

A Short History of Exchange Developments in Professional Music Training in Europe

Cooperation on the European level in professional music training has been greatly promoted through various initiatives in relation to the European integration process. Although European integration was originally an economic process - the three founding treaties are the *Treaty Establishing the European Coal and Steel Community* (ECSC 1952); the *Treaty Establishing the European Atomic Energy Community* (Euratom 1957); and the *Treaty Establishing the European Economic Community* (EEC) - the understanding grew at one point that the European integration would never be achieved through economic measures alone and that a greater understanding between the various peoples in Europe had to be developed. Initiatives for the exchanges of youth and students were developed in the early 80s. In higher education, a first exchange programme called ERASMUS (acronym for European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) was established in 1987. It contained the possibility of receiving funding for so-called ICPs (Inter University Cooperation Projects), which were subject-based networks that could initiate activities in the field of student exchanges, teacher exchanges, joint curriculum development, and joint intensive programmes.

The very first European project in professional music training financed by a European programme was a project in the framework of the TEMPUS Programme, which was established by the EU in 1989 to help the development of higher education in the countries of the former Soviet bloc after the fall of the Iron Curtain. In 1990, a TEMPUS Joint European Project (JEP) was established by the Prague Music Academy with a small consortium of conservatoires in the United Kingdom, France, Denmark, Germany, Austria, and the Netherlands. This project, which was co-ordinated by the Utrecht Conservatory, not only saw an active schedule of exchanges of students and teachers, but also was able to acquire recording equipment, books, recordings for the library, and several instruments for the Prague Music Academy with substantial EU financial support for three years.

In 1992, professional music training institutions entered the ERASMUS programme by establishing two ICPs in music: the *Polyphonia Network*, co-ordinated by the Utrecht Conservatory, and the *Sibelius Network*, co-ordinated by the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki. This rather late participation of music in ERASMUS was caused by the widespread opinion that ERASMUS (which indeed was strongly modelled to the university sector) was not suitable for music in view of the highly individual character of its training. This opinion was contradicted by a strong development of activities in both networks during the years after their establishment. In fact, music turned out to be one of the strongest growing subject areas in ERASMUS in the early 1990s. While the *Polyphonia Network* was active in several innovative projects in joint curriculum development and joint intensive programmes, the *Sibelius Network* established a busy schedule of exchanges of students and teachers. Through the participation in ERASMUS, professional music training institutions were able, for the first time, to formalise, structure and, above all, finance their European activities.

Meanwhile, the European Union had also developed further. The Maastricht Treaty that was signed in 1992, and amended by the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997, included for the first time specific articles on European cooperation in education (article 149); training (article 150); and culture (article 151). These articles paved the way to a new generation of cooperation programmes, not only for

education (SOCRATES), but also for training (LEONARDO) and culture (KALEIDOSCOPE). In education, an important change to the original system was realized by closing down the network-based approach in the ERASMUS programme, which now was moved into the new SOCRATES programme as the chapter for higher education, alongside other chapters such as COMENIUS for secondary education, MINERVA for open and distance learning, and GRUNDTVIG for adult education. In the new situation, the multilateral network principle in ERASMUS was replaced by a bilateral approach in the SOCRATES programme, using direct bilateral contracts between the EU and the institutions themselves, and the ICPs were resolved with the funding now going directly to the institutions. However, the two networks in music kept together and continued their joint activities. During this period, the number of institutions active in the programmes increased, as well as the number of students and teachers being exchanged. The two networks continued their annual meetings and even started to organize joint meetings when the need for separate meetings was found to be unnecessary.

Until that moment, the European Association of Conservatoires (AEC) played a marginal role in these European activities. Somewhat surprised by the sudden explosion of activity in relation to European cooperation between conservatoires, initiated by the institutions themselves through the networks without any involvement of the AEC, the association understood that it had to wake up to this new European reality and become more active with regard to the European programmes and the possibilities these programmes offered. The AEC came into the arena of European programmes in 1996, when a specific item in SOCRATES was developed for the creation of so-called Thematic Networks Projects, giving large networks of higher education institutions in specific subject areas the possibility to discuss issues of common interest on the European level. The AEC has been involved with such Thematic Networks Projects since 1996, and this has developed into one of its most important activities. The Thematic Networks also allowed the AEC to start a close collaboration with the European League of Institutes for the Arts (ELIA): within the framework of the Thematic Networks the AEC is responsible for all issues regarding music, while ELIA deals with fine arts, theatre, and dance.

Apart from the important work being done in the framework of the Thematic Networks, the AEC took over the organisation of the annual meetings each September for international relations co-ordinators from the former ERASMUS networks. During these meetings, which have grown considerably in size and scope over the past few years, officials dealing with international relations in European conservatoires discuss current and future projects. Recently, this active group of international relations co-ordinators started the development of a '*Code of good practice for European programme management in European conservatoires*', which proposes a number of procedures in relation to European exchanges in professional music training and the use of standard forms for all institutions involved.

