European Perspectives on Music Education 17

Isolde Malmberg, Thade Buchborn, Lauren Steinmetz (Eds.)

# Future-making, Mobility and Networking in Europe

## Impulses for Music Education in School, Teacher Education and Professional Development

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TEACHER EDUCATION ACADEMY FOR MUSIC

Future-Making, Mobility and Networking in Europe

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**Future-making, Mobility and Networking in Europe.**
**Impulses for Music Education in School, Teacher Education and Professional Development**
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Ruth Jakobi & Simone Dudt

# Foreword

As the broadest network of music organisations in Europe with a great diversity of members, the *European Music Council (EMC)*[1] is honoured to be an associate partner of the *TEAM* project,[2] with Secretary General Ruth Jakobi serving on the *TEAM Scientific Advisory Board*. We strongly believe that music is a powerful driver of personal and societal growth. Access to both musical practices and music education plays an important role in contemporary societies, with the potential to nurture inclusive communities and to further democratic principles. Everyone should be able to engage in music at every stage of life, regardless of physical or mental ability, gender, age, ethnicity, or social, cultural or geographical origin. The European Music Council welcomes the *TEAM* project's alignment with the values of the International Music Council's *5 Music Rights*[3], including the right of free musical expression, the right to learn musical languages and skills, and the right to fair working conditions for musical artists and educators.

The 2018 *European Agenda for Music*[4], agreed upon by over 70 networks from the European music sector representing a broad range of aims and target groups, set out the following key elements (among many others) that are today core themes of the *TEAM* project:

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1 www.emc-imc.org

2 *TEAM* was funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

3 www.imc-cim.org

4 www.europeanagendaformusic.org

- *Develop and maintain the quality of music education in schools*
- *Provide better and lifelong training for music teachers and trainers in all areas of the music sector*
- *Exploit the use of new technologies in music education and capacity building*
- *Increase international exchange in training and education*
- *Set up enhanced international programmes, conferences, projects and networks for professionals, non-professionals, educators and students*

Mobility is a well-recognised conduit for knowledge sharing, artistic collaboration, and intercultural competence, and as such offers valuable support for graduates in the arts and cultural fields as they make the increasingly difficult transition into the professional sphere. Yet cross-border internships remain difficult to access, limiting students' and young graduates' ability to build foundational professional connections. This is particularly relevant in music teacher education, as curricula and employment rules are often subject to strict and complex national regulations. Cross-border mobility often remains a privilege for those with personal contacts, the financial means to cover ongoing living costs at home and additional expenses abroad, the resources to pay for travel expenses, and access to travel infrastructures, which are very unequally developed across Europe. For equitable access to mobility, access to information, improved infrastructure and clearly structured programmes are key.

The *TEAM* approach – establishing a network for pan-European research and development in music teacher training, including the ethical use of digital tools and new technologies; increasing the mobility of students, teachers and researchers; and mapping both music teacher education and music education across Europe – is timely and appropriate. In today's rapidly changing societies, a high level of flexibility and preparedness is needed to navigate the transformative processes required to face technological development including AI, climate change and climate adaptation as well as resilience and recovery related to increasing conflicts and crises. Music, in its threefold nature as an art form, as a tool for societal change, and as a potential contributor to economic growth[4], has an important role to play. Therefore, the *EMC* has placed a strong focus on music education in its advocacy work, by supporting, for example, the *Global Framework for Culture and Arts Education*[5] adopted by the UNESCO member states in 2024. The *EMC* has joined an initiative of several European cultural networks to add the **A**rts to a set of future-proof skills in EU policy and terminology. The aim is to move from a STEM approach to STEAM (science, technology, engineering, **arts**, and mathematics), specifically promoting the inclusion of the arts to

[5] https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000395719

foster creativity and innovation.[6] We therefore welcome the *Culture Compass for Europe*,[7] adopted in November 2025, which provides a strategic policy framework for culture in Europe. Among many other topics, this framework encourages the integration of arts and culture into education to foster democratic citizenship and address skills shortages. It emphasises strengthening cross-sector cooperation between education providers, artists, and cultural institutions.

