

Tapping into the potential of European Higher Arts Education

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TAPPING INTO THE POTENTIAL OF EUROPEAN HIGHER ARTS EDUCATION

1.1 THE SUBJECT AREA OF THE ARTS

This introduction accompanies the *Tuning documents* in Art & Design and in Dance & Theatre Education and reflects on developments in learning and teaching, in the profession and in artistic research within Higher Arts Education. It also provides a brief report about the findings of the work on Tuning and Qualifications Frameworks, as well as of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement activities within the *inter}artes* Thematic Network 2004 -2007 in the context of the current *Bologna reforms*.

Europe increasingly recognises artistic/creative production and culture as essential to our societies' functioning and quality of life. The *Dance Tuning document* calls dance a '*barometer for social change*' and that is probably true of all arts subjects. The arts, artists and creative practitioners often challenge our values and attitudes; add to our understanding and appreciation of culture and influence political, cultural and social change. As arts educators we like to think of our society as one where creativity and knowledge are equally valued. We believe that artists and creative practitioners are essential agents in advancing the concept of a European '*knowledge society*' in this wide sense.

Across Europe, approximately one thousand institutions of fine Art, Design, Theatre, Music¹, New Media, Dance, Film and other arts disciplines enable students to realise their own creative potential. Arts institutions equip students with a wide range of artistic, professional and personal skills and need increasingly to deliver complex and high-level curricula in order to meet the demands of contemporary society. Art graduates in all disciplines are expected to be able to think both generatively and critically, as well as to solve problems, work effectively in cross-disciplinary teams and be capable of constantly updating their own skills and knowledge in response to changing requirements. Graduates are increasingly entrepreneurial, developing '*portfolio*' careers, in which achievements and skills acquired need to be clearly documented.

High-level education of professional artists and creative professionals is a key factor in the development and maintenance of vibrant cultures in Europe. It nurtures and releases the potential of Europe's most talented creative young people, spanning a wide spectrum, for example; from advertising and broadcasting through cultural heritage, visual and performing arts to architecture, writing and publishing.

1.2 TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE ARTS

Arts educators constantly have to respond to transformations in society, digital technology and the creative professions that directly influence learning and teaching in the arts. Furthermore, in response to the *Bologna reforms*, they have had to rethink the way that arts subjects are taught and how to face new challenges posed by political changes. Because of these developments, it is clear that learning and

¹ Tuning and other Bologna activities in music are undertaken by the Thematic Network for Music 'polifonia' and the AEC. Three joint AEC/ELIA position papers have been published on the Bologna Process with a view to the ministerial summits in Berlin 2003, Bergen 2005 and in London 2007). Two joint 'Bologna' conferences have been held, in Vienna 2003 and in Tallinn in 2007.

teaching in the arts is becoming more complex than ever, demanding an open approach by teachers towards tradition, innovation and change as well as continuing to provide a firm grounding in artistic practices and disciplines.

Learning and teaching in the arts is both practically and conceptually based, utilising modes of learning that promotes creativity, innovation and critical reflection, and often the ability to question orthodoxies. The majority of arts students feel a heightened personal connection with their education and, through projects and programmes, reflect on, and connect with, their experience and ambitions, building confidence in their own creative identity. Teaching in the arts is primarily student-oriented rather than focused on the delivery of set curricula. Most of the programmes and courses in Higher Arts Education programmes centre around problem-based and experiential learning, which are underpinned through critique and discourse by practitioners. Practice-based learning and experimentation is principally organised within a dedicated studio environment with appropriate technical facilities. Programme delivery is normally conducted through a combination of studio practice, workshops, lectures, seminars, critiques, tutorials and work placements. Individual and collective projects and assignments form a key part of the curriculum from the start and often become even more important in the later stage of studies.

1.3 CREATIVE INDUSTRIES POSE NEW CHALLENGES

Many of the new ways of learning and teaching as well as research developments respond to new demands and expectations from the professional world. These changes converge in the term 'creative industries'. In the words of long standing author, researcher and commentator John Hartley: "A new term, creative industries, has emerged...that exploits the fuzziness of the boundaries between "creative arts" and "cultural industries", freedom and comfort, public and private, state-owned and commercial, citizen and consumer, the political and the personal...The core of culture [is] still creativity, but creativity [is] produced, deployed, consumed and enjoyed quite differently in post-industrial societies from the way it used to be..."²

