

Response of the European Association of Conservatoires (AEC) to the Green Paper ‘Unlocking the potential of cultural and creative industries’



With this brief document, the **European Association of Conservatoires (AEC)** would like to respond to the Green Paper ‘Unlocking the potential of cultural and creative industries’. The document will explain the work of the AEC with regards to this issue and provide suggestions on the improvement of the current situation based on experiences in the field.

The European Association of Conservatoires (AEC)

The AEC is a cultural network of almost 300 institutions for higher music education in all European countries (including countries outside the EU), which aims at representing the interest of the European higher music education sector and promoting European cooperation¹. This is being done through several initiatives and projects, some of which are supported by EU programmes.

The issues of professional integration and the connection between professional training and the music profession have been a consistent component of the Association’s agenda during the past few years. Already in 1999, the AEC started a project in the LEONARDO project entitled ‘ProMuse’², which addressed continuing professional development and lifelong learning. In subsequent projects and in particular in the large ERASMUS Network for Music ‘Polifonia’³, issues related to professional integration, employability and lifelong learning were studied at the European level with a wide partnership bringing together higher music education institutions, professional networks, employers’ organisations and musicians’ unions.

This response will not follow all questions as posed in the Green Paper, but address those issues that in our opinion need to be addressed, based on the expertise developed in the above-mentioned projects.

General impression

In general, the AEC greatly welcomes the Green Paper, as it clearly outlines the issues at stake in relation to the cultural and creative industries from a European perspective. In addition, we are grateful to the European Commission for addressing the cultural and creative industries as an issue within the overall development of the European cooperation and integration process, which reflects the growing understanding of the importance the cultural and creative industries play in our societies, both from a social and economical point of view.

More specifically, we welcome three particular issues in the Green Paper:

1. The clear definitions of the cultural industries and the creative industries as mentioned in the Green Paper will be very useful for future debates and developments. The inclusive character of these definitions will also ensure that the entire cultural sector in all its diversity, including both commercial and non-commercial activities, will feel addressed by the Green Paper.
2. The strong focus on skills in the Green Paper and its direct connection to the EU ‘New Skills for New Jobs’ initiative is significant. This reflects the growing understanding of the importance to discuss professional training in relation to cultural and creative industries, in addition to the usual technical issues such as intellectual property rights, VAT and access to financing.
3. The clear position the Green Paper attributes to institutions for higher arts education as important players in the process of improving conditions for cultural and creative industries.

¹ More information about the AEC can be found at www.aecinfo.org

² More information about the ‘ProMuse’ project can be found at www.aecinfo.org/promuse.

³ More information about ‘Polifonia’ can be found at www.polifonia-tn.org.

A brief comment on terminology used in the Green Paper

In the Green Paper, often the terms ‘art schools’ or ‘art and design schools’ are being used, which obviously refer to institutions that train professionals in the arts. It should, however, be pointed out that in the terminology used at the European level, ‘art schools’ usually refer to schools for visual arts and design only, and less so to institutions that train professionals in music and the performing arts (e.g. conservatoires of music, theatre schools and dance academies). We therefore suggest using the widely accepted and more inclusive terms ‘institutions for higher arts education’ or ‘institutions for professional training in the arts’.

Better matching the skill needs of cultural and creative industries

If the cultural and creative industries in Europe want to further strengthen their situation, a reflection on how workers for these industries are trained and stay up-to-date is an essential issue. As is rightly mentioned in the Green Paper, the EU paper ‘New Skills for New Jobs’ is highly relevant for the cultural and creative industries, even more so when considering the fact that employment opportunities are currently changing rapidly. Information collected in the ERASMUS Network for Music ‘Polifonia’ shows a European-wide trend, in which the professional context for musicians is increasingly changing from employment in fixed contract situations to portfolio careers based on self-employment. This has not only important social implications for the professionals themselves, but also for the way these professionals are prepared for participation in the employment market and how they stay up-to-date in a profession that is constantly changing⁴.

Based on this situation, it is suggested that when addressing professional training in relation to the cultural and creative industries, we can distinguish three levels of relevance:

- Initial professional training
- Professional integration
- Continuing professional development of professionals

We would like to make comments to all three levels and in particular how these levels could be approached from a European perspective with relevance to the development of the cultural and creative industries.

Initial professional training

Initial professional training is training typically (but not always) provided by institutions at a higher education level (e.g. universities, art and design schools, conservatoires of music, theatre schools, dance academies, etc), with the aim to prepare professionals for the cultural and creative industries. This sector has seen a significant development over the past decades by broadening its provision in many new fields of expertise (e.g. games, sound design, musical, rock music, management, etc) , serving better the needs of the cultural and creative industries. During the past decades, higher arts education institutions have increasingly understood the importance to address issues of employability and the needs of the cultural and creative industries in terms of identifying and training relevant skills.

Nevertheless, many institutions are still offering programmes based on outmoded models of the profession. Institutions should be encouraged and convinced to engage with issues on employability as well as lifelong learning. With lifelong learning not just the continuing professional development of professionals is meant, but also the approach in study programmes that will assist students to become independent learners with the ability to continue learning after they have graduated from their professional training institution, so that they can adapt to changes in professional contexts. This lifelong learning approach can be achieved by offering various formal, informal and non-formal learning experiences with a close connection to the reality in the cultural and creative industries. Examples of such experiences are mentoring and coaching schemes with involvement from professionals in the cultural and creative industries, and the availability of internships and work

⁴ Study executed by the ERASMUS Network for Music ‘Polifonia’ Music Profession Working Group 2004-2007; see www.polifonia-tn.org/profession.

placements during studies. In addition, an increasing number of institutions have started to address entrepreneurship as an integral part of study programmes.

