

MUSIC EDUCATION ACROSS EUROPE: A PANORAMA OF DIVERSITY AND COMMON GROUND

Final Report – TEAM Work Package 8

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Introduction

Music education in Europe is a rich and diverse landscape, shaped by centuries of cultural traditions, educational philosophies, social change and distinctive national identities. Each country has developed its own ways of understanding the place of music in education: what music is taught, how it is experienced in schools, who teaches it and what purposes it is expected to serve. These differences make European music education difficult to describe through a single model, but they also constitute its greatest richness. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of music education across Europe, bringing together different national perspectives and identifying both shared tendencies and distinctive features. A description of music education in 23 countries is presented in a separate document, allowing readers to explore its educational context, traditions, structures, and current developments in greater depth. Before turning to these individual portraits, however, we begin with a broader panorama – a view across countries that reveals the diversity, common ground, contrasts, and emerging directions of music education in Europe.

What are the origins of this European panorama?

This European panorama has emerged from TEAM – Teacher Education Academy for Music – a large-scale European project running from 2023 to 2026. It brings together 13 partner institutions from 11 countries and a wider network of associated partners across 26 further European countries. TEAM aims to contribute to the transformation of music teacher education and school music education in response to the changing realities of twenty-first-century education. Across nine interconnected work packages, the project addresses key areas such as teacher professionalism, digitalisation, intercultural learning, international mobility, curriculum development, and future educational challenges. By connecting institutions, researchers, teacher educators, teachers, and educational contexts across Europe, TEAM creates a space for sharing knowledge and experience while exploring both the diversity and common directions of European music education.

Work Package 8 (WP8) – Mapping Music Education – turns this broad European collaboration into a systematic picture of music education across countries. Building on the earlier *meNet* project, WP8 revisits the European music education landscape almost two decades later, updating and extending the previous mapping to reflect current structures, curricula, practices, and developments. This work has included designing the study, collecting and validating data from participating countries, comparing national contexts, and communicating the findings. Two reports mark the main stages of this process: an interim mapping report (D8.1) and this final comparative report, which brings together the results of the mapping process, and provides the foundation for subsequent cross-country comparison, interpretation, and recommendations.

How was the panorama created?

The European landscape of music education was developed through a comparative survey study, using a common questionnaire to collect structured yet context-sensitive information across 31 European countries. Building on the earlier *meNet* instrument, the questionnaire was updated and expanded within WP8, discussed by TEAM partners, and revised to reflect contemporary developments in music education. Its seven sections covered the political and school context, the place of music in schools, music curricula and assessment, current trends, future developments, and examples of practice. Most questions were open-ended, allowing national experts to provide both factual information and explanations grounded in policy documents, curricula, research, and professional knowledge.



The study involved 31 European countries (Questionnaire Countries shown in green), covering the large majority of the continent and providing a broad basis for exploring the diversity of music education across Europe. This extensive geographical coverage allows the panorama to capture different educational traditions, school systems, and approaches to music education. The map shows the geographical scope of the study and highlights the breadth of national contexts represented in the report.

Data were collected between December 2024 and March 2025. Depending on the country, questionnaires were completed by individual national experts in consultation with colleagues or collaboratively by teams of music educators. Spain and the United Kingdom were represented by autonomous educational contexts – Catalonia, Wales, and Scotland. The completed questionnaires were subsequently reviewed and cross-checked by the WP8 coordinating team. Where information was unclear or incomplete, contributors were contacted for clarification or additional evidence. Finally, the data were organised thematically and compared across contexts, combining common indicators with national particularities and examples of practice. This process enabled us to create a panorama that is both comparable across Europe and sensitive to its educational diversity.

How is the panorama presented?

To make the diversity of European music education both visible and comparable, the findings are presented, following the same three-part structure.

1. Political Framework and School Structure, providing the context needed to understand how education is organised and governed. It then turns to

2. Music in Schools: Time Allocation, Provision and Teacher Support, showing where and how music is positioned within schooling, how much time is allocated to it, and who is responsible for its delivery.
3. Music Curriculum, focuses on curriculum aims and content, implementation, assessment, and the place of broader educational priorities. Using the same structure for all participating countries makes it possible to appreciate each national context on its own terms while also creating a common lens through which similarities, differences, and distinctive features across Europe can be identified.

