



## I. Introduction

1. In this document, the **Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen** (AEC) responds to the Communication circulated by the European Commission, which proposes several points of discussion on the future role of universities in the European context. The AEC welcomes this Communication and would like to thank the Commission for this important initiative and its open-minded attitude, asking for opinions from the field of higher education itself. The AEC responds to the Communication on behalf of its 192 member institutions (conservatoires, music academies, music universities and Musikhochschulen) in 46 countries, of which 70% are located in the European Union.
2. The AEC represents a rather small, but clearly distinct subject area, which is closely related to Europe's cultural heritage. Because of this important connection, the subject area represented by the AEC should not be left out but rather be fully part of the developments in relation to the target set by the European Council in Lisbon, stating that Europe should become "*the most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion*". It should be stressed in this context, that several recent studies have clearly shown the economic and employment potential of the cultural sector, not only in terms of its size (it is estimated that currently 7.2 million workers in the EU are employed in the cultural sector) but also in terms of its growth potential (an annual employment growth rate of 2,1% in the period 1995-1999)<sup>1</sup>.
3. The AEC and its members are therefore fully committed to contribute to the debate on the construction of Europe, by emphasising and supporting the important role of education and culture within the overall framework of European integration. It is particularly critical to stress this fact in relation to the current Communication, which mainly emphasises scientific and technological progress. The AEC would like to recognize and emphasize the special and unique place that the arts in general and music in particular play in society. The arts are increasingly critical because each provides a uniquely effective means of engaging people in learning throughout their lives, citizens' lives are enriched and social cohesion is improved through greater understanding of other cultures and cultural forms. We hope these conditions and the strong multiple common artistic legacies, achievements, and aspirations of Europe compel attention to the viewpoint of the AEC, to the educational and artistic leadership in music and its concentration on international aspects of music education, the music profession and issues of quality.

## II. Professional music training in Europe

4. With 'professional music training' is meant training that gives access to the music profession. It must be clear that this goes beyond music performance only, as it is usually understood: the music world offers a vast range of professions in addition to performance activities, such as music teachers in schools, instrumental music teachers, music librarians, musicologists, music managers, music recording engineers, music publishers, music therapists, musicians in the media, music creators (composer, arrangers) and many other types of occupations. In reality, the employment situation of musicians is increasingly a mix of several types of activities: musicians having permanent jobs exclusively in teaching or performance are becoming rare. Most professional music training institutions respond to this reality by adapting their study programmes and by offering broader training possibilities.

<sup>1</sup> 'Exploitation and development of the job potential in the cultural sector in the age of digitalisation'. Final report of study commissioned by European Commission DG Employment and Social Affairs, June 2001.

5. Reflecting the situation of the cultural sector itself, there is a great variety of educational systems and approaches for professional music training in the various European countries. In 1997 the AEC conducted a study entitled 'Caprices d'Europe', which compared all professional training programmes for violin performance in the various European countries. The result was a vast amount of information, showing a complex diversity in study content, educational approaches, final qualifications and levels of study. As a consequence, it was difficult to compare the collected data, which explains the ever-present problems with the recognition of studies and qualifications in the music sector. This problem seems especially relevant for those musicians wanting to teach in another European country and face great difficulties with the recognition of their qualifications. It is therefore hoped, that this chaotic landscape of professional music training in Europe will become more transparent when the effects of the Bologna Declaration will become noticeable. The AEC has responded to this important European development by creating a project entitled 'The effects of the Bologna Declaration on professional music training in Europe', which studies the implications of the Bologna process<sup>2</sup>.
6. Finally we would like to provide a short explanation about terminology: the term 'professional music training' is used on purpose instead of 'higher music education', as in some countries institutions that are offering professional training do not always have higher education status (e.g. in France, Luxembourg, Greece). Therefore the term 'conservatoire' can sometimes be confusing, because in some countries it is used for a level which can be described as a music school offering non-professional training to amateurs, while in some countries a conservatoire will be an institution with higher education status. For higher music education institutions other names are also used, such as music academies, music faculties, music universities and Musikhochschulen.