On the other hand, organisations as part of the cultural and creative industries should also be convinced of their interest to be involved in closer collaborations with professional training institutions with the aim to prepare future graduates better for their roles as professionals in the cultural and creative industries. This can be done by having a pro-active role by the cultural and creative industries in initial professional training by offering internships and work placements as mentioned above.

From a European point of view, there is a great need for the exchange of information and examples of good practice on collaborations between institutions for professional training in the arts and organisations as part of the cultural and creative industries that aim at improving the employability of future professionals. In addition, it should also be pointed out that the cultural and creative industries are increasingly operating in an international environment, which underlines the need for professionals with intercultural skills and international experiences. **We would therefore recommend that such an exchange of information could be supported through the following measures:**

1. Support should be provided to networks of European-level organisations or associations representing institutions professional training in the arts, professional networks, employers' organisations and artists' unions with the aim to debate issues on employability, lifelong learning, the forecasting of skills and the connection between professional training and professional practice. The aim of such networks will be to collect information and examples of good practice, and disseminate these to the relevant constituencies. Support to such networks could be provided through the EU educational and cultural programmes.
2. A more efficient provision of information on existing support mechanisms is advisable. For example, the possibility offered to students by the ERASMUS Programme to receive funding for an internship in a professional organisation located in another European country is so far hardly being used by the cultural and creative industries. Such an information provision could be provided through the networks mentioned in the previous point.
3. Support should be provided to cross-border projects at grass roots level, in which professional training institutions and organisations as part of the cultural and creative industries will cooperate in joint artistic activities (e.g. joint performances, joint tours, etc), offering students an important professional experience. As these activities would be of a primarily artistic character, support to such projects could be provided through the EU culture programme.

Professional integration

Evidence and experience show that the period after graduation from an institution for professional training in the arts can be highly challenging, with new graduates finding it difficult to find their place in the often somewhat unstructured sector of the cultural and creative industries. Professional integration schemes have been set up in various European countries to address this challenge. This is typically provided by organisations in the cultural and creative industries through work placements or internships, or institutions providing apprentice schemes in professional settings.

It is exactly here where a strong European dimension could prove to be highly valuable. Much has been said about the development of a European mobility scheme for artists, modelled after the ERASMUS Programme for students in higher education. We are uncertain if it would be helpful to allocate parts of the already scarce European resources for the cultural sector to the mobility of artists in general; this is an activity that is already quite dynamic with support of national authorities, especially in the fields of music and the performing arts. Instead, it could be considered to develop a support scheme for the mobility of recently graduated professionals (e.g. within 5 years after their graduation from an institution for professional training) that would be a professional integration tool at the same time. This would not only give these young professionals an important mobility experience, but also help them to develop an internationally focused professional practice. Such a scheme should not only be targeting individuals but in particular small ensembles and bands.

Continuing professional development of professionals

Projects in the field of music have shown that, although there is a clear need for courses for the continuing professional development of professionals, very few of such courses still exist. More importantly, professional training institutions often do not offer such courses.

In relation to this issue, the suggestions mentioned in the paragraph on initial professional training could be repeated: also in relation to this issue, European networks with different stakeholders should be supported with the aim to exchange information, better use should be made from existing possibilities (e.g. the grants for work placements for recently graduated students in the LEONARDO programme) and grass-root level activities with a European dimension should also be supported.

Mobility and the circulation of cultural and creative works

The Green Paper rightly addresses issues that deal with short-term mobility in relation to the cultural and creative industries. However, we would like to point out that long-term mobility (i.e. professionals moving to other countries with the aim to seek employment) is another issue that needs further attention. In relation to this issue, the role of the recognition of qualifications is often overlooked as an aspect when addressing mobility with regards to the cultural and creative industries. Especially with the developments in the employment market leading to a more diverse portfolio of professional activities that will include teaching, the recognition of qualifications will become increasingly important for professionals in the cultural sector choosing to work in another European country. For the recognition of qualifications, the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning will be essential. Sectoral Qualifications Frameworks exist (including for several artistic disciplines in higher education⁵) to support recognition successfully at a European sectoral level through the development of learning outcomes and reference points for the various educational levels. Information on the existence and use of such frameworks should be much more distributed.

What is the AEC planning to do about the issues mentioned in the Green Paper?

The AEC is planning to address many of the issues mentioned in the Green Paper during the coming years. In the framework of the ERASMUS Network for Music ‘Polifonia’, it plans to further develop contacts with representative organisations of employers and employees a part of the cultural and creative industries. The outcomes of this ambition will be the production of a ‘Handbook on entrepreneurship in European conservatoires’, a compilation of case studies describing partnerships between professional training institution and organisations in the cultural and creative industries for lifelong learning and a large conference bringing all relevant stakeholders together in 2013. In addition, it also plans to collect information on partnerships between professional training institution and organisations in the cultural and creative industries in the field of research, which will closely relate to issues mentioned in paragraph 3.1 of the Green Paper.

Further recommendations

In addition to the recommendations mentioned above, we would like to suggest that:

1. Professional training at all levels will be a clear theme in the new Culture Programme, similar to the MEDIA Training component in the MEDIA Programme.
2. Professional training at all levels will be a theme in the debates of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) working group on the cultural and creative industries.
3. The OMC working group on synergies between education and culture will continue with its important work that can have a substantial contribution to the development of arts education in general education. This will greatly support the issues addressed in paragraph 5 of the Green Paper on the spillovers of the cultural and creative industries.

⁵ The AEC has developed such a Sectoral Qualifications Framework for music (www.bologna-and-music.org/learningoutcomes).