

AEC Global Strategy 2030

1. Introduction

The Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC) is the leading voice for Higher Music Education (HME) in Europe. While rooted in the European Higher Education Area, AEC has, since its foundation, maintained a strong global outlook, recognising that music, music education, and artistic practice transcend national and continental borders.

This AEC Global Strategy builds on the **AEC Strategy 2030**, the objectives and deliverables of the **Creative Europe Network project (2025–2028)**, and the previous strategy document **Rationale, strategy and actions to promote global cooperation in higher music education**. It responds to a rapidly changing global context characterised by geopolitical tensions, ecological and social crises, accelerating digital transformation, and increasing awareness of ethical responsibility, equity, and decolonisation.

The document provides a strategic framework for AEC's global engagement up to 2030, reaffirming existing commitments while introducing updated perspectives, priorities, and partnerships.

2. Executive Summary

AEC's global engagement is an integral and strategic dimension of its mission to promote higher music education and its societal importance. The **AEC Global Strategy 2030** builds directly on the **AEC Strategy 2030**, the objectives and deliverables of the **Creative Europe Network project (2025–2028)**, and earlier AEC work on global cooperation, while responding to an evolving international context marked by geopolitical instability, ecological and social crises, accelerating digital transformation, and growing awareness of ethical responsibility, equity, and decolonisation.

This strategy positions global cooperation not as a separate area of activity, but as a **cross-cutting approach** that strengthens AEC's European role through international dialogue, mutual learning, and shared advocacy. It translates the four strategic objectives of AEC Strategy 2030 - being ahead of trends; advocacy and communication for change; promoting excellence, quality and diversity; and building alliances - into a global context, recognising that many of the challenges and opportunities facing higher music education are inherently global.

A central element of the Global Strategy is its **explicit ethical framework**. Drawing on outcomes of previous and ongoing AEC projects, including ARTEMIS, SMS (Strengthening Music in Society), and the current Horizon Europe project *d@rts*, the strategy embeds the AEC Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Policy 2030 and the AEC Sustainability Policy and Action Plan across all global activities. It places strong emphasis on ethical international cooperation, mental health and well-being, climate sustainability of mobility, and responsible use of digital tools, including AI.



The strategy also introduces a **clear commitment to decolonising perspectives** in global collaboration. AEC acknowledges historical and structural power imbalances in international arts education and commits to moving beyond Europe-centred models of internationalisation towards reciprocal, context-sensitive partnerships based on shared authority, co-creation, and long-term relationship-building.

To operationalise these principles, the Global Strategy sets out **four objectives and associated actions towards 2030**, focusing on strengthening global networks and partnerships; promoting ethical, inclusive, and sustainable cooperation; enhancing quality and innovation through global exchange; and reinforcing global advocacy for music and arts education. Responsibilities within AEC's governance and organisational structure are clearly defined to ensure coherent implementation.

Finally, the strategy consolidates AEC's cooperation with **established partner organisations beyond Europe** and introduces a structured approach to engaging with **new global partners**, particularly in Africa, Latin America, and worldwide. In doing so, the AEC Global Strategy 2030 situates higher music education within a global ecosystem of shared responsibility and solidarity, reinforcing AEC's role as a credible, values-driven, and forward-looking international actor.

3. The Strategic Framework

3.1 Global Cooperation within AEC Strategy 2030

The AEC Strategy 2030 and the AEC Global Strategy 2030 are closely interlinked and mutually reinforcing, with the Global Strategy functioning as a concrete extension of the overarching European strategic framework into the international sphere. The Strategy 2030 establishes AEC's core vision of music and arts education as a central contributor to democratic societies and human life and defines four key objectives: being ahead of trends, advocacy and communication for change, promoting excellence, quality and diversity, and building alliances.