Initiatives like *TEAM* are crucial in supporting such advocacy efforts as those above by providing both the necessary data and practical, hands-on solutions. We hope that the project results will be disseminated widely and that they receive the acknowledgement they deserve.

*Simone Dudt and Ruth Jakobi*
*Secretaries General of the European Music Council in dual leadership*

[6] www.cultureactioneurope.org
[7] https://culture.ec.europa.eu/policies/culture-compass

Isolde Malmberg, Thade Buchborn & Lauren Steinmetz

# Addressing Music Education Futures in Europe Through Research and Development

## An Introduction

This edited volume, *Future-Making, Mobility and Networking in Europe: Impulses for Music Education in School, Teacher Education and Professional Development*, emerges from the 39-month *Erasmus+ Teacher Academies* project *TEAM – Teacher Education Academy for Music: Future-Making, Mobility and Networking in Europe*.[1] *TEAM* is a pan-European research and development network dedicated to rethinking music teacher education and school music education in Europe. Bringing together universities, schools and teacher education institutions from eleven European countries, with associated partners extending the network to 23 countries altogether,[2] this large-scale project sought to respond to pressing social, technological, ecological, and cultural transformations shaping contemporary education. Coordinated initially by the University of Potsdam in Germany and subsequently by the Austrian mdw – University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, *TEAM* developed collaborative structures for research, mobility, innovation, and professional exchange across national and institutional borders. The present volume documents the central findings, reflections, and outcomes generated throughout the project and synthesises the work conducted across all project work packages.

*TEAM* was conceived within the framework of the *Erasmus+ Teacher Academies* programme[3] and aimed to strengthen music teacher education through networking, mobility, intercultural exchange, and the development of future-oriented educational resources.

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1 *TEAM* was funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them. *TEAM* ran from 15.6.2023 to 14.9.2026 and was co-funded by the EU by 1,500,000 Euros. Project Number 101103634. https://teacher-academy-music.eu/

2 https://teacher-academy-music.eu/about-team

3 Call ERASMUS-EDU-2022-PEX-TEACH-ACA

The project addressed current challenges of music teacher professionalisation, including digitalisation, sustainability, democracy education, intercultural learning, and social cohesion. At the same time, it pursued the development of evidence-based open educational resources (OERs), curricular frameworks, mentoring structures, and mobility formats designed to support both initial and continuing music teacher education throughout Europe. The project therefore positioned music education not merely as a school subject but as a socially and culturally significant field capable of contributing to democratic participation, cultural understanding, and sustainable futures.

## Negotiating and Governing Futures: Music Teacher Education in Contemporary Europe

The *TEAM* project raises fundamental questions concerning the relationship between educational research, political agendas, and institutional governance within European funding structures. The thematic priorities defined by the European Commission for the *Erasmus+ Teacher Academies* call – particularly digitalisation, democracy education, and sustainability education – significantly shaped the conceptual orientation of the project from the outset. These themes undoubtedly reflect urgent societal concerns and correspond to broader European policy frameworks such as the *European Education Area* and the *Green Deal*. Yet their predefined status also requires critical reflection.

The increasing orientation of educational research towards externally defined policy priorities can be interpreted as part of a broader transformation of educational governance in late modern societies (Biesta, 2010; Ball, 2012). Research funding increasingly privileges projects that align with political agendas centred on innovation, employability, measurable impact, and social transformation. In this context, concepts such as sustainability, digitalisation, and democracy education often function simultaneously as pedagogical aspirations and as instruments of governance. Educational institutions are thereby expected not only to respond to social change but also to actively produce desired forms of future citizenship and social behaviour. This development raises important questions for teacher education in general and for music teacher education in particular. Can schools and teacher education institutions truly initiate profound societal transformation? Or are they increasingly burdened with political expectations that exceed their structural capacities? Scholars in critical educational theory have repeatedly warned against attributing overly expansive transformative functions to schools while neglecting broader social, economic, and political conditions (Biesta, 2020; Brügelmann, 2021). Educational institutions undoubtedly contribute to socialisation, participation, and cultural reflection; however, their capacity to solve systemic crises such as climate change, democratic erosion, or digital capitalism remains limited.