The following sections move from the broader European perspective to a more systematic examination of the contexts in which music education takes place. Using a common analytical framework, we first consider the political and structural conditions shaping education across countries, before turning to the place of music in schools and, finally, to music curricula and assessment. This shared structure provides the basis for understanding both national particularities and the patterns that emerge across Europe.

1. Political Framework and School Structure

The political and administrative framework within which an education system operates provides the foundation for curricular and pedagogical decisions. It determines how responsibilities are distributed between national, regional, municipal, and school levels, who develops curricula and regulations, how schools are funded and administered, and how much autonomy individual schools have in shaping educational provision. Across Europe, these arrangements vary considerably. Understanding how education is governed is therefore essential for interpreting differences in school structures, curriculum implementation, teacher provision, and ultimately the place of music education.

How is education governed and organised?

A key distinction concerns the level at which educational decision-making is concentrated. In some countries, education is governed predominantly at the national level, with a central ministry responsible for major aspects of education policy, curriculum frameworks, teacher regulations, and funding. In other systems, significant responsibilities are delegated to regional or municipal authorities, allowing educational provision to be adapted to local circumstances while remaining within a broader national framework. The degree of decentralisation can therefore vary considerably, even among countries with similar overall political structures. Federal and multi-level systems illustrate this diversity particularly clearly. In some countries, responsibility for education lies primarily with individual regions or states, each of which may have its own education ministry, legislation, curricula, and administrative structures. In others, educational governance is organised around linguistic or

cultural communities rather than geographical regions. Some systems combine several levels of responsibility, with national authorities establishing overarching frameworks while regional or local bodies are responsible for implementation, administration, and resource allocation. The extent to which these levels coordinate their activities also varies, resulting in different degrees of national coherence and regional variation.

Local authorities and schools themselves may also play an important role in educational governance. Depending on the national context, municipalities or other local bodies may be responsible for school infrastructure, staffing, budgets, or the organisation of specific educational services. Schools may have varying degrees of autonomy in areas such as curriculum implementation, timetabling, staffing, and the allocation of resources. In some countries, this autonomy allows schools to respond flexibly to local needs and priorities; in others, decision-making remains more strongly regulated at higher administrative levels.

Educational provision is further shaped by actors beyond government authorities. Private and publicly funded independent schools, religious or pedagogical school networks, professional associations, cultural institutions, and other organisations may contribute to the organisation and delivery of education. Their role differs substantially across countries, particularly in systems with a strong tradition of educational pluralism. In some contexts, non-state schools form an established part of publicly funded education and enjoy considerable autonomy in governance and curriculum implementation, while in others their role is more limited.

These different governance arrangements have direct implications for music education. Where curriculum development and funding are highly centralised, national regulations may provide relatively consistent expectations for music across schools. Where greater responsibility lies with regions, municipalities, or individual schools, the provision of music may vary more strongly according to local priorities, available resources, staffing, and institutional autonomy. Political and administrative structures therefore do not determine music education directly, but they establish the conditions within which it is planned, funded, implemented, and experienced.

How is the school pathway structured?

Across Europe, educational pathways begin in early childhood, although participation at this stage is not universally compulsory. The transition to compulsory education therefore takes place at different ages and within different institutional structures across countries. Compulsory education typically extends through primary and lower secondary education, although the duration and structural organisation of these stages vary considerably. In some systems, primary education constitutes a distinct stage of several years, while in others, primary and lower secondary education are combined into a single continuous cycle. These structural variations also affect the age range covered by different educational stages, meaning that terms such as “primary school

“music” may refer to different age groups and educational spans across countries. Direct age-based comparisons are therefore essential for cross-national analysis.

The table provided within the first section of each country report (Political framework and school structure) offers an orientation for understanding these structural differences. By mapping the respective age ranges onto the categories of early childhood, primary school, lower secondary school, and upper secondary school, it is intended to support readers in developing a clearer understanding of how the school system is structured in each country. Rather than providing a basis for direct comparison of educational stages, the table should be read as a guide to the specific organisation and age structure of schooling in each national context (see example below).

