

AEC Advocacy Plan 2030

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Introduction

Advocacy is a core task of the Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC) and an integral part of its mission to represent and advance the interests of Higher Music Education (HME) for the greater societal good. Building on the AEC Strategic Plan, the AEC Advocacy Strategy (adopted in 2023), and the rapidly evolving European policy landscape, this Advocacy Plan provides a structured framework for coordinated advocacy action at international and European level, with clear links to national and institutional advocacy by AEC members.

The plan is designed as a practical and strategic tool to guide AEC's advocacy work in the coming years, in particular in relation to the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF 2028–2034), the proposed AgoraEU programme, and the implementation of the European Culture Compass. It also describes key messages and partners in the different policy areas, and it ensures alignment between advocacy, policy monitoring, communication, and project activities.

Background

Strategic context

The AEC Strategic Plan positions advocacy as a transversal priority across its pillars, with a particular focus on fostering the value of music and music education in society, enhancing quality in HME, and promoting participation, inclusion, and diversity. The AEC Advocacy Strategy further clarifies advocacy as a change-oriented process aimed at influencing political decision-makers, stakeholders, and public discourse, while also empowering AEC members to advocate at local, regional, and national levels.

Policy context

At European level, culture and education policy are entering a decisive phase. Key developments include:

- The European Commission's proposal for the EU long-term budget 2028-2034, the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), which foresees large structural changes and simplifications, influencing visibility and funding opportunities, including in Horizon Europe.
- The European Commission's Culture Compass, which places culture at the heart of democracy, societal resilience, and European integration, and explicitly strengthens the link between culture and education.
- The proposal for AgoraEU as the main EU funding framework for culture, media, democracy, and civil society under the next MFF, with opportunities but also risks for sector visibility and funding balance.
- Ongoing debates on artistic freedom, AI and digital transformation, fair working conditions, mobility, and international cultural relations.

For AEC and its members, these developments create both advocacy opportunities and challenges. While culture and education are more prominently recognised at EU level than before, there is a real risk of dilution of sector-specific needs - particularly those of music and HME - unless they are articulated clearly, consistently, and collectively.

Executive Summary

This Advocacy Plan sets out how AEC will:

- Advocate for strong recognition of Higher Music Education as an essential part of Europe's cultural, educational, and democratic ecosystem.
- Influence EU policies and funding programmes to ensure that music and music education are visible, well-resourced, and structurally safeguarded.
- Work in close cooperation with partner organisations internationally and in Europe to amplify impact and speak with a coherent voice.
- Empower AEC members to engage in advocacy at national and institutional levels through shared narratives, tools, and evidence.

The plan defines clear objectives, expected results, key performance indicators (KPIs), a realistic timeline, and an organisational framework to ensure accountability and continuity.

Objectives

Overall objective

To strengthen the voice, visibility, and impact of Higher Music Education in European cultural, educational, and funding policies, in alignment with AEC's strategic priorities and the evolving EU policy framework.

Specific objectives

1. **Policy influence**
Ensure that HME, music, and arts education are explicitly recognised in key EU policy frameworks, including the Culture Compass, education initiatives, and cross-sector strategies (e.g. AI, mobility, sustainability).
2. **Funding advocacy**
Advocate for strong, accessible, and ring-fenced EU funding opportunities for culture and HME, particularly within AgoraEU, Erasmus+, Horizon Europe and other relevant cross-cutting programmes.
3. **Sector positioning**
Strengthen the positioning of HME as equal to other higher education sectors, such as the European University Alliances, with full recognition of its artistic, pedagogical, and research dimensions.
4. **Alliance-building**
Deepen strategic cooperation with European partner organisations (e.g. ELIA, EMC, CAE, EPASA, and others) to develop joint positions, statements, and actions.

5. Member

empowerment

Support AEC members in developing effective advocacy at national and local levels through shared messages, examples of good practice, and targeted tools.

Main Results and KPIs

Expected results

1. Stronger policy recognition of HME

HME and music education are clearly referenced in EU policy documents, consultations, and implementation measures.

2. Improved funding conditions

EU funding frameworks reflect the specific needs of music and HME, including cooperation, mobility, networks, and innovation.

3. Enhanced advocacy capacity

AEC and its members demonstrate increased confidence, coherence, and effectiveness in advocacy activities.

4. Visible and credible partnerships

Joint advocacy actions with partner organisations are recognised by EU institutions as representative of the sector.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

1. Number of policy contributions, position papers, or consultation responses submitted annually.
2. Number of formal meetings or structured dialogues with EU institutions and policymakers.
3. References to music, HME, or arts education in EU policy and funding documents.
4. Number of joint statements or actions undertaken with advocacy partners.
5. Participation of AEC members in advocacy-related workshops, briefings, or consultations.

Timeline

Short term (2025-2026)

- Consolidate advocacy priorities linked to MFF, AgoraEU negotiations and the Culture Compass.
- Co-host, prepare and participate in regular meetings of the relevant coordination groups and committees.
- Prepare and disseminate core advocacy messages and briefing notes.

Medium term (2026-2028)

- Engage actively in the design and implementation phases of EU funding programmes.
- Develop and pilot advocacy tools and guidance for AEC members.
- Strengthen links between advocacy, communication, and dissemination activities.