Within music education, these tensions become particularly visible. Music education has traditionally been associated with aesthetic experience, cultural participation, creativity, and personal expression (Elliott & Silverman, 2015); however, contemporary discourses increasingly demand that music education address sustainability, democratic participation, intercultural dialogue, and digital transformation (Buchborn et al., 2022). Such expectations may open important pedagogical possibilities, yet they also risk instrumentalising artistic education for external political purposes. As Bowman (2007) argues, music education should not be reduced to a merely functional tool for achieving predefined social outcomes; rather, its educational value also lies in its openness, ambiguity, and capacity for critical reflection.

Similarly, the discourse on democracy education often assumes that participatory pedagogies automatically lead to democratic dispositions. However, democracy cannot simply be produced through curricular interventions alone (Rancière, 1991). Democratic education necessarily involves conflict, plurality, and the negotiation of differences. Music education may contribute to such processes by creating spaces for collaborative artistic practice, listening, improvisation, and intercultural encounter. Yet these contributions remain contingent, fragile, and deeply dependent on institutional conditions, teacher agency, and social contexts.

The same applies to sustainability education. While educational institutions are increasingly expected to contribute to ecological transformation, sustainability itself remains a contested and politically charged concept (Vare & Scott, 2007). In music education, sustainability discourses often intersect with questions of resource consumption, cultural diversity, decolonisation, mobility, and digital infrastructures. Consequently, sustainability cannot be approached merely as an additional thematic module but requires deeper reflection on educational values, institutional practices, and global inequalities.

Digitalisation presents another ambivalent field. Digital technologies undoubtedly offer new possibilities for transnational collaboration, creative production, and access to educational resources. The *TEAM* project itself relied heavily on digital communication infrastructures and online collaboration across European countries. Nevertheless, critical scholarship has emphasised that digitalisation also transforms educational relations through datafication, platformisation, and new forms of surveillance and dependency (Selwyn, 2021). Music teacher education therefore faces the challenge of engaging critically with digital technologies rather than embracing technological innovation unreflectively.

Against this background, the contributions assembled in this volume do not present simplistic solutions or celebratory narratives of innovation. Instead, they document a complex process of collaborative inquiry into the possibilities and limitations of future-making in European music education. The term *future-making* itself is understood here not as a technocratic project of predicting or controlling the future, but as a reflexive and relational practice of imagining, negotiating, and shaping possible futures through

educational action. The volume therefore approaches mobility and networking not only as organisational strategies but also as epistemological and pedagogical practices. European collaboration in music teacher education enables encounters between different educational traditions, institutional cultures, and understandings of music pedagogy. Such encounters can generate productive tensions and new forms of professional reflection. At the same time, they also reveal asymmetries of power, resources, language, and access that continue to shape European educational cooperation.

## The Chapters as Contributions from nine *TEAM Work Packages*

The contributions collected in this volume reflect the interconnected structure of *TEAM*'s nine work packages. *Work Packages 1*, *2* and *9* focused on project management, coordination, dissemination and sustainability strategies, such as the development of a sustainable network, ensuring both the organisational coherence of the consortium and the long-term visibility of project outcomes.

*Work Packages 3*, *4* and *5* formed the conceptual and pedagogical core of the project and were organised as educational design-based research (DBR) initiatives (Anderson & Shattuck, 2012; McKenney & Reeves, 2019):

*Work Package 3 – Music Education and Future-Making*, developed pedagogical concepts and teaching materials addressing the thematic fields of digitalisation, democracy education, and sustainability. The work undertaken in this package explored how music education might engage with urgent societal transformations and how artistic and pedagogical practices can contribute to future-oriented educational thinking. The chapter *Music Education for Future-making: Integrating Sustainability, Democracy and Digitalisation through Participatory Design-based Research* by **Philip Stade**, **Thade Buchborn**, **Jonė Girdzijauskaitė-Pocienė**, **Anna Houmann**, **Elissavet Perakaki**, **Branka Rotar Pance**, **Michael Rumpeltes**, **Lina Van Dooren** and **Lena Widdermann** gives insights into a participatory design-based research process. The authors developed seven learning offers for school music education, music teacher education and continuing teacher education and tested them in music educational practices across Europe. Key design principles were integration, participation, flexibility, creativity and criticality as well as open access and collaboration. The learning resources are published open access on the collaborative platform *openmusic.academy*.[4] Educators are invited to adapt, apply, implement and co-design the materials and concepts for their local music learning and teaching context.

