Strengthening Music in Society

2017-2021

Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen

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AEC - Strengthening Music in Society

In 2017 the Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC) won 4-year funding from Creative Europe for a project called *Strengthening Music in Society* (SMS). This project marked an ambitious next step in the organisation's work.

About the project

'Strengthening Music in Society' takes a particular lens on the broad agenda that the title suggests, focusing on the education of the next generations of professional musicians through higher music education institutions (HMEIs): what is needed in developing this education to ensure that **emerging professional musicians are able to make flourishing lifelong careers and contribute to the societies in which they live**; and equally in what ways these institutions may strengthen the part they play within their own localities, and the **societal impact** they have through the work they do with young musicians.

Project objectives

Through this project, together with experts from AEC member institutions and partner organisations who have formed different **Working Groups (WGs)**, AEC has been pursuing the following objectives:

1. To raise consciousness of contemporary potential and **challenges for musicians and HMEIs in society**, and how these interact with the complex **responsibilities that HMEIs have**, artistically, educationally, economically, socially and environmentally.
2. To encourage HMEIs to open their educational offer towards more **diversity** and to promote **inclusiveness** throughout their activities.
3. To embed **entrepreneurial skills** in the education of the artist to better prepare students for their future role as musician-entrepreneur.
4. To help music students and teachers **internationalise** their careers and activities, and to achieve a greater impact of the most important online tool for student mobility in HME.
5. To explore and discuss new **Learning & Teaching models** enabling HMEIs to educate creative and communicating musicians.
6. To encourage the use of **digital technologies** in music education.
7. To strengthen **student voice** within the Association and within all AEC member institutions and to establish a European network of HME students.
8. To increase the **quality of early childhood music education** and thus extend the audience of tomorrow.

AEC organises its different platforms and activities through the establishment of different WGs, composed by experts in different areas within the field of Higher Music Education. Proactivity, as well as geographical and gender balances are the applied criteria to guarantee the diverse and dynamic character of the groups, who recreate the diversity of AEC membership. In the frame of the AEC - Strengthening Music in Society project, each strand is carried out by a WG composed by representatives of AEC member institutions, a student representative, a WG coordinator and relevant external partners.

WG1 - Higher Music Education Institutions' (HMEIs') Role in Society

Objectives of the WG

- Raise consciousness of the contemporary potential and the contemporary challenges for musicians and for HMEIs in society.
- Explore how this potential and these challenges interact with the complex responsibilities that HMEIs have, artistically, educationally, economically, socially and environmentally.

Outcomes of WG1

The WG examined concepts such as artistic citizenship, social responsibility and civic mission increasingly perceived to be relevant to the sector, and particularly explored their connections to concepts of artistic excellence, imagination and creativity, and musical heritage.

Annotated bibliography

A selective annotated bibliography related to the themes addressed by the SMS project.

The aim of the bibliography is to offer a powerful insight into existing writing and research, from various perspectives and disciplines, connected to the **theme *Strengthening Music in Society*** and to the central concepts explored by the working groups.

The bibliography is meant for **students, teachers, researchers and leaders in HMEIs** who want to dig into the various themes addressed in more detail and find appropriate resources.

Visit the bibliography on the SMS website

The bibliography offers 120 publications, consisting of books, articles and policy documents which the WG used during its explorations and discussions, arranged in alphabetical order and searchable via various thematic keywords (hashtags), such as "reflective practice", "entrepreneurial mindset", "interdisciplinarity", etc. A short paragraph introduces each resource so that the users quickly understand its content and its target audience. The bibliography has been conceived as an open resource. Users are welcome to contact the AEC team and propose that a specific publication about the topic is added to the bibliography.

Musicians as "Makers in Society": A Conceptual Foundation for Contemporary Professional Higher Music Education

An academic paper informed by research

This paper problematises the fundamental contemporary opportunities and challenges in making higher music education relevant, with an orientation towards the future of the music sector. It encourages institutions to rethink the nature of higher music education along these lines.

Through the paper, the WG calls for HMEIs to take ownership of the **paradigm of musicians as "makers in society"**, in order to support artists of the future and to renew the place of HMEIs.