Early childhood				Primary school				Lower secondary school				Upper secondary school			
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N	AGE RANGE															
	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18

Table 1: School structure in N country

These structural differences provide the context for understanding how music education is organised in each country. The next section focuses on time allocated to music, who teaches it, resources for music teaching and learning, and extracurricular music activities.

2. Music in Schools: Time Allocation, Provision and Teacher Support

How much time is given to music?

Comparing the time allocated to music across Europe is not as straightforward as counting weekly lessons. School structures differ considerably between countries: primary education may last from four to seven years, while in some systems primary and lower secondary education form a single stage extending over eight or nine years. Children also enter formal schooling at different ages. To make comparison possible, we follow the European Commission framework and distinguish between primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary education, while also considering students' age. The data therefore represent the usual provision in the majority of schools rather than every possible national or local arrangement.

Music is present from the earliest stages of education in almost all participating countries. In early childhood education, however, it is usually integrated into broader creative activities rather than taught as a separate subject. The most consistent position of music can be seen in primary education. All countries include music at this stage, and in the vast majority it is compulsory. Most commonly, pupils receive between one and two lessons per week, although the number and distribution of lessons may change from one grade to another.

At lower secondary level, music remains part of the curriculum in almost all countries, but the picture becomes more varied. In some systems it continues as a compulsory subject throughout this stage; in others, it becomes optional after one or more years. The greatest diversity appears in upper secondary education. Music may remain compulsory throughout, as in Estonia and Serbia, become optional in later grades, as in Austria, Hungary and Lithuania, or no longer form part of the general curriculum, as in Greece and Italy. Overall, the age up to which students encounter music within formal school education ranges approximately from 14 to 19 years.

These figures need to be interpreted with some caution. Around one third of participating countries reported substantial regional or local differences. National curricula may provide a general framework while regions, municipalities, or individual schools retain considerable freedom to determine actual provision. Germany, Scotland and Wales illustrate this particularly clearly and are therefore not represented in the comparative figures on weekly hours. In Germany, education is regulated by 16 federal states, while schools in Scotland and Wales have considerable autonomy in organising curriculum provision.

Time allocation also reflects different understandings of how music belongs in school education. While it is commonly taught as an independent subject, particularly at primary level, music may also be combined with other arts, integrated into interdisciplinary learning, or complemented by optional activities and specialist

programmes. The European panorama therefore reveals not one common timetable, but different ways of making time and space for music throughout a student's school journey.

Who brings music into the classroom?

Who teaches music depends significantly on the level of schooling. The greatest diversity is found in primary education: in 15 of the 30 countries, music is taught mainly by generalist classroom teachers; in 12 countries, either generalist or specialist music teachers may teach the subject, depending on school organisation, staffing, or teacher expertise; and in only three countries is primary music taught exclusively by music specialists. At lower and upper secondary levels, the picture is much more consistent, with music taught by subject specialists who generally hold formal qualifications in both music and education. National arrangements nevertheless vary, particularly where music forms part of broader areas such as expressive arts or aesthetic education. Specialist provision may also be strengthened through partnerships with music schools, municipalities, cultural institutions, or external professionals. At the same time, several countries report shortages of qualified music teachers, creating challenges for ensuring consistent access to specialist music expertise.

What resources bring music learning to life?

Across Europe, music education draws on an increasingly diverse combination of instruments, printed materials, digital technologies, and cultural experiences. Yet the findings reveal that the key issue is not simply which resources are available, but how equally they are distributed. Most countries provide public funding for school music, although systems range from centralised national provision to models in which municipalities or individual schools determine priorities and spending. As a result, access to instruments, technologies, and teaching materials can differ considerably between regions and even between neighbouring schools.

A second pattern is the coexistence of traditional and digital resources. Textbooks remain important in some countries, while elsewhere teachers rely more strongly on self-created materials, instruments, audiovisual media, and digital platforms. Greater teacher autonomy can encourage flexibility and innovation, but it can also increase differences in the quality of provision when resources, funding, or professional support are uneven.

Importantly, resources for music learning extend beyond the classroom. National cultural programmes, partnerships with music schools and cultural institutions, concerts, workshops, and encounters with professional musicians can substantially broaden students' musical experiences. Here again, however, the European panorama reveals unequal access: where systematic national programmes exist, opportunities are more consistently available, whereas elsewhere participation depends on local initiative, funding, school leadership, or geographical location. Thus, resources should be understood not simply in terms of access to

equipment and facilities, but also as an issue of equity. Students' opportunities to learn and experience music are closely connected to the structures that support music education.