[4] https://openmusic.academy/docs/jxCA1WSQjPB5QiLdAdPNws/team-music-learning-offers-on-sustainability-democracy-digital-music-making

*Work Package 4 – Mobility in Music Teacher Education* concentrated on the mobility in music education programmes, and developed evidence-based material aiming to support transformative and reflexive forms of mobility. In their chapter *Redesigning Mobility in European Music Teacher Education: From Barriers to Opportunities* **Jens Knigge**, **Thomas De Baets**, **Natassa Economidou Stavrou**, **Solveig Fretheim**, **Rūta Girdzijauskienė**, **Runa Hestad Jenssen**, **Kirsti Nørstebø** and **Lorraine O'Connell** examine the challenges and possibilities of student mobility in European music teacher education through design-based research involving institutions, staff, and students from seven countries. Based on the findings, the chapter introduces the *Mobility Designer*, an online framework developed to support more inclusive, structured, and sustainable approaches to international mobility.

*Work Package 5 – School Internships Abroad and Mentoring* addressed a particular format of student mobility: the professionalisation of novice music teachers in school internships abroad, and how these can be mentored by experienced music teachers. Central objectives were to strengthen transnational mobility opportunities for student teachers by establishing the school-university-network *TEAM-IN* and to establish high-quality mentoring structures as well as practical tools in the form of open educational resources (OERs) capable of supporting intercultural professional learning. In this context, the project developed frameworks for international school placements and reflected critically on questions of educational transfer, intercultural understanding, and professional identity formation in European teacher education. In their opening chapter *Design-Based Research in an International, Multilingual and Interprofessional Setting: Facilitating School Internships Abroad in European Music Teacher Education*, **Lauren Steinmetz**, **Isolde Malmberg**, **Smaragda Chrysostomou**, **Stefanie Kreuzwieser**, **Angeliki Triantafyllaki**, **Demosthenes Dimitrakoulakos**, **Verena Bons** and **Wilfried Aigner** present the methodological framework of their international and multilingual Design-Based Research (DBR) endeavour, aimed at developing tools and knowledge to support school internships abroad for music education students. The authors developed data collection instruments, tools and OERs across seven iterative research cycles involving researchers, teacher educators and mentor teachers from five European countries. The chapter also reflects on the opportunities and challenges of conducting large-scale, cross-institutional and interprofessional DBR and offers methodological insights for future educational research projects. **Isolde Malmberg**, **Angeliki Triantafyllaki** and **Demosthenes Dimitrakoulakos** then explore how mentoring in international school internships for music education students is shifting from hierarchical models toward collaborative and co-constructive professional learning in their chapter *Mentoring in Collaboration: Co-constructing Music Education Competencies in School Internships Abroad*. Based on seven design-based research cycles within the *Erasmus+ TEAM* project, the study identifies key features of effective mentoring in intercultural placements and introduces a practical Mentor Teacher Checklist to support collaborative learning processes. Finally, in their chapter *Crossing Borders, Shaping Professional Selves:*

*Preservice Music Teachers in School Internships Abroad*, **Lauren Steinmetz** and **Smaragda Chrysostomou** examine how school internships abroad can support intercultural learning. The study shows that immersive international placements fostered openness, adaptability, confidence, and professional reflection, even when students did not explicitly describe their experiences in terms of interculturality.

