AEC Position Paper 2025 on the Digitisation of Erasmus+ Procedures

The Perspective of Higher Music Education Institutions within the Erasmus Without Paper Consultation

About this Paper

The Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC), representing approximately 300 Higher Music Education Institutions (HMEIs) across over 50 countries, submits this position paper to inform the European Commission's 2025 consultation on the digitisation of Erasmus+ procedures. Drawing on a decade of experience with the digitisation of the Erasmus processes in higher music education and on a recent survey among AEC members on the digitisation of Erasmus, this paper outlines the opportunities, challenges, and sector-specific needs related to the Erasmus Without Paper (EWP) ecosystem, advocating for inclusive and tailored digital solutions for HMEIs.

The AEC commitment to Internationalisation, Mobility and Digitisation

Since its founding in 1953, the AEC has served as a platform for cooperation, knowledge exchange and advocacy, engaging with policymakers to maintain artistic and pedagogical excellence while fostering the sustainable development and innovation of the Higher Music Education (HME) sector.

Within its current strategy, the AEC focuses, among others, on the three following interconnected priorities: internationalisation, mobility, and digitisation. Internationalisation involves embedding a global perspective into curricula, institutional partnerships, and professional training, preparing music graduates to succeed in an increasingly interconnected musical world. Mobility builds on this by creating opportunities for music students, educators, and administrators to study, teach, and collaborate across borders, enriching artistic perspectives and pedagogical approaches. Digitisation addresses the growing role of technology in music education, supporting not only digital tools for learning, collaboration, and artistic creation, but also the digitisation of administrative procedures including those involved in the Erasmus+ programme administration. This shift has significantly affected the administration of international offices within AEC member institutions, streamlining processes while introducing new requirements for digital skills and data management.

Through these priorities, the AEC aims at supporting and strengthening the capacity of higher music education to adapt and lead in a rapidly evolving cultural and technological environment, ensuring the continued vitality and relevance of higher music education institutions and advocating for its members on this matter at national and European level.

Within this context, during **Summer 2025 the AEC conducted a comprehensive survey** among its member institutions holding an Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE). This survey, answered by **136 HMEIs,** aimed to capture the **current state of digitisation within the Erasmus+ programme**, focusing on the implementation of the Erasmus Without Paper (EWP), the AEC's project for an application management system *EASY*, and related digital tools for mobility in higher music education institutions. The findings, presented in this position paper, highlight the opportunities, challenges, and sector-specific needs to inform the European Commission's consultation on the digitisation of the Erasmus+ programme.

Motives, Practices, and Unique Characteristics Shaping Higher Music Education Workflows

The Association Européenne des Conservatoires (AEC) submits this position paper on behalf of Higher Music Education Institutions (HMEIs) as part of the 2025 Erasmus Without Paper consultation to highlight the distinct needs of the HME sector. Policymakers must recognize these specificities when designing digital tools and procedures intended for universal adoption across higher education. Standardized systems risk marginalizing HMEIs unless they accommodate unique workflows, such as portfolio-based admissions and flexible Inter-Institutional Agreements (IIAs), which differ significantly from those of larger, multidisciplinary universities.

HMEIs are, in most cases, autonomous entities, although some operate as faculties within larger universities, often those specialising in the performing or applied arts. HMEIs generally have relatively small student populations; in 2025, enrolment figures among AEC member institutions range from 38 to 2.646 students. Mobility and enrolment numbers in HMEIs tend to be relatively low, partly because this is a highly competitive sector in which only the most qualified and artistically accomplished "talents" are accepted.

For HMEIs that function as faculties or academies within broader university structures, decisions related to mobility cooperation are typically made at the faculty level. This reflects both the diversity of programmes offered the differing opportunities—or constraints—for student and staff mobility in each academy/faculty. Consequently, Inter-Institutional Agreements (IIAs) are usually concluded at the faculty level. In some cases, this approach may also be defined through the use of ISCED codes within university level agreements.

For HMEIs, the application process is a critical, complex step requiring flexibility within rigid bureaucratic frameworks. It involves multilevel decision-making that shapes the handling of IIAs, Learning Agreements, and Transcripts of Records. The information collected during applications is foundational to all subsequent mobility processes.