The authors identify apparent dichotomies of value within contemporary higher music education, including between artistic and social purpose in the arts, between cultural heritage and new work, and between artistic imagination and cultural entrepreneurship. They argue that creative tensions between what have until now easily been perceived as opposing concepts or competing priorities need to be embraced.

The paper, published in the Journal Frontiers in Psychology - Performance Science is addressed to students, staff and leaders in HMEIs as well as to representatives of the professional world and to policy makers.

Read the academic paper

Watch the film explaining the academic paper

The authors believe that working together in higher music education on this paradigm will be essential in the next years. They therefore encourage students, staff and leaders in HMEIs to reflect on the conceptual paradigm proposed and to foster discussion and critical debate with colleagues, sector networks, and locally with relevant communities and policy makers.

WG2 - Diversity, Identity, Inclusiveness

Outcomes of WG2

Objectives of the WG

- Encourage HMEIs to open their educational offer so as to answer the needs and requirements of diversity and promote inclusiveness throughout their activities.

The WG, seeking examples of learning, teaching, recruitment and (equal) access among HMEIs, has successfully prepared two online publications. These publications, having evolved from the WG's personal experiences and reflections, consultations, continuous discussions and insights gained through a vast body of scholarly literature, are meant to **identify good practices, promote increased access and encourage HMEIs to evaluate their educational programmes and policies through the lens of inclusivity and pluralism.** Moreover, both publications were enriched in myriad ways by reaching out to different HMEIs in search of existing practices and reflective actions on challenges posed by the wide area covered by this project strand.

How are diverse cultures integrated in the education of musicians across Europe?

The first publication presents relevant **case studies** on how HMEIs integrate minority cultures and diverse backgrounds, including migratory backgrounds, in their educational offer, and how such practices enable the engagement of new audiences and communities. These case studies are meant to stimulate discussion and provide new ideas and possible pathways for HMEIs to undertake.

Read the publication on the SMS website

The Diversity, Identity, Inclusiveness Working Group, engaging with various topics linked to diversity and inclusion and compiling the publications, has not only been influenced by its members' own experiences working in HME, but also by broader movements like #metoo and Black Lives Matter. These movements, as well as the Covid-19 crisis, have highlighted many difficult questions that have been tackled in several workshops and sessions delivered in the frame of AEC events during the project's four-year scope.

Artistic Plurality and Inclusive Institutional Culture in HME

Decentering curricula: questions for re-evaluating diversity and inclusiveness in HMEIs

The second publication includes a framework of common questions that allow institutions to consider a wide range of factors and premises according to their own unique circumstances. This compendium of **self-reflective questions** aims to challenge the ways of thinking of curricula and institutional culture from a diversity perspective within HMEIs, and can be used as a self-assessment tool.

Self-assess your institution

Finally, the WG launched an **eBook that combines both publications** into a holistic framework for reflecting upon and evaluating diversity, identity and inclusiveness in higher music education (HME) today, supported by a wealth of examples of inspiring practices across Europe and beyond. Concepts of quality and success become more inclusive when different genres and musical traditions coexist and influence each other through teaching, performance and research; this, in the WG's view, is the essence of *Artistic Plurality and Inclusive Institutional Culture in HME*, and represents the major outcome of this project strand.

Download the eBook

WG3 - Entrepreneurial mind-set for musicians

Outcomes of WG3

Objectives of the WG

- Embed entrepreneurial skills in the education of the artist in order to better prepare students for the challenges they will face in their future role as musician-entrepreneur.
- Enable artists to gain new skills which will enrich their professional life and embrace their chances on the labour market.

"Make Music Work" mobile/web app on entrepreneurship

The Web App is designed to **inspire further reading and discussion among students, teachers and management of HMEIs**. This tool contains a set of relevant materials on various topics (entrepreneurship, mindset & well-being, marketing & communication, management & monetization, curriculum, HME in society), and in various formats (tutorials, podcasts, literature lists and links to research, articles, presentations and interviews).