*Work Package 6* concentrated on curricula and policy development, as well as advocacy for music education through strategic stakeholder collaboration. This work package strengthened connections between schools, higher education institutions, NGOs, and professional associations such as those gathered in the *SCHEME* group.[5] The completion of this work package marks not merely the end of an EU-funded project cycle, but the consolidation of a durable European network for collaborative thinking and action in music education. This is also reflected in the approach of co-authorship: *WP6* invited stakeholders from the three key European-wide professional associations (*EAS*, *EMU* and *AEC*) to co-author the texts, continuously and directly linking insights from *TEAM* to current stakeholder activities and developments among policymakers. The chapter *The TEAM Learning Outcomes for Music Teacher Education in Europe* was written by **Thomas De Baets**, **Ann-Sophie De Praitere**, **Marina Gall** (*EAS* president) and **Isolde Malmberg**. It introduces the *TEAM Learning Outcomes for Music Teacher Education in Europe*, a future-oriented framework for teacher education curricula developed through a data-driven, multi-stakeholder process to support high-quality music teaching across Europe. It presents 20 core and 5 transversal descriptors and discusses their relevance for curriculum development, teacher learning, and the harmonisation of European music teacher education. The chapter *Advocating for Music Education: Strategies to Sustain Music in General Schools and in the Wider Music Education Sector* was authored by **Isolde Malmberg**, **Marina Gall** (*EAS* president), **Michaela Hahn** (*EMU* president) and **Finn Schumacker** (*AEC* secretary general). It analyses current challenges facing music education in Europe, including structural inequalities, limited resources, reduced instructional time, and shortages of qualified teachers, arguing that sustaining high-quality and accessible music education requires coordinated European advocacy, strengthened research, transnational collaboration, and strong teacher education structures.

*Work Packages 7* and *8* established comparative mappings of music education and music teacher education systems across participating European countries. These comparative analyses create an important empirical basis for identifying structural differences, shared challenges, and possibilities for future European collaboration. To ensure that these vital resources – intended to foster future cross-border collaboration in music education – are

[5] The *SCHEME* group (= *Steering Committee for the Harmonisation of European Music Education*) joins forces of *AEC* (*Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen*), *EAS* (*European Association for Music in Schools*) and *EMU* (*European Music School Union)*. https://eas-music.org/partnerships/scheme/

accorded sufficient space, the findings from *WP7 – Mapping Music Teacher Education* can be found in volume No. 15 of this series, *Mapping School Music Education Across European Landscapes*. The detailed results from *WP8 – Mapping Music Education* are presented in volume No. 16, *Harmony and Disruption: Reflecting on Music Teacher Education in Europe*. The present volume contains two overview articles of these mapping work packages which present comparative overviews across all participating countries: The chapter *Mapping Music Teacher Education in Europe: From Design to Implementation* by **Natassa Economidou Stavrou**, **Smaragda Chrysostomou**, **Angeliki Triantafyllaki**, **Elissavet Perakaki** and **Thekla Andreou** describes how *Work Package 7* examined the landscape of music teacher education across Europe. Based on literature reviews, contributions from international experts representing 24 European countries, and a multi-stage review and analysis process, national approaches to music teacher education were systematically compared in order to support research, educational policy, and the further development of teacher education at both national and European levels. The chapter *Mapping the Present and Shaping the Future: Insights on School Music Education in Europe* by **Rūta Girdzijauskienė**, **Lorraine O'Connell** and **Karla Stolle** presents a cross-national overview of school music education in 31 European countries, using a mapping approach and qualitative comparative analysis based on questionnaires completed by national experts. The findings highlight both a shared commitment to music education and significant differences in curricula, assessment, teacher roles, and access, while also identifying common trends such as curriculum reform, increasing use of digital technologies, and ongoing inequalities in provision.

This volume invites readers to reflect critically on the role of music teacher education within contemporary Europe. It argues that music education can contribute meaningfully to democratic participation, sustainability, intercultural dialogue, and digital literacy, but only if these concepts are approached critically, reflexively, and with awareness of their political and institutional conditions. The contributions gathered here thus seek neither to reproduce policy rhetoric uncritically nor to reject educational transformation altogether. Rather, they explore how music education in schools and music teacher education might navigate the tensions between political expectations, pedagogical autonomy, artistic practice, and social responsibility.

In this sense, *Future-Making, Mobility and Networking in Europe* documents both the achievements and also the still unresolved questions of the *TEAM* project. The work packages may now be formally completed, but the debates initiated through the project remain ongoing. The future of European music teacher education will depend not only on policy frameworks and funding programmes, but also on the willingness of educators, researchers, institutions, and students to engage critically and collaboratively with the uncertain futures that lie ahead.