These objectives are deliberately formulated in a way that transcends national and regional boundaries, recognising that the challenges faced by higher music education - such as sustainability, digital transformation, social inequality, and the need to articulate societal value - are global in nature. The Global Strategy directly builds on this premise by positioning global cooperation not as a separate activity, but as a cross-cutting dimension that strengthens AEC's capacity to fulfil its European mission in an increasingly interconnected world

More specifically, the Global Strategy translates the objectives of the Strategy 2030 into an international context. "Being ahead of trends" is addressed through systematic global knowledge exchange on artistic, educational, technological, and societal developments, enabling AEC and its members to anticipate changes beyond Europe. "Advocacy and communication for change" is reinforced by amplifying joint international voices in defence of music and arts education, thereby increasing the sector's visibility and influence in global policy debates. Likewise, the commitment to "promoting excellence, quality and diversity" is broadened through engagement with multiple artistic traditions, pedagogical approaches, and knowledge systems worldwide, challenging Eurocentric perspectives

and supporting more inclusive understandings of quality and excellence. Finally, the objective of “building alliances” is operationalised globally through the consolidation of existing partnerships and the development of new, ethical, and reciprocal collaborations in regions such as Africa and Latin America

In this way, the AEC Global Strategy 2030 ensures coherence between European priorities and global engagement. It aligns international activities with AEC’s core values - artistic and academic freedom, diversity, inclusion, sustainability, and solidarity - while embedding ethical and decolonising perspectives into all global actions. Rather than diverting attention from AEC’s European role, the Global Strategy strengthens it by situating higher music education within a global ecosystem of shared responsibility, mutual learning, and collective advocacy.

3.2 Global Cooperation and Creative Europe Priorities

The Creative Europe Network support programme provides a strong policy and funding framework that directly reinforces the objectives and orientation of the AEC Global Strategy 2030. At its core, Creative Europe recognises culture as both an intrinsic public good and a strategic driver for democratic values, social cohesion, innovation, and sustainable development. This understanding closely aligns with AEC’s global ambition to position higher music education as a contributor to societal resilience and international dialogue.

By explicitly promoting European cultural diversity, artistic freedom, inclusion, and participation, the programme underpins AEC’s commitment to ethical global engagement grounded in shared values rather than competition or unilateral knowledge transfer. The emphasis on networks as reliable policy actors further supports AEC’s role as a representative voice for higher music education in global policy debates, enabling its global strategy to be embedded within wider European cultural and external relations priorities

A particularly strong link lies in the programme’s prioritisation of international cultural cooperation and the strengthening of the cultural dimension of EU external relations. Creative Europe frames global collaboration as a form of co-creation on an equal footing, promoting mutual learning, long-term partnerships, and the visibility of European values such as artistic freedom, democracy, and cultural rights. This directly informs the AEC Global Strategy’s focus on ethical, reciprocal partnerships and its commitment to addressing global challenges - such as sustainability, digital transformation, and social inequality - through dialogue with partners beyond Europe.

The programme’s call for organisations to build capacity for international engagement, support mobility and exchange, and contribute to global policy reflection provides a clear mandate for AEC to integrate its global activities into a broader European strategy for international cultural relations.

Furthermore, Creative Europe’s cross-cutting priorities - sustainability, inclusion and diversity, digital transformation, and support for artists and cultural professionals - reinforce the thematic foundations of the AEC Global Strategy 2030. By aligning global cooperation with the European Green Deal, human-centred digital transformation, and the promotion of equity and gender balance, the programme ensures that international engagement contributes to long-term systemic change rather than isolated

exchanges. In this way, the Creative Europe Network framework does not merely fund activity; it legitimises and strengthens AEC's Global Strategy by situating higher music education within a coherent European vision of culture as a driver of global cooperation, shared responsibility, and sustainable futures.

4. Values and Ethics Guiding Global Cooperation

AEC's global engagement is grounded in a strong ethical framework, informed by outcomes of previous and ongoing projects, including **ARTEMIS**, **SMS (Strengthening Music in Society)**, and the current **Horizon Europe project d@rts – Advancing Cultural Literacy for Social Inclusion through Dialogical Arts Education**. These projects have provided the foundation for several AEC policies adopted by the AEC Council and General Assembly such as the **AEC Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Policy 2030**, and the **AEC Sustainability Policy and Action Plan**.