What happens beyond the music lesson?

Extra-curricular music is a visible part of school life across Europe, but the opportunities available to students vary considerably. Choirs are the most widespread activity, followed by instrumental ensembles, school bands, musicals, and instrumental or vocal lessons. Their presence often reflects national musical traditions: in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, for example, school choirs are closely connected to the Song Festival tradition. A broader pattern, however, is that extra-curricular provision depends less on formal curriculum requirements and more on school-level conditions. Funding, available facilities, teacher initiative, school leadership, and partnerships with cultural institutions strongly influence what schools can offer. This creates considerable differences in students' access to musical experiences. While some schools provide rich programmes of ensembles, performances, and projects, others offer few opportunities beyond regular lessons. Extra-curricular music, therefore, reveals both the vitality of music within European school communities and the inequalities that arise when provision depends heavily on local resources and individual initiative.

Where can students go further with music?

Specialised music education is well established across most European countries, providing opportunities for students to pursue music beyond the general school curriculum. The panorama reveals several models: general schools with enhanced music programmes, music or arts schools, specialised music or arts gymnasiums, and private music schools or studios. These differ not only in intensity and age range but also in their relationship with general education. Some integrate advanced music learning into the school day, while others operate as separate institutions after regular school hours. Music gymnasiums may offer particularly intensive programmes and prepare students for further professional studies. Funding arrangements are equally diverse, ranging from fully state-funded institutions to mixed public-private models and entirely private provision. Thus, while specialised pathways are widely available across Europe, access, intensity, and institutional status differ substantially, reflecting different national traditions and approaches to supporting advanced musical development.

The differences in the organisation and provision of music education outlined in this section are also reflected in what students are expected to learn and how their learning is assessed. Examining music curricula and assessment practices across Europe reveals both shared educational principles and distinct approaches to the knowledge, skills and music experiences that different music educational systems seek to develop, as discussed in the following section.

3. Music Curriculum and Assessment

The concept of curriculum is a complex and much contested one, and in its broadest sense refers to everything that takes place in schools. However, for the purpose of this comparative report, the focus is on official published curriculum documents. If political and administrative frameworks establish the conditions within which music education operates, as noted earlier, then curriculum documents reveal the purposes and values that underpin it. They outline the place of music within general education, what students are expected to learn, which musical traditions and practices are worth studying, and how achievement is assessed. Curricula therefore function both as frameworks for guiding practice and as expressions of educational values.

Across Europe, music curricula differ considerably in their organisation, terminology, level of prescription and relationship to wider curriculum frameworks. Nevertheless, the country reports reveal substantial common ground in how music learning is conceptualised. Most curricula promote an experiential approach to learning music: learning music through active music-making.

Who shapes the music curriculum?

The governance structures outlined earlier determine where authority for education lies. The key question for music education is how that authority shapes the curriculum. In line with these governance structures, two broad approaches to curriculum development emerge from the questionnaires and country reports. In centralised systems, which accounts for most countries, music curricula are developed largely at national level, while in decentralised systems, overarching authorities establish broad objectives that are translated into curricula at regional, network or school level.

Regardless of governance structures, music curricula development often involves different combinations of educational stakeholders. Although formal responsibility ultimately lies with a ministry of education in most countries, the specialist work of drafting, revising, publishing and monitoring the curriculum is often undertaken by a designated agency, institute or pedagogical council. These expert boards differ in composition across all countries, but generally comprise subject specialists, music educators, academics, and professional organisations. The extent and nature of participation differs, as does the degree to which classroom teachers and subject associations have a formal voice in curriculum development. Formal public consultation on draft curricula is not widely documented, mentioned in only a small number of country reports.

How are music curricula changing?

Curriculum reform is a prominent feature of the contemporary European educational landscape. A substantial number of the countries represented are in the process of developing new frameworks, or have recently revised curricula and are currently implementing reforms. Although these reforms differ in detail, a recurring trend is a movement away from content-based syllabi towards competence- and outcomes-based approaches. In other countries, such approaches are already well established.

