

European perspectives on music education

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1. Introduction

Describing European perspectives on music education is actually not that easy. Despite the question “what does “European” actually mean?” or “what is music education?” it is clear that the cultural and political landscape is quite diverse and complex. My intention is therefore not to give a complete overview neither will I come to clear-cut conclusions. I would like to give my impressions and inform you of what I have come across as an active member of a European network for music education in schools, the *European Association for Music in Schools*, (*EAS*). First, I will give some information on *EAS*. After this I will present some results of a project that attempted to picture music education in Europe in terms of content, hours, music teacher training etc. Thirdly, I would like to talk about the European policy and the attempts of all kinds of networks and bodies that emphasize the importance of music and music education. Finally I will draw some conclusions.

2. The European Association for Music in Schools

The *European Association for Music in Schools* is a relatively young organisation. It was founded in 1990. In its mission statement it states that *EAS* is a network for teachers, artists, scientists, associations and project partners – committed to the development and improvement of music education throughout Europe. “It brings together all those concerned with music edu-

cation to share and exchange knowledge and experience in professional fields and to advocate for high quality music education accessible to all".¹ The activities of *EAS* include:

- the organisation of an annual conference
- the organisation of meetings for students, both for students in music teacher training and doctoral students
- the maintenance of a lively website and activities on social media
- service for members, e.g. advice on project management
- the publication of a book series on music education in Europe
- cooperation with *ISME*² through organising a shared *EAS/ISME* Regional Conference
- cooperation with the *The Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC)*³ and *European Music School Union (EMU)*⁴
- the description of music education and music teacher training in the different European countries
- advocacy for Music Education by contributing to policy papers

EAS is connected to 25 countries. Each country is represented by a National coordinator. National coordinators are of high importance for the work and efficiency of *EAS*. They act as connectors between the National and the European network. They inform the *EAS* community about current developments in their country and in turn they keep their own network updated about what is happening in European music education. An important tool for this is the *EAS* country website they edit and administrate. Some national coordinators work together on a regional level. There is project cooperation between the Baltic states, Poland and Slovenia and there is a lively network of the Vysehrad countries, including Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary.

1 Retrieved from www.eas-music.org (latest accessed on 2nd of February 2016).

2 <http://www.isme.org/> (latest accessed on 2nd of February 2016).

3 <http://www.aec-music.eu/> (latest accessed on 2nd of February 2016).

4 <http://www.musicschoolunion.eu/> (latest accessed on 2nd of February 2016).

3. A picture of music education in Europe

Music education and the activities in and around schools in Europe are characterized by a fascinating diversity of approaches to music and to the training of music teachers and musicians. Europe has an extremely rich musical heritage, varying from classical music to contemporary music and from traditional folk to pop, rock and jazz. This is also recognizable in music education.

Even at first glance, a rich variety of practices in music education can be noticed. There is music education that takes place in classrooms with listening to music, composing, singing or playing an instrument and with varieties in musical styles and genres. And there is as well a rich world of musical learning that is taking place outside school: in educational concerts, at music schools, in choirs, ensembles, rockbands, etc. Formal and non-formal music education is much broader than that which is happening in schools.

Let us focus on music education in schools in the first place. An initial question while picturing music education in Europe might be what the differences in music education could be between countries. How does music education look like in Germany, in Spain, Italy, Cyprus? And what are the characteristics, the commonalities or differences?

When we think about music education in a particular country we might get the impression that countries can be characterized. One could think of the songfestival in Estonia, a brass class in Austria, the Kodaly approach in Hungary or Musical Futures in the UK. But what do these images actually say? Although there might be noticed some tendencies, all countries show, more or less, a very varied picture of what is happening in schools. It is too easy to characterize music education in the different countries according to the pictures as described above. Often the differences between countries are as broad and varied as the differences within one country.

However, official documents like policy papers, can give an idea of certain aspects that may be characteristic for one country. These documents can inform on the role of the National Curriculum, the amount of hours, who is been teaching music? How is music teacher training organised? It is worth having a look at these documents, bearing in mind that paper and practice are often different things.