HMEIs exhibit significant variation in application procedures, with each institution setting its own deadlines and requirements. Unlike larger universities, HMEIs often sign ad hoc IIAs for specific mobilities without committing to long-term partnerships. These procedures vary further depending on whether an HMEI operates independently or within a broader university structure, where imposed digital tools and deadlines may not align with music-specific needs. Administrative capacity also plays a role: larger HMEIs may have international offices with 5–

10 staff, while smaller institutions often rely on a single administrator or even a music teacher handling Erasmus duties part-time, often with minimal compensation. The 2025 AEC survey on Erasmus digitization reveals an average of 1.75 full-time staff in HMEI international offices, with standalone institutions averaging 1.45.

The distinct nature of Erasmus applications in HMEIs stems primarily from the one-to-one tuition model, which shapes institutional mobility strategies and student motivations. Additionally, low student enrolment in standalone HMEIs results in limited mobility flows and lean administrative teams compared to multidisciplinary universities. Music students often choose destinations to study with renowned professors, sometimes with the intent to pursue a full degree at the host institution. This drives a highly selective admissions process, where incoming students are evaluated based on audiovisual portfolios, the content of which is dictated by the receiving institution. Decisions rest with professors and department heads, prioritizing artistic excellence over standard academic credentials like language certifications. Outgoing students are similarly pre-screened by their home institutions to ensure quality representation abroad.

This rigorous, dual-level evaluation—conducted by both sending and receiving institutions—ensures high standards but complicates workflows. According to the AEC survey, 74.3% of HMEIs accept applications from non-partner institutions, treating IIAs as formalities often finalized post-mobility decision. Incoming application portfolios are notably complex, requiring specific musical repertoires, recommendation letters, and CVs highlighting artistic achievements. In contrast, outgoing applications are simpler, as students have already met their home institution's quality standards.

HMEIs cannot guarantee the number of study placements as stipulated in IIAs. Admission is highly competitive, and a study place can only be offered if the relevant main subject teacher—who provides one-on-one instruction—has an available slot. This aspect is often overlooked or misunderstood, yet it is a key reason why HMEI's application procedures are considerably more complex, time-consuming for all parties involved, and ultimately carry no assurance of acceptance. Consequently, nominations must be treated separately from applications, as placements cannot be guaranteed.

As mentioned, mobility numbers in HMEIs are low, averaging 11.6 outgoing and 13.3 incoming traditional semester mobilities annually, with significant variation (0–70 mobilities). Institution size does not always correlate with mobility flows. Highly internationalized HMEIs may have low Erasmus participation due to existing diverse student bodies, while smaller institutions may see proportionally higher mobility as students seek prestigious teachers abroad. Mobility flows are driven by teacher reputation rather than institutional size or country, and balanced incoming-outgoing partnerships are not always prioritized. Some HMEIs aim for overall balance, influencing nomination decisions and deadlines.

Application volumes far exceed realized mobilities. The AEC survey reports averages of 24.2 outgoing and 47.35 incoming applications annually, with only about half of outgoing and one-third of incoming applications resulting in actual mobilities. Highly competitive institutions may accept as few as one-fifth of incoming applicants. Students often apply to multiple destinations without a binding priority order, waiting for all offers before deciding, sometimes switching to more prestigious institutions late in the process. This flexibility, while student-cantered, increases administrative burdens, as international offices process high

application volumes with limited resources. The low number of realized mobilities discourages investment in additional staff or digital infrastructure, exacerbating overburden and stress in international offices and limiting support that international offices can provide to students willing to engage into the Erasmus experience[1].

To conclude, the complexity of Erasmus applications in HMEIs arises from low mobility numbers, high application volumes, stringent multilevel selection, and constrained administrative resources. The following sections detail the Erasmus application workflow in HMEIs and present the AEC's proposed solutions for its members.

Key Specificities of HMEIs in Erasmus+ Workflows

- **One-to-One Tuition**: drives student mobility choices based on studying with renowned professors, requiring flexible application processes.

