

moving on in higher arts education in Europe ELIA – AEC follow-up Bologna Position Paper

Introduction

The member institutions of the European League of Institutes of the Arts (ELIA) and the Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC), representing more than 550 higher arts education institutions across Europe that provide higher education in architecture, fine art, dance, design, media arts, theatre and music, remain strongly committed to the principles of the Bologna process¹, and continue to support the European ministers for education in seeking greater comparability and readability of qualifications as the platform for a stronger, more integrated European space of higher education.

The *Bologna Declaration* has had a challenging impact on the art schools across Europe. As active partners in the European higher arts education, many institutions have widely engaged with the outcomes of the ministerial meetings by analysing the effect they will have on the sector and by embarking on the route of meaningful implementation. Over the past four years *Bologna* became a key activity of the AEC and ELIA.

The objectives of both organisations have been to gain a better understanding of both existing differences and common values, to create an ongoing dialogue between higher arts institutions at a European level and with national and European professional bodies. At the same time we are mindful in respecting and supporting the rich diversity of learning and teaching approaches, artistic traditions and practices.

The development within the two European organisations has clearly revealed a shift from the *why* to the *how* of the Bologna principles. This has been reflected by a pragmatic, pro-active approach to institutions seeking and implementing appropriate solutions, and using opportunities in the *Bologna* process to engage in curriculum development and co-operation at a European level.

Three-cycle structure for European higher arts education

As a result of new national legislation, higher arts education institutions in most European countries have now implemented the two-cycle structure and in a number of these countries 3rd cycle courses exist or are being developed. These developments, however, do not have the same pace of implementation nor are all signatory countries embracing all actions equally. There are still serious concerns and problems with implementing the three-cycle structure in some countries and/or specific arts disciplines.

It is vital to the European cultural sector that professional training in the arts is recognised at 1st, 2nd and 3rd cycle higher education levels in all countries. Currently this situation does not exist in some European countries, where institutions and disciplines have no higher education status. As a result obstacles to mobility, recognition of studies, qualifications and quality assurance procedures at European level will remain, resulting in negative effects on the employability of arts graduates.

Comparability and transparency

To establish a meaningful platform for comparability and transparency, ELIA and the AEC have encouraged and facilitated a Europe-wide discussion on what shared values underpin the ethos of European higher arts education, both specific to individual disciplines and to the arts collectively. Both organisations have undertaken such work in the course of a SOCRATES Thematic Network project in 2000 – 2004, during which the

¹ See original ELIA/AEC 2003 Bologna Position Paper - www.elia-artschools.org or www.aecinfo.org/bologna/aecpolicy

AEC developed learning outcomes and competencies for music² and ELIA core values and competencies for dance, fine art and theatre³.

Building on these first crucial steps the follow-up Thematic Networks *Polifonia* (AEC) and *inter}artes* (ELIA), established in October 2004, have set out to further improve comparability and transparency. The networks will continue to refine and test shared definitions of competencies and qualifications using methodologies developed through the *Tuning Educational Structures* project. Through these actions we will contribute to the development of the European Qualifications Frameworks, but in relation to these developments both organisations stress the necessity to fully consider the specificity and special characteristics of the arts disciplines.

Research

ELIA has recently received EC support⁴ to begin to explore differences in the understanding of research within higher arts education across Europe and to begin to investigate what impact research in and through the arts has on the quality of education within arts institutions, on the development of disciplines they present and on the social, economic and cultural development of European societies. With these objectives, the project aims to build a case for claiming partnership in the European space of research and access to EU research funding, on equal terms with other sectors of higher education.

Quality assurance and enhancement

AEC has recently finalised a European project⁵ funded by the EU/USA programme with quality assurance and accreditation in music as its main focus. The project conclusions clearly show that the procedures in quality assurance can only be effective when they respect institutional autonomy, take into consideration the specificity of the arts disciplines and the existing diversity of cultural traditions, and make use of the vast amount of knowledge that is available in the sector itself, for example through the use of a peer-review system at European level. The two new Thematic Networks, *Polifonia* and *inter}artes*, will continue to explore current practices and new national and European developments in quality assurance and enhancement. Our aim is to help institutions develop their own internal procedures for attaining appropriate standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of its academic provision.

Synergy with the Lisbon Strategy of the EU

Finally we believe it to be vital that synergies are created with other important European policies and strategies with the aim to concentrate and co-ordinate efforts. One example is a closer alignment with the *Lisbon Strategy*: one of the measures required to reach its objective “to become the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world” is to achieve academic and scientific excellence in higher education. ELIA and AEC recommend making *artistic excellence* another vital part of this strategy. Not only do studies such as EUROSTAT show the significant contribution of the cultural industries to the EU economy, but it is also the rich mixture of diverse cultural and artistic heritage that makes Europe unique in the world.

European League of Institutes of the Arts (ELIA)

Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC)

March 2005

² see: www.aecinfo.org/bologna/learningoutcomes

³ see <http://www.bologna.elia-artschools.org/>

⁴ see *re:search – in and through the arts* : www.research.elia-artschools.org

⁵ see *Music Study, Mobility and Accountability project website*: <http://msma.arts-accredit.org>