

ELIA Manifesto

During the ELIA General Assembly in Barcelona, 7 October 2000, the members unanimously approved the following text:

Introduction

We are living in times of unprecedented change. The globalisation, the powerful dynamics of commercial pressure directed particularly at young people, and the increasing interaction between traditional, ethnic, religious and national communities are all creating a cultural climate of immense complexity. Education systems everywhere are also being reformed to take account of these changes.

In Bologna, on 19 June 1999 thirty-one European Ministers of Education signed a joint declaration to 'construct the European area of higher education'. The implementation of this declaration will have fundamental consequences for university and higher education in Europe, as well as for higher arts education institutions. These developments throughout Europe are leading to a re-evaluation of the arts and arts education and creating a new field of expertise.

In Paris on 3 November 1999, the UNESCO Director-General made an appeal for 'the promotion of arts education and creativity at school as part of the construction of a culture of peace'. The Commissioner of the European Union's Directorate-General for Education and Culture set out her main objective during a hearing in the European Parliament on 2 September 1999: to create a 'European Educational and Cultural Area'.

1. The Value of the Arts

The arts are both the most local and the most international of activities - proud of their traditions and identity, but at their most exciting when they break down barriers and cross borders. From the founding conference 'Creativity and Diversity: Europe's Richness' onwards ELIA has valued diversity. ELIA's membership reflects this diversity and will continue to do so, drawing in others associated with the arts and education too. The place of the arts in European life is beset with contradictions. At one level the arts are more widely practised and enjoyed than ever before. The arts are available to more people via more media and with a greater range of experience and knowledge than at any time in Europe's history. Especially because the EU is enlarging it will become increasingly

possible for performers, writers and audiences to connect across borders with all the freedom and regularity which contemporary technology and political circumstances allow.

However, the arts are also under more pressure than any time in the last fifty years. The consensus on the necessity of funding from taxation, and of the importance to society of a broad and deep cultural education, is under attack. Paradoxically, on the one hand, the artistic work of a small number of 'stars' and the record of the past can be successfully marketed globally and on the other hand, it is becoming harder for a large number of artists to maintain careers. The manifestation of successful entertainment and cultural industries influence (and could even threaten) the artistic process, which is concerned with the exploration of individual creativity and expression, with breaking the rules. The presentation of arts is expensive to mount and reach only a small proportion of the population in societies where political influence is measured by numbers rather than quality.

The creative arts contribute to the experience of life in parity with science and philosophy. The arts have the capacity to persuade, subvert, celebrate and confront; to challenge the status quo; to act as powerful cultural agents; to establish an individual's aspirations, to help people learn to appreciate differences and to construct coherent value systems. The arts constitute a distinct network of knowledge, with its own language and procedures, which enables us to describe, understand and engage in different forms of experience. The process of political and economic unification of Europe provides the ideal opportunity to stimulate awareness of neighbouring cultures through the medium of art.

Artists and arts graduates are invaluable, not only to the arts but to all activities in society by providing a workforce with a more sophisticated range of creative, interactive, negotiating, presentation, team-building, decision-making and entrepreneurial skills. It has been demonstrated that the arts provide a unique form of learning which enhances life skills and builds confidence in a wide variety of situations and types of community.

With the changing and increasing demands in society, new challenges have to be faced. In lifelong learning, continuing education and other non-traditional pathways the arts and artists play an important role.

The EU agenda for the future places considerable emphasis on education and training for economic development and employability. The arts (and artists) make a substantial contribution to the economy and are increasingly a feature of social and economic regeneration programmes. Cultural industries are those successful businesses set up to develop an artistic product for profit. In the process, the industry will often try to mould and influence the artist's work so that it is inoffensive and conventional and therefore more appealing to the market. It is the difficult task for arts education institutions to educate and

yet remain independent enough from industrial demands to maintain the integrity of work without disdaining commerce.

2. Art in Education: the importance of learning through the arts

Art in education, through its processes and products, initiates people into a unique form of experience, which enhances the quality and meaning of their lives, acts as a source of inspiration and celebrates the richness of the human spirit. Learning through the arts can play a fundamental role in people's personal development by helping them to extend their imagination, creativity and perceptive skills. Education through the arts is a learning process which awakens consciousness and curiosity towards other cultures, both sorely needed components of contemporary education.

Individuality, imagination and innovation should be encouraged and developed within the student experience. Academic systems need to become more flexible - a fluid network of transnational and transdisciplinary resources, capable of integrating the arts, humanities, technology and sciences.