- **Portfolio-Based Selection**: incoming student applications rely heavily on audio-visual portfolios, with decisions made by receiving professors or department heads.

- **Low Mobility Numbers:** HMEIs average 11.6 outgoing and 13.3 incoming mobilities annually, with smaller institutions often managing with limited staff (average 1.75 full-time international office staff).

- **Flexible IIAs:** 74.3% of HMEIs accept applications from non-partner institutions, often signing ad hoc IIAs post-selection. Nominations are separated from applications as placements are not guaranteed. Numbers indicated in IIAs are not binding.

- **High Applications-to-Mobility Ratio**: Only ~50% of outgoing and ~33% of incoming applications result in mobilities due to strict selection processes.

These specificities necessitate digital tools that accommodate flexible, multi-step workflows and prioritize artistic excellence over standardized administrative metrics.

The standard Erasmus workflow in HMEIs[2]

Step 1 – Internal Application, Selection and Nomination of Outgoing Students

- ✓ Higher Music Education Institution having an ECHE issue their internal call for Erasmus for "student mobility for studies".

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[1] in the AEC Survey on Mobility Trends sent to IRCs and Students of HMEIs in Spring 2025, students and IRCs from HMEIs underlined the students' lack of understanding of the Erasmus+ processes and the related digital tools and asked for more support by the international offices.

[2] Differences in the process still exist even within the HME sector. The AEC proposes a standardized but still flexible process to its members based on shared and established practices in the sector

✓ Students apply through an internal application form, where various information and documents are asked. The information and document asked can vary a lot according to the institution and ranges from the basic data on the student, their current studies and wishes for the mobility (destinations and period) to CV, language skills, motivation and/or recommendation letters.

- *OPTIONAL step: **internal selection** based on one or more of the items listed below*
    1. A live / online audition (via submitted audio recording) – most common
    2. Submitted documents (the list can vary, see above)
    3. An interview
  - A selection committee reviews the application portfolio decides if the student is eligible for the mobility.
- The selection committee informs the international office

    ✓ The international office nominates the student for the outgoing mobility. The number of destinations the nomination is sent to can vary. There is no priority order.
    ✓ In most cases, an existing IIAs between home institutions and destinations is not necessary but institutional policies in this regard should be checked before sending nominations to institutions with whom an IIA is not in place.

Step 2 – Application, Selection and Nomination of Incoming Students

    ✓ The student completes the various incoming applications for each destination. The application is normally composed of:

1. Basic data on the student and their current studies
2. Proposed study period and study level during the mobility
3. A Study Plan, which is a simple list of courses that the students want to take at destination during the mobility period
4. **Audio and video recording** of the student's performances (or written works in case of composers or theoretical studies) - *this is the most important part of the application*
5. A recommendation letter by the teacher of the main instrument/subject (optional)
6. Preferred professor at destination (optional)
7. Language Certificate or Language Level declaration (optional)
8. Other specific documents asked by the receiving institutions

In this phase, students need to pay attention to the different requirements and deadlines of each destination they are applying to. They also need to look for the study catalogue of each destination to fill in the study plan.

The AEC advises against requiring Learning Agreements at the application stage, as they are contracts formalizing confirmed mobilities. Requiring them prematurely during the selection process creates unnecessary administrative burdens.

- ✓ The outgoing nomination reaches the destination. This can happen before or after the student has completed the incoming application. In most cases, a previous IIAs between home institutions and destinations is not necessary for applications and nominations to be sent but institutional policies in this regard should be checked before sending nominations and applications to institutions with whom an IIA is not in place.

- ✓ The incoming international office sends the application portfolio to a Selection Committee (which can be composed of just one person, such as the teacher of the main subject/instrument or the head of department).
- ✓ The Selection Committee communicates the final decision (accepted /rejected) to the International Office.
- ✓ The international office communicates the decision to the student and offers a study place to be accepted or refused by a given deadline.

