

European Music School Union

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Activity Report 2024

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49th General Assembly and European Music School Forum



The 49th General Assembly of the EMU and European Music School Forum were hosted by the “Konferenz der Österreichischen Musikschulwerke” (KOMU), the Austrian member of the EMU, from May 31 to June 2 in St. Pölten, Austria.

Around 90 participants from 24 countries gathered at the Festspielhaus St. Pölten to inform themselves about current issues in the member countries, discuss them and exchange ideas and experiences. The 49th edition of the General Assembly also saw elections to the board of the EMU for the 2024 – 27 term and produced the following results:

Michaela Hahn, AT, President
Romain Asselborn, LUX, Vice-President
Csilla Gal, HU, Board Member
Marek Korbélyi, CZ, Board Member
David Lalloz, FR, Board Member
Olli-Pekka Martikainen, FI, Board Member
Robert Vroegindeweij, NL, Board Member

The forum focused on the societal relevance of music schools and quality assurance. The event opened with a youth saxophone orchestra performance and keynote speeches by Philippe Dalarun and Tamara Ofenauer-Haas. Adriana Di Lorenzo Tillborg’s keynote emphasized youth involvement and cultural programming through initiatives like KulturCrew. Student voices, represented by Violetta Sebestyen and Markus Hahn, highlighted the need for inclusive, accessible music education. Discussions explored parental roles, community engagement, and evolving quality standards.

Saturday's sessions included a keynote by Natalia Ardila-Mantilla and working groups on health, digitization, and student participation.

Seminar on Early Childhood Music Education in Grevenmacher, Luxembourg

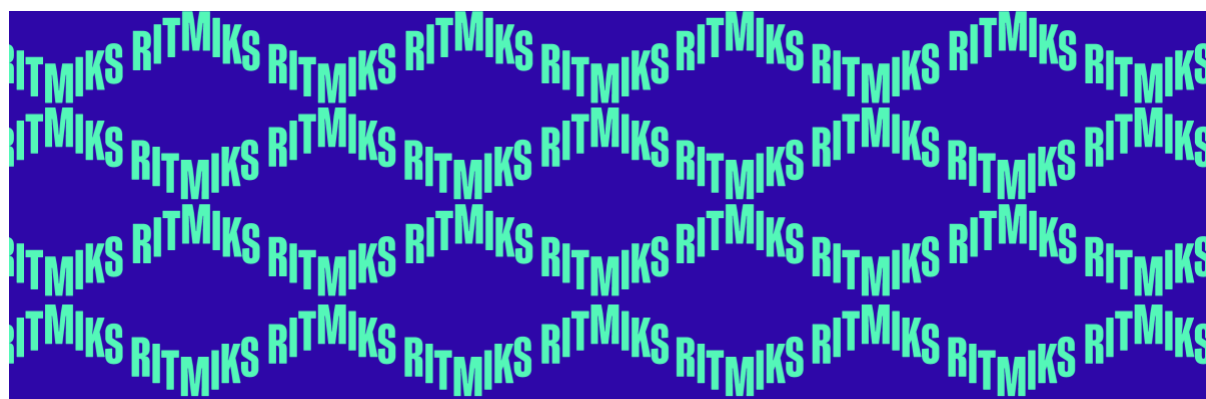
The EMU seminar on Early Childhood Music Education took place on October 23-24, 2024, at the Centre Culturel 'Machera' in Grevenmacher, Luxembourg. This event, supported by the Luxembourgish government, was attended by participants from Luxembourg and various EMU member countries. Keynote speakers included Michaela Hahn, EMU President, along with Gilles Lacour, Commissaire du Gouvernement à l'enseignement musical and Romain Asselborn, President of the Luxembourgish music school association AEM.



The seminar offered a comprehensive agenda that combined insightful presentations with interactive workshops, where participants explored innovative teaching practices and observed music sessions with children of various ages. These sessions highlighted effective, hands-on methods for engaging young children in music, including live-streamed demonstrations that enabled attendees to view and discuss real-time lessons.

Presenters included notable experts such as Michael Dartsch, Natassa Economidou, and Satu Sopanen, each of whom contributed specialized perspectives in early childhood music education. Informal discussions and networking continued through breaks, creating an environment rich in professional exchange and reflection. The event was followed by a meeting of the EMU's newly elected presidium, who aim to advance similar collaborative opportunities in the future. Attendees left inspired, equipped with new techniques to apply in their teaching, and motivated to further promote early childhood music education across Europe.