An extensive description of music education in Europe was the result of the work of the music education network (meNet): A European Communication and Knowledge Management Network for Music Education,⁵ funded by the European Commission as part of the SOCRATES-COMENIUS programme. This project, running from 2006–2009 collected, compiled and disseminated information on music education in schools and music teacher training in Europe. One of the targets of the meNet project was inspired by a curiosity to identify the similarities and differences in Music Education (ME) systems in Europe. The focus point was to map out

- the political context of the education systems,
- the structure of the school systems,
- the amount of time given to Music Education across Europe as a compulsory or optional subject,
- music curricula across Europe,
- common aims and objectives for music education across Europe.

The collation and presentation of documentation on music education within the school systems of 20 European countries has been described according to particular criteria. In a handbook that can be found on the *meNet* website, there is given an overall presentation of Music Education in 20 school systems through diagrams and synopses. It must be noted that the accuracy of the information might have changed after the publication due to policy initiatives or revisions. Many of the information however can also be found on the *EAS* website where the same information may have been updated.

5 www.menet.info (latest accessed on 2nd of March 2016).

The following countries have been described.

- AT – Austria
- BE – Belgium
- CZ – Czech Republic
- DE – Germany
- EE – Estonia
- ES – Spain
- FI – Finland
- FR – France
- GR – Greece
- HR – Croatia
- HU – Hungary
- IT – Italy
- ME – Montenegro
- NL – Netherlands
- NO – Norway
- PL – Poland
- SE – Sweden
- SI – Slovenia
- SK – Slovakia
- UK – United Kingdom



Fig. 1 National descriptions by the meNet project⁶

Any understanding of Music Education in the countries surveyed must at first consider the system that underlies it. The chart here shows how the structure and duration of schooling are organised.

⁶ <http://menet.mdw.ac.at/menetsite/english/topics.html?m=1&c=0&lang=en>
(latest accessed on 2nd of March 2016).

