



Report on the Conference „Formal and Non-formal Music Education in Young Choirs - New Perspectives - “ organised by Europa Cantat in the frame of the European Forum for Music Education and Training (EFMET)

After a long tradition of organising weekend-long General Assemblies for its membership, Europa Cantat started shortening the statutory General Assembly as such and combining it with presentations and workshops on different issues interesting for organisers of choral events and for choral conductors. At the same time the membership of Europa Cantat started asking for a conference on Music Education, since there was a rising awareness of the fact that there is a direct connection between the quality of music education on the one hand and the amount of singers and the quality of choral singing on the long run on the other hand.

For the management of Europa Cantat it was clear from the beginning that it would not make much sense to organise a conference on music education “alone”, just with experts from the choral field, since choirs are only a small part of the (non-formal) system of music education. The European Forum for Music Education and Training, initiated by the European Music Council (of which Europa Cantat is a member) therefore offered the ideal frame for a conference organised in cooperation with representatives from other fields of the music education sector.

The Board and General Secretariat of Europa Cantat started planning the conference asking **where choir singing “touches” other fields of music education:**

- singing at an early age will encourage more young people to join choirs later
- there are all sorts of choirs in the field of non-formal music education, but there are also singing lessons and choirs within the field of formal music education, in normal, elementary and secondary schools as well as in music schools, universities and conservatoires
- in many countries, choir conductors are trained in music universities and conservatoires
- music teachers - trained in music universities, teacher training colleges or conservatoires, depending on the country - often become choral conductors later, within the formal sector of music education or outside

It was therefore decided to organise a conference with the following elements:

- a **keynote speech** by a representative from the world of conservatoires on non-formal music education in cooperation with the formal sector and on the influence of today’s changing society on the training of musicians
- a **round-table discussion on conductors’ training in Europe**, with representatives from Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom who each prepared in advance a short description of the situation in their country, with a special focus on children’s choir conducting
 - o For this round-table discussion we invited representatives of the Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC)



- The prepared reports and the discussion (in which representatives from further countries joined in) showed that
 - conductors' training is offered within the formal sector of music education in some countries (mostly Scandinavia, the Baltic Countries, the Netherlands, Germany and Eastern Europe) but is totally lacking in others (such as the United Kingdom and France), where the non-formal sector is offering courses instead
 - children's choir conducting is only offered as special subject in very few countries, mostly in the non-formal sector of music education, even though many conductors consider it to be an important part of the education of a conductor and of a music teacher
 - the training of elementary school teachers does not include enough music in many countries (examples quoted were 2 to 6 hours in a 3-year education), even though elementary school teachers in most countries will be expected to sing and make music with their pupils – as a result, in many countries the children do not sing enough in kindergardens and schools
 - the training of music teachers for secondary schools often includes very little training in choir conducting and more especially in children's choir conducting

- **parallel workshops presenting examples of good practice** concerning the cooperation between the formal and the non-formal sector of music education in the field of choir music
 - with repertoire collections prepared by the Italian choir organisation FENIARCO and offered free of costs to choir conductors and music teachers in schools
 - with examples of cooperation between music schools and choir federations, presented by a representative of the European Music School Union (EMU)
 - with examples of cooperation between choir federations and music teachers in schools from the United Kingdom (the system of “animateurs” offered by youngchoirs.net and from Belgium (Attakatamoeva, songbooks and CDs for singing in schools)

- **workshops on youth empowerment and youth participation**
 - with a report on the ExtEND study of Jeunesses Musicales (supported by the European Union) on the needs and wishes of young people and the question how music can empower young people and how they wish to participated in decision-making process
 - with a workshop showing how youth participation can be organised in an interesting and attractive way, presented by young representatives of the Norwegian youth organisation NoBu

- a final **plenary with a first evaluation of the conference** and the preparation of a document with **conclusions and recommendations** for the future cooperation between the formal and non-formal sector of music education in the field of choral music



Evaluation

The conference was considered as being highly interesting and inspiring by most of the participants. The discussion on conductors' training in Europe showed some surprises compared to the prejudices many people had (Italy turning out to have a much better system than most people had expected, the situation in the United Kingdom shocking many people since the country has a certain fame for excellent choirs) and showed that singing in schools and music education in general seems to be in decline in many European countries. The examples of good practice inspired representatives from other countries and may be "imitated" in some cases.

The general feeling was that even though the situation is very good in some countries, there is much space for improvement in others. It was therefore decided to formulate a number of recommendations to ministries of culture and education, teacher training colleges, music universities and conservatoires, music schools, elementary and secondary schools as well as choral organisations in Europe (see attachment). These recommendations shall be distributed to other European music organisations (such as the European Music School Union (EMU), the Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC), the European Association of Music in Schools (EAS), Jeunesses Musicales International (JMI) and the other partner organisations in the EFMET project) as well as to the national and regional member organisations of Europa Cantat – European Federation of Young Choirs, with the aim to encourage a better cooperation between the formal and the non-formal sector of music education on a local, regional and national level and thus contribute to an improvement in music education in general.

It was only possible to organise such an interesting conference involving representatives of other European organisations active in the field of music education thanks to the support of the European Union to the EFMET project. This enabled Europa Cantat for the first time to get into closer contact with European music organisations outside the specific field of choral music and to find out where these organisations have common aims and where they could cooperate with each other, support each other or inspire each other.

European Added Value

The conference clearly showed that European Networks such as Europa Cantat have the potential to collect information from different European countries and gather examples of good practice which can then be distributed back to all European countries and used there by the local, regional and national organisations for their lobby work for the cause of music. Without the European network these organisations would probably never find out about what is going on in other countries.

In the same way, the cooperation between the formal and the non-formal sector on a European level between European music organisations in the frame of EFMET will thus filter back to their member organisations in the different European countries and may encourage a better cooperation on a local, regional or national level.



Europa Cantat is supported by the European Union, the German Ministry for Youth



Bundesministerium
für Familie, Senioren, Frauen
und Jugend

and the city of Bonn