



## 46th AEC Annual Congress and General Assembly

7-9 November 2019

Conservatorio di Musica "G. Verdi", Turin

### **'Re-imagining Success?' AEC - Strengthening Music in Society**

Around the same time as this year's AEC Congress takes place, the AEC's highly successful Creative Europe project 'SMS - Strengthening Music in Society' enters its third year of operation. One might wonder how success is measured, and whether it is appropriate to speak about success for a project which has not yet reached its halfway point. It is easy to claim to be 'successful', but the criteria used to measure this success should be defined. However, one thing seems certain: the SMS Project is capturing the spirit of our time. The issues that it raises address the key questions that will determine the future of the Higher Music Education sector.

It is still too early to foresee to what extent the results of the project will contribute to the sustainable strengthening of the social significance of art and culture in general, as well as music and music education specifically. However, the Turin Congress has set itself the task to provide food for thought and to reveal new approaches to accomplish these goals. To do so, it is crucial to turn to prior successful work, but also to rethink and re-imagine familiar routines and to explore new pathways.

The thematic spectrum of the 46th Congress is, as usual, very broad. The two main themes, 'Entrepreneurship' and 'Digitisation' seem a straightforward response to the burning issues that arise from the change in the job market and therefore affect the music profession. In November 2017, for the first time in its history, the European Commission referred to culture and cultural education as 'key to the future - both for the individual as well as for our Union as a whole'. Triggered by this clear political commitment, the idea of the identity-building effect of art and music is experiencing a somehow unexpected revival.

The arts do not exist in isolation, but they are part of society. They can, in the best case, positively influence society and give an important contribution to its evolution. On the other hand, the arts depend on a social climate of appreciation which recognises and values all of their aspects: as art production, as the subject of aesthetic education and as the object of self-developed participation in culture as part of one's human rights.

In order for art and culture to become the glue that holds societies together, greater emphasis must be placed on issues such as access to music and music education for everyone. That is why this year's AEC Congress will address variety of

topics such as audience development and early childhood music education. Furthermore, special attention will be devoted to the concept of 'diversity' and the need to face an ever-changing and increasingly pluralistic understanding of culture. In line with a well-established tradition, the Congress will also resume the debate on topics that have been on the agenda in previous editions. A central role will be played by the discussion on 'power relations', which determine the inner structure of Higher Music Education Institutions: how to deal with this issue for the benefit of all? And how to overcome an outdated understanding of power relations? These questions will run like a red thread throughout the Congress programme.

In addition, the 2019 Congress will also provide the opportunity to meet colleagues from other countries and to exchange views in front of a couple of glasses of good Piedmontese wine.

We are looking forward to welcoming you in Turin, to jointly explore new approaches and to search for an up-to-date definition of the Higher Education Institutions' role in society.