Within these frameworks, attention is increasingly directed towards what students should be able to do, understand and demonstrate through music. Emphasis is placed on active participation, creativity, reflection and procedural or experiential learning through music-making. To this end, knowledge is situated within the broader processes of performing, creating, listening, responding and understanding. A similarity in the structure of many curriculum documents can now be observed. A typical music curriculum outlines a rationale for the subject, general aims, a competence model or a set of organising domains, learning outcomes specified by stage or grade, pedagogical recommendations, and a section on assessment. Many also address adaptations for students with additional needs.

This development is also associated with a broadening of the purposes attributed to music education. Creativity and self-expression are among the most consistent aims, alongside aesthetic development and the cultivation of musical knowledge and understanding. Music is also frequently presented as contributing to the development of communication and collaborative skills, personal and emotional development, cultural awareness, and participation in social and cultural life. It is interesting to note that these purposes show considerable continuity with those identified in the *meNet* Final Report. That project identified three broad and interconnected rationales for school music education: the development of the musical skills, knowledge and understanding needed to make and respond to music; the development of knowledge, understanding and appreciation of cultural environments and heritage; and music's contribution to individual and social development through creativity, identity formation, personal development and social interaction. The present findings suggest that these fundamental purposes remain strongly evident, although they are now articulated within a broader curricular discourse that increasingly encompasses inclusion, intercultural understanding, citizenship, well-being, sustainability and digital competence.

Cultural identity and diversity constitute particularly important themes. Many curricula seek to introduce students to, and/or strive to preserve their own national, regional or local musical heritage while simultaneously encouraging engagement with a wider range of musical cultures. Music education is therefore frequently

positioned both as a means of maintaining cultural traditions and as an opportunity to encounter difference, while also aiming to respond to the musical worlds in which young people frequently inhabit. However, intercultural understanding, inclusion and respect for diversity appear with varying degrees of explicitness across the curriculum documents.

The development of digital competence also forms part of this changing landscape. A number of curricula acknowledge digital tools for listening, creating, recording, producing or engaging with music. These developments reflect a broader opening of school music towards contemporary musical practices and students' everyday musical environments. Other cross-cutting competencies include citizenship and democratic participation, sustainability, equality and well-being. These are more prominent in some curricula than others and are not always translated into specifically musical outcomes. Nevertheless, their presence demonstrates that music is often situated within wider educational agendas rather than justified solely in terms of subject-specific musical development.

Reform is not uniform across the participating countries. Long-established and recently developed curriculum models coexist, and several countries are currently in periods of transition in which new curricula are being introduced progressively. The European picture therefore does not suggest convergence towards a single curricular model. It points instead towards some shared directions of development, particularly competence orientation, active musical participation, student-centred learning and an increasingly broad conception of the educational purposes of music.

What do students learn?

Within this changing curricular landscape, and despite diversity in many aspects of curriculum documents, there is a notable degree of similarity in the organisation of music learning around three core musical activities: performing, creating, and listening and responding. Performing encompasses singing and instrumental music-making, both individually and in groups. Creating includes exploring and experimenting with sound, improvising, composing, and arranging. Listening and responding are understood as active, analytical and reflective processes rather than passive reception. Across curricula, these activities are variously described as domains, strands, or musical competencies.

A fourth domain or strand, concerned with understanding music in its cultural, historical and social context, is also included in most curricula. Some countries integrate music literacy, notation and the learning of conceptual knowledge within the three core domains, while others identify their development as a fifth strand. Regardless

of difference, most curricula reflect a shared understanding that all musical knowledge and skills should remain connected to sound and be developed in and through practical music-making.

Variation in what students learn arises primarily from the relative emphasis placed on these different aspects of musical learning. Some curricula give particular prominence to singing and collective music-making, often reflecting established choral and folk-song traditions. Others place a greater emphasis on listening and analysis, viewing it as a means of developing musical understanding and aesthetic awareness. A strong focus on composition and improvisation is less common, although many curricula advocate a balance between the three core activities. The emphasis placed on the importance of musical literacy, theory and historical knowledge also varies. In some countries these remain strongly represented with curricula prescribing detailed and carefully sequenced concepts to be taught. Elsewhere, curricula articulate only broad learning outcomes and place greater emphasis on practical, experiential and creative approaches.