4.1 Core Ethical Principles and Their Relevance for the AEC Global Strategy

The core ethical principles of the AEC, as defined in the AEC Strategy 2030, are not only foundational for its European mission but also directly shape the orientation and implementation of its Global Strategy. Artistic and academic freedom and integrity lie at the heart of AEC's identity and are essential to meaningful international cooperation.

In a global context where freedom of expression and institutional autonomy cannot be taken for granted, AEC's commitment to these values provides a clear ethical compass for engagement with partners worldwide, ensuring that collaboration supports open inquiry, creative independence, and high professional standards. Respect for cultural diversity and multiple knowledge systems further underpins this approach, recognising that musical knowledge and artistic practice are shaped by diverse histories and traditions and that global cooperation must be based on mutual learning rather than the export of a single canon or model.

Equity, inclusion, and non-discrimination form a second core pillar that strongly informs the Global Strategy. AEC's emphasis on fair access, participation, and the dismantling of structural barriers translates globally into a commitment to ethical partnerships, inclusive mobility, and the recognition of unequal power relations between regions. Environmental sustainability and social responsibility similarly extend beyond Europe, positioning higher music education as a global actor in addressing shared challenges such as climate change, social cohesion, and wellbeing through artistic and educational practice. Transparency, reciprocity, and mutual benefit complete this ethical framework, guiding AEC's global partnerships towards long-term trust, accountability, and shared ownership.

Together, these core values ensure that the AEC Global Strategy is not simply an expansion of activities beyond Europe, but a values-driven approach to global cooperation. By applying the same ethical principles internationally as within Europe, AEC strengthens its credibility as a responsible global partner and aligns its global engagement with its fundamental mission and societal role.

4.2 Decolonisation and Global Collaboration in AEC

As a European network with global connections, AEC recognises that international collaboration in arts education takes place within historical and contemporary power asymmetries shaped by colonial legacies, unequal mobility regimes, and disparities in cultural authority. These dynamics influence whose knowledge is recognised, who defines educational norms, and who benefits most from global exchange.

AEC understands decolonisation not as a symbolic gesture or a one-time corrective, but as an **ongoing organisational and ethical practice**. It involves critically reflecting on how power, authorship, and legitimacy operate within global partnerships, and how European institutions participate in these structures.

In its global engagement, AEC seeks to move from Europe-centred models of internationalisation towards **reciprocal, context-sensitive collaboration** based on shared authority and mutual learning. This includes recognising multiple artistic traditions and pedagogical knowledge systems, and valuing difference as a source of educational and artistic innovation rather than as a deviation from established norms.

AEC is committed to fostering global partnerships that prioritise co-creation over dissemination, long-term relationship-building over short-term projects, and reciprocity over extraction. Particular attention is given to structural barriers related to mobility, language, funding, and precarity, acknowledging that access to international collaboration is uneven and politically shaped.

AEC will continue to develop ethical frameworks for physical and virtual mobility, ensuring accessibility, fairness, environmental awareness, and data responsibility, including in the use of digital tools and AI.

By embedding this ethical reflection into its governance, programmes, and advocacy, AEC positions itself as a **self-critical and responsible global actor**. This approach strengthens the network's credibility, enhances the quality and relevance of arts education, and supports the development of more equitable and sustainable global collaborations, in alignment with international cultural principles such as those promoted by **UNESCO**.

5. Objectives and Actions towards 2030

Objective 1: Strengthen Global Networks and Partnerships

AEC will:

1. Co-opt two AEC Council Members representing Associate Members from countries outside Europe;

2. Plan and integrate contributions on global cooperation by representatives of international partner organisations into the AEC Annual Meetings of International Relations Coordinators (IRC Meetings) and AEC Annual Congresses;
3. Organise joint online and in-person events with international networks and partner organisations;
4. Allocate dedicated travel and accommodation resources to sustain partnerships and enable mutual participation in the annual conferences and key events of international partner organisations;
5. Dedicate one AEC Annual Meeting of International Relations Coordinators to cooperation with Higher Music Education Institutions (HMEIs) outside Europe;
6. Inform and support AEC members, both within and beyond Europe, in the development of sustainable global partnerships, making use, where appropriate, of opportunities provided by Erasmus+ 2021–2027 and successor programmes.

