't forget the following:

- Date of the event
- Name of the venue
- Address and city
- Doors open at
- Concert start at
- Entrance fee

Artist FB Page

Nine out of ten people in the Netherlands is active on social media, with Facebook and YouTube being the most commonly used. A Facebook *Profile* is meant for a person and can have a maximum number of 5000 friends. A Facebook *Page* is meant for businesses and doesn't have a limit. Since most artist pages start as private profiles, it is possible to transform your *Profile* into a *Page*.

You use your Facebook Page to share messages, pictures, videos and links to f.e. your music and videos elsewhere. The algorithm of Facebook is programmed to find signals of popularity, newsworthy, unique content and relevance. So naturally, if you get more followers to your Facebook Page, you reach more people. If your post gets a lot of likes, it means it's more popular, relevant etc., so it will show at more timelines.

Increase your Facebook Reach!

Be aware of the following things to increase your reach on Facebook:

- Next to the 'Like' button there's a 'Follow' button that enables people to always see your new posts and get notifications when you go live with a video. Whenever you 'Like' a Page you automatically 'Follow' that Page in a Default setting. Urge your biggest fans to change this setting to 'See First' to make sure they don't miss out on any content you're sharing.
- Facebook wants you to stay on the Facebook site and not go elsewhere. Sharing a link to a video on YouTube will reach fewer people than uploading or live-streaming directly onto Facebook. The downside is that Facebook videos can't generate money off of commercials, where YouTube offers you that option.
- The other way around; increase your relevance by directing to your Facebook Page from other sources. This can be from your personal website, YouTube, SoundCloud, Instagram etc.

- The concept of Facebook is to create a dialogue between you and your friends/fans. So don't just post, but respond with your artist page as well. Facebook's software will pick it up and push your new posts.
- Promote yourself by doing free giveaways, start discussions, share pictures and announcements from the venue (preferably with a lot of people visible).
- Facebook offers Page tips as well. For example, you can invite your friends of your Profile to like your Page. This can greatly increase your amount of followers.
- Post events in time, both as a Facebook Event as in a post.
- Make sure your basic info is up-to-date and people can contact you.
- Tag events, people and places in your post to reach the audience that follows these places or people. Also, the other way around you're helping promote something or someone else, so they might return the favor.

Start a Facebook Campaign

When you've created your Page, Facebook will offer to create a Campaign for you. You can choose from the following options:

- Advertise your business: You can do a paid promotion of your page, sharing the Page name, profile picture and the About text in people timelines. You can target regions, age groups, gender and interests.
- Promote a post: Using the same options as before you can promote a specific post you did about f.e. an event, video or link.
- Create an Event: Similar to creating an event from your personal Profile, you give your followers the chance to click on 'Interested' or 'Going' to stay up-to-date. You can reach these people in the Event itself by doing targeted posts.
- Create a discount: When typing URL's like bol.com Facebook gives you the option to give a discount in your name, offering discount codes to create a relevant post.

Last tips to get the most out of your Facebook Artist Page

- Put links to your album/music next to your cover photo/profile picture. Your visitors are guaranteed to see these, so edit the description and put in links to your music.
- Don't let other social media automatically share for you on Facebook. Other apps like Instagram can copy your post to your Facebook, but your fans will be annoyed if they only see posts like this. So whenever you share on Facebook, at least edit the text so it fits Facebook well.
- Have a sign-up form. You might have these followers on Facebook now, but you never know where they'll be in a year. So it's important to create a database, and that means; mailing lists. People can actually sign up on your Facebook Page using programs as MailChimp.
- Like a Page as your Page. As said when tagging someone else's Page or Event you include their audience to yours. By actually liking their Page you together create a community of like-minded music lovers and again; you reach more people.
- Pin your best content. If you, for example, released an album, you can pin the post where you share all the links to your music on top of your Facebook Page. Making sure that everyone sees that post first.

Relevant websites:

<https://jazzfuel.com/12-facebook-artist-page-tips/>

<http://artbusiness.com/facebook-tips-help-protocol-etiquette-and-instructions-for-artists.html>

<https://www.facebook.com/notes/artwebcom/how-to-create-an-artists-successful-facebook->

Social Media

Besides Facebook there are many other platforms for your social media to reach your audience. We'll go over them briefly.