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**Statement on the use of AI**

Artificial intelligence tools (Claude, ChatGPT, and Grammarly) were utilised in a supportive, non-automated manner for language editing and stylistic improvements, focusing on clarity and structural coherence. All substantive content, interpretations, analyses, and conclusions remain the sole responsibility of the authors.

# I. MUSIC EDUCATION AND FUTURE-MAKING

Philip Stade, Thade Buchborn,
Jonė Girdzijauskaitė-Pocienė, Anna Houmann,
Elissavet Perakaki, Branka Rotar Pance, Michael Rumpeltes,
Lina Van Dooren & Lena Widdermann

# Music Education for Future-making

## Integrating Sustainability, Democracy and Digitalisation through Participatory Design-Based Research

**Abstract**

In current EU policy papers, the key issues of sustainability, democracy education and digitalisation are linked together to serve a coherent strategy. However, in competence frameworks for education, the close connection between these future-oriented topics gets lost. Therefore, educators are faced with the challenge of relating sustainability, democracy education and digitalisation to one another when developing learning opportunities for practical application. In this chapter, we describe the design process and results of *TEAM's Work Package 3 Music Education and Future-making*. In a participatory Design-Based Research process seven learning offers for school music education, music teacher education and continuous teacher education were designed and tested in music educational practices across Europe and published open access on the collaborative platform *Open Music Academy*. Key design principles were *integration*; *participation*; *flexibility*; *creativity and criticality* as well as *open access and collaboration*. Educators are invited to adapt, apply, implement and co-design the materials and concepts for their local music learning and teaching context.

**Keywords:** music education, sustainability, democracy education, digitalisation, design-based research

## Introduction

In times of rapid and fundamental global change, music education must not only enable learners to adapt, but also empower them to actively shape emerging futures with a conscious and critical attitude. Integrating future-oriented topics into the music classroom and music teaching aligns music education with the broader social, ecological, and technological realities students face today (Buchborn et al., 2022). This chapter aims to demonstrate how music education can respond to global challenges by integrating three future-making dimensions – sustainability, democracy, and digitalisation – into teaching and learning.

To provide guidance, European policy papers such as the *European Education Area* emphasise these priorities. The European Commission (2020) set the goal of achieving the *European Education Area* by 2025, promoting quality education, inclusion, green and digital transitions, teacher support, and higher education cooperation.[1] To transfer these and other goals into educational practice, the European Council introduced several competence frameworks:

- *DigComp* (and its updates 2.0, 2.2, 3.0) defines digital competences for all citizens (Cosgrove & Cachia, 2025; Ferrari, 2013; Vuorikari et al., 2016, 2022).
- *DigCompEdu* focuses on educators' ability to integrate digital technologies into teaching (Redecker & Punie, 2017).
- *GreenComp* outlines environmental and sustainability competences (Bianchi et al., 2022).
- *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture* (*RFCDC*) emphasises civic, social, and democratic competences (Council of Europe, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c).

Together, these frameworks aim to support lifelong learning in a digital, sustainable, and democratic society (European Parliament & Council of the European Union, 2006). However, looking at the individual documents, this integrative and broad perspective is often narrowed, with digitalisation, sustainability and democratic education separated when it comes to concrete competences. In many respects, the objectives formulated in the different competence frameworks are compatible with each other. For example, both *GreenComp* and the *RFCDC* share several objectives with the *SDGs*, the *Sustainable Development Goals* (United Nations, 2015): *RFCDC* with regard to civic engagement, inclusion, and social responsibility; *GreenComp* with regard to responsibility. Both dimensions could be integrated in a coherent strategy aiming at social and ecological sustainability. However, the separation of the holistic strategy at the level of the competence models also leads to

[1] Further information on the *European Education Area* (*EEA*) can be found on the European Commission website: https://education.ec.europa.eu

tensions. A critical analysis of *DigComp*, *DigCompEdu* and *GreenComp* showed that those competence frameworks rarely connect with each other (Stade & Buchborn, 2025). For instance, digital practices often conflict with sustainability when energy-intensive technologies are involved. Furthermore, the focus on innovation and the goal of teaching skills in the use of the latest technologies in *DigComp* can lead to a throwaway mentality that runs counter to the responsible use of resources emphasised in *GreenComp*.