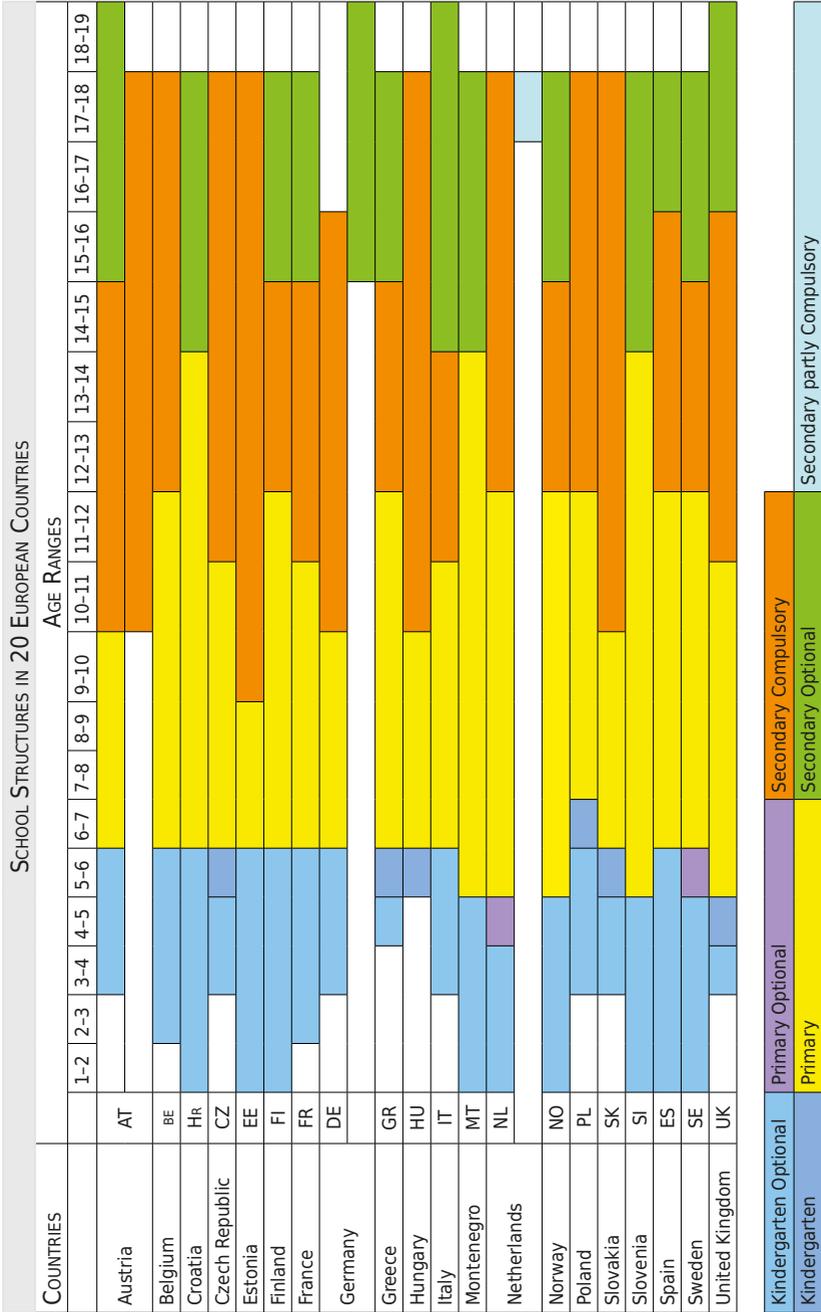


Fig. 2 School structures in 20 European Countries

This table makes clear that there are differences in the age ranges covered by “primary” and “secondary” education. As you can see, the starting age for compulsory schooling and the age at which children transfer to secondary education varies across these countries. There are also variations in the overall duration of compulsory education. The majority start compulsory schooling at the age of six, with all offering optional pre-school provision: from the age of three in eight countries and from the age of one in nine countries.⁷

There is more detailed information to be found on school systems in Europe at the *Eurydice* website.⁸ The Eurydice Network provides information on and analyses of European education systems and policies.

4. Music in the curriculum

In the *meNet* final report on music education in Europe, it is concluded that in all twenty countries, music is included in the compulsory school curriculum. According to the report, in curricula documents the values ascribed to in music education can be separated into three broad groups:

1. intrinsic values associated with the development of musical skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to make and respond to music,
2. knowledge, understanding and appreciation of cultural environment and heritage and
3. the contribution Music makes to the development of the individual and to communities through creativity, identity formation, personal development, and social interaction.⁹

According the *Eurydice* network, the concept of arts curricula varies greatly between European countries. In about half of them every arts subject is conceived separately in the curriculum (like music, visual arts). In other countries, the art subjects are considered together as an integrated area

⁷ <http://menet.mdw.ac.at/menetsite/english/topics.html?m=1&c=0&lang=en> (latest accessed on 1st of March 2016).

⁸ http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/index_en.php (latest accessed on 1st of March 2016).

⁹ <http://menet.mdw.ac.at/menetsite/english/topics.html?m=1&c=0&lang=en> (latest accessed on 1st of March 2016).

(like the “arts”). Some curricula give a view of Music as an integral part of arts or cultural education alongside Visual Art, Dance and Drama. This is the case, for example, in the Netherlands, Germany and Poland. Some curricula emphasise a close relationship between Music and Dance, especially for primary education, for example in Norway. In all countries curricula include music and visual arts and in many it also includes drama, dance and craft.¹⁰