3. Higher Arts Education in development

Higher arts education is integral to artistic development. Without opportunities to experience the arts, without research and development which enhances creativity, without innovative training, the arts become less dynamic. The future of the arts is dependent on the creativity, knowledge, skills and motivation of people who experience, teach and practice them. Higher arts education institutions should be laboratories and not museums. They should be embedded in their cities and develop a continuous dialogue with their citizens. They have not only an educational but also a civic responsibility to meet the challenges faced by mankind. Those laboratories should initiate new developments through new technologies towards a transformation process of art forms and new ways of teaching and learning. Consequently, higher arts education institutions are deeply affected by technical and political developments. They should neither seek to back away from this complexity nor should they feel compelled to look for a separate status.

In the current process of European integration, the plurality of higher arts education and its openness to contemporary realities determines the important role it can play in making Europe innovative and exciting. The providers of Europe's higher arts education must reflect upon and help achieve the social and cultural balance between identity and plurality, unification and diversity, within this continent and beyond.

ELIA will undertake to promote equality of opportunity for all students and staff regardless of gender, age, ethnic origin, cultural background, disability or philosophical orientation. ELIA believes that one of the strengths of Europe lies in the cultural diversity of people in Europe; therefore it will seek ways to celebrate diverse cultures. It is necessary to engage with other cultures to ensure that knowledge of their artistic achievements is not suppressed or removed from the dominant version of European art history. Only such a process of engagement will ensure that Europe remains a diverse and plural space.

The richness of the diversity of Europe's citizens is a challenge. The delicate balance between encouragement of diversity (preserving the integrity of cultures) and openness to others will be difficult to achieve and maintain. On the one hand, over-assertion of regional or national identity leading to fundamentalism and racism is destabilising and damaging, and on the other hand, we must guard against the ever-present possibility that regional and national diversity will be crushed by the technical advancement of multi-national, mass-consumer culture. It is only through a sophisticated approach to other cultures that a true balance can be found. The responsibility implicit in this form of approach is one for which both the artist and those involved in higher arts education constantly and sensitively must prepare.

ELIA Objectives

Representation and Advocacy

- To represent higher arts education and to be a voice to promote the interests of higher arts education in order to improve the conditions in which higher arts education can flourish within changing educational structures, nationally and internationally, and to promote the specific nature of arts education.
- To advise arts institutions as well as national and international authorities on the position and potential of higher arts education, specifically in the development of policies arising from the 1999 Bologna Declaration.
- To encourage European mobility, exchange and co-operation between students and staff.
- To promote the development of Europe as a multicultural society and the changing role of artists and arts education and to stimulate the discussion of the contribution of artists to an improved understanding of (and communication with) disadvantaged groups in our societies and to combat social exclusion.
- To encourage greater involvement of the arts and artists in primary and secondary levels of education as well as outside formal education. Art should be an integral part of education. Special attention should be given to teacher training in this respect.

- To seek recognition for the status of the artist and to support the process of recognition of innovative arts practice as a form of research and to look into the issues of copyright.
- To promote and support international networks in the artistic field as a framework for long-term co-operation, as part of a flexible and constantly changing process that thrives on new stimuli.

Innovation and Cooperation

- To encourage improvement of quality and innovation of higher arts education including curriculum development and staff development at a European level.
- To help establish favourable conditions for graduates to enter professional life. Institutions and organisations preparing young artists for professional practice should be supported.
- To analyse the artists' labour markets in all sectors of society and to research the range of work undertaken to develop a curriculum that provides them with the necessary professional skills.
- To encourage greater involvement of higher arts education in European developments in urban and social regeneration in cities and regions.
- To analyse the significance of arts education and training in the cultural industries and to discuss curriculum development in relation to the cultural industries.
- To understand the influence of emerging information and communication technologies in the arts and of the new, developing interdisciplinary art forms, and to initiate activities resulting in new ways of teaching and learning.
- To encourage, exchange experience and develop lifelong learning programmes, both in terms of further training for graduates and artists and courses for a wider target group, such as older people and people from minority backgrounds.
- To see and develop European arts graduates as a resource for the future of arts education, creating links for them with arts institutes after graduation.
- To collect and disseminate accurate data on relevant topics for higher arts education and to initiate and undertake comparative research and development in Europe and a cross-national setting in higher arts education.
- To seek contact and co-operation with relevant organisations from the academic world and beyond.