- Instagram
 - In many aspects Instagram is similar to Facebook, but it's more visually focused. Ideal for creating a visual image of yourself or your band.
 - The app is for your smartphone, and you can't upload from their website.
 - They don't differentiate private or professional accounts, and an account is easily made from your (possibly already existing) Facebook account.
 - Links on posts don't work. Mostly this is resolved by referring to your bio and posting the link there on your main profile.
 - More and more people in their 20's are switching to Instagram as their main focus for social media and to discover new people to follow. Get experienced with the app, adjust your posts to the Instagram audience and reach them there!
- Snapchat
 - An app that allows you to send pictures or movies to people that disappear after being opened. When added to 'Your Story' your post is publicly shared for 24 hours.
 - Not ideal to make new friends or fans, but it's a fun app to get closer to your already existing fanbase sharing exclusive teasers and secret messages.
 - It offers certain geofilters, allowing you to target persons in a specific area.
- YouTube
 - A website that allows you to upload videos that can easily be embedded (shared) on your website, blog or social media.
 - Create your own channel and customize it to your image so people can subscribe to it and receive notifications whenever you upload something new.
 - Unlike most social platforms you can make money off of views by allowing advertisements to be run before or during the video.
 - For most bookers this is the first place to go when listening to new bands, so make sure your best videos show on top when you search for your band.
 - Sharing your live videos and studio recordings on here is common, but don't overlook the potential of starting a vlog (video blog) and streaming live videos directly to your YouTube audience.
 - Make use of free giveaways to have your audience like, comment and subscribe. Most people don't automatically engage with your video on this website.
- SoundCloud
 - A free website to upload and share your own music.
 - Easily embed the SoundCloud player on your website or social media.
 - There are some options to get a paid subscription, but generally speaking you don't pay or get paid on this website.
 - Think before uploading your whole album on this website. Is your audience here? Or should you direct everyone to one streaming service to boost the numbers there?
- Twitter
 - One of the older social media platforms. Started with only written messages of max. 140 characters, but currently allowing 280 characters, pictures and video uploads.

- Similar to Instagram you publicly share, and people are able to follow you. Getting your followers to Retweet your post is a great way to reach more and new followers.
- Learn the language! As it's getting more important to use your tags (@) and hashtags (#) in an effective way in both Facebook and Instagram, this is where it's started and probably where it matters most. Trending hashtags are still mainly being picked up from Twitter over the other social media.
- It's not as popular as it used to be, but simultaneously it has a strong core of engaged users that you can reach.
- Other platforms
 - Google+: Very similar to Facebook. Main difference is the audience (a lot smaller than Facebook) and the compatibility to share YouTube and Google Play links, as they're owned by the same company.
 - Pinterest: A digital bulletin board. Share images and add them to a moodboard, which can be your own or a general topic. They're public and can be followed. It's a very visual platform, often used by photographers and fashion designers.
 - Blogs: The already old-fashioned blogs still exist and can be a way to share your day-to-day life as an artist. Sites as Blogger, WordPress, Web-log offer this for free.

Simple website

There are some simple ways to get started when creating your first website. Let's first have a look at what platform you could use to create a website without too much trouble, and secondly focus on what should be on there.

How to build a website?

- **Templates**

There are many websites offering services to provide you with a clean, good-looking website template for you to adjust to your likings. Most offer a free service and various paid services. Expect that for the free service you can't claim your personal domain, and you'll stay as a subpage of their main website (example: bobsmith.wordpress.com). The most common sites are: **Wordpress** (www.wordpress.com), **Squarespace** (www.squarespace.com), **Wix** (www.wix.com) and **Webflow** (www.webflow.com).

- **Claim your domain**

Most of these sites give you the opportunity to quickly and easily connect to your personal domain (example: www.bobsmith.com). Though it might be cheaper and eventually easier to buy your domain name on a separate website and connect them. There are numerous sites to get your domain, like www.versio.nl, www.hosting2go.nl and www.domeinwinkel.nl. Also Google for Business offers a chance to quickly claim domain names and easily connect their email address to your Google Account, which could be helpful if you work with Gmail. Every website decides their own prices, so you could save some money if you spend some time on discovering your options! *Do check if your website host is able to connect with your domain, for example Squarespace doesn't allow .nl domain names to be connected.*

- **Personal business email addresses**

If you own a website, you can create your personal business email addresses (for example: info@bobsmith.com). The online mailbox that is provided with this most often is very basic and hard to work with, but with some effort you should be able to connect them to f.e. your Apple Mail, Windows Live or Gmail. You can 'forward' your emails or 'import' them into another account. Importing a different account allows you to also send emails from your private account (f.e. from your Gmail inbox) whilst

signing it with a different email address, without having to actually ever open this separate inbox that was provided by your domain host. For more info on how to set this up, check the 'Help' section of your email provider. Example of how it could be set up: <https://prologger.com/how-to-set-up-an-email-account-that-uses-your-domain-name/>

What should be on my website?

