

AEC Strategy 2030

The leading voice for higher music education in Europe

Foreword

AEC is the leading voice for higher music education in Europe bringing together prominent institutions and laying the foundation for a rich and diverse European music landscape. There is great variation in the membership when it comes to mission, leadership, size, traditions and age, but all members are dedicated to developing artistic practice, research and innovation to the highest level to secure the future for European music life as an indispensable part of European cultural heritage and values.

Based on proud traditions making music from a millennium come to live and at the same time experimenting and developing new pedagogic methods and musical formats the institutions' ambitions are focused on passing on knowledge and practice to new generations enabling them to take part in the shift in cultural interests and societal needs.

In 2024, the need to be able to handle a range of serious crises has never been greater. Geopolitical conflicts, major changes in climate and biodiversity, late consequences of covid-19, a worrying development in the mental health in particular of children and young people, and the rapid development in digitisation and AI, present challenges in all parts of society, and Higher Music Education institutions must also adapt themselves and find ways to exploit the changes to their advantage.

This document constitutes a new strategic plan for the AEC. It sets new objectives and priorities for our organization. This is done in recognition of the fact that the world around us is changing at an ever-increasing pace, which means that the AEC must not only improve its ability to look ahead and understand new developments and trends that affect our members, but also become even clearer in the communication of the value of music and music education. Finally, the major projects of recent years have given the AEC an impressive amount of new knowledge, and it is the ambition that this will provide value to all members.

The strategic plan implicates the development of operational plans to achieve the objectives, subject to annual review by the AEC Council to ensure relevance considering rapidly changing circumstances. A close cooperation between the AEC Council, the membership and the AEC Office will secure a successful implementation of the strategic plan for the benefit of the membership as well as the European music life.

Deborah Kelleher
AEC President

Finn Schumacker
AEC Executive Director

AEC Strategic Plan 2030

The leading voice for higher music education in Europe

VISION

Music and arts education is a central contributor to human life and democratic societies.

MISSION

AEC promotes higher education in music and art and their societal importance.

VALUES

AEC protects and promotes the values of Higher Music Education: Artistic and academic freedom and integrity, diversity, inclusion and equality as well as sustainability, solidarity and transparency.

OBJECTIVES

- Being ahead of trends
- Advocating and communication for change
- Promoting excellence, quality and diversity
- Building alliances

Setting the scene

Since its founding in 1953, AEC's importance for the development of higher music education in Europe and beyond has increased year by year. Major achievements were made especially in connection with the implementation of the Bologna process and the development of subject-specific learning outcomes, which paved the way for enhanced quality assurance and international institutional benchmarking and promoted closer collaboration and mobility in the higher music education sector (The Polifonia Project).

Through subsequent major EU-supported projects, the AEC and its members have strengthened the family feeling by enhanced cooperation setting new standards in all departments of the institutions. Connections to the music industry have been reinforced, community involvement and artistic research have grown, and students are becoming a natural partner in decision-making processes. Furthermore, AEC is today a sought-after partner for its expertise, e.g. in the field of diversity, equity and inclusion.

However, there is no doubt that the future will be demanding. Societies are changing and the speed of change is accelerating. Modern music life is on the one hand a success story, on the other hand it is challenged. The commercial music industry is growing, and we listen to music like never before, but the musical ecosystem is suffering. Music education in primary schools and in music schools is being politically de-prioritised, resulting in the loss of musical communities and social disadvantage. Even though our society has never been richer in economic terms, it is often difficult to gain recognition for the value of music and music education.

There is no doubt that rising temperatures and declining biodiversity risk having serious consequences for all people, and there is a need to see the Higher Music Education Area from a sustainability perspective, not only how the sector itself becomes sustainable, but how, through music and arts education, it can inspire the community around it to find innovative solutions to these challenges.

Music's strong connection to emotions, to creating hope, should be brought into play, just as creating music in a community has a range of positive effects, e.g. can counteract dissatisfaction and strengthen self-esteem and creativity.

There is a need to intensify international cooperation in our sector and a need for an appropriate European platform that can take leadership, bringing together wisdom, trend scouting, strategizing, advocacy and creating a public discourse on the importance of music as an indispensable part of being human.

Being such a European platform, the AEC's mission is both to serve the needs of its members and strengthen their societal importance. AEC must therefore, like its members, adapt its activities to meet challenges, which are constantly changing. Therefore, in the coming years, we commit ourselves to the following specific key objectives:

Ahead of trends

When social development happens ever faster, the ability to detect impending changes early becomes crucial for our ability to deal with them. Therefore, we must be attentive and take initiatives, such as:

- scan the horizon and gather data to identify trends and developments across the cultural and educational sectors and to find solutions to collective needs
- continuously exchange with partners, stakeholders and decision-makers to identify new developments and trends as well as new fields of interest for our members
- take a leading role in promoting the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals and the principle of Triple Transformation in the sector

Advocacy and communication for change

Creating change requires images of a desired future and the ability to communicate these images. In collaboration with members, stakeholders and partners, we will:

- represent and advance the interests of the Higher Music Education (HME) sector at national, European and global levels for the greater societal good
- promote the value of arts and education and the importance of adequate funding
- support the recognition of third cycle level and artistic research relevant to our sector
- advocate for better access to and across Music Education at all levels
- gather and share examples of good practices and innovative approaches of Higher Music Education institutions, also within the sector itself

Promoting excellence, quality and diversity

To fulfil the ambition that we and our members can maintain and develop the importance of music and music education for our society, to respond to changes and contribute to strengthening cultural life and its values, we will:

- always ensure and defend artistic freedom, institutional autonomy and high ethical standards
- in dialogue with our members, the music profession and other relevant sectors of society, further explore and develop different concepts of excellence and quality
- support the incorporation of all aspects of sustainability in the members' operations such as gender equality and the principle of non-discrimination

- promote the continued development and integration of digital tools, including AI, in the institutions' curricula and operations
- strengthen capacity building through the establishment of a platform for leadership development and lifelong learning
- advocate for close collaboration with students, student organisations and society stakeholders designing sustainable professional careers, nurturing the musical ecosystem and promoting health and wellbeing.
- support quality enhancement and its ongoing development

Building alliances

With its more than 310 members, AEC is an important organisation with a solid and growing membership. We can only achieve our objectives through strong collaboration and solidarity internally and with current and new partners. We will:

- Strengthen AEC as a network organisation through optimisation of existing structures to achieve greater impact at national, European and international level
- Develop and deepen relationships with existing and new partners in the arts and education to strengthen our important messages and the communication thereof
- Ensure that all members feel included and heard in our efforts for advancing music and music education
- Promote European values with a focus on diversity, equity and inclusion while supporting transnational cooperation and the exchange of knowledge and experience
- Expand cooperation with partner organisations and institutions in those parts of the world where formalised cooperation does not yet exist