Long term (2028 onwards)

- Monitor policy and funding impacts on HME and adapt advocacy priorities accordingly.
- Contribute to long-term debates on the role of culture and education in Europe, including future revisions of EU strategies and programmes.

Organisation

Governance and coordination

- **AEC Office:** Overall coordination of advocacy activities, policy monitoring, communication and institutional relations.
- **Standing WGs and Committees:** AEC is running or member of following groups which serve as strategic platforms for joint analysis, priority-setting, and coordinated action with partner organisations.
 - The Coordinating Committee for the Networks Action Group under Culture Action Europe. Current members include ELIA, IETM, EMC, Michael Culture Association, AEC and Culture Action Europe.
 - The Coordination Group of the Artistic Research Alliance. Current members include ELIA, Culture Action Europe, EQ-Arts, GEECT and AEC.
 - The Steering Committee for the Harmonisation of European Music Education (SCHEME). Members include European Association of Music in Schools, European Music School Union and AEC
 - AEC-EPASA meets regularly to discuss advocacy matters to improve student empowerment.
- **AEC Council and Executive Committee:** Strategic oversight, political guidance, and validation of key advocacy positions.

Working methods

- Regular policy monitoring and information sharing.
- Joint drafting of statements, position papers, and advocacy messages.
- Alignment of advocacy with communication and dissemination strategies.
- Continuous feedback loops with AEC members to ensure relevance and responsiveness.

This Advocacy Plan is conceived as a living document, to be reviewed and updated regularly in response to political developments, member feedback, and emerging opportunities or risks.

Annex 1

Overview over levels, partners, policy areas and relevant funding programmes.

Advocacy partners on international policy level			Internal advocacy for AEC membership
UNESCO	EU level	National level	AEC membership, EPASA
IMC, NASM, SEADOM, CMS, ISME, PASMAE, ALAEMUS (see Global Strategy)	EPASA, CAE, ELIA, EMC, Educational Organisations: EAS, EMU, YMTE Industry Organisations: PEARLE and many others	AEC membership National/Regional organisations of HMEI	
Policies, Position Papers, Funding Programmes			
United Nations' SDG's, UNESCO's Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions	MFF Culture Compass, AgoraEU EU AI Act Horizon Europe Erasmus+ European Agenda for Music EU Teacher and Trainers Agenda	National funding for arts and education National implementation of EU legislation	
Key Messages			
Access for all	Access for all	Access for all	
	Student empowerment	Student empowerment	
Artists' rights	Artists' rights	Artists' rights	
	Funding	Funding	
Artistic and Academic Freedom	Artistic and Academic Freedom	Artistic and Academic Freedom	
Artistic Research	Artistic Research	Artistic Research	
DEI, Resilience / Wellbeing			DEI, Resilience / Wellbeing
			Education & Profession
			Music, Society & Sustainability
			Greening HMEI
			Digital transformation

Annex 2

Key Messages in our advocacy

The AEC Communication Strategy defines for each argument **target audiences**, **key partners**, **illustrative narratives**, and the **most effective campaign formats**, providing a clear roadmap for AEC's strategic communications for change.

Argument: ACCESS

Statement:

Music education should be considered a fundamental part of the curriculum at all levels of education. It fosters well-rounded individuals who are not only culturally enriched but also equipped with critical life skills.

Partners: EAS, EMU, EMC, IMC

Argument: STUDENT EMPOWERMENT

Statement:

Empowering students in the music and arts fields to become active advocates for their own futures ensures they have the tools to navigate their careers and shape the sector.

Partners: EPASA

Argument: STABLE & SUSTAINED FUNDING

Statement:

The sustainability and growth of music education depend on reliable, long-term funding that supports innovation, inclusion, and access.

Partners: AEC Members, CAE, EMC, IMC

Argument: ARTISTS' RIGHTS IN A TECHNOLOGICAL WORLD

Statement:

The digital age has transformed how artists create and share their work. Protecting artists' rights is vital to ensure fair compensation, ownership, and ethical use of creative output.

Partners: ECSA, EMC, CAE, PEARLE

Argument: ARTISTIC & ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Statement:

Artistic and academic freedom are pillars of a healthy and democratic society. HME institutions must safeguard creativity, critical thinking, and diversity of expression from political or commercial pressure. Within this framework, Artistic Research stands as a vital source of knowledge: one that bridges artistic practice and academic inquiry, generating new insights, innovation, and understanding of culture's role in society.

Partners: ELIA, EMC, CAE, Artistic Research Alliance Members

Argument – CULTURE AND EDUCATION

Statement

In a policy landscape increasingly dominated by the language of “skills,” the AEC will advocate for the renewed recognition of education as a cultural and ethical endeavour, not solely an economic instrument. A balanced approach between skills and education, and between competitiveness and human development, is essential for the wellbeing of societies and the sustainability of Europe’s cultural and democratic fabric.

Partners: CAE, ELIA, EMC, IMC, and other European networks working on education, culture, and democracy.

References

[AEC Strategy 2030](#)

[AEC Advocacy Strategy and Toolkit](#)

[AEC Communication Strategy 2030](#)

[AEC Global Strategy 2030](#)

[European Commission: AgoraEU proposal](#)

[European Commission: Culture Compass](#)