



Brussels, 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2014

Dear colleagues,

The AEC has great pleasure in inviting you to the next edition of

**The AEC Annual Meeting for International Relations Coordinators in European Institutions for Higher Music Education (IRCs meeting)**

which will take place at

**Royal Academy of Aarhus/Aalborg - Aalborg  
Aalborg, 26-28 September 2014**

**What for and for whom?**

The Annual Meeting for IRCs is meant for administrative and/or teaching staff members in conservatoires who deal with international relations and European programmes (such as ERASMUS). The meeting is open also to students interested in the international dimension of their learning. During the meetings, relevant topics in the field of mobility and international cooperation are discussed in plenary sessions, workshops, discussion fora and parallel sessions. The meeting is also a unique platform for networking at European level: participants have the opportunity to develop relations with fellow IRCs, meet project partners and potential partner institutions and show projects and activities that have been developed within their home institution.

Over the years, the AEC Annual Meeting for International Relations Coordinators has seen strong development and a substantial increase in numbers of participants. The 2013 meeting, which took place in Antwerp, was attended by 187 participants from 30 different countries.

**The theme of the IRCs meeting 2014 – 'Accentuate the Positive': getting the most out of ERASMUS+'**

For International Relations Coordinators, the last two years have been filled with mounting expectation as details of the new EU funding programme for education (2014-2020) have emerged. Would the new programme feel like the old one, but just with a few adaptations, or would the landscape be entirely changed? Would some of the longstanding weaknesses of the previous programme be rectified - and might there be fresh obstacles and irritations? Would the promises of greater funding overall convert into a real sense of increased opportunities? Above all, what 'new tricks' would we in the conservatoire world need to learn to make sure that mobility and knowledge sharing across our sector continue to function effectively in the new landscape?

Since it was first announced under the title 'ERASMUS for all', the new programme has been the subject of many sessions at IRC meetings. By last year in Antwerp, we knew it would be called 'ERASMUS+' but many of its details were still surrounded by uncertainty, pending the formal approval of budgets.

Some key characteristics have remained in the new programme since the earliest announcements:

- The bringing together of all the previous programmes for Lifelong Learning, International Higher Education and Youth in Action into one all-embracing programme using the ERASMUS 'brand'
- The division of the new programme into three Key Action areas: Mobility of Individuals; Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practices; and Support for Policy Reforms
- An emphasis upon these actions being taken up by institutions as part of their strategic planning and not just as 'add-ons'
- An insistence that the Erasmus+ Programme should contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy, including the headline education target to reduce early school leaving to less than 10% and increase attainment in tertiary education to at least 40% by 2020

The IRC meeting in 2013 focussed mainly on Key Action 2 - Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practices – and, in particular, on the new Strategic Partnerships. After the full details of the programme appeared in December 2013, many AEC members worked hard to submit applications for the first round of these by April 2014; AEC itself is a partner in seven such applications. By the time we gather in Aalborg in September, the results of these first applications will be known.

The theme of the meeting will be 'getting the most out of ERASMUS+'. During the meeting, we will share experiences and try to analyse the factors that have contributed to success, where it has occurred, and the pointers to be drawn from this for future applications.

We shall also be making sure that Key Action 1 – Mobility of Individuals – gets its fair share of attention. Although, in general, this part of the new programme may feel the closest to 'business as usual', it contains important new features – and new forms! – that need to be discussed and fully understood. The 'Polifonia' working Group on Mobility has produced a 'Step-by-step' guide to mobility within the framework of the new programme and this is among several tools that will be presented and discussed.

We want all IRCs to get the maximum out of this event. To help ensure this, we are organising an additional workshop just before the main meeting on how institutions can benefit from Key Action 2. If you are interested in this, make sure you book early as numbers have to be limited. We are also organising part of the meeting in the form of a 'Bar Camp' where delegates can vote 'on-the spot' for particular discussion topics, so as to make sure that these focus on the most popular issues.

In the name which it was finally given, the ERASMUS+ programme suggests that it goes beyond the previous programmes and delivers something additional and positive. Our plan of topics and activities for the 2014 IRC meeting aims to help members achieve these additional benefits. In the words of the popular song, we hope to 'Accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative'. We look forward to working towards this goal together and, following the successful introduction of choral audience-participation last year, we shall even have a new song of our own to sing at the concluding session!

#### **Practical information and procedures to attend the meeting**

Further information, such as the programme of the meeting, information on travel, accommodation and participant fee payment, as well as the links to the online registration can be found at [www.aec-music.eu/irc2014](http://www.aec-music.eu/irc2014).

We are very much looking forward to seeing you in Aalborg in September!

Kind regards,



Jeremy Cox (AEC Chief Executive)