The creative industries and its potential for creating wealth and jobs has also gained a new importance on the European political agenda, in particular by the EU *Lisbon Agenda* as well as the now ratified *UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity*. The sector can be characterised by three overlapping 'circles': a core area of artists/cultural production and a surrounding area comprising the public, the intermediate (non-profit) and the private (market-oriented) sub-sectors. While the first two areas belong to the field of non-profit oriented culture, the third sub-sector is profit-oriented or commercial. The whole of the cultural/creative industries builds on the creativity potential of the public and the not-for-profit cultural sectors. One of the characteristics of the sector is its openness. The strength of free-lance practitioners and small enterprises lies in their ability to absorb trends and react quickly to market changes, and this is of fundamental importance for the creative industries. Although the creative industries represent a significant economic force, they remain a high-risk sector within a variable market.³

² Hartley, J., *The Creative Industries*, 2006

³ Study on the Economy of Culture in Europe by KEA European Affairs, 2006
http://ec.europa.eu/culture/eac/sources_info/studies/economy_en.html

Higher Arts Education has traditionally fostered a strong and effective interface between the student learning experience and the relevant fields of professional practice, for example, many professional practitioners in the arts contribute significantly to the teaching of their subject. While there exists a strong professional focus, Higher Arts Education is never simply about preparing students for the pre-defined requirements of a specific profession. Many arts institutions actively seek ways to develop new models of curriculum design and implementation and in building new interfaces between education and the professions. One example of a new approach involves subject-focused [learning in arts 'labs'](#), designed to focus learning and teaching on the professional field. Other initiatives aim to bridge the gap between school through incubator units and work placements. All of these initiatives should make it easier for graduates to enter their chosen profession with a portfolio of skills and projects that have been shaped, developed and assessed in the context of the marketplace. Arts institutions are also involved in supporting company start-ups, during or following the students' studies. Career services help to identify which skills graduates need in order to apply for work or further study and provide advice on opportunities in the chosen field. In spite of these initiatives, arts institutions only are beginning to explore the impact of these developments and the next Thematic Network '*artenet europe*', starting from October 2007 will have to invest in a strategic debate on the long-term consequences for Higher Arts Education.

1.4 RESEARCH AND INNOVATION A PRIORITY FOR ARTS INSTITUTIONS

The 2004-2005 survey *re:search in and through the arts*⁴ showed that artistic research and 3rd cycle degrees are defined quite differently within Higher Arts Education and within professional arts sectors across Europe. Although the pace of change and the level of expertise vary from country to country, most Higher Arts education institutes across Europe are now fully aware of the importance of research in and through the arts. Artists are increasingly equipped to shape new knowledge in their fields, creating and extending knowledge and embedding this into both academic and public domains. Artistic research is understood as part of complex artistic practice and builds upon the changing role of the arts in our societies. The various disciplines within the arts are developing their own research methodologies, fitted to the specific needs of their respective disciplines. While research is being developed in dance, Design, Fine Art, Film, Music, New Media, Theatre and in other disciplines, research in the arts is increasingly becoming interdisciplinary.

The inclusion of the third cycle in the *Bologna Process* since the *Bergen Communiqué* in 2005 is beginning to have an impact on Higher Arts Education and the conditions for developing research cultures. In most countries – but with important exceptions – Higher Arts Education institutes are authorised to award 3rd cycle degrees or develop 3rd cycle programmes, independently or in collaboration with universities. However, established scientific concepts of research often inhibit the development of new concepts of research and innovation, emerging within the arts. Higher Arts Education institutions across Europe are currently developing strategies that challenge the dominance of the scientific model of research. These developments also seek to open possibilities for the development and funding of artistic research in a European context. Therefore, the European Research Area, gradually creating free circulation of researchers in Europe in all scientific fields has great relevance for artistic research.

⁴ *Re:search in and through the arts*, published by ELIA, Amsterdam and Universität der Künste Berlin, 2005. See www.elia-artschools.org

1.5 THE CONTEXT OF THE *BOLOGNA REFORMS*

The overall picture of higher arts education in Europe shows that a large variety of universities and professional training institutions, as well as independent academies, delivers Higher Arts Education that leads to similar levels of qualifications, regardless of whether it is delivered in a professional or academic institution. Most institutions providing higher arts education have now implemented a 2- or 3-cycle structure, with a 3- or 4-year Bachelors' degree and a 1-, 1½- or 2-year Masters' degree. This does not necessarily mean that the clarity and transparency has increased.