Although much has been achieved through the use of European programmes, there are also indications that the professional music training sector in Europe is, in comparison to other subject areas, still lagging behind in terms of the participation of the number of music training institutions in the European programmes. In this context, it is important to mention the recent survey executed by the AEC on the participation of its member institutions in European exchange and cooperation programmes. The result of this survey shows that the number of participating institutions in the European programmes is still limited and in some programmes practically non-existent, with the majority of the activities being initiated by a small number of active institutions. Particularly noticeable is the low participation rate in one particular form of participation: Joint Curriculum Development.

Several reasons for this situation could be advanced. One important factor could be the individual character of music education, in which one-to-one teaching is still the most effective method of training, implying an unusually strong connection between teacher and student and making exchanges in professional music training a complicated matter in terms of practical arrangements. Other reasons could be problems with the eligibility of institutions for participation in ERASMUS (in some European countries professional music training institutions do not possess higher education status); problems related to the recognition of study-abroad periods; the use of languages; a lack of information on or awareness of the benefits that participation in these programmes can bring; and pressures in relation to time and finance.

The AEC also started to realize several large-scale European projects with specific themes that were supported by programmes of the European Union. Examples of these are the project 'Promuse' (1998-2001), which did research in professional integration of musicians and continuing education in music with funding from the LEONARDO Programme, 'Music education in a multi-cultural European Society' (1999-2001), which studied cultural diversity in music education with funding from the CONNECT Initiative, and MusicWeb (2001-2004), a project on the use of new technologies in music theory teaching supported by the eLearning Programme. These projects gave the AEC a renewed purpose as an organisation that brings people and institutions together to discuss specific themes of common interest on the European level within a certain (and sometimes intense) project period, supported by European funding, and helps institutions to exchange valuable information with colleagues abroad. Many excellent publications were produced and new contacts established, which resulted in the development of new study programmes or the improvement of already existing study programmes. However, this impact seemed to limit itself to a small number of institutions, even though the publications and project results were widely disseminated throughout the entire association.

Despite these positive developments of European collaboration in professional music training, the institutions would have undoubtedly continued to develop within their own national environments and participated only occasionally in European initiatives, had there not been one single development that would lift the European cooperation in higher education to a completely different level: the Bologna Declaration in 1999. The impact of this declaration, which was signed by European Ministers for Education from twenty-nine European countries to establish a 'European area for higher education', has had an enormous impact on higher education in all European countries, including professional music training institutions that form part of the national higher education structures. It must be clear that the Bologna Declaration was a commitment freely taken and in no way imposed by the European Union. Originally it was not a European Union initiative, and therefore it includes countries outside the European Union. The declaration - which proposes structural reforms in national higher education systems through the introduction of a two-cycle structure (Bachelor's/Master's), the use of credit points, and European-wide cooperation in quality assurance - was signed to counteract the chaotic diversity in higher education systems. This diversity was causing problems with the recognition of studies and diplomas and presenting a confusing picture of higher education in Europe to the outside world. The research done in 1997 by the AEC, which compared all the study programmes for violin in European conservatories and resulted in a publication called *Caprice d'Europe*, reflected the same picture. This publication showed the enormous diversity in length of study programmes, curricular design, content, and qualifications.

The AEC responded to these new developments by acting proactively within its limited financial and organisational capabilities. In 1999, the AEC had already published its own Declaration, which is a reaction to the Bologna Declaration. The AEC also established an AEC Bologna Working Group, a highly efficient, well-connected, and motivated group of conservatoire representatives

from various regions in Europe that has produced an enormous amount of highly important work in relation to the Bologna Declaration and the Bologna Process that followed its publication. Among its main tasks, the group informed AEC members about the effects of the Bologna Declaration. It tackled this through newsletters, lists of frequently asked questions, glossaries, and Congress presentations. It also started the development of common descriptions of learning outcomes that describe what the student should have achieved in terms of knowledge and skills after finishing the first or second study cycles in music. These descriptions of learning outcome are in line with one of the main Bologna objectives, called *convergence*. The development of these Bologna Process discipline-based descriptions of learning outcomes, which might play an important role in relation to the recognition of diplomas and to quality assurance in the future, are currently high on the political agenda on a European level. More information about the Bologna Process in relation to the professional training music sector in Europe can be found on the AEC website at <http://www.aecinfo.org/bologna>.

Although the European higher education sector is in the middle of these developments, it is expected that, once the reforms are implemented, a clearer picture of European higher education will appear, with positive effects both on the recognition of studies and qualifications within Europe and on the mobility of both students and professionals. In the field of music, in which professionals increasingly tend to have mixed professions (a combination of performance, teaching, and other types of activities in music), qualifications are likely to become more and more important, especially for those wanting to work in another country. Although it is too early to draw any preliminary conclusions—many challenges still need to be faced—one should expect that the Bologna Process will have positive effects both on the exchanges of students and teachers in professional music training and on the introduction of increased opportunities for professionals seeking employment in other European countries and improving their employability.