### III. The European dimension of professional music training

There are several points that make professional music training distinctly European:

7. **The connection to Europe's cultural heritage.** Very few other subject areas have such a direct link to Europe's cultural wealth and history. Although audiences interested in non-European music are growing and we must take into account the strong development of non-European commercial music, much of the music played in concert halls in and outside Europe is of European origin. As a consequence, Europe, with its strongly developed musical infrastructures and traditions, is internationally still perceived as the main centre for western art music today. Through this fact, music is making a major contribution to promoting and safeguarding Europe's unique cultural heritage. It is clear that a strong system for professional music training must be supported in order to maintain Europe's leading role in this field.
8. **Cultural diversity.** The musical traditions in the various European countries, although based on similar principles, are highly developed; this is what makes the musical heritage of Europe so unique. This diversity is reflected by the various approaches in systems for professional music training in European countries. Any move towards a further European integration must be based on the respect for this diversity of musical traditions.
9. **The international character of music.** Because of its function as the ultimate form of nonverbal communication, music does not need translators in order to be active on an international level. The music profession is therefore highly international, which is reflected by the presence of many foreign students and teaching staff in professional music training institutions. However, in this context it is important to stress the fact that the presence of international students and teachers does not necessarily give an institution a truly European or international outlook: much will depend on how institutions are actively involved in the exchange of students, teachers and information in collaboration with institutions.
10. **Access to music studies.** Being part of the national higher education systems, most professional music training institutions in Europe are still highly accessible in comparison to similar institutions outside Europe, due to the existing national policies in relation to tuition fees and financial support to students and institutions. At the same time, music distinguishes itself from many other disciplines by the fact that entrance examinations are held to assess the musical and technical abilities of future students. Although it is crucial for professional music training institutions that this right for selection is being respected, it must be clear that any sufficiently talented student should have easy access to higher music studies.

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<sup>2</sup> See for more information [www.aecinfo.org/bologna.html](http://www.aecinfo.org/bologna.html)

## IV. A future agenda for institutions for professional music training in Europe

The challenges faced by professional music training institutions in the overall debate on higher education in Europe can be summarised by the following points:

### 11. Recognition of professional music training studies at higher education level

There are major differences on how professional music training fits into the national educational structures in European countries: most institutions are part of the national higher education systems, either in the university or in other higher education sectors. However, in some European countries, institutions for professional music training do not have higher education status, which has serious implications for the recognition of studies and qualifications in music. EU member states should ensure that professional music training is part of higher education structures in all European countries, including possibilities for music studies not only at Bachelor's level, but also on the levels of Masters and PhD.

### 12. Connecting professional music training institutions to society

- Professional music training institutions cannot be seen as purely educational institutions only: they do also have a role as cultural centres on local, regional, national or sometimes international level. This close connection to the existing cultural infrastructure must be seen as an important contribution to local and regional development. Furthermore, professional music training institutions are also important employers for the cultural sector. The European Regional Development Funds should also acknowledge this fact.
- Another important link, the connection of training institutions to the professional world, still needs to be further developed in various European countries. Although one could say that this link already exists through the teachers (usually also active performing musicians), it seems that in some countries, institutions have very few formalised connections to organisations in the music profession. In order to be able to adapt music training to changes in the music profession, this connection needs to be further developed by both training institutions and the profession itself.
- In relation to lifelong learning, music should be taken into account in the various European and national lifelong learning strategies. Usually both professional and non-professional musicians are active in music education for all their lives. In order to be able to learn a musical instrument, it is often necessary to start at very early age because of the various musical, physical, psychological and intellectual dimensions of music education. It is highly unusual for a professional musician to start studying music seriously after the age of 18. Being a musician (both professional and non-professional) therefore seems to be the perfect example of a truly lifelong learning situation, starting to learn at a very early age and continuing up to or well after retirement. In its European project 'ProMuse', which was supported by the LEONARDO programme of the EU and which studied the aspects on continuing education in music and the professional integration of musicians, the AEC found as one of the main research findings, that while there is a need felt by professional musicians to have continuing professional developments opportunities, these opportunities hardly exist in the field of music<sup>3</sup>. Training institutions, employers and public authorities should be aware of this fact and act with a pro-active position to this matter.