Preparations of RITMIKS, the XV. European Youth Music Festival



RITMIKS, the XV European Youth Music Festival, is set to take place in Catalonia from May 29 to June 1, 2025. Organized by the Catalan Association of Music Schools (ACEM) and patronized by the EMU, the festival will feature performances from over 170 ensembles representing more than 4.000 young musicians across 18 European countries. The event will span 50 cities and utilize over 100 stages, offering a unique opportunity for cultural exchange and musical celebration.

Registration for RITMIKS opened in two phases in 2024. The initial period ran from June 3 to September 30, followed by a final registration window that closed on November 15. During this time, organizers conducted informative sessions, including informative online meetings, to assist music schools and ensembles with logistical and practical preparations. These efforts ensured that participants were well-prepared for the festival and encouraged interested parties to register by providing relevant information on various issues related to the event.

Online Meeting of the Boards

On January 25 and 26, 2024, the EMU hosted an online edition of its biennial Meeting of the Boards, focused on the theme “Effective Communication for Associations of Music Schools”. 26 board members and professionals working in national music school associations registered for the event.

The first day explored communication strategies at the European level, including how European networks present themselves, how they engage their audiences, and how EMU can strengthen its own communication approach. Participants exchanged ideas through presentations and breakout group discussions. The second day turned to national-level communication, examining how associations interact with member schools, directors, teachers, students, and the wider public. Sessions featured best practice examples, tools for internal and external communication, and strategies for using digital platforms effectively. The event encouraged active participation and offered space for reflection, discussion, and peer learning.

Application to Creative Europe Funding

The EMU submitted an ambitious application to the European Networks of Cultural and Creative Organisations strand of the EU's Creative Europe programme. This funding programme is aimed at supporting European umbrella associations in the cultural sector. EMU's proposal, titled *Creative*

Crescendos: Empowering Music Education in Europe, requested €1.2 million in funding for the period from 2025 to 2028.

The project was carefully designed to align the needs of the music school sector with wider European cultural and educational goals. It focused on increasing resilience and sustainability within the field, while also fostering improved conditions for musicians and educators. *Creative Crescendos* placed strong emphasis on inclusivity and the development of strategic partnerships across the continent. Central to the proposal were strategies for integrating artists into educational roles, creating guidelines to support childhood welfare, and promoting environmentally sustainable practices. The project also aimed to deepen awareness of Europe's rich musical heritage. Furthermore, the project was set to drive forward pedagogical innovation through capacity-building activities, encouraging experimentation with new teaching methods. It also highlighted the importance of international connectivity and digital transformation, including the creation of online platforms for teaching resources and the facilitation of exchange opportunities for students and teachers within Europe's music schools.

Despite the clear strategic vision and strong foundation of the application, it did not succeed in securing funding. It received 80 out of a possible 100 points, narrowly missing the required threshold of 86 points. While the result is naturally disappointing, it does not impact the day-to-day operations of EMU, as the organisation remains financially stable and is not dependent on project-based funding.

Preparations of a New Website and Corporate Identity

As part of its ongoing development, the EMU has initiated the process of creating a new corporate identity and redesigning its website in 2024. This strategic effort aims to present EMU in a more professional, modern, and cohesive manner, reflecting its role as a forward-thinking organization at the heart of European music education. The new website will offer a clearer structure, improved functionality, an interactive map of its members and user-friendly navigation, making it easier for members and visitors to access relevant information, resources, and updates. With a fresh visual identity, the renewed platform aims to further strengthen the EMU's communication and outreach across Europe.

Collaboration with European organisations

During the activity year, the EMU maintained relations and collaborated with the following European organisations:

a. Steering Committee for the Harmonization of European Music Education (SCHEME)

The Steering Committee for the Harmonization of European Music Education (SCHEME) consists of representatives of the Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC), the European Association of Music in Schools (EAS) as well as the European Music School Union (EMU).

These three complementary networks have a good history of cooperation through the Music Education working group of the European Music Council (EMC); in the development of Learning Outcomes and Quality standards for both musical performance and music pedagogy; in work on pre-college music education (within the AEC 'Polifonia' and 'Full Score' projects); in joint policy statements and in the organisation of joint events. To further enhance the areas and levels of cooperation between these three networks, their representatives meet regularly in the frame of SCHEME meetings.