Step 3 – Choice of the Student and Allocation to the final mobility destination

- ✓ Students collect decisions and study offer and make decisions according to the deadlines given by the destinations. The student is not tight to any priority order. As destinations have different deadlines, it is not uncommon that students accept study offer and then change their mind when other offers come in.
- ✓ When a student has confirmed their final choice, their home / outgoing coordinator allocates the student to the chosen destination.
- ✓ If not already in place, the two involved institutions need to sign a IIA.

Step 4 – Learning Agreement

- ✓ The student fills in the learning agreement, including Table A and Table B (courses to be taken at destination and corresponding courses at home), signs the learning agreement and transfers it to the home/outgoing coordinator.
- ✓ The outgoing / home coordinators reviews the learning agreement, proposes changes if necessary (to be implemented by the student) and signs (or asks a departmental coordinator to sign) the document.
- ✓ The incoming / host coordinator reviews the learning agreement, proposes changes if necessary (to be implemented by the student) and signs (or asks a departmental coordinator to sign) the document.

Step 5 – Financial Agreement and Confirmation of Arrival + Changes to the Learning Agreement and Transcript of Records

- The student signs the financial agreement with the home/outging coordinator

- When the student arrives to the receiving institution the receiving coordinator sends to the sending coordinator a confirmation of arrival
- During the mobility, the Learning Agreement can be changed and resigned by the 3 parties
- A transcript of records is uploaded/sent by the host institutions to the home institution

The EASY Project: AEC's European Online Application System for Mobility in Higher Music and Arts Education

Since 2010, AEC's International Relations Coordinators have urged the association to provide a unified European online application system for Erasmus and other mobility programs to address challenges like excessive paperwork and the proliferation of disparate digital platforms.

In response, the AEC launched the **European Online Application System (EASY)** in 2016 under the FULL SCORE project (Creative Europe – Networks). A task force of international relations experts collaborated with a commercial IT provider from Estonia to create a tailored solution for multinational mobility exchanges (Erasmus, Nordplus, and bilateral schemes). Piloted in 2016–2017 by 41 AEC member institutions, EASY grew to include over 120 institutions by 2023, handling more than 8,000 applications across music, dance, theatre, fine arts, design, architecture, film, and media.

With the adoption of Erasmus Without Paper (EWP) as the European Commission's standard for Erasmus+ programs, EASY transitioned in 2023 to the Austrian company SoP's Mobility Online platform, which ensured full compatibility with EWP protocols. The resulting **EASY Mobility Online (EASY MO) system**, a customized version of the standard SoP's Mobility Online platform for the AEC consortium, now supports 77 HMEIs in managing Erasmus+ Student Mobility for Studies, Nordplus, and bilateral exchanges. It includes tools for Inter-Institutional Agreements (IIAs) and Digital Learning Agreements (DLAs) linked to the EWP network. Future enhancements will cover short mobilities, grant agreements, staff mobilities, traineeships, nominations, and transcripts of records with the ultimate goal to cover the full Erasmus landscape.

EASY MO is a unique, subject-specific platform designed to meet the digital demands of the Erasmus+ programme while supporting smaller HMEIs. It offers a centralized, collaborative system for managing outgoing and incoming applications, DLAs, and IIAs, with flexibility for independent use of each component. Tailored to music education, but suitable for any other art discipline, it handles video files and exportable tables for multilevel selection processes, significantly reducing licensing costs for the single participation institutions thanks to the AEC's coordination. Support includes manuals, webinars, peer-to-peer assistance, and annual user meetings. However, challenges persist, including balancing standardization with institutional flexibility, technical issues like bugs and complex interfaces, and the learning

curve for smaller international offices with limited time and expertise. For EASY MO to succeed, participating institutions must invest time to master the system, align internal processes with its workflows, provide feedback for improvement, and maintain advanced knowledge of Erasmus+ guidelines. Flexibility and a commitment to shared standards are critical for balancing individual needs with collective benefits.

According to the 2025 AEC survey, over half of AEC members with an Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE) use EASY MO for mobility applications, while 25% rely on email, PDFs, and online forms, and 15% use other commercial systems, primarily SoP's standard Mobility Online product.