- **Content**

Recently many artist websites have been stripped down since most information can nowadays be found on your social media. Still, there is a lot that should be available. A good website should at least contain a **Bio, (upcoming) concerts, gallery, videos, contact info** and (if you released music) **webshop**. Just like with your social media, adjust your website so that there's a reason for people to visit it instead of your Facebook or Bandcamp.

- **Benefit**

A lot of content can now easily be shared on social media instead, still there are many benefits to having a good website. First of all, it's where you can **collect** everything (or the highlights) of what you've been sharing on numerous platforms. Also, it's the best place to **gather data** on your fanbase, by for example offering a sign-up sheet for your newsletter. For some artists the website is primarily focussed on potential bookers/press, and they offer their **press kit** to be easily downloaded.

- **Fresh**

Most artists treat their website as a static environment, neglecting the need for regular updates. Without it visitors won't return. Plus, Google loves 'living' website and reward them with higher ranking in their search engine, so keep the content fresh. Also be sure that your website is **mobile responsive**, since most people will open it on their mobile phone.

A website can be a one-sided self-promotion, but for better results you should aim to be an **exchange of values**, regularly updating it, engaging with your fanbase, collecting data and creating your own space.

Links: <https://jazzfuel.com/interview-nadworks/>

Streaming music

There are various platforms aimed at sharing your music through streaming, so what are the differences and where should your music be?

- **SoundCloud**

As described before at the Social Media chapter, SoundCloud is a free platform for streaming your music. It's easily embedded into your website or social media, but you won't make money from any streams. It is optional to add a 'buy' button to direct your listeners to iTunes

- **BandCamp**

BandCamp is often used for starting bands to easily distribute and sell your music. You can pick the price you'd like to charge for your music, and people can pay for downloads and merchandise. BandCamp takes a share of your income. You do not generate an income for streaming your music online.

- **Spotify**

The biggest platform today for streaming music is Spotify. Spotify pays the artist between \$0.006 and \$0.0084 per stream. They're constantly updating their platform and with it are changing the way many people experience music. It is advised to read up on how Spotify works if you're trying to get the most out of your Spotify streams. *The main focus for Spotify is their Playlists, so getting your music into one of their curated lists could make your track go from <1.000 plays to even a million in a short period of time. Many artists are adjusting the way they're releasing music to fit this new trend.*

- **iTunes**

iTunes has been the dominant distribution medium for a long time, relying on downloading more than streaming. It can be quite costly to get your music on iTunes as a new artist, since you need to go through a third-party, an aggregator. (See: <http://mashable.com/2011/05/20/getting-music-on-itunes/>) Though the continuing popularity of iTunes does make it appealing to get your album on there.

Links: <https://www.pastemagazine.com/articles/2014/08/where-to-share-the-costs-and-royalties-of-having-m.html>

Video

Proper video material can help you a long way getting your band on the map. The focus has shifted from high-quality produced video clips to stripped-down live videos for many bands, but in every case you always aim to get new people engaged with your music.

Newsletter

Sending out newsletters might not seem so 'hip' or necessary anymore with all of the possibilities that social media offer. Yet, it remains one of the most effective ways to keep your fanbase involved and reach out directly.

Social media to revenue

When starting at the social media to get people involved, the 'liking' of a post can result into the 'liking' and 'following' of your Facebook Page. Yet, the majority of people that have already committed now to following your updates actually do not see your post (see Facebook Page). Therefore, going from your Facebook fan base to actual revenue is still a far way to travel.

Inviting your fans to sign up for a newsletter gives you a far directer way of communicating, allowing you to keep them involved on a longer term basis. Also, as social media platforms change over time, your database of email addresses remains.