### 13. Funding

- Most professional music training institutions are funded by the state. Some private institutions exist as well: examples of private institutions that receive no government funding, but are recognised by the state and are therefore able to give out qualifications similar to those of the state funded institutions can be found in France, Spain and Italy. In various European countries, music schools specialised in pop and jazz exist that are not funded and recognised by the state. However, these schools are mainly active as music schools and very rarely provide training for the profession.
- The Communication rightly points out the difficult financial situation of higher education institutions in Europe. Compared to other developed countries in the world, European institutions for higher education seem to be seriously under-funded. In addition to this general statement, two issues in relation to professional music training need to be mentioned:
  - Because of the highly individual character of music training, which implies the use of one-to-one teaching as the most efficient way of training, professional music training tends to be more expensive compared to other subject areas. In relation to this fact, the following quote from the AEC Credo is relevant: *"The AEC stands for the strongly individual character of music education, the one-to-one teaching of instrumental and vocal studies being at the core of this education. By stating this, the AEC would like to urge the relevant authorities to acknowledge the financial implications of this particular quality."*<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See for more information [www.aecinfo.org/promuse.html](http://www.aecinfo.org/promuse.html)

<sup>4</sup> See for more information [www.aecinfo.org/credo.htm](http://www.aecinfo.org/credo.htm)

- In relation to generating income from private sources, it is important to understand that the possibilities for professional music training institutions remain limited. Whereas research universities can cooperate with private companies for the funding of specific technological research, similar possibilities in the field of music will remain limited, as training institutions would have to deal with professional organisations in the field of culture, which are often heavily depending on government subsidies themselves. Although links to the commercial music sector could be envisaged, such a connection would only be relevant to certain commercial styles of music, which could undermine the broader range of music styles offered by the institutions today. It is therefore crucial that in the debate about the funding of higher education, a distinction is made between institutions with possibilities of co-operation with the private sector and institutions not having such possibilities and therefore being in need of structural and sufficient state funding.

#### 14. European co-operation

- As mentioned in paragraph III, the highly international character of the music profession is reflected by the often international populations (both students and teachers) in professional music training institutions. It does not, however, necessarily mean that institutions with foreign students and teachers also have a European or international outlook or policy: an institution can have many foreign students, but still be strongly provincial in its way of thinking. In this context, it is important to mention the recent research executed by the AEC on the participation of its member institutions in European exchange and co-operation programmes. The result of this survey shows that the participation of the institutions in the European programmes is still limited and in some programmes practically nonexistent, with the majority of the activities being initiated by a small number of active institutions<sup>5</sup>. The reasons for this situation appear to be the following:
  - Lack of information or awareness of the benefits that participation in these programmes can bring.
  - The individual character of music education, in which one-to-one teaching is still the most effective method of training, implying an unusually strong connection between teacher and student and making exchanges in professional music training a more complicated matter in terms of practical arrangements.
  - Problems of eligibility for participation in SOCRATES of institutions for professional music training in several European countries seem to complicate this situation even further.
  - Problems related to the recognition of studies.
- This situation could be handled on European level by the following measures:
  - By giving specific support to promote European co-operation in under represented subject areas.
  - By strongly emphasising aspects of academic recognition within the framework of the Bologna process. This could be done by establishing a European qualifications framework, which would include all qualifications in Europe in one clear overview. This European qualifications framework should be based on general descriptions of learning outcomes for the various study areas, which the AEC is currently developing for the 1st and 2nd study cycles in music. In relation to increasing the attractiveness of European higher education (one of the main objectives of the Bologna Declaration), this European qualifications framework could also have a positive effect.
  - By offering a flexible framework of support programmes on European level. As mentioned in its response to the 'Consultation on the future of European programmes in education and training', the AEC emphasised the development of programmes without the rigid separation in levels (secondary education, higher education, etc) and types (education and training). In addition, because of this direct connection to both the educational and cultural sectors, it must be stressed that professional music training should have access to both the educational and cultural programmes of the European Union: at this moment, applicants are sometimes refused and referred to the other type of programme.
  - By promoting co-operation in curriculum development through measures such as the European Joint Masters. However, such European measures must be supported by actions taken by member states in relation to the recognition of these joint degrees.
  - By supporting 'Centres or Networks of Excellence' on regional and European level. As correctly described in the Communication, it is difficult for institutions to achieve excellence in all appropriate areas, due to limited resources and the pressures of competition. This situation could be approached by the creation of 'Centres of Excellence' on regional levels combining the resources and knowledge of conservatoires, universities and other types of institutions, as well as 'Networks of Excellence' on European level. In relation to this last point, it must be pointed out that the possibilities given to institutions to get support for the establishment of such 'Networks of Excellence' through the 6<sup>th</sup> Community Framework Research Programme should not only be restricted to technological research subject areas.

<sup>5</sup> 'Cultural co-operation on European level in professional music training': study executed by the AEC in 2002-2003.