Beyond EASY MO, the AEC has developed two additional tools to enhance sector mobility:

The AEC Mobility Information Portal: this free platform provides comprehensive information on incoming application procedures for AEC member institutions, including contact information, deadlines, application platform links, and course catalogues. Accessible to any student and international office, it serves as a free and centralized resource point for the whole sector, distinct from the fee-based EASY MO.

The AEC Vacancy Platform: Freely available, this platform enables AEC members to post – and explore – among other professional categories - international traineeship opportunities for students, fostering broader mobility options.

These initiatives reflect AEC's commitment to facilitating efficient, accessible, and tailored mobility solutions for the higher music and arts education sector.

Higher Music Education and Erasmus Without Papers

Through the AEC Survey on the Digitisation of Erasmus+ Procedures for Higher Music Education Institutions (2025) the AEC took a snapshot of the digitisation landscape in higher music education, revealing both progress and persistent challenges in adopting the digital tools provided by the EWP universe as well as collecting wishes and needs about the upcoming elements of the Erasmus landscape that will be digitalized in the coming months and years.

Digital Interinstitutional Agreements (IIAs)

96.3% of the survey respondents declared to be **connected to EWP for Interinstitutional Agreements (IIs),** showing that the HMEIs sector is almost completely embracing the digitisation of this important document. 81,6% of the respondents deals with IIAs via the EWP Dashboard, including a vast majority of the EASY MO system users, who still prefer Dashboard to the tool proposed by the commercial provider for IIAs. For those connected to EWP for IIAs, the average **percentage of IIAs exchanged digitally is 88%** (89% for Dashboard users, 87% for commercial systems' users and 81% for EASY MO users) meaning that that - even if an institution is connected to EWP - for technical or non-technical reasons 12% of the IIAs on average are still not exchanged digitally. When it comes to the **satisfaction** of the users in

relation to this digital tool, the average mark is **3,5 out of 5**, but while the mark for Dashboard users was 3,9 for commercial systems the mark goes down to 2,9 and 2,2 for EASY MO users, clearly showing an issue for these interfaces when it comes to IIAs.

When asking more in details about technical issues related to the digital exchange of IIAs, Dashboard users in the HMEIs sector listed the following issues

- Issues with visibility and tracking of IIA status
- Lack of filtering, sorting, and search capabilities
- Problems of interoperability and synchronization with third-party systems
- Lack of automatic notifications for all relevant actions
- No pre-filled information and errors in the exportable reports
- Agreements suddenly reverted, with wrong or missing data

Anyhow, Dashboard users also underlined a general improvement of the tool and less technical issues overtime.

Technical Issues about IIAs reported by HMEIs' users of commercial systems, including EASY MO and Mobility Online in general are the following:

- Interoperability failures between different systems, and commercial systems and Dashboard
- Issues with synchronization of the agreements
- EWP messages are received incorrectly or not at all
- Signatures, statuses, and coding information are not reliably transferred
- Updates disrupting IIAs that were previously marked as ready
- No possibility to migrate existing agreements from Dashboard to commercial systems

These issues undermine the trust of HMEIs' users in the commercial systems, who still prefer to use Dashboard, considered simpler and more reliable, feeling there is no need to invest their already scarce time resources in trying out other tools.

Digital Learning Agreements (DLAs)

95,6% of the survey respondents **is connected to EWP for their Erasmus DLAs, reaching the goal fixed by the EC for 2025**. 73%of them uses the EWP Dashboard and the OLA platform while the rest are connected via a commercial provider; 22% of EASY MO users uses the DLA tool embedded in the system. Nevertheless, in practice, **84% of the Learning Agreements of the connected users are exchanged digitally**, meaning that for technical or non-technical reason, 16% of the learning agreements signed within the HME sector is still not digital. When it comes to the satisfaction of the users in relation to this digital tool, the average mark is 3,3 out of 5, even though this mark is mainly related to the low score declared by those doing DLAs via EASY MO, where this tool is still undergoing a fine-tuning phase.