Objective 2: Promote Ethical, Inclusive, and Sustainable Global Cooperation

AEC will:

1. Integrate the AEC Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Policy 2030 and the AEC Sustainability Policy and Action Plan across all global activities;
2. Develop, based on decolonising perspectives, and disseminate guidelines and examples of good practice for ethical international cooperation;
3. Align AEC's global engagement with the Sustainable Development Goals through a coherent set of recommendations;
4. Promote mental health and well-being by prioritising the needs of mobile and international students, academic staff, and international office professionals, thereby supporting resilience and the long-term sustainability of mobility programmes;
5. Reflect critically on the climate sustainability of mobility by identifying ways to reduce the environmental impact of international activities and embedding sustainability considerations within internationalisation strategies.

Objective 3: Enhance Quality and Innovation in Higher Music Education through Global Exchange

AEC will:

1. Encourage the exchange of pedagogical models, curricula, and artistic practices at relevant AEC events, as well as at international conferences and meetings;
2. Foster global dialogue on digital transformation, artistic research, and emerging professional profiles in music and the arts;
3. Develop sustainable, strategic, and innovative forms of transnational cooperation, including new collaborative educational formats such as joint courses, modules, and programmes that support curriculum development, artistic innovation, and institutional renewal;
4. Improve the quality of the mobility experience by rethinking processes and developing shared guidelines that ensure inclusive, accessible, and high-quality mobility for students, staff, and educators, including by addressing barriers arising from political and geopolitical circumstances.

Objective 4: Strengthen Global Advocacy for Music and Arts Education

AEC will:

1. Collaborate with international partner organisations on joint advocacy initiatives;
2. Contribute actively to global policy debates on culture, education, sustainability, and the societal role of music and the arts;
3. Amplify the voice of Higher Music Education at global fora and within international cultural and educational policy frameworks.

Responsible Bodies within the AEC Structure

- **AEC Council:** The highest decision-making and responsible authority for AEC's global strategy and priorities.
- **AEC Office:** The executive body responsible for implementing actions on behalf of, and under the mandate of, the AEC Council.
- **International Relations Coordinators Working Group (IRC WG):** Advises the AEC Council and AEC Office on international cooperation and mobility matters and is responsible for the planning and programme development of the IRC Annual Meetings.

6. AEC's Partner Organisations beyond Europe

6.1 Established Partner Organisations

AEC maintains strategic partnerships with the organisations below. These partnerships are based on long-standing cooperation, mutual participation in events, joint advocacy, and exchange of expertise.

International Music Council (IMC)

The International Music Council (IMC) is the world's leading membership-based organisation dedicated to promoting the value of music in society. Its mission is to support sustainable music sectors worldwide, raise awareness of the importance of music, uphold basic music rights, and ensure that music plays an active role across all areas of social life.

Founded in 1949 at the request of UNESCO's Director-General, IMC originally served as a non-governmental advisory body to UNESCO on musical matters. Today, it operates independently as an international NGO and official UNESCO partner, while remaining based at UNESCO headquarters in Paris. Over the decades, IMC has developed into a highly influential global network advocating for sound policies and practices in music and music education.

IMC's network spans over 150 countries across all continents and includes national music councils, regional and international organisations, and specialised bodies in the arts and cultural fields. Through this structure, IMC connects more than 1,000 organisations and represents a global community reaching hundreds of millions of people engaged in musical life. Its work is supported by Regional Music Councils in Africa, the Americas, and Europe, which develop programmes and initiatives tailored to regional needs.