Access the web app

Podcasts *"Music in Society - Nurturing the entrepreneurial mindset in higher music education"*

The set of podcasts features five episodes:

▶ The entrepreneurial mind-set in time of uncertainty with Libby Percival and Canberk Duman
▶ Let's talk about #Mindset: a psychological perspective with Gerry Fitzpatrick and Vourneen Ryan
▶ Institutional change – in relation to teaching entrepreneurship with Martin Prchal and Roxanna Albayati
▶ Agency in learning with Lia Pale and Berginald Rash
▶ *Decolonising canon* with Nathan Holder and Viola Cheung

Listen on your favourite streaming platform

Entrepreneurial bootcamps and teacher trainings

As part of the project Demusis, members of the WG3 contributed to designing and organising bootcamps and related teacher trainings. In the teacher trainings, the teaching staff learned how to **design an entrepreneurial bootcamp** for students. Afterwards, the teachers observed the student bootcamp taking place and reflect on this particular **instrument for teaching entrepreneurial skills and an entrepreneurial mindset in HMEIs.**

The entrepreneurial bootcamp is an educational instrument that allows students to develop a lot of so-called career skills in a short period of time. In only a few days students learn by doing how they can function in society as artists in different roles and different contexts. Students are challenged to make use of their creativity, their ability to collaborate and their communicative skills. They explore different aspects of their artistic identity in a setting outside the walls of their educational institution.

Learn more

Together with the SMS WG5, dedicated to learning and teaching, WG3 delivered a **teacher training** in The Hague from 30 August to 3 September 2021. The training was addressed to HMEIs teachers, offering the opportunity to observe an 'entrepreneurial bootcamp' taking place at the same time at the Royal Conservatoire The Hague as part of the curriculum for 2nd year BA students.

Learn more

WG4 - Internationalisation and transnational mobility

Objectives of the WG

- Help music students and teachers to internationalise their careers and activities.

Outcomes of WG4

The International Relations Coordinators (IRC) Working Group has organised, between 2018 and 2021, **4 editions of the AEC Annual meeting for International Relations Coordinators**. These meetings, involving around 200 participants each year, brought together a growing community of international relations coordinators (IRCs) composed of administrative or teaching staff members from HMEIs who deal with international relations and European programmes (such as ERASMUS), as well as from institutions not familiar with these programmes, but with an interest in becoming involved. These meetings have been important for **networking, exchanging useful information and developing partnerships.**

AEC Annual Meeting for IRCs 2018 in Birmingham: *Beyond Europe - bringing the world to our institutions*

AEC Annual Meeting for IRCs 2019 in Prague: *The Pink Elephant - reflections on the future to transform the present*

AEC Annual Meeting for IRCs 2020 Online: *Ready to Change? Digitisation, crisis management and green thinking for a Sustainable Future*

AEC Annual Meeting for IRCs 2021 in Vigo and Online: *Call to Action - working towards inclusiveness and recognition in the new Erasmus Programme*

Reference documents

As an outcome of the discussions taking place during those meetings, the WG published the following reference documents for the IRCs community of the AEC:

▶ **Reflection Paper** on the AEC Annual Meeting for International Coordinators 2018 – looking back at the past while imagining the future of internationalization of Higher Music Education

▶ The 2020 **Manifesto of the AEC International Relations Coordinators Community** and related Video

▶ **Articles** on Internationalisation and Transnational Mobility on the SMS website:
  - Students' shifting towards Chinese Higher Education Institutions: A pivotal change in the traditional setting
  - Being International at Home by Integrating Other Cultures at Local Level
  - The Future of Employability in Music
  - Huis clos ("No exit") - International music students during the pandemic
  - Building a shared roadmap for Sustainability

▶ **Call for Flexibility** related to the consequences of the Pandemic on the new academic year for international students

▶ **How Institutions reacted to the pandemic:** some experiences from the IRCs

▶ Contribution to the **Erasmus 500 Campaign**

▶ Contribution to the Erasmus University Charter (available upon request)

The IRCs have been monitoring the online tools developed by the AEC for supporting mobility among HMEIs: the **AEC website database, the AEC Job Vacancy Platform and the European Online Application System for Mobility EASY**.
In particular, the EASY system grew sensibly in the 4 project years, going from 67 to 125 institutions joining the system as internal institutions, with about 6.000 applications exchanged within the system in the last academic year. The existing functionalities of the system have been improved to meet the needs of the users, EASY has been opened to other artistic disciplines in addition to music, a consistent body of User Support Material (manuals and webinars) has been developed and made available to all users and, finally, the connection to the Erasmus Without Paper ecosystem has been established.