During the activity year, EMU representatives participated in the following events:

- 17 January: online
- 4 April: online
- 13 – 16 November: AEC Annual Congress in Milano (Secretary General Till Skoruppa participated in a panel discussion on advocacy work)

b. European Music Council (EMC) and International Music Council (IMC)

During the activity year, the EMU has continued its cooperation within the European Music Council (EMC) and the International Music Council (IMC). The European Music Council (EMC) is the European umbrella organization for the music sector dedicated to promoting access to music and supporting the cultural, social, and political value of music across Europe. It advocates for music education, cultural diversity, and the interests of the music sector at the European level. The EMC also serves as a platform for cooperation and knowledge exchange among its member organizations. The International Music Council (IMC) is the EMC's global umbrella organization, working worldwide to promote access to music and uphold the five music rights.

During the activity year, EMU representatives participated in the following events:

- 8 February: Lounge on the Creative Europe call for cultural networks
- 26 June: EMC Webinar on EU Cultural Policy
- 3 July: Lounge on the Creative Europe mid-term evaluation
- 11 September: Rentrée lounge
- 23 October: Lounge for European organisations, EU cultural policies
- 27 November: Lounge for EMC members, letter to Commissioner Micallef

c. Young Music Talents Europe

Young Music Talents Europe (YMTE) is a European network dedicated to identifying, supporting, and connecting talented young musicians across the continent. Founded in 2018, YMTE is a membership association comprising specialized schools and organizations within pre-college music education. Its members provide high-level musical training to students, preparing them for potential entrance into higher music education. The network fosters collaboration among institutions to share expertise, enhance curricula, and support the development of young musical talents.

The EMU has recently begun cooperating with YMTE to explore shared goals and establish regular exchanges. This collaboration marks a promising step toward developing joint initiatives, sharing best practices, and creating new opportunities for talented young musicians within the membership of both organizations.

d. MusiQuE (Musique Quality Enhancement)

MusiQuE – Music Quality Enhancement is a recognised European independent accreditation and external evaluation body for music, contributing to the continuous improvement of the quality of higher music education across Europe and beyond. Its board consists of experts proposed by 4 partner organisations: the Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC), the European Music School Union (EMU), the European Association for Music in Schools (EAS) and Pearle*- Live Performance Europe (the Performing Arts Employers Associations League Europe). Currently, the EMU is represented by Michaela Hahn on the MusiQue board. During the activity year, MusiQue has published new draft Standards for Music School and Pre-College Education which have been sent to the members of the EMU for review and feedback.

Cultural Policies

a. New European Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture, and Sport

On December 1, 2024, Glenn Micallef was appointed as the European Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture, and Sport. In response to his appointment, the European Music Council (EMC) initiated a joint letter, co-signed by the EMU. This letter served as a formal welcome and outlines several key priorities for the new Commissioner. The signatories urged the establishment of an expert group dedicated to music, ensuring that the sector's diversity is adequately represented. They emphasized the importance of integrating music education into broader EU strategies, advocating for access to music education from early childhood through to adulthood. The letter also highlights the need to include the arts in the STEM approach, transforming it into STEAM, to foster a more holistic educational framework. Additionally, the signatories called for attention to issues such as fair remuneration, working conditions, access to cultural heritage, and the development of international cultural relations.

b. European Compass for Culture, Upcoming Multiannual financial framework and next generation of Creative Europe

The adoption of the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), covering the period from 2028 to 2034, will take place during the term of European Glenn Micallef. It is therefore essential for the European Music School Union (EMU) to closely follow developments at the European level and actively represent the interests and perspectives of Europe's music schools throughout the process. The new MFF will also determine the future of key funding programmes such as the Creative Europe programme, whose continuation the EMU strongly supports. In preparation for the upcoming policy cycle, Commissioner Micallef has announced the development of a new "Cultural Compass for Europe." This initiative aims to provide strategic orientation for EU cultural policy by identifying shared goals, values, and priorities that will guide future action across the cultural and creative sectors. The

EMU has actively engaged in shaping the Cultural Compass by responding to consultations, participating in stakeholder dialogues, and contributing to discussions—particularly those led by the European Music Council (EMC)—on how the cultural sector can influence and benefit from this framework.

Communication

The EMU published four newsletters during the activity year that included updates from the EMU itself, articles from its board members, announcements of various events, cultural policy news, and other news items relevant to music education on the European level. The EMU also sent out several mailings to its members to provide updates on individual events or developments. Furthermore, both the public section and the members' area of the EMU website have been updated regularly.

Presidium Meetings

The EMU presidium held the following meetings in 2024:

- 7 & 8 March, Lisbon, Portugal
- 7 May, online
- 3 September, online
- 25 & 26 October, Grevenmacher, Luxembourg
- 12 December, online

EMU Regional Groups

EMU worked in close cooperation with its regional groups: EMU Nordic group, Visegrad, LLACHD and Onda Latina.