



Press Release

Reach Out, Open Up, Take In!

From 27 February to 1 March 2009 over 35 representatives of music organisations from North, Central and Southern Eastern Europe met in Pomáz (Hungary) to explore the possibilities of advocating for music and cooperation possibilities on a national and international level.

The seminar started with an introduction on the International and European Music Council (IMC/EMC) and its relationship with UNESCO – though funded by UNESCO and having a seat at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, the International Music Council is an independent non-governmental body (NGO) which is consulted by UNESCO on musical matters.

On a national level the music councils of Hungary and Estonia presented in an impressive way how the musical life in one country can gain in strength when working together. Both music councils were founded during the early 1990s when the societies seized the opportunity to actively and freely participate in cultural and political life of the countries. Both councils are consulted by the governments in musical matters, the Hungarian Music Council is even included in the forerun of law making. The biggest concern of both, the Estonian and Hungarian Music Council, is the decreasing recognition of the values of music, especially music education, during the last years, but both are standing up for the importance of music and music education.

During the presentation of the Hungarian Music Export office it became clear that music can be a positive bearer of national identity e.g. the CD of the Hungarian Music export office is used as official state present in diplomatic circles. The danger that music is exploited for other means was also addressed as well as the concern not to forget the values of music when involving “big names” in campaigns for music.

In a practical workshop the “dos and don’ts” of advocacy work were introduced on the basis of the model of the Parliamentarian Enquete for Music in Austria that was initiated by the music information center austria (mica). Whereas the Parliamentarian Enquete was an expert hearing for music taking place during one full day, most advocacy talks and exchanges with the political field will have to take place in much shorter settings. Therefore it is essential to have one clear message and be best prepared. In the subsequent discussion, the importance to raise public awareness and thus to create a political incentive to follow your advocacy issues were confirmed.

The chances and challenges of the online environment that especially affect music and its distribution were discussed. Whereas the Internet and the online availability of music might be a serious threat for the safeguarding of authors right it provides at the same time an enormous opportunity for niche markets in music. Online download platforms may even guarantee a bigger partaking in the financial revenue for the authors of music. Still, the question of promotion (marketing) and distribution of music in the Internet where nearly every kind of music is available is of great relevance. Social networks such as myspace, facebook and last.fm were introduced as alternative distribution models to the conventional marketing tools.

The cause for music may also be strengthened when joining forces with other art forms. This is valid for the artistic exchange when working together with other art forms such as theatre, dance, fine arts, literature, etc as presented by Jeunesses Musicales International but also when advocating together for culture in general. The Slovak Coalition for Cultural Diversity, which unites representatives from the fields of literature, theatre, music, dance (etc.), has also approached other political sectors to increase the impact of their work for culture, in the concrete case the coalition addressed the Slovak Ministry for social affairs when pleading for the status of the artist. Whereas not all concrete concerns for music or culture may find a common denominator, it is of utmost importance to address all political fields that may have an effect on culture, this inclusion of all areas of politics is also known as “culture mainstreaming”.

During this international workshop the issue how to cooperate and work together in international projects was addressed. The challenges and chances of cooperation projects were discussed and general trends could be detected. Operational funding for music and culture is decreasing in favour of project funding. This mentality of “project-only” may put at risk sustainable and long-term cooperation. Another trend surely is to prefer multi-lateral projects to bilateral.

The one and a half days at the Choral Castle in Pomáz were intense and very informative. Framed by wonderful concerts the seminar provided practical tools how to engage in music and how to strengthen the music sector on a national, European and international level. We very much hope that we have encouraged the participants from all the different countries to engage for the sake of music in their countries also after the seminar.

(The participants came from: Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia)

The seminar was organised jointly by the International and European Music Council (IMC/EMC), the Hungarian Music Council, the Europa Cantat Central Eastern European Centre (ECCEEC) and the Hungarian Choral Castle in Pomáz.

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