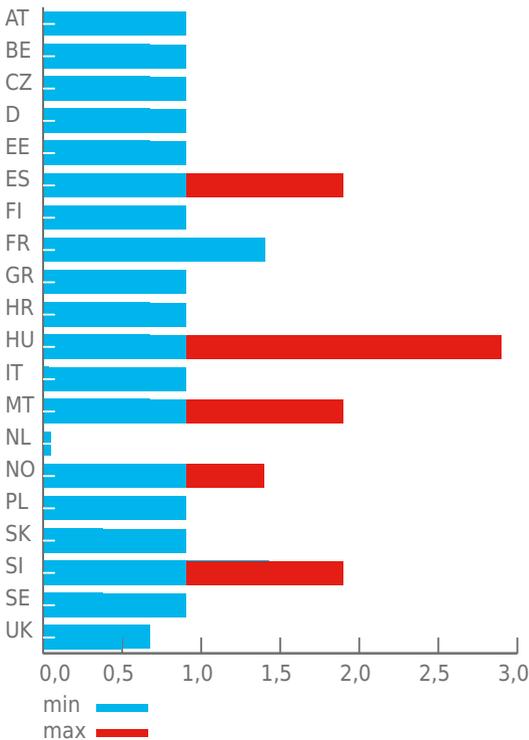
The question as to whether music or other art subjects should be taught separately or integrated is discussed in many countries, although in some countries more than in others. The issue is complicated. For example there are already several interpretations of the concept of integration and there is also debate about the purpose of it. The arguments for and against the integration of arts subjects are not underpinned yet by empirical research. Furthermore, the opinions about the desirability of integration of the arts subjects are often linked to broader views on educational reform (Haanstra, 2009).

¹⁰ http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/113EN.pdf (latest accessed on 2nd of March 2016).

5. Time allocated to music education

Another conclusion of the *meNet* project was that Music is included as a compulsory subject in primary education in every country. Besides this there is some variation in secondary schools with compulsory Music as most common up to the age of 14 and optional after this age.

Indicative compulsory time for music / week at primary school



*In NL schools can decide how much time they devote to music as part of their Arts education Programme

Fig. 3 Time allocated to music in primary education¹¹

¹¹ <http://menet.mdw.ac.at/menetsite/english/topics.html?m=1&c=0&lang=en> (latest accessed on 1st of March 2016).



*In NL schools can decide how much time they devote to music as part of their Arts education Programme

Fig. 4 Time allocated to music in secondary education¹²

According to the final report there are often national guidelines for the amount of time pupils have music lessons, but it is mostly the case that individual schools have their own policy.¹² There are some countries in which there is no specific compulsory allocation of time for music as is the case in the Netherlands because Music is part of the integrated arts. In some countries, particularly in primary education, the time for music les-

¹² <http://menet.mdw.ac.at/menetsite/english/topics.html?m=1&c=0&lang=en> (latest accessed on 1st of March 2016).

sons might be dependent on the presence of confident generalist teachers or specialist teachers for music; and on how important Music is for cultural life of the school. Due to the economical crisis and other factors there is some degree of pressure placed on schools to focus on “core” subjects such as language and mathematics.

It will be important to have further comparative investigations in to the question of how the structures and extent of school-based education affect the musical development of young people. From this perspective I would like to plead for research that is addressing issues on the level of content, aims, concepts and approaches. Quantitative research on, for example, allocation of time would provide definitive relevant information. But it is easily taken for granted that the more music education you get the better it is, but we have to understand that it is more important to see for e.g. what exactly is offered in these hours. It will also be interesting to see what the differences are between music education in primary, secondary and other levels, plus the effects of transition from one phase of schooling to the other; of the amount of time spent on music education in preschool/kindergarten and children’s music development.

6. Instrumental education

The *meNet* report states that in many European countries formal music education takes place outside of school as well. There are state or privately funded music schools which provide instrumental tuition and classes in music theory, aural skills etc. This means that there are in effect two music education systems running in parallel, with the more specialist tuition available to those who can access it.¹³ In some countries instrumental education is free for all who want it or that it is very accessible; in other cases it is only available to the musically able, and for others their parents may have to pay for it.

There is an increasing trend that both types of music education are blended. There is no clear distinction sometimes between so called “schoolmusic” and “instrumental education”.

¹³ <http://menet.mdw.ac.at/menetsite/english/topics.html?m=1&c=0&lang=en> (latest accessed on 1st of March 2016).

