

EMU General Assembly part II - 21 May - Linz, Austria Conference 'EMU in Future'

'Benefits cooperation between music schools and other arts'

Introduction Open Space Working Group by Harry Rishaug (Norway)

Dear colleagues,

The world today is characterised by rapid change, increasing globalisation and increasingly complex economic, societal and cultural relations. In this world also the music schools – and consequently EMU - are challenged to participate in the discussions about changes needed to meet a future quite different from yesterday.

To manage this, it is necessary not only to understand the changes, but to anticipate them and use our institutions and organisations today as partners for the local and national authorities in preparing for tomorrow. In such a perspective the title of this working group - 'Benefits cooperation between music schools and other arts' – obviously is rather narrow. The real big question would be the future position of all the arts and culture in society and in the general and special public education in arts in particular.

This discussion is, however, a starting point for in due time – to handle the challenges encountered by each and every of our member schools, so also by EMU as our European meeting point.

Some months ago the Presidium distributed a questionnaire to all its member associations. On behalf of the Nordic members of EMU I had the pleasure – together with my Finnish colleague Leif Nysten – to discuss the survey with the Presidium at a meeting in Latvia. The of viewpoints forwarded by the members is most interesting. As an introduction to the discussions I will give a brief summary of some statements.

The answers reveal a concern that including other art forms in the music schools may be a threat. This mainly seems to be related to fear of reduced resources to music education, and if so making in hard to keep the necessary quality of teaching.

These viewpoints of course need to be discussed thoroughly. Any reduction of quality is unacceptable, even if I believe the concept of quality could deserve another debate.

As threats some of the members mention the different traditions and understanding of teaching in the arts, and the risk that the standard and discrete nature of each art form may be lost. For this reason one of the members believes we have to protect the level of music education by strengthen the stability and power of music schools. And he or she adds: Acceptable artistic results on a higher level are easier to reach in only one discipline like music, than in a "multiple-art-context". Also, this member thinks a multi-art school could experience arts to be fighting each other to get pupils. Another answer underlines the responsibility and importance of leadership.

A number of advantages, on the other hand, are mentioned by almost all members: more cooperation creates understanding between art educators, synergies and possibilities to realise complex projects by working together - and better use of financial resources. One member points at the fact that students wishing to learn different kinds of arts can do it at one place, another that a multi-art institution will create a richer cultural climate and wider approach to artistic development for young musicians.

In a note to me from Ap de Vries, the Director of Kunstconnectie, The Netherlands, he refers to the Unesco Road Map on Arts Education and The United Nations' Declaration of Children's Rights. These documents strongly claim children must be given a room for self-development and education in various areas, including the creative and artistic field. The Declaration does not distinguish between art disciplines.

Ap de Vries also shows the strong tendency since many years in the art world towards collaboration between various art disciplines. For instance between music and dance, music and literature, fine arts and literature, drama, dance, theatre and so on. Much of the renewal in contemporary art – he says - concerns crossovers between different disciplines. And music is no isolated art discipline – and has never been – but is finding renewed power and innovation in collaboration.

Of all the 25 answers, 11 member associations reported music education was organised mostly or partly in culture schools, or what I more precisely prefer to name schools of music and performing arts. To a high degree they emphasise the same kind of challenges for the multi-art schools as their colleagues. They also believe the number of such institutions in their countries will increase the coming years!

The question then remains: How to take care of the quality of music education within these schools?

A natural step further – and of high relevance to our conference today will be: How to handle this quality question within EMU? An increasing group of member associations will be - or at least should be - dealing with this at national level. I believe we all agree the quality issue is too important only to be left to each member association for internal discussion.

Maybe EMU could be taking an initiative to establish a research programme. If so, it should be followed up by a thorough analysis and debate on threats, risks - but also benefits – similar to what just have been done on a rather subjective and individual basis. The focus of such a programme then has to be the member countries where music and other arts for years have been organised within one institution.

At our working group today we may in our discussion deepen some of the answers from the questionnaire.

- Is it true that music education will be better off if organised in separate music schools?

- Is quality of instrumental and vocal music education in music and art schools primarily a question of professional leadership and qualified teachers?
- Is it in the end necessary to consider law acts and regulations to secure quality?
- OR: Is it simply necessary just to accept the fact that an increasing number of national associations will have multiple-arts' schools as their members - and consequently – also develop EMU to adapt to that?

I am very much looking forward to hearing your viewpoints.

Thank you for your attention.