

# **BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN NATIONAL CONTEXTS AND SUBJECT-SPECIFIC EUROPEAN- LEVEL INITIATIVES**



## **OBSERVATIONS AND EXPERIENCES FROM THE FIELD OF MUSIC**

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- Building bridges between national contexts and subject-specific European-level initiatives: a case study
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# THE AEC



- European association for higher music education institutions founded in 1953
- Almost 300 members
- Aims: to promote European cooperation between its members and to represents the interests of the sector
- Activities: events, European projects and advocacy

# THE AEC – SOME ‘BOLOGNA’ ACHIEVEMENTS



- Sectoral Qualifications Framework for Higher Music Education
- Handbooks (credit points, curriculum design, internal QA, 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle...)
- [www.bologna-and-music.org](http://www.bologna-and-music.org)
- ‘Mundus Musicalis’ for ‘global dimension
- **Framework for QA & Accreditation**

# AND SOME SPECIAL FEATURES...



- High entrance level required for admission to higher music education
- Entrance examinations for all cycles
- Individualised teaching and learning
- Longer duration of studies needed

# AEC QA & ACCREDITATION PROJECTS



- EU/USA project ‘Music Study, Mobility and Accountability’ with National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) in the US, 2002-2004
- SOCRATES project ‘Accreditation in European Professional Music Training’, 2006-2007
- ERASMUS Network for Music ‘Polifonia’, 2007-2010
  - *Institutional Review / Programme Review*

# AEC QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION ACTIVITIES

- Key documents
  - Framework Document *Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Music Education (AEC, 2007)*
  - Handbook *How to prepare for an AEC Institutional and Programme Review? (AEC, 2010)*
- Consists of:
  - Characteristics (of HME and of QA in Music)
  - Reference points (link to the SQF)
  - Areas of enquiry and criteria/questions to be addressed
  - Review procedures
  - Register of experts

# AEC AREAS OF ENQUIRY



1. Mission and vision /programme goals and context.
2. Educational processes.
3. Student profiles (admission to, progress through and completion of the programme)
4. Teaching staff.
5. Facilities, resources and support.
6. Organisation and decision-making processes and internal quality assurance systems.
7. Public interaction.



# AEC QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION ACTIVITIES (2)



- In informal context: music-specific peer review system for quality enhancement
- In formal context: collaboration with national quality assurance & accreditation agencies

=> Aim: to add a European-level subject-specific dimension to the national quality assurance and accreditation procedures

# AEC COLLABORATION WITH NATIONAL QA & ACCREDITATION AGENCIES



Several options:

- AEC proposing experts in the accreditation panels appointed to evaluate music academies.
  - German accreditation agency ACQUIN
  - Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance
- AEC responsible for implementing the evaluation procedure of several higher music education programmes in the same academy of music.
  - German accreditation agency (ZeVA)
- Joint procedure AEC – Accreditation Agency (experts and criteria)
  - Swiss Accreditation Body (OAQ)
  - Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS)
  - Lithuanian Centre for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (CQAHE)

# CASE STUDY: THE COLLABORATION BETWEEN AEC AND THE SWISS AGENCY OAQ



*Accreditation procedure of several Master programmes in music, by OAQ and AEC during the academic year 2009-2010.*

- **Precondition:** compliance by the OAQ and the AEC with the European Standards and Guidelines
- **Phase I:** comparative analysis of the procedures and criteria for the assessment applied by the two organisations  
Result: ad-hoc set of standards integrating the European-level discipline-specific AEC standards with the national OAQ general standards
- **Phase II:** composition of diverse groups of experts for each of the exercises
- **Phase III:** Implementation: 4 jointly coordinated site-visits, resulting in 4 external evaluation reports

# BENEFITS OF THE JOINT PROCEDURE FROM THE OAQ PERSPECTIVE



- **Quality of experts panels**
- **Added value for the institutions**
- **Visibility**
- **A learning outcomes oriented approach:** (*AEC Sectoral Qualifications Framework for Higher Music Education, the European Qualifications Framework for Higher Education*) fostering the Bologna process
- **Respect of national legal framework**

# BENEFITS OF THE JOINT PROCEDURE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF AN EXPERT



- **Criteria:** clear document resulting from the comparative exercise
- **Composition of the groups of experts:**
  - Presence of student members trained by the OAQ
  - Through AEC involvement in procedure: access to a large international pool of experts with
    - ✦ linguistic capabilities
    - ✦ various specialisms within the discipline that cover a wide spectrum.
    - ✦ objectivity and new perspectives
    - ✦ ability to assess the musical reality

“It is felt that a group of experts composed of musicians, and rendered objective by being drawn from a truly Europe-wide pool, made its way more rapidly and efficiently to conclusions than would have been the case otherwise.”

# BENEFITS OF THE JOINT PROCEDURE FROM AN INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE



## The **music-specific approach**:

- AEC criteria complementary to the national standards , more attuned to the Conservatoires' specific field of study and research.
- High level of competence and professionalism of the international experts, diversity of specializations and experiences and, above all, understanding of the sector.
- Supportive atmosphere created by the critical but friendly panels.

## The **conception of accreditation**:

- Extended (focused on enhancement) as opposed to minimal

# STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES OF THE COLLABORATIONS AND FURTHER OBSERVATIONS



## Strengths:

- International dimension and subject-specific approach

## Challenges:

- Knowledge of the national higher education system
- Language

## Further observations

- Absence of criteria relating to international strategies or European cooperation in most national procedures;
- Differences between countries:
  - level of interference
  - balance between quality enhancement and compliance with national quality assurance criteria
  - great variety of procedures and of roles of the experts

# CONCLUSIONS



- Very positive experience
- Subject-specific approach: strengthened involvement of students and teachers in accreditation procedures
- It is not only about standards – it is also about experts
- A possible role for European subject standards: framework for a variety of national quality assurance and accreditation procedures.
- The AEC model : cooperation rather than competition with national quality assurance agencies.
- Need to officially acknowledge such models



# Thank you for your attention!



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