The cooperation between AEC and IMC has evolved steadily over many years. A key element has been the election of AEC representatives to the IMC Board (Jacques Moreau in 2018 and Keld Hosbond in 2025), as well as close collaboration with the European Music Council (EMC), an IMC member, notably in the development of the European Agenda for Music. Mutual participation in conferences and events has further strengthened this relationship, including IMC contributions to AEC Annual Congresses and vice versa.

College Music Society (CMS)

The College Music Society (CMS) is a United States-based consortium of colleges, conservatoires, universities, and independent musicians and scholars active across all music disciplines. Established in 1958 through the merger of two earlier organisations, CMS plays a leading role in shaping higher music education in the United States.

CMS promotes excellence in music teaching and learning, musical creativity and research, interdisciplinary dialogue, and diversity in higher education. It also serves as a platform for addressing structural and educational challenges facing music in contemporary society.

The partnership between AEC and CMS is relatively recent but has developed rapidly. It was consolidated through AEC's participation in CMS conferences, including the attendance of AEC leadership at CMS events, and CMS representation at AEC Annual Congresses. CMS has identified a dedicated contact person for relations with AEC and has committed to regular exchange and collaboration.

National Association of Schools of Music (NASM)

Founded in 1924, the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) is the main accrediting body for music programmes in the United States, representing more than 600 accredited institutions. NASM establishes national standards for music degrees and provides guidance and support for institutions, educators, and professionals engaged in music education and artistic practice.

NASM is a long-standing strategic partner of AEC. Cooperation is rooted in mutual participation in each organisation's annual gatherings and sustained dialogue at leadership level. Over the years, AEC Executive Committee members and NASM Presidents and representatives have regularly contributed to each other's conferences, reinforcing shared commitments to quality, standards, and international exchange in higher music education.

Southeast Asian Directors of Music (SEADOM)

SEADOM, founded in 2008, is a regional network representing institutions involved in professional music education in Southeast Asia. Today, it comprises over 80 member institutions across all ten Southeast Asian countries and beyond. SEADOM works to advance higher music education in the region, with a strong focus on professional training, cultural relevance, and future-oriented educational practices.

SEADOM supports its members through networking, information sharing, advocacy, and international partnerships. While music is its primary focus, many member institutions also integrate dance and drama, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of arts education in the region.

The cooperation between AEC and SEADOM has grown significantly in recent years, supported by leadership representation within AEC structures. This partnership has facilitated the increased participation of non-European institutions in AEC activities, including both in-person and online engagement at Annual Congresses. Under the ARTEMIS project, collaboration with SEADOM has become more regular and structured, reinforcing AEC's commitment to meaningful global cooperation beyond Europe.

6.2 Potential New Partner Organisations

To further strengthen its global reach and diversity of perspectives, AEC will explore cooperation with the organisations below. These organisations represent key regions and communities currently

underrepresented in AEC's global cooperation and offer significant potential for mutually beneficial collaboration.

GLOMUS – Global Music Education Network

In addition to the networks mentioned above, an already existing liaison with the GLOMUS Network will be reinforced. The GLOMUS network is a value driven non-profit community where students' artistic and human development is at the centre. Core values for the GLOMUS network are intercultural dialogue and artistic interaction with a focus on contributing to a positive social development, both locally and globally. GLOMUS has several concrete activities such as exchanges, bilateral cooperation projects and capacity building projects. The primary activity of the network is a major event or "GLOMUS Camp", which takes place every two years and brings students, teachers, managers and artists from all member countries together to engage in an abundance of intercultural expressions, performances, and debate workshops, which are also open to the public. So far, GLOMUS Camps have taken place in Mozambique, Ghana, Tanzania, Malaysia, Brazil, Georgia and Nepal. GLOMUS has 25 partner institutions from all continents that represent some of the academically strongest and most visionary arts schools in the world, including AEC members in Europe and Higher Music Education institutions in Middle East, Far East, South America, US and Africa.

ISME – International Society for Music Education

The International Society for Music Education (ISME) is a global professional organisation dedicated to advancing music education across all levels, contexts, and cultural settings. Founded in 1953 under the auspices of UNESCO, ISME has grown into a worldwide network bringing together educators, researchers, practitioners, and institutions committed to inclusive, high-quality music education.