WG5 - Shaping the musician of tomorrow through innovative learning and teaching

Objectives of the WG

- Explore and discuss new L&T models enabling HMEIs to educate creative and communicating musicians.
- Strengthen the ability of HMEIs to explore and discuss learning and teaching that meet the demands of the 21st century, by active collaboration between students, teachers, and researchers in all relevant fields of higher music education.

Outcomes of WG5

The WG has since 2018 operated the joint **Platform for Learning and Teaching in Music Performance Education (LATIMPE)** set up by AEC and the Norwegian Academy of Music (NMH). Latimpe launched its webpage **www.latimpe.eu** in October 2018, presenting projects and practices exploring learning and teaching in higher music education from various European institutions.

In these four years, the WG has addressed several topics. First and foremost, it has elaborated extensively on the concept of the student as a researching artist and how this can influence the learning and teaching practices of higher music education institutions. The WG also contributed to the EPARM conferences twice with perspectives on **artistic research-based education** and its implications for learning and teaching. Furthermore, the use of **digital tools** in higher music education has been a significant area, through the two events described below, and through the WG's contribution to the SWING-project, evaluating the use of LoLa through interviews with participants in three institutions. In the last project year, the WG focused on assessment, by holding a symposium on the topic, visiting the critique-class at Rhythmic Music Conservatory in Copenhagen and taking part in the Teacher Training in The Hague in September 2021.

Seminars and conferences

The WG has organised two large, international conferences and two symposiums:

- ▶ In October 2018, the conference *Becoming musicians –student involvement and teacher collaboration in higher music education*, held at the NMH, Oslo, gathered 122 teachers, students, researchers and leaders from 44 different institutions worldwide for presentations, discussions, knowledge-sharing and networking.

- ▶ In May 2020, the online conference *Students as researching artists –music, technology and musicianship*, organised together with MDW in Vienna, gathered about 120 attendees from all over Europe and North America and included 23 paper presentations.

- ▶ In January 2020 a **researchers' colloquium on low latency streaming in music learning and teaching**, held at the Royal College of Scotland in Glasgow, gathered 14 active participants, with space for in-depth discussions of each paper presentation.

- ▶ In September 2021, the WG hosted a **digital symposium** together with the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama on assessment, critique and reflection in higher music performance education.

Publications

The WG published an **anthology** in 2019 with the same title as the 2018-conference, *Becoming musicians –student involvement and teacher collaboration in higher music education* edited by Stefan Gies and Jon Helge Sætre. The anthology includes 15 chapters, and is available online. The WG's contribution to the anthology was a chapter on *The music performance student as a researching artist – Perspectives on student-centredness in higher music education* (Sætre et. al., 2019).

By the end of 2021, a special edition of *Journal of Music, Technology and Education* dedicated to digital tools in higher music performance education will be published. The issue is edited by Jon Helge Sætre and Luc Nijs and includes many contributions from the 2020 Latimpe Conference.

Furthermore, Stefan Gies has published on *Student-Centred Learning in Higher Music Education* (2020), Camilla Overgaard and Susanne van Els did a written interview on *Diversity in Higher Music Education*, published in On Curating and the female WG members have co-written the paper *The embodied score – a performance perspective,* for a special issue on 'female voices in music theory' of the Rivista di Analisi e Teoria Musicale (RATM).

WG6 - Digitisation

Outcomes of WG6

Objectives of the WG

- Encourage the use of digital technologies in music education.
- Provide tools and examples of interesting practices that help the acquisition of knowledge, skills and experience on digital technologies, and develop an approach to promote critical thinking, in order to meet the needs of an ever-advancing society.

Empowering learners and teachers and inspiring them to integrate educational technologies to create **innovative learning environments** that transform learning and teaching: might this be the force of change that so often is attributed to technology? Might this be a way to enhance the quality of music education? To strengthen music in society through a broader access and more diversity? To even shape society? The Working Group believes it is!