- **Marketing Automation Platform**

Many artists use online platforms as **Mailchimp**, **SendinBlue** or **Freshmail** to create their database and send out newsletters. To see what online platforms there are available, see this article:

<https://blog.capterra.com/top-10-mailchimp-alternatives-small-business-email-marketing/>

Insight

Mailchimp is the largest of them all and allows you up to 2.500 subscribers for free. Not only does such a Marketing Automation Platform offer you stylish Templates to create your newsletter, after sending out your newsletter they keep track of the response. Which means that you'll be able to collect data on your fans and target them even more specifically in the future. See where your emails are being opened most, what time of day they're online, what links did they click on, etc.. Or use it to keep venues and festival bookers up-to-date with a special newsletter and actually know whether they've listened to your music or not.

Payment

- **Gageverklaring (Standard Expenses Deduction Scheme)**

If you're not working in music professionally yet, the Standard Expense Deduction Scheme (KVR, 'Kleine vergoedings regeling' in Dutch) allows you to earn small amounts. Clients can use this scheme to pay a maximum amount of €163 per artist without having to withhold and pay income tax and contributions. The KVR scheme is a tax-free allowance for expenses incurred. Please note, however, that this is not necessarily tax-free for you; you still have to state these earnings on your income tax return. Download the KVR:

https://download.belastingdienst.nl/belastingdienst/docs/gageverklaring_artiesten_beroepssporters_lh0242z17fol.pdf

Advantage:

- Fast and easy payment up to €163
- No extra costs

Disadvantage:

- Not possible for fees over €163
- You include these earnings in your annual income tax return
- In the event of an audit, you need to be able to prove to the tax authorities that these costs can really be classified as expenses

- **Payroll service**

If you're not self-employed yet, but you are doing paid work in music, you can arrange to be paid through a payroll service. This is a company that sends an invoice to the client on your behalf, and then pays you. This means that all your concerts are paid by one company, and they can deduct your income tax as if you were their employee.

- Advantage: You don't need to worry about keeping detailed records. The payroll service company does this for you and provides you with an annual statement.
- Disadvantage: You pay a small fee for each invoice. A large portion of your income is withheld in tax, which you can deduct from your income tax at the end of the year. You still receive it, but indirectly.

- **Invoice (self-employed)**

More information on this will follow shortly. Until then, please go to www.kvk.nl for answers to your questions.

Many musicians make their money being a freelancer. For this you need to register as such at the Dutch Chamber of Commerce (Kamer van Koophandel). You can go to their website (English: <https://www.kvk.nl/english/registration/>) or set a meeting at their local office to do so. To finalize the process you must always drop by in person.

There are different legal forms of companies. Most likely you will want to register as a '**Sole Proprietorship**', in Dutch referred to as the 'ZZP'er' or 'Freelancer'.

- No starting capital needed
- Your liability for your company and privately is combined
 - You are personally responsible for the finances of your Sole Proprietorship, so you can't legally distance yourself in case your business goes bankrupt.
- When creating a low profit, this legal form offers you financial benefits.
- Deduct business investments from your income (profit)
- You collect VAT (Dutch: BTW) over your work (currently 6% for arts and 21% for other). You receive the paid VAT over business investments back every quarter.
- You need to prove that you work at least 1225 hours a year, and at least 50% specifically for your freelance work (in case you are also in a salaried employment).

Invoicing clients abroad (as a Dutch business)

If you invoice clients within the EU, there are two things to look out for.

1. Your invoice must state your own VAT number *and* the VAT number of the business you're sending the invoice to.

2. On your invoice, you do *not* charge VAT, but state 'VAT reverse-charged'. The business will calculate and pay VAT to the tax authorities itself.

See also [Belastingdienst VAT](#).

Invoicing clients in the Netherlands as a foreign business

T.b.a.

Creating an invoice

You can send out invoices for your work once you're registered as a Sole Proprietorship. Your invoice should include the following:

- A unique (and successive) invoice number
- Date when you send the invoice out
- Date that you delivered your product or did your gig
- Name, address, kvk-code and btw-identification code of your company
- Full name and address of the client
- A clear description of the product or service
- The price excluding VAT and the total amount
- The VAT-rate in percentages and vat-amount in euro's
- You list the btw-identification code of the client In case you're sending an invoice out to a different country/state of the EU, or when your client is responsible for paying the BTW in your place through the 'verleggingsregeling'

Example Invoice: [download link](#)

Model agreement

Since the Declaration of Independent Contractor Status (VAR) was abolished, independent contractors are required to use model agreements when invoicing. This is a mutual declaration that your arrangement is not employment, but contracted work. At the end of 2016, it was decided that since this change in the law was very difficult to apply, small entrepreneurs like musicians won't be fined for not using this method.