When asked about technical issues encountered with DLAs, EWP Dashboard users in the HME sector listed the following issues:

- Limited possibilities of the tool: no possibility of intervention by the IRC on what the student inputs, no possibility to delete agreements, limited opportunities for changes
- Interoperability and synchronisation issues with commercial systems
- Bugs and errors
- Key information on the student not displayed in the overview

Nevertheless, improvements have been recognized and there is a fair consensus on the good functioning of the tool.

Users of EASY MO and other commercial systems listed the following items:

- Interoperability and synchronisation issues with other commercial systems and Dashboard (such as DLAs not visible on one side and therefore stuck process, duplications
- Too many steps, difficult to navigate
- Difficulties in changing dates
- Manual inputs of courses
- No DLAs for short mobilities
- Signatures by department coordinator not always possible
- Delayed resolution of technical issues by commercial providers

European Student Card Initiative (ESCI): the European Student Card (ESC), the Erasmus+ Mobile App and EWP

When it comes to the implementation of ESCI, more than 57% of the respondent declared not to have started yet; only 6,6% finalised the implementation but are not using the tools yet, while almost 20% declared that for them the implementation is in process. If we compare these replies with the replies about IIAs and DLAs, which show a percentage of EWP connections close to 100%, it is clear that most of the respondents do not really know what the ESCI is about, as the implementation of EWP means that the road to ESCI is in process.10% of the respondents are not informed about the ESCI development in their institution, and most probably do not know what it is about. These numbers clearly show a lack of information (and thus communication) about these tools within HMEIs.

The use of the Erasmus+ app seems very limited in the sector: more than 88% of the respondents do not use it, only 7,4% is making some use of it and there is even (a small) part of the respondents who have never heard of it.

The general feeling about the ESCI and its elements within the HME sector can be summarized as follows:

- Erasmus Student Card and Erasmus+ App are generally considered as **additional tools adding complexity with no clear use,** benefit or value;
- These tools are not well functioning and need a dedicated Digital Officer to make them work;

- **International Offices have no time nor capacity** to learn and train staff and students on additional tools - the **priority goes to IIAs and DLAs,** no time for non-essential tools;
- **There are no clear instructions and communication** on these tools from National Agencies: implementation will be pushed only if mandatory;
- Too many tools are needed or required, while general **simplification** is asked;
- The **value of EWP** is generally **recognized** and shared;
- A clear and realistic **timetable** from the European Commission is asked;
- Increased editing capacity/rights for international relations coordinators are required within the tools to help students;
- General desire for tools to be ready and **fully functional**, stable and bug free before being rolled out;
- The main issue for **small institutions** is the lack enough staff and (inexistent) IT departments;
- The main issue for **large institutions** is the need of dealing with multiple platforms and systems, at faculty and university level and the fact that all faculties of the same universities need to be connected to the EWP network through the same provider;
- Generally, the situation is improving, but slowly.

EWP Adoption and Satisfaction in HMEIs (AEC Survey 2025)

IIAs: 96.3% connected to EWP; 88% digitally exchanged. Satisfaction: 3.5/5

DLAs: 95.6% connected to EWP; 84% digitally exchanged. Satisfaction: 3.3/5

ESCI implementation: 57% not started, 20% in progress, 6.6% implemented but unused. Limited use of Erasmus+ App (7.4%).

Upcoming Digital Nominations: what AEC's institutions wish for

While implementing digital nominations, the Higher Music Education (HME) sector asks the European Commission to take the following points into account:

- The specificities of the selection process in the HME sector widely explained in this position paper (in particular the selection based on portfolio and final decision on the incoming side);
- Nominations should not be linked to a preliminary existence of an IIA;
- When existing, data indicated in the IIA should (number of students and ISCED codes) not be binding;
- Flexibility (i.e. delete/modify options), user-friendliness, and technical stability;
- Different deadlines of destinations;
- Fix any bugs of DLAs and IIAs before implementing Digital Nominations.

The general sentiment about digital nomination is the fear of added administrative burden and the current lack of information. The HME sectors asks for clear instructions on what "digital nomination" means and implies.

