

'TOWARDS AN INTERNATIONAL HIGHER MUSIC EDUCATION AREA' STATEMENT OF THE 'MUNDUS MUSICALIS' PROJECT WORKING GROUP



Introduction

'Mundus Musicalis' aimed at creating a greater understanding of issues on higher music education and training in and outside Europe, with an intent to remove obstacles currently preventing the recognition of music studies and qualifications, and thus facilitate an increase and enhancement of mobility and employability of students, teachers and professionals.

'Mundus Musicalis' also sought to improve the quality of professional music

training in Europe through an exchange of information regarding professional music training and the music profession at the international level. The project, which was coordinated by the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) and the European Association of Conservatoires (AEC), was conducted from 2005 to 2007 with 10 partner organisations world-wide supported by the ERASMUS MUNDUS programme of the European Union.

Project results

During the course of the project, the 'Mundus Musicalis' working group produced the following results:

- The Final Report *Higher Music Education: A Global Perspective*, which contains information regarding international cooperation in higher music education, global trends in music and music education, and conclusions and recommendations.
- A set of descriptions of national higher music education systems in more than 36 countries world-wide.
- The handbook *The International Recognition of Studies and Qualifications in Higher Music Education*.
- The study *Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Music Education – an International Comparison*.
- The website www.studymusicineurope.org with information regarding studying music in Europe.

Conclusions

The 'Mundus Musicalis' working group considers international mobility of students, teachers and professionals as a vital component of a vibrant global musical landscape and observes that:

- Both in- and outside Europe, successful models and practices that facilitate international mobility in music are already in place based on informal and formal agreements. In addition, various tools that can facilitate mobility exist or are being developed. For example, a) credit point systems compatible to the European ECTS system now exist in most countries and b) many programs are organised into three cycles with defined learning outcomes. In addition, existing and emerging quality assurance and accreditation structures at national levels are enhancing comparability and recognition. These initiatives provide a solid basis for the continuing development of the mobility between and within cycles, and in the formation of joint programmes.
- At the same time, there are still structural, institutional, financial and cultural challenges to mobility at all levels. Existing regulations, systems and procedures often are not compatible, the costs of study abroad can be prohibitive (particularly for those coming from developing countries), and the encounter with different cultures of organisation, communication and pedagogy can be alienating instead of stimulating, if not appropriately supported.

In addition to issues regarding international cooperation, the working group identified the following shared concerns:

- The continuous challenge faced by higher music education institutions to prepare graduates for an increasingly diversified music profession.
- Changes in the role of art music in our societies, the emergence of new 'players' such as world music and web-based music, and continuous questions raised by choosing positions in an increasingly globalised, mediatised, and commercialised musical arena.
- A lack of consideration for cultural diversity and its interaction with the forces of globalisation, as addressed, for example, in the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.
- The necessity to recognize higher music education institutions as central and fundamental players in the maintenance of the artistic landscape and the development of arts communities.

Recommendations

Based on these observations and conclusions, the 'Mundus Musicalis' working group would like to make the following recommendations to the various stakeholders.

It is recommended that regional and national governments:

1. Recognise the capacity of music to be a powerful non-verbal tool for intercultural dialogue.
2. Recognise higher music education institutions as central and fundamental players in the maintenance of the artistic landscape and the development of music communities.
3. Recognise study programmes in music at all 3 cycle levels of higher education.
4. Stimulate validating and accrediting authorities to overcome structural barriers to student mobility.
5. (Further) develop a discipline-specific approach to quality assurance and accreditation processes and support international cooperation in this area.
6. Avoid barriers to mobility caused by rigid visa regulations, excessive tuition fees for international students and inflexible recognition procedures.
7. Introduce the Diploma Supplement as an efficient tool for academic and professional recognition.

It is recommended that institutions for higher music education and training:

8. Invest additional time and resources in international cooperation.
9. Communicate clearly to institutions and students involved in mobility and exchange information regarding content, practical and recognition issues.
10. Insist on the autonomy of music administrative units as part of larger higher education institutions to be able to make final decisions on the admission of international students.
11. Approach real or perceived differences of formal aspects of the study programme creatively with the aim of establishing equivalence of comparable learning experiences.
12. Take into account explicit and implicit cultural differences between visitors and the home institution, realising the benefits of mutual dialogue.
13. Seek to avoid or remove structural barriers to student mobility when designing and reviewing programmes of study.

It is recommended that the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG):

14. Strengthens the global dimension of the 'Bologna' process by supporting the distribution of information on 'Bologna' process developments worldwide.
15. Pays more attention to discipline-specific approaches and cooperation both in- and outside Europe as a next step in the 'Bologna' process after 2010.

It is recommended that the European Commission:

16. Recognises the role of music as a powerful non-verbal tool for intercultural dialogue and supports an active role for culture in general, and music in particular, in the international policies of the European Union – thus supporting one of the ambitions described in the EU Communication for a European Agenda for Culture in a Globalising World.
17. Recognises in the design of its international cooperation programmes the value of cultural diversity and exchange as a highly beneficial outcome of 'two-way traffic', both inwards to EU institutions and outwards to non-EU institutions.
18. Focuses further developments regarding international cooperation in higher education on the support given to discipline-specific initiatives (e.g. by providing more opportunities to existing European projects in higher education to extend their work internationally) and discipline-specific approaches to quality assurance and accreditation in higher education.

Final statement

As a final general observation, the 'Mundus Musicalis' working group concurred that, in addition to the discussions and analysis of formal structures and regulations, a fundamental factor in the success of international cooperation in higher music education is flexibility on the part of all stakeholders, taking into account that considerable cultural diversity in content, organisation, and approaches to learning are at the core of enriching international experiences in the pursuit of musical excellence.