Copy the following text to your invoice:

This performance does not lead to employment, to which the tax facility for performing artists of Section 5a of the Wages and Salaries Tax Act 1964 (Wet LB) and Section 4 of the Decree of 24 December 1986 (social insurance) would apply. As an artist, I choose not to use this tax facility for performing artists, and thus not to have any income tax and national insurance contributions withheld, nor to be covered by employee insurance schemes. This is in compliance with Section 3a of UR LB and Section 4 (2) of the Decree of 24 December 1986. As a result of this choice, the client is permitted to pay me the fee for the performance gross.

4. Giving concerts

All musicians want to perform in front of an audience, but concert opportunities can be hard to find. Here are some quick tips to keep in mind if you want to perform.

4.1 Types of concerts

If you accept a concert, you can end up in all sorts of situations. They can be commercial, promotional, or perhaps a valuable experience. With time, all musicians develop their own rules of thumb to determine whether a concert is worth the effort. One of the most well-known guidelines is the claim that a concert can be interesting because of the **money**, **audience** or the **musicians**. The idea is that you should do the performance if it meets two of those three criteria. It either pays well or is with musicians you enjoy playing with or would like to play with, but you only serve as background music. Or it's a chance to present yourself to a large audience, sharing the stage with well-known musicians, but you earn next to nothing. Obviously, this rule is not for everyone, but it may offer a starting point.

4.2 Arranging concerts

Whether it's a concert at a festival with your band or playing covers at a wedding, there are some similarities when it comes to getting a gig. Here are some tips to keep in mind:

- **Work with a clear purpose.** Many venues get dozens of emails a day, so you if you really want to play there, you need to stand out. It's better to approach ten venues properly than send a group email to 50.
- **Do the work for them.** If a festival has five stages and they don't know your music yet, it can be tricky to determine whether you fit the bill. Make sure you're well-prepared, look for similar bands in their programme and try to make your offer as concrete as possible. All they need to do then is say 'yes' or 'no'.
- **Make yourself unique.** Figure out what your 'Unique Selling Point' is. There are lots of musicians and bands, so you need to have a reason why you of all people should perform there. Have you recorded a new CD? Have you won any prizes recently? Is the majority of your Facebook fans based in this city?

- **Show quality.** This is not just about your music or press photos. It's also about the quality of the venues and festivals where you perform. If you play in pubs all month, the local jazz club won't book you for a concert with the same band.
- **Be professional.** Show that you're serious and reliable. Be polite in your emails and on the phone, and answer their questions within a few days. It doesn't matter whether you're in contact with the organiser of a local fete or the Pinkpop programmer, everyone deserves to be treated with respect.
- **Establish a relationship.** You won't be booked instantly. Take the time to get to know the programmer, ask for his/her opinion and keep them updated on your band's developments. As long as you're not pushy, but keep working on your quality and Unique Selling Point, you'll convince them eventually.

4.3 First email contact

When contacting a booking agent or programmer for the first time, it's important to give the right kind of information. Use the following steps to compose a good email:

Dear....

My name is ... from...

1. Describe the trademark of your music. (For example: 'Music in the style of this film, this book.) Use something that appeals to people's emotions.
2. Proven facts (where have you played? Have you won any prizes? Released any CDs?)
3. Something about the music (could be:.....is one of the few musicians to combine indie rock with free jazz in a unique, personal and contemporary style).
4. Something about you (short bio).
5. Press quotes (if you have them).
6. One or two good-quality YouTube links
7. One good photo

Thank you for your time. I look forward to receiving your response.

Kind regards,

Name, phone number, website, email.

4.4 Press

Press attention will bring your music to the attention of a wide and probably new audience. Essentially, the tips about how to contact someone for a concert also apply here. **Work with a clear purpose in mind, be well-prepared, make sure you offer something unique, show quality, be professional and establish a relationship.** Many media won't immediately earn you anything, so particularly the smaller, local media will welcome you with open arms if you want to drop in for a broadcast. You can also contact the local newspaper if you're the headliner at a festival. Find out which magazines or websites have written about similar artists and approach them.