## 15. Research

- In relation to research, the joint position paper in response to the Bologna Declaration<sup>6</sup>, written by the AEC and ELIA (European League of Institutes for the Arts), stresses the following point: *“The teaching and learning environment in higher arts education is based on artistic development and research. In some countries, artistic development in this context is recognised as a form of research. Artistic development and research taking place in higher arts education have to be recognised on a level equivalent to all other disciplines of higher education. Dedicated funding and incentives are needed in order to develop further the research/artistic development dimension in higher arts education”*.
- It is important to understand that the term ‘research’ should not only be used in relation to technological subject areas. The creation of PhD courses in the field of music, some of which might combine aspects of performance with more academic forms of research, should be actively encouraged by the member states; on European level, a European dimension of these PhD courses should be developed.

## 16. Quality

The answer to the increasing competition in higher education on a global scale can only be the existence of a European higher education system of high quality. There will not be many other subject areas with such an intrinsic obsession with quality as professional music training: music students constantly have to perform for committees and juries and, the ultimate test of all, for the general public. This does, however, not mean that professional music training institutions should be excluded from existing internal and external quality assurance mechanisms in higher education. However, mechanisms must be in place that:

- respect the artistic and academic autonomy of the institutions;
- take into account the specific characteristics of professional music training. It is crucial that the special character of music training (such as the one-to-one teaching) and artistic dimension of music training are part of these mechanisms;
- should not only be based on the accountability of public funding, but should also be to the benefit of the institutions by helping to improve quality standards;
- should be based on a joint ‘code of good practise’ and jointly established criteria, if the external quality assurance procedures will develop into a more converging direction on European level;
- should not be over-bureaucratic.

## 17. International dimension

Music is such a highly international subject area, that any division of actions into ‘EU-specific’ and ‘collaboration with third countries’ seems to be unnatural to the dynamic international reality of the sector. We are therefore strongly in favour to increase possibilities for the inclusion of third countries in EU programmes. However, the following remarks can be made:

- A distinction could be made between ‘third countries *in* Europe’ and ‘third countries *outside* Europe’. As some ‘European third countries’ (the Balkans and former Soviet Union states) have educational and musical cultures, which are closely connected to the overall European cultural heritage, these regions should therefore never be excluded from participation in EU programmes and should receive greater attention.
- A distinction could also be made between ‘simple’ mobility programmes, which play a role in the creation of mutual understanding of cultural diversity, and programmes that are targeting development of educational programmes and policies, which would enable the EU to operate better in a highly competitive globalized sector of education. The latter kind of programmes would be restricted to European (including ‘European third countries’) participation, thus symbolising the unity of the European continent in the rapidly developing trend of globalisation.
- A greater attention to projects with cultural components would be advisable. Culture in general and music in particular are perfect vehicles for cross-cultural understanding and multi-cultural development. Exclusion of cultural subject areas, as has been the case in TEMPUS and some of the other cooperation programmes with third countries, should be avoided.

## 18. Networking

Additional resources should be made available to support existing European networks in the field of higher education, which currently play an important role in the European developments such as the Bologna process. Only through such European networks will it be possible to address some of the relevant European issues on the level of the various disciplines.

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<sup>6</sup> See for more information [www.aecinfo.org/bologna.html](http://www.aecinfo.org/bologna.html)

## V. Conclusions and summary

- The professional music training sector, as represented by the AEC, should play an active role in the debate about the future role of higher education in the Europe of knowledge. This role is supported by the sector's direct connection to Europe's cultural heritage and its contribution to the creation of employment possibilities for Europe's citizens.
- With 'professional music training' is meant training that gives access to the music profession. In general, professional music training institutions are part of the university or other higher education systems in the various European countries.
- The distinctly European dimension of professional music training is based on its direct link to Europe's cultural heritage, its cultural diversity, its highly international character and the democratic access to music studies.
- Professional music training studies should be recognised on higher education level in all European countries.
- Close connections between training institutions and the local and regional cultural infrastructures, as well as the music profession in general, should be promoted.
- Professional music training institutions should be sufficiently funded by the state for its core teaching activities, having limited possibilities for acquiring other types of funding from the private sector.
- Mobility and cooperation on European level in professional music training should be encouraged and supported, as in this area the sector seems to have a lower level of involvement.
- The term 'research' should not only be used in relation to technological research, but in relation to other field as well.
- If quality assurance procedures will develop a European dimension, this should be based on 'Codes of good practise' and the development of joint criteria, which fully respect the characteristics and needs of a specific subject area such as professional music training.
- International cooperation in the field of music with countries outside the EU and Europe should be encouraged and supported.
- Networking in higher education should be stimulated by giving support to active European networks and associations in higher education.