

Bonn Declaration for Music Education in Europe

An exchange on the Bonn Declaration was included in the programme of the 3rd European Forum on Music entitled “Re>>generating Europe through Music”.

The discussion was chaired by Gretchen Amussen, Vice President of the European Association of Conservatoires (AEC) who put the focus on the first point “access”. The debate directly revealed that access and quality are closely interlinked and that it may not be possible to separate one from the other. The broad range of participants (from North, South and Eastern Europe; from schools, out-of school and music schools) demonstrated that the topic of music education should be approached from a very broad angle: there is education in music and education through music. At the centre of all music education is the music education practitioner who can be highly inspiring but who may also cause enormous frustration, which is why continuous education and training for music education practitioners is of great importance. The cooperation between all areas of music education, i.e. schools, music schools and out-of-schools offers, is essential for successful music education because they provide wide access to music education.

A diversity should also be reflected in what is being offered. The ultimate goal should not only be to learn how to play an instrument, but singing, conducting, composing and careful listening are equally important – an all-encompassing music education must offer the possibility of choice.

The participants were particularly worried about the ongoing financial crisis in Europe which has led to austerity measures that also effect music education activities. During the discussion it was highlighted that music education is an essential part of the personal development of the human being and should thus not be effected by budget cuts. The relatively small expenditure in this area will not lead to a significant saving of costs, however, the long-term damage will be immense, because well-evolved structures are destroyed quickly but only re-built with great difficulty.

In this context it is worth looking at the report of the OMC Working Group on “developing synergies with education, especially arts education”: http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-policy-development/documents/moc-edu-final-report_en.pdf.

The executive summary starts with:

“The impact of quality artistic and cultural education on the full development of the individual, on the improvement of motivation and learning skills as well as on the creative and innovative potential is officially acknowledged by the Member States, the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council in several reports and recommendations already released. The reinforcement of synergies between education and culture is therefore considered as a key goal both at national and international level, opening the way for the mainstreaming of artistic and cultural education throughout Europe.”

These findings will hopefully also be reflected in the spending policies of the EU, its member states and beyond.