The *Long And Winding Road* of digitisation

Through its work, WG6 meant to present a framework for the reflective practitioner who wishes to set steps on the "Long And Winding Road" of digitisation. The WG's activities and outcomes will **inspire teachers, researchers and policy makers, support them in a systematic reflection on digitisation, and help them to integrate technology in view of empowering students.** This way, students, being the musicians and music educators of the future, will be prepared and equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to contribute to strengthening music in society.

Online database

The WG developed an online database featuring data collected through a questionnaire on the **use of digital learning tools in music education institutions.** It will be available on the SMS website.

Webinar on digitisation in music education

A webinar on digitisation in music education targeting music teachers working in music schools was organised on 1-2 October, with 80 participants from all over Europe.

Articles

The WG published numerous articles reporting and reflecting on its work, its findings, the data collected and future perspectives:

- ▶ Digitisation in music education

- ▶ Reflections of the AEC-SMS Digitisation Working Group on the current COVID-19 situation

- ▶ Imitate or innovate? A reflection on the road ahead in digitising education

- ▶ The Long And Winding Road: exploring the landscape of Digitisation in (Higher) Music Education

- ▶ A new season for digital music education?

- ▶ Analysis of collected digital practices in HME institutions

Read the articles

The Digitisation Working Group was composed of representatives of AEC, European Music School Union (EMU) and European Association of Music in Schools (EAS).

WG7 - Involving Youth – Student's input in shaping their education

Objectives of the WG

- Strengthen student voice within the Association and within all AEC member institutions and to establish a European network of Higher Music Education students.

Outcomes of WG7

The WG's objectives were achieved through the **presence of SWG members in six other AEC-SMS Working Groups** and through **connecting with student participants at AEC events** both online and in presence. The importance of student voice was soon recognised and **two members of the SWG were co-opted to take part in AEC Council meetings from 2019.**

Students at AEC events

The SWG largely contributed to building **student presence at AEC events,** both through their own participation as well as through building an informal network of students and inviting them to events. In addition to their contribution in other SMS working groups, the SWG members have independently **hosted event sessions during AEC events,** namely during the Annual Meeting for International Relations Coordinators and the Annual Congress. The topics covered were addressed not only to students but also to a wider audience and ranged from power relations through encouraging international collaborations to entrepreneurship.

AEC Annual Congress

At each Annual Congress, the SWG members connected with student participants, guided them through the event, and organised **'Student wrap up' sessions** where they provided information on **how to set up and run student councils** - as described in the **handbook** *"Increasing student voice in Higher Music Education institutions – tips and guidelines from the AEC Student WG"*, and asked for input from other students with regard to the establishment of a European network. The WG stayed in close contact with participants by connecting on social media, namely through the AEC Student & Alumni Network Facebook page, and continued regularly inviting peers from all over Europe to AEC events.

Download the handbook

European Performing Arts Student Association (EPASA)

In the final year of the project, the WG focused on the **establishment of the European Performing Arts Students' Association (EPASA)**. The Association will soon be legally established and focus on further encouraging the student voice and promoting their interests.

More about EPASA

WG8 - Early Childhood Music Education (ECME)

Outcomes of WG8

The Working Group on Early Childhood Music education worked on raising awareness for this important type of pedagogy in higher music education institutions, in music schools and in other music education contexts.

Guidebook for Early Childhood Music Education

The ECME Working Group wrote a **guidebook that aims at offering some ideas from literature and their own experience as early childhood music practitioners and researchers,** with the hope that it will stimulate interest in the magical world of music in the early years.

The book shall help to establish music lessons with young children all over Europe. For teachers who have to earn their living with their profession, this can even open up a new facet in their professional portfolio.

It will be available on the AEC-SMS website.

Webinar on Early Childhood Music Education

The ECME Working Group hosted a webinar with the aim to both **introduce the topic of ECME** to participants from countries with no or only little tradition for this kind of pedagogy, while at the same time bringing together **different European perspectives** on the topic for participants with more experience in the field.

The group met in presence and online numerous times of the course of the project; contributed to the AEC's, the European Music School Union's (EMU) and the European Association for Music in School´s (EAS) annual congresses and events and collected data on ECME practices in European music schools.

The ECME Working Group was composed of representatives of AEC, EMU and EAS.

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More information?
Contact us!

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