In some countries as well as in some arts disciplines, such as Dance, Higher Arts Education is not (yet) entitled to deliver Masters' programmes and/or third cycle programmes, which will lead to persisting problems of mobility and comparability of qualifications. Some arts institutions, delivering similar qualifications as other institutes, have no higher education status and in some countries arts institutes are accountable to their Ministry of Culture, rather than to their Ministry of Education, which leads to very different structures and regulations. Although arts institutions have taken significant steps, the full implementation of the 3-cycle system in arts institutions in the *Bologna* signatory countries has yet to be fully realised.

1.6 *TUNING ON OUR TERMS* IN DANCE, DESIGN, FINE ART AND THEATRE

The *inter}artes* thematic network for European Higher Arts Education has undertaken an intensive work programme for the last 3 years on *Quality Assurance and Enhancement, Tuning/Qualifications Frameworks, Tradition and Innovation and Professional Practice in the Arts*. In order to tackle these complex and interrelated issues *inter}artes* worked within four strands, with each strand addressing one of the issues mentioned above.⁵ Strand 2 of *inter}artes* concentrated on the preparation of the tuning documents and qualifications frameworks, working with the objectives of:

- clarifying that higher arts education provides a complete and rounded education, of equal value to other forms of higher education.
- gaining a better understanding of national, disciplinary and pedagogical differences, among other things, through the *Tuning documents*.
- distilling the experience of educators directly involved in these evolving educational processes into collective, well-documented expertise.
- exploring the feasibility of a sectoral Qualifications Framework for the Arts.

The *Tuning* activities built on actions in the previous thematic network. Already in 2003 – 2004, a first set of documents in Dance, Fine Art and Theatre Education had been drafted. Working conferences in the different disciplines agreed for the first time on a common understanding of their educational objectives. The Cluj-Napoca meeting in Fine Art Education in 2004 was also the starting point for the newly formed discipline network in Fine Art Education, PARADOX. The Theatre Education discipline network PROSPERO had followed a somewhat different route by developing a list of subject-specific competences for Theatre Education, conducting interviews and drawing on national documentation. Without these explorative actions and documents it would not have been possible to draft, discuss and agree on the *Tuning documents* presented in this publication. Committed partners in the *inter}artes Thematic Network* were then keen to take the work forward.

Strand 2 quickly concluded that devising a sectoral Qualifications Framework for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd levels/cycles required a wide range of input from the main discipline areas, Fine Art, Design, Theatre and Dance Education. In order to give a coherent

⁵ For further details on the other three strands, please go to www.inter-artes.org.

structure to this data the Strand 2 working group decided to use the well-established *Tuning Template*, following the agreement made with the *Tuning Project*. The advantage is that competences, as defined in the tuning methodology, are not meant to, and do not define the academic content, they define the skills and attributes the students should achieve if they meet the aims of the particular course or programme. This approach made it easier for the involved colleagues to reach a common understanding without waiving differences aside. The further advantage of using the *Tuning Template* was that the different disciplines could be characterised according to a series of common headings: definition of the subject, relationships with other subjects, relationships with key stakeholders and most importantly how the subject at 1st, 2nd and 3rd cycle is characterised in terms of key subject competences and key generic competences.

Using the extensive network of the *European League of Institutes of the Arts* and sub-networks, *inter}artes* invited its partner institutions from the discipline networks to join the *inter}artes* working group and liaise with their respective discipline networks in the preparation of the *Tuning documents*. The PARADOX Fine Art network developed the *Fine Art Tuning document* and a draft was finalised at a network meeting in Utrecht in March 2006. *The Design Tuning document* was further developed at the CUMULUS conference in Nantes, June 2006. The PROSPERO Theatre *Tuning document* and the ELIA Dance Section *Dance Tuning document* were prepared within a series of meetings throughout 2006. All *Tuning documents* went through various stages of consultation and feedback.

During a workshop session on Quality Assurance and Tuning in Stuttgart, Germany, June 2007 authors of the four *Tuning documents* were interviewed about their initial motivations. These ranged from 'we prefer to do it ourselves, before others do it for us' to the need to build up a shared language in the discipline, to overcoming scepticism about such processes and the fact that many of the colleagues in the arts institutions went through a similar process in their own country. The authors also reported that they were quite amazed by the direct and significant impact of the drafting process, the consultations and the documents. They particularly noted that:

- Thinking in terms of competences helps students to have a better understanding of their own learning process and helps educators to reflect continually on their own practice and to rethink programmes and assessment.
- The *Tuning documents* helps to make transparent the unique range of skills Arts Education delivers.
- Such a reference document also clarifies where one's own institute deviates at a programme- or institutional level.