ISME's mission is to build and sustain a global community of music educators by fostering dialogue, research, policy engagement, and professional exchange. Its work spans formal, non-formal, and informal learning environments, with strong attention to cultural diversity, access, lifelong learning, and the social role of music education. ISME promotes music education as a fundamental human right and a key contributor to individual development and social cohesion.

The organisation is structured through specialised Commissions and Professional Networks addressing areas such as music teacher education, community music, early childhood education, policy, and research. ISME's biennial World Conferences and regional events serve as major international platforms for exchange and collaboration.

ISME's global reach, interdisciplinary perspective, and longstanding engagement with UNESCO and international policy frameworks make it a key reference point for dialogue on music education worldwide and a valuable potential partner in global cooperation initiatives.

Pan African Society for Musical Arts Education (PASMAE)

The Pan African Society for Musical Arts Education (PASMAE) is a continental network dedicated to the advancement of music and musical arts education across Africa. PASMAE brings together educators, researchers, artists, and institutions committed to strengthening music education in diverse African contexts while recognising the richness of African musical traditions and knowledge systems.

PASMAE promotes culturally grounded, context-sensitive approaches to music education that reflect Africa's musical heritage alongside contemporary artistic practices. Its work addresses challenges related to access, infrastructure, professional development, and recognition of music education within broader educational and cultural policy frameworks. Central to PASMAE's mission is the empowerment of educators and learners through collaboration, research, advocacy, and capacity building.

The network places strong emphasis on decolonial perspectives, knowledge exchange within and across regions, and the visibility of African musical arts education at international level. By fostering partnerships between institutions and practitioners, PASMAE contributes to sustainable development, cultural continuity, and innovation in music education.

PASMAE represents an important platform for dialogue between African music education communities and international partners, offering opportunities for equitable global cooperation grounded in mutual respect and shared learning.

Latin American Forum on Music Education (FLADEM)

The Latin American Forum on Music Education (FLADEM) is a regional network committed to the promotion, development, and defence of music education throughout Latin America. Established in 1995, FLADEM brings together educators, researchers, artists, and institutions working across educational sectors and cultural contexts.

FLADEM's mission is grounded in social justice, cultural diversity, and the recognition of music education as a fundamental human right. It promotes pedagogical approaches that value local musical traditions, intercultural dialogue, and critical reflection on educational practice. FLADEM actively addresses issues such as access, inequality, teacher training, and the role of music education in democratic and inclusive societies.

The network operates through national sections, regional meetings, seminars, and publications, creating spaces for professional exchange and collective reflection. FLADEM also engages in advocacy, positioning music education as an essential component of cultural and educational policy in Latin America.

With its strong regional roots and emphasis on socially engaged music education, FLADEM offers valuable perspectives for global dialogue and cooperation, particularly in relation to equity, diversity, and culturally responsive pedagogies.

Association of Latin American Schools of Music (ALAEMUS)

The Association of Latin American Schools of Music (ALAEMUS) is a network of higher music education institutions across Latin America, dedicated to strengthening cooperation, quality, and innovation in professional music education. ALAEMUS connects conservatoires, university music departments, and specialised institutions committed to artistic excellence and regional collaboration.

ALAEMUS aims to foster exchange between institutions, promote curriculum development, and support mobility of students and staff within Latin America and beyond. The association provides a platform for dialogue on shared challenges such as institutional development, recognition of qualifications, artistic research, and the balance between local traditions and global artistic practices.

A key aspect of ALAEMUS's work is the affirmation of Latin America's diverse musical identities and pedagogical approaches, positioning them within an international context without diminishing their cultural specificity. Through meetings, joint projects, and partnerships, ALAEMUS contributes to strengthening the visibility and voice of Latin American higher music education at regional and global level.

ALAEMUS represents a strategic partner for institutions and networks seeking to develop equitable, sustainable cooperation with higher music education in Latin America.

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