

Recommendations from the European Association of Conservatoires (AEC) and the European League of Institutes of the Arts (ELIA)

Our constituency - The higher arts education sector in Europe

The European Association of Conservatoires (AEC) and the European League of Institutes of the Arts (ELIA) together represent more than 600 institutions for higher arts education in all European countries. The higher arts education sector in Europe provides a natural synergy between education and culture, which is of crucial importance to supporting creativity and innovation not only in the arts sector, but in society at large. Both organisations are uniquely positioned through their experience and mission to subscribe, enhance and contribute to furthering the aims of the EU Year of Creativity and Innovation 2009.

Our core values

While addressing the contribution of the arts to promoting and nurturing creativity and innovation in our societies, both European associations have identified the need to address and secure the following core values

- Maintain and value the unrestricted critical and questioning role of artists as a core attribute and purpose of creative education and as a necessary function of a balanced and responsible society.
- Promote the value of arts research and enterprise as significant contributors to opportunity and knowledge generation and as vital creative, intellectual and groundbreaking engines of innovation and change in society.
- Promote and facilitate greater collaboration and cooperation between the arts and sciences that draws upon shared concerns, approaches to problem solving and the potential for creating new visions, solutions and compelling arguments for the role of creativity as a catalyst for invention.
- Explore structurally sustainable and strategic ways of reinvesting in higher arts education that draws upon the resources and massive increase in cultural provision and participation in the arts in the last two decades. It is specifically important to ensure that the cultural industries, the public and private sectors invest in new talent creation as a means of ensuring a vibrant and continuing high level of cultural product fit for the recent explosion in cultural infrastructure. Higher arts education has benefited the least from this increase in cultural expansion.
- Profile cross disciplinary thematic enquiry and create new sustainable partnerships that reflect a complex society. There is a proven case that there can be a cultural response and approach to the pressing issues of our time such as climate change, poverty, exploitation, greed and oppression. This represents a challenge to the nature of what is a legitimate curriculum portfolio for creative arts education.

Our recommendations

To the European Commission and the EU Member States:

- To acknowledge within the European Year of Creativity & Innovation 2009 the role of the arts as an important contributor to innovation in society and the economy by giving particular support to activities, projects, organisations and networks in this field in the work programme of the year.
- To introduce into the design of the future EU cultural programme a specific strand to support cultural projects with an educational dimension building on the experiences of the CONNECT Initiative (1999-2000).
- When shaping a future European mobility scheme for artists, to consider offering mobility grants to recent graduates supporting their efforts to establish a high level of professional practice at a European level that will also have educational benefits.

- To prioritise the synergy between education and culture as a central topic at the next Cultural Forum in September 2009.
- To promote in their efforts to support the Bologna Declaration process beyond 2010 a more sectoral and subject-specific approach to curricular reform, quality assurance and qualifications framework as a new step in the process, in order to enable creative disciplines to develop their aims to support and sustain creativity and innovation.
- To create new opportunities for research within the arts, and further promote cross disciplinary research initiatives through the EU research programmes so that arts based research on creativity can be expanded, supported and enhanced where there are shared concerns for the value of innovation and creativity.

To the Culture Committee of the European Parliament:

- To organise a hearing and a report on higher arts education in Europe to assess the current strengths and weaknesses of the sector. The focus of this initiative should highlight the role the sector plays in promoting creativity and innovation in our societies and in supporting the development of the cultural industries. It should also propose a convincing set of recommendations and actions on how to improve existing and future EU programmes and initiatives in supporting both arts education and culture.
- To give support to the creation of pilot projects in preparation of the future EU cultural programme, which will test and prepare a specific strand in this programme to support cultural projects with an educational dimension building on the experiences of the CONNECT Initiative of the EU (1999-2000).

To the Open Method of Coordination working groups in culture and education & training:

- To encourage the national representatives in the recently established Education & Culture Working Group in the framework of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) for Culture to debate and secure actions for a closer synergy between education and culture by taking into account the role of culture and the arts in various educational contexts (formal, non-formal and informal) and levels (from pre-primary to and beyond higher education), and not just limit its remit to arts education in (formal) primary and secondary education.
- To acknowledge the role the arts can play in supporting creativity and innovation when discussing new indicators on education for innovation and creativity in the framework of the OMC for Education and Training after 2010, as suggested in the recently published strategic framework for European cooperation for education and training.
- To encourage the national representatives in the OMC working groups on the Cultural Industries to address professional training and the continuing professional development of artists, managers, teachers, facilitators and other professionals in the cultural sector as a central theme.
- To encourage both the OMC for culture and the OMC for education and training to consult with and draw upon the vast amount of expertise present in AEC and ELIA in relation to the above-mentioned issues.

AEC/ELIA January 2009

*For more information, please contact Mr Martin Prchal (AEC Chief Executive) at aecinfo@aecinfo.org
or Ms Carla Delfos (ELIA Executive Director) at elia@elia-artschools.org*