Upcoming Digital Transcript of Records (ToR): what AEC's institutions wish for

While implementing digital ToR, the Higher Music Education (HME) sector asks the European Commission to take the following points into account:

- Allow qualitative, descriptive, or pass/fail evaluations in ToRs, avoiding numeric conversions that may misrepresent artistic assessments.;
- Evaluations must reflect individualized study paths and non-credit-bearing activities going beyond standard subject to include artistic projects and multi-component courses;
- Include in the document space for "legends" and explanations;
- Produce guidelines on how ToR for short mobilities/BIPs should be handled;
- Define clear user roles, permissions, and responsibility boundaries;
- Provide integration with campus management systems and/or usable exportable options.

As for the digital nominations, also for digital ToR the following criteria have been mentioned:

- Flexibility (i.e. delete/modify options), user-friendliness, and technical stability
- Clear information, instruction and training on the tool
- Fix any bugs of DLAs and IIAs before implementing any new tool

Key Recommendations to the EC on further implementation of EWP

Based on the survey's findings and sector's needs extensively explored in this paper, the AEC makes the following key recommendations to the European Commission:

- **Tailor Tools to include HMEI Needs:** develop EWP tools that support portfolio-based selections, flexible IIAs with no binding numbers and not linked to the nomination process, considering varying institutional deadlines and qualitative evaluations.

- **Enhance Interoperability**: address synchronization issues between Dashboard and commercial systems to ensure seamless data exchange.

- **Prioritize Stability:** resolve bugs in IIAs and DLAs before introducing new tools like Digital Nominations and ToRs.

- **Enhance Flexibility and Usability**: allow editing/deleting/sorting options and user-friendly interfaces in the provided and upcoming tools.

- **Improve Communication and Provide Training:** provide clear guidelines and training on established and upcoming digital tools to address awareness gaps.

- **Support Small Institutions:** offer resources to help HMEIs with limited staff manage digital transitions effectively, both in terms of financial support, training opportunities and reliable and timely user support.

The European Commission is strongly encouraged to allocate **dedicated funding** in the next Erasmus+ **programme to support the digitisation of administrative processes** in international offices. Such funding would enable small institutions, often constrained by limited administrative resources, to effectively implement and manage digital tools provided by the Erasmus Without Paper ecosystem and tailored platforms such as the AEC's EASY Mobility Online. By investing in training, infrastructure, and technical support, this financial commitment would enhance digital skills, streamline mobility workflows, and ensure equitable access to digitisation benefits for smaller institutions. This support is critical to reducing administrative burdens, fostering seamless international collaboration, and maintaining the Erasmus+ programme's inclusivity and effectiveness across diverse educational sectors.

At present, smaller Higher Education Institutions—particularly Higher Music Education Institutions—risk being left behind. If current conditions persist, many of these highly specialised and internationally engaged institutions will be unable to fully implement the Erasmus+ programme and may ultimately be excluded from its funding opportunities. This situation arises from parallel administrative processes and inconsistent interpretations of guidelines across different National Agencies and software providers. Moreover, the ongoing digitalisation of Erasmus+ processes does not currently deliver on its promise of simplification—perhaps offering some benefits to students, but not to the institutions and administrative staff responsible for enabling exchanges. Given the significant contribution of HMEIs to European cultural and educational collaboration, despite operating with limited resources, it is essential that measures be taken to ensure their equitable inclusion and support.

Conclusion

The digitisation of Erasmus+ procedures represents a crucial step toward a more efficient, transparent, and inclusive mobility landscape in Europe. However, as this position paper demonstrates, Higher Music Education Institutions face unique structural and pedagogical specificities that must be acknowledged in the design and implementation of digital tools. Balancing standardisation with flexibility is essential to ensure that the digital transition strengthens—rather than hinders—participation in mobility programmes. The AEC and its members remain committed to contributing actively to the ongoing development of the Erasmus Without Paper ecosystem, advocating for interoperable, stable, and user-friendly solutions that respect the artistic and educational realities of the music sector. Collaboration between policymakers, IT providers, and sector representatives will be key to achieving a digital environment that truly supports excellence, accessibility, and sustainability in European HME. HMEIs play a vital role in preserving and advancing Europe's cultural heritage through music, and their inclusion in the digital Erasmus+ ecosystem is essential to maintaining this legacy.