

PRESS RELEASE

Report of the EMC Annual Conference 2008

Access to Music – New perspectives in Education, Distribution and Politics

17 to 20 April 2008 in Brno, Czech Republic

Organised in cooperation with

the Czech Music Council and the Janáček Academy for Music and Performing Arts

In this year the EMC Annual Conference investigated specific needs for Access to Music regarding the different aims and interests of education, distribution and politics. More than 90 representatives from 24 European countries, Israel, Venezuela and Australia came to Brno to exchange their vision on the music life of the 21st century. The Janáček Academy for Music and Performing Arts provided a nice and convenient atmosphere for the event.

Vladimir Šucha, Director for Culture, Multilingualism and Communication at the EU commission, presented the European Agenda for Culture within his conference keynote. He exposed especially two aspects: firstly the importance of „culture mainstreaming“ which stands for the inclusion of culture into various other fields of politics; and secondly the importance of arts education for the learning of intercultural competences as well as the enhancement of skills and creativity. Furthermore Sucha reported about the EU-Commission's plan to build up a mobility fund for the culture sector. With this idea the Commission is following the good example of the Erasmus programme in the educational sector, which is very successful in enhancing the student exchange between the European countries.

Inspired by this keynote the conference offered its participants the opportunity to discuss new perspectives in music education, music distribution and music politics: How can we guarantee the human right on a holistic development of diverse artistic expression for every child and adult? How can we guarantee fair remuneration for all artists when the rapidly changing world of media provides free access to the world music repertoire to everybody? Which regulations or liberalisations on political level does the music sector need in order to face changes in technology and society? Those are just a small selection of questions discussed during the Interactive Round Tables that enabled each participant to give an active contribution to the conference. Each discussion forum was opened with speeches by three experts on the particular topic. Amongst others Richard Letts, President of the International Music Council, talked about new perspectives on the international work of music politics; Janet Ritterman, Vice-President of the Royal College of Music London, demonstrated the British point of view on new perspectives on music education; and Peter Rantasa, Executive Director of mica – music austria, presented new perspectives on music distribution.

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The performance of a variety of project presentations gave a desirable practical input to the theoretic discussions. Several concerts by local artists and students from the Academy were featuring musical diversity in Czech Republic.

In the context of the conference, the EMC Annual Meeting took place and a new Board has been elected. The EMC is happy to announce Timo Klemettinen (President, Finnish Music Council) as new chairman and Christian Höppner (Secretary General, German Music Council) as Vice-chair. Further Board members are Stef Coninx as treasurer (Secretary, International Association of Music Information centres), Petra Mohorčič (Chairperson, Jeunesse Musicales Slovenia), Harald Huber (President, Austrian Music Council), Erling Aksdal (Leader, Faculty of Jazz, Norwegian University, Trondheim, Norway), Ugis Prauliņš (President of the Latvian composer's Union). As eighth member Daphne Wassink was coopted by the Board; she is student and chairperson of the EMC Working Group Youth.

The consensus of the discussions and conclusion of the conference was clear: the "European Agenda for Culture" and the "UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions" are significant documents to announce the importance of cultural diversity, participation and artistic education. The shortcoming of these documents is the lack of concrete answers on how to finance and implement those issues.

Therefore, the EMC is continuing to enhance the dialogue between the acting musicians, music educators, music organisations, stakeholders and politicians. An important objective of this dialogue is to create the political, economic and cultural framework to enable the maintenance and continuation of the present richness and diversity of the European and international music life.