E.g. in Germany and Greece, there arises a trend towards all-day schools which will impact on the specialist music schools that take place during afternoons. In England, instrumental tuition is available for free or subsidised by the state through Music Services who provide tutors who visit schools to teach individuals and groups. Some similar developments can be seen in the Netherlands and Germany. There are projects that emphasize instrumental tuition for all children.

These changes in music education definitely have an impact on how we must see music education. What are for e.g. the effects of all these initiatives on music in schools? How does the specialist music school affect attitudes to music in ordinary schools? Do music teachers from both types of institutions collaborate in discussions on, for example, the curriculum, on the learners' progress, on complementary approaches? What is the experience of young people who are accessing both forms of music education simultaneously?

7. Curriculum documents

When we have a look at curriculum documents it shows that there is no consistent way in which these documents describe and present aims, content or learning outcomes for music as a school subject. Some documents show a clear philosophy and describe clear starting points for music education and are less concerned with defining specific content. Others give detailed lists of the musical skills, knowledge and repertoire that should be taught in clear steps for all the age groups. Most documents include statements about ways of learning, focusing on practical knowledge for performing, composing and listening and understanding of social and cultural contexts for Music. Although improvising and arranging are often mentioned, composing is less usual, especially in primary education. Also listening and responding to Music, learning about music and becoming critical are mentioned in most of the curricula. There are a few curricula that refer to a comprehensive study of music history (e.g. like in Germany, Croatia and Estonia). Most mention music of the past or its heritage – or the development of music – without much detail.¹⁴

¹⁴ <http://menet.mdw.ac.at/menetsite/english/topics.html?m=1&c=0&lang=en> (latest accessed on 1st of March 2016).

In many curriculum documents music education is described in separate activities of music making: composing, performing, listening and understanding. However at the same time an holistic and integrated approach to music education is almost always advocated. Some documents emphasize the importance of integrating the activities, knowledge and understanding of music in order to make learning meaningful (see, for example Austria).

Only a minority of countries give an emphasis on integrating music with other arts subjects (Germany/Czech Republic/Slovakia/Austria/Poland). The Netherlands seems to go further and outlines themes and topics for cross curricular learning. In Greece, cross curricular links are encouraged throughout the whole music curriculum.

We should realize that there are often gaps between the stated aims and objectives presented in all these documents and practice. It might be interesting to explore in more detail how the day to day experiences of teachers and their students in music lessons relates to the written curricula. While reading each country's documents, one can find many common topics, approaches and emphases. However, there are also many differences in the level of comprehensiveness. It may be clear that a very well formulated and structured document does not necessarily mean that the quality of music education in schools is of equal weight. Nevertheless it can at least indicate recognition and intent.

The importance of curricula documents cannot be emphasized enough. They function in many ways as instruments to show intentions and weight of music as a school subject, as a tool for further development and as a mirror for the practice of music education. Even if they do not always reflect the reality, they are important in many ways.

8. Specialist and generalists

In many school systems in Europe and elsewhere generalist teachers are required, in principle, to teach all curriculum subjects to children in elementary schools. There are many variations in the way music is taught and by whom. At some schools there might be a music specialist teacher, in others music is taught by the generalist teacher or not at all. Some schools do have a generalist teacher who teaches music in all classes. There might also be collaborations between generalists and specialists or cooperation

with other institutions. I would like to argue that music can and should be taught by both specialists and generalists, and collaborations of other kinds are important as well. However, the generalists' training for music is limited and is often lacking and accordingly teachers do not have the confidence always to teach music in a good and stimulating way. We can have serious concern about music education in primary. According to Hennessy (2013) "we know that in practice the picture is far from clear and children's music education can be alarmingly varied in quality, scope and quantity" (p.183).

9. European policy

When we look at the international and European cultural policy contexts for music education, there are some policy papers worth mentioning. First there are the strategies developed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) concerning arts education.

In the last decades UNESCO had shown growing interest in arts education by promoting the role of arts teaching as a fundamental element in education, especially in strengthening the promotion of cultural diversity. Arts are seen as integral to life and function, creation and learning are intertwined.¹⁵ UNESCO emphasizes that both learning through the arts and learning in the arts are important. The Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions¹⁶ in 2005 is widely considered as the important charter for international cultural policy. It defines a human's right to cultural self-determination by international law. (Dudt, 2012).