A broad developmental pattern can be identified across educational stages in several curricula. Music in the earlier years typically emphasises direct experience through singing, movement, musical play, listening, simple instrumental activity and exploration of sound. As students progress, curricula generally introduce more developed musical concepts and skills, analytical listening, musical literacy and contextual understanding. At secondary level, music history, stylistic understanding, analysis, technology and more sophisticated creative and performance activities tend to assume greater importance. In some countries the balance shifts significantly away from experiential and practical learning towards historical, analytical or theoretical work as students become older.

What counts as school music?

While music curriculum documents define what students should be able to do in music, with varying degrees of detail, most leave the selection of repertoire to the teacher (sometimes including students). However, there is evidence that national and regional musical traditions remain important in many countries, and this is where curricula differ from each other. Folk songs and dances, choral singing, national art music, and in some countries, long-established traditions of aural training (such as the use of relative solmisation) contribute to a curriculum's national/regional character, and are understood as playing a significant role in developing cultural identity and transmitting musical heritage. In addition, in several post-conflict settings in some eastern European countries, curricula specifically include music traditions from all communities to encourage intercultural understanding.

The lack of prescription of repertoire points to a widening of what counts as ‘school music’. Popular genres, traditional and world musics, jazz and contemporary practice now sit alongside Western art music. Several countries go further, incorporating informal approaches to learning and music production with digital technologies, especially at secondary school level. The resulting panoramic view then is of curricula that are at once more nationally grounded, yet more varied than those documented in *meNet*. While the transmission of cultural heritage remains an important aim, what counts as school music has widened to take account of young people’s lives beyond the music classroom.

How much freedom do teachers and students have in shaping music learning?

One of the clearest areas of diversity across European curricula is the extent to which the official curricula determine how music education takes place in the classroom. As noted above, many curricula now operate primarily as curriculum frameworks which specify aims, competencies or learning outcomes but allow teachers to choose repertoire, activities, pedagogical approaches and particular learning materials. In such cases, schools and/or individual teachers design their own curricula based on the national or regional requirements, but adapted to students’ ages, interests and previous experiences, as well as to local musical cultures and the resources available in the school. At the other end of the spectrum are those educational systems which are more closely regulated. In such cases, curriculum documents prescribe in greater detail the music material to be taught, and may also include a prescribed sequence and/or thematic units are prescribed, leaving less room for teacher autonomy.

The use of textbooks and other teaching materials also impacts on degrees of teacher and student autonomy. Practices range from the requirement to use officially approved textbooks – often in conjunction with more tightly prescribed curricula – to those systems where textbooks are available but entirely optional. More commonly, teachers appear to be able to supplement official or published materials with resources of their own, and/or be able to choose repertoire and teaching approaches.

Student voice is increasingly recognised, although its form and extent vary. In some education systems, formal structures such as student councils, advisory bodies and consultation processes provide opportunities for students to contribute to wider school or curriculum decision-making. Within music classrooms, however, student agency more commonly takes a less formal and more immediate form. Students may contribute to the choice of repertoire, topics and projects, make decisions within creative and performance activities, or pursue musical interests and preferences within personalised learning. Active music-making itself can provide opportunities for students to assume responsibility and exercise choice.

Both teacher and student agency depend not only on what curriculum frameworks permit, but on how those possibilities are implemented. Open curricula can encourage creativity and greater student ownership, but they also place greater responsibility on teachers to design appropriate programmes suited to the needs of their students. This has implications for teacher education: to educate teachers with the expertise to shape meaningful musical education.

How is music learning assessed, and does it contribute to school-leaving qualifications?

Assessment reflects the multidimensional nature of music learning. Reflecting the main areas of the curriculum, the data collected describe assessment as embracing this multidimensional range, rather than testing musical knowledge alone. Typically, students are assessed through varying combinations of performing, creating, listening and musical understanding. However, increasing consideration is also given to participation, individual progress, creativity, cultural understanding and the ability to reflect across many curricula. The use of both formative assessment, which supports learning on a continuous basis, and summative assessment, which records what has been achieved, is also evident across all curricula. However the balance between these varies according to educational stage and national practice. A developmental progression across the various educational stages is common in many countries. In primary schools, assessment is typically descriptive and formative, focusing on participation and achievement through musical activity. Numerical grades become more common as students progress through school, with more formal assessment of knowledge and understanding gradually incorporated alongside practical work.