Even without being officially published, many colleagues in different countries use the documents as a tool to construct their institutional or national sets of competences, and institutions use the documents to communicate with non-European partner schools in explaining about European education in their Arts disciplines.

An overall conclusion is that the writing of, and agreement on such a key document for the discipline is necessarily a collaborative effort of colleagues who are deeply involved in teaching. In the case of *inter}artes* the process brought about a well-informed group of European 'pioneers', who are committed to take the issue further within the Arts Education community in Europe. For a large group of arts institutions the internal '*Tuning process on our terms*' has helped to lessen some of the concerns and tensions about the impact of the *Bologna Process* in Higher Arts Education and the scepticism about the process itself.

1.7 ON THE WAY TO A QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR THE ARTS

A next step was the construction of a grid as another building block for a sectoral Qualifications Framework for the Arts. The idea for this was conceived in 2005, when the European Commission invited interested groups, including sectoral groups, to comment on the proposed European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF). The core element of the EQF is a set of eight reference levels, which act as a common reference point for education and training authorities at national and sectoral levels. Each of the eight reference levels is based on learning outcomes, which are understood in the EQF as statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process. *Inter}artes* decided to construct a grid, which would allow straightforward comparisons to be made between different national qualifications frameworks and a sectoral qualifications framework following the general guidelines / structure of the proposed EQF. One of the problems with respect to framing a sectoral Qualifications Framework was the terminological overlap and mismatch between the core concepts of knowledge, skills and competences of the Dublin-descriptors used by the EQF and the concept of key subject specific competences and key generic competences. Specifically, the term competences in the *Tuning Template* cover what is meant by skills and competences within the EQF structure.

The level descriptions of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd cycles from the Fine Art, Design, Theatre and Dance *Tuning documents* served as a basis for developing the grid. The discipline descriptions in these documents resulted in a series of columns for each of the disciplines. Each extra box in the grid described 1st, 2nd and 3rd level cycles for each of these disciplines. The main challenge was to characterise general arts degrees in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd cycles in terms of knowledge, skills and competences. These were assigned a separate set of boxes describing the cycles in terms of knowledge, skills and competences. The descriptions in each box are an amalgamation of the descriptions of individual disciplines. See the annex 'On the way to the Qualifications Framework for the Arts'. We are currently seeking feedback from the Higher Arts Education sector how further transparency, visibility and diversity of the arts institutions in Europe can benefit from a Qualifications Framework for the Arts. Further work will be done within the successor of *inter}artes*, '*arteshet europe*' 2007 – 2010. Hopefully a joint project proposal on the further development of Qualifications Frameworks between the *Tuning Project* and the arts disciplines will be able to start its work in the beginning of 2008.

1.8 QUALITY ASSURANCE – ENHANCEMENT BASED ON SELF-EVALUATION

In developing and implementing the European Qualifications framework it is also necessary to ensure that institutions are delivering courses and offering qualifications that meet these self-defined, agreed standards.

Whilst a Qualifications Framework ensures students attain comparable achievements linked to specific degrees at the same levels, quality assurance sets out to ensure arts institutions are able to deliver and meet these standards and effectively enable students to achieve their maximum potential.

Methodologies for a set of common and shared principles for quality assurance are emerging, necessary for underpinning quality assurance irrespective of the various national approaches, which must, if they are to be effective, reflect local context and practice in the detail of their application. These shared bases for quality assurance are described within the 'standards, procedures, and guidelines' being developed by the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), and with

EUA, EURASHE and ESIB under the mandate from the European Ministers in their Bergen Communiqué.⁶

The Higher Arts Education sector believes the approach should be based on critical self-evaluation at both subject-based and institutional levels, tested through peer reviews. We consider the principle aim is to consider self-evaluation as an institutional responsibility to enhance the student learning experience and ensure the quality and standards in Higher Arts Education. The principles of which include:

- based on peer review;
- involves strong student participation at all levels of the exercise;
- involves participation of professional bodies;
- emphasis on the development and use of explicit criteria and processes
- process is open to external scrutiny;
- transparent procedures through external and international reference points
- need for 'comparability' – European framework;
- has formal status and outcomes are publicly available;
- emphasis on enhancement of quality.