In 2006 the first World Conference on Art Education was held. The outcome of the conference was the Road Map for Arts Education, a 20-page document that provides a practical and theoretical framework with guidance for strengthening arts education worldwide.¹⁷ The Road Map is striving for a common understanding among educators, parents, artists,

¹⁵ www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/creativity/arts-education/about/approach/ (latest accessed on 5th of March 2016).

¹⁶ http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=31038&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html (latest accessed on 5th of March 2016).

¹⁷ http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/CLT/pdf/Arts_Edu_RoadMap_en.pdf (latest accessed on 5th of March 2016).

directions of schools, ministries, policy makers and all kinds of organisations of the importance of Arts Education for the development of learners' creative capacities required for the 21st century. Furthermore the document is aiming at the improvement of the quality of Arts Education. The Roadmap was continued with the Seoul Agenda¹⁸ in 2010 that came up with three broad goals:

- Goal one: Ensure that arts education is accessible as a fundamental and sustainable component of a high quality renewal of education
- Goal two: Assure that arts education activities and programmes are of a high quality in conception and delivery
- Goal three: Apply arts education principles and practices to contribute to resolving the social and cultural challenges facing today's world.

Each of these goals includes strategies and action items.

In 2010 the European Music Council (EMC) launched a working group on music education to explore the implementation of the Seoul Agenda and seek ways of adapting the document for the music sector in Europe. The outcome was the so-called Bonn Declaration, a document that is directed at the music education sector and at political decision makers.

The first goal of the Bonn Declaration is focusing on access: "Access to music education and active music participation is a human right which has to be ensured for people of all ages and all backgrounds in Europe".¹⁹ This access includes lifelong learning, participatory music education as part of the curriculum, recognition of non-formal and informal music education opportunities, the variety of places in which music education is offered and reflects the diversity of society and the cooperation with artistic and non-artistic disciplines.

The second goal emphasizes the importance of and requirements for high quality music education: "Assure that arts education activities and programmes are of high quality in conception and delivery".

The document states quality in music education can be achieved and improved for instance by the employment of high quality music education practitioners at the earliest stages of education (pre-kindergarten and

¹⁸ http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/CLT/pdf/Seoul_Agenda_EN.pdf (latest accessed on 5th of March 2016).

¹⁹ http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/pdf/BonnDeclaration_EN.pdf (latest accessed on 13th of November 2016).

pre-school education), the pedagogical training in professional training of musicians and musical training for all education professionals, as well as a modernised music teacher training and the development of appropriate evaluation systems (for all educational settings).

The third goal reflects “interdependence of the individual and society and re-emphasizes the potential of music for social responsibility and intercultural dialogue”.²⁰ The declaration states for instance that music education must be context-driven and take into account the changes in society, intercultural training should be included in professional training for all musicians and music education practitioners, music education institutions in the formal sector and organisations offering non-formal music education should offer more activities which are aimed at addressing and resolving social and cultural challenges¹⁶. The recommendations of the Bonn declaration are not only addressed to politicians and governments, they are also addressing the organisations in the music field.

The European Union seems to take the issue of arts education seriously, especially through the European Agenda for Culture and the inclusion of creativity in the strategic framework for education and training. “However, there is still no specific programme to support arts education initiatives and with the lack of the word “culture” in the Europe 2020 strategy it is important to continue emphasizing the importance of arts and culture and education for the European project particularly in times of an European financial and economic crisis.” (Dudt, 2012: 131).

10. Music Education in the 21st century

The musical and cultural variety is one of the most significant characteristics of European culture. This is one of the great challenges for music education. But there are many demographic, sociological, cultural and economic changes in society that require an overall shift in the way we think about music education. We really need to think about music education in a totally different way. Musical learning is not limited to the school period only: people learn music during their whole lifespan and children and youth are exposed to many musical experiences.