A wide range of methods is used within both formative and summative approaches. Practical performances, singing and instrumental work, compositions and other creative work, listening activities, project work and portfolios all contribute to feedback and grades. Observation, oral feedback and the monitoring of practical work allow teachers to identify progress without separating assessment from everyday musical activity. Written and oral assignments, theory tests and other more formal examinations become increasingly prominent where curricula give greater emphasis to musical knowledge, history, analysis or literacy. Interestingly, assessment is not just confined to students' demonstration of musical skills, knowledge and understanding. Assessing such areas as 'safety and well-being' and 'learning how to learn' are important in some countries. This first of these includes the safe use of equipment and devices and the ability to recognise the impact of music on well-being. 'Learning to learn' involves students' setting goals for their own learning, and self-reflection. Related to this, references to peer-assessment, self-assessment and self-reflection, usually in the context of formative assessment approaches, are becoming more prominent in many curricula. Learning to evaluate their own

performance, as well as that of their peers, is seen as contributing to the development of students' competencies in the areas of self-development and communication.

Whether music contributes to students' secondary-school qualifications differs significantly across Europe. In most countries, music is not included as a state examination subject within general education. Where examinations do exist, they take different forms. Externally set examinations occur in only a minority of countries, usually at the end of upper secondary school, although in a few cases, they also take place at the end of lower secondary education. These typically combine a written component which assesses listening, aural perception, musical knowledge and composition, together with a performance assessment. Such examinations significantly impact what music is taught in the classroom, and how. Elsewhere, music may contribute to students' *Matura* or matriculation qualification, but assessment is organised and carried out at school level, giving teachers greater autonomy over content.

The relationship between curriculum and assessment is particularly important. Where curricula are organised around broad competencies and learning outcomes, assessment generally captures practical, creative, cognitive and reflective dimensions rather than relying predominantly on written testing. This requires considerable professional expertise from teachers, and it may have implications for music teacher education.

Overall, the data collected reveal both substantial common ground and continuing diversity in music curriculum and assessment across Europe. Active music-making, creativity, broad musical participation and multidimensional assessment occur across differing governance structures, educational systems and curricular traditions. These shared aspirations, however, are ultimately realised in classrooms rather than in inert documents, and so their impact rests on teachers' expertise, the resources available to them, and the place afforded to music within each education system.

Concluding Remarks

This report offers a broad overview of school music education across Europe based on data collected in 31 countries within the TEAM project. The findings reveal a diverse landscape shaped by different political frameworks, school structures, educational traditions, and approaches to curriculum and teaching. Although music is present in the school systems of almost all participating countries, its position, continuity, and the time allocated to it vary considerably across educational stages. The panorama also highlights shared challenges. Access to qualified music teachers, adequate resources, extracurricular activities, and specialised music education often depends on regional conditions, school priorities, funding, and individual initiative. These differences affect not only how music is taught but also the opportunities students have to participate in meaningful musical experiences. At the same time, the findings demonstrate the vitality of music education and its continuing importance within European schools and communities.

This report provides a concise introduction to the research conducted within the TEAM project. More detailed country-level information, comparative analyses, and discussion of school music education in Europe can be found in the project publications listed below.

Girdzijauskienė, R., O’Connell, L., & Stolle, K. L. (Eds.). (2026). *Mapping school music education across European landscapes*. Helbling.

Girdzijauskienė, R., O’Connell, L., & Stolle, K. (2026). Mapping the present and shaping the future: Insights on school music education in Europe. In I. Malmberg, T. Buchborn, & L. Steinmetz (Eds.), *Future-making, mobility and networking in Europe: Impulses for music education in school, teacher education and professional development* (pp. 185–204). Helbling.

Stolle, K. L., Girdzijauskienė, R., & O’Connell, L. (2026). Whose voices are heard in music curriculum development? A comparative study of Germany, Ireland and Lithuania. *Revista Portuguesa de Educação Musical*, 152, e64. <https://doi.org/10.25659/rpem.v152i.64>

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