Within the framework of *inter}artes* an international group of eight experienced arts educators from different countries were invited and trained according to the principles and methodologies developed. These formed the review teams that tested the developed model for Higher Arts Education in four arts institutions. The *University of Art and Design (UAD) Cluj-Napoca, Romania - Faculty of Fine Art; National Academy of Theatre, Film and Television, Sofia, Bulgaria - Faculty of Theatre; Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theater, Vilnius - Faculty of Theatre and Film; Faculty of Fine Arts, Brno Institute of Technology, Czech Republic - Studios for Painting and Sculpture*) deliberately selected from new EU-countries, all wished to learn from the experience and invited the teams of '*critical friends*' to review their institutions.

Through an extensive process of two consecutive three-day visits involving four peer 'experts' engaging with all key stake-holders a detailed report was produced and presented to the institution. The reports identified good practice and guidance on how to develop and improve their own internal quality management policies, processes and practices appropriate to European and local demands. These review visits were followed by regional workshops in Budapest, Hungary, Athens Greece, Stuttgart, Germany and Porto, Portugal to disseminate these experiences and address 'local' issues. In developing and testing these principles and methodologies appropriate to higher arts education we will shortly commence a comprehensive evaluation of our process and recognize the ongoing need to develop and expand the register of trained 'experts' in the fields of qualifications frameworks and quality assurance/enhancement; extend the 'testing' of quality management to other European regions.

1.8 ISSUES FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

Looking back at the process and initial concerns at the beginning of the *Bologna Process* from 1999 the arts institutions have gone through an unprecedented and intensive period of educational change. Almost everybody would acknowledge that the *Bologna reforms* have introduced new elements. The redefinition of curricula, more pronounced Masters' programmes, the introduction of quality assurance procedures, a sharper focus on learning outcomes are only among the most obvious

⁶ 'A framework for qualifications of the European Higher Education Area'

<http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/>

ones. In most European countries, the emphasis on artistic research and the inclusion of the third cycle in Higher Arts Education was a direct result of the *Bologna Process*. In some other countries, in particular the UK and Ireland, this had already started to develop from the early nineties. Overall, the balance for most arts institutions seems to be positive, although some of the initial concerns remain, in particular about the diversity of approaches, traditions, and values, which constitute art practices and arts education.

In the next three-year period 'artnesnet europe' will bring together experienced as well as new partners, arts educators, for instance from Turkey. 'artnesnet' is also extended with a number of representatives from the professional field (museums, professional organisations, creative companies), who will provide new and valuable input in the process and outcomes. Some of the 'artnesnet' objectives include:

- to capitalise on and transfer of good practice by linking Higher Arts Education institutes with their local and regional communities, professional practice, and cultural and professional organisations;
- to deepen, specify and extend the Tuning documents, also in other arts disciplines and to further develop our common language. Research and the third cycle will be an important aspect of this. It will be essential to organise regular updates, debates, re-analysis and reformulation of cultural, social, political and spiritual values, in order to stay fully connected with developments in society, the professional field and in arts education;
- to maintain ensuring ensure a co-ordinated, bottom-up approach to all implications of the *Bologna* process for the arts and to value and preserve cultural, artistic, and pedagogical diversity;
- to organise a balanced conversation with all relevant partners on the impact of the '*Creative Industries*' and other changes in society on Higher Arts Education.

Increasingly consultation with the professional field will become part of this process. The Validation Conference organised by the Tuning Project and the European Commission in November 2007, will provide an excellent and first European-wide opportunity to deepen the interaction between Higher Arts Education and practitioners from European arts and culture.

The *inter}artes* Thematic Network, September 2007

inter}artes - the Socrates Thematic Network for the Higher Arts Education Sector in Europe 2004 -2007 brings together 65 Higher Arts Institutions from almost all EU countries, co-ordinated by the Aleksander Zelwerowicz State Theatre Academy Warsaw, Poland . contact persons *inter}artes*: Tomasz Kubikowski and Beate Kowal (international@at.edu.pl) and Lars Ebert (lars.ebert@elia-artschools.org)

artnesnet europe- the creative partnership network 2007 - 2010 Erasmus Network brings together 61 Higher Arts Institutions from almost all EU countries + Turkey, co-ordinated by the National Academy of Theatre and Film Arts Sofia, Bulgaria. contact persons *artnesnet europe*: Snejina Tankovska (st@art.acad.bg) and Lars Ebert (lars.ebert@elia-artschools.org)

Through the partnership with the **European League of Institutes of the Arts (ELIA)** *artnesnet europe* and *inter}artes* connect with 350 Higher Arts Education Institutes.