²⁰ http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/pdf/BonnDeclaration_EN.pdf (latest accessed on 13th of November 2016).

There is much musical learning that takes place outside school: sometimes organised by the school like in educational concerts, or provided by art centres, music schools, music communities like orchestras, etc. As schoolbased music educators we should realize that learning music takes place in many ways and that music education in school is just one of the, very important, learning experiences the child has.

The many musical environments a child can be confronted with may include educational projects of concert halls, instrumental education at a music school, playing in a rock band, music lessons at school and other informal communities of practice, watching Youtube or listening to music on a smartphone.

Music education activities in schools are of great importance because they can reach all young people. This education should however be strongly connected to the other learning environments. There are chances of all kinds for collaborations between schools and cultural animateurs many already exist or are being established – in some countries more than others. Although initiatives by institutions and schools are essential in this, collaborations between networks will also be important. I would like to illustrate this as the basis of an organisation like The European Association for Music in Schools.

There are many different musical contexts and accordingly many European organisations: EAS (European Association for Music in Schools), AEC (European association for higher music education, like conservatoires), EMU (European Music school Union), but, in addition, organisations like Europa Cantat, Jeunesses Musicales, The associations for string players ESTA, pianist (EPTA), etc. The changes in society have led to the development of all kinds of collaborations between schools and cultural actors, and many are still being established. But in general there is still much separation between these worlds. Now that music educators, schools, musicians and cultural organisations are becoming more and more involved in the field of school-related music education, it is important that they work together. This is essential if greater coherence and quality is to be improved. It is in fact that the learner that will benefit. We also need to join forces amongst music associations, institutions and professionals to advocate for music education at large. Without good music education there will be no musicians in the future, without good music teacher training

there will be no music education, without musicians there will be no audience. All this means that we have to reconsider what music education should be.

11. Music Education and 21st century skills

I don't think I should repeat here the importance of music education. We all know the arguments. It is believed that being musical is integral to human design. This means that everyone can learn music. It is also clear that early experience of music in childhood is important and that this can have a powerful formative influence for further engagement as an adult. Our experiences of music are framed and shaped by musical interactions within particular sociocultural contexts, as well as being flavored by individual subjectivity, maturation, and biography (Welch & McPherson, 2011).

There is a tendency that we as music educators would like to stress the importance of music education in terms of its transfer value to other domains. I think if we can convince politicians and others that music education has an impact on other areas, that's fine. But at the same time we should be careful.

The main findings of a study of scientific research and presented in reports like *Art for Art's Sake*,²¹ suggests that there is not yet support for the claim that art education has a positive effect on school performance in subjects like math and language. Let us keep in mind that the main justification for cultural education relates probably more to the unique value of the art itself, than to the alleged side effects.

12. What can we conclude?

Music education and the activities in and around schools in Europe are characterized by a fascinating diversity of approaches to music and to the training of music teachers and musicians. A trial to map out what the characteristics of the different countries are is meaningful but at the same time problematic. A first question is often how much time is allocated to music education. A comparison of the level of concrete data, like the

21 <http://www.oecd.org/edu/ceeri/arts.htm> (latest accessed on 13th of November 2016).

amount of hours, is only meaningful if the context is taken into account and when there is comparative investigation of how the structures and extent of school based education affect the musical education of young people.

It should be noted that Musical learning is not limited to the school period only: people learn music during their whole lifespan and children and youth are exposed to many musical experiences. There is much musical learning taking place outside school and music educators need to connect to that. Collaborations with other educators like generalists, artists and organisations are very important for the quality, improvement and sustainability of music education.

High quality music education requires, of course, highly skilled professional music teachers, as well as generalist teachers who have the confidence and inspiration to teach music and abilities to cooperate with professional musicians and music teachers. Good music education can only be provided by a shared expertise of different professionals.

We must continue to repeat to our ministries, policy makers and stakeholders the importance of music education, and at the same time we also need to develop creative partnerships at all levels between schools, and teachers and musicians, science and community organizations.

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