This creates significant challenges for music educators who seek to integrate digital, sustainable and democratic dimensions in a coherent way. Their task is to consciously and justifiably weigh these dimensions against one another and place them in perspective, acknowledging that in some situations they may even stand in tension.

To address these challenges, *Work Package 3* (*WP3*) of the project *Teacher Education Academy for Music: Future-Making, Mobility and Networking in Europe* (*TEAM*)[2] developed Open Educational Resources (OERs) that embed sustainable, democratic, and digital principles into music education. Using a Design-Based Research approach, these resources were developed for schools, teacher education, and professional development, and are accessible via the *Erasmus+ European School Education Platform*, *Open Music Academy* (*OMA*),[3] and the *TEAM* website.[4]

The chapter is structured to guide readers from context to practice. First, we provide an overview of current discourses on sustainability, democracy, and digitalisation in music education, with a focus on their connections and contradictions. Next, we introduce Design-Based Research (DBR) as a research approach that enables both the iterative and cyclical development of practical materials in close connection to researching educational practice. We will show how we designed learning offers for different music educational contexts that integrate sustainability, democracy, and digitalisation in a coherent way.

In the results section, the seven learning offers are introduced as well as the five design principles (Euler, 2017) we followed in our DBR process: *integration*; *participation*; *flexibility*; *creativity and criticality*; and *open access and collaboration*. Each learning offer illustrates how policy priorities and research insights can be translated into practical resources for music education. The chapter concludes with a discussion and outlook, reflecting on future-making pathways for music education in a European perspective.

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[2] *TEAM* is the *Teacher Education Academy for Music* https://teacher-academy-music.eu/. Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the *European Education and Culture Executive Agency* (*EACEA*). Neither the European Union nor *EACEA* can be held responsible for them.

[3] https://openmusic.academy/docs/jxCA1WSQjPB5QiLdAdPNws/team-music-learning-offers-on-sustainability-democracy-digital-music-making

[4] https://teacher-academy-music.eu

## Connecting sustainability, democracy and digitalisation in music education

Music education today faces the challenge of responding to global transformations while maintaining its artistic and cultural integrity (e.g. Regelski & Gates, 2010). Three interconnected future-making themes – sustainability, democracy, and digitalisation – have become central to educational discourse and policy (e.g. Buchborn et al., 2022). This section explores how they shape music education, drawing on research that informs the design principles and learning offers presented later in the chapter.

Sustainability has become a driving force in music education (Barrett & Westerlund, 2023; Eusterbrock et al., 2024; König, 2024; Van Dooren et al., 2026), asking educators to rethink their roles and responsibilities in an era of global change. As Bates (2024) argues, "it would be untenable for music educators to stay on the sidelines, providing background music for the events happening on the field" (p. 54), urging the field to actively pursue "sustainable futures" (p. 55). Aligned with the United Nations' (2015) *SDGs*, sustainability is understood as a multidimensional concept that integrates ecological, social, and economic perspectives, along with values of inclusion and equity. This perspective connects to concepts like Shevock's (2018) *Eco-Literate Music Pedagogy* and Eusterbrock's (2022) *Climate-Conscious Popular Music Education*, which foreground ecological concerns while inviting broader reflection: How are social needs interrelated with ecological and economic priorities? And how can music education address these intersections creatively and critically?

The connection to inclusion and equity leads to discourses on participation and democracy, which have a long-standing tradition in music education research and practice. Many scholars draw on the works of Dewey (1916), Freire (2005), and Biesta (2023), emphasising that democratic education is not only about addressing political issues but also about creating participatory learning environments. Dewey's (1916) concept of education as a social process highlights the importance of collaborative inquiry and shared decision-making. This perspective is consistent with Freire's (2005) critical pedagogy, which understands participation as a means of self-empowerment that enables learners to question and actively change their reality. Recently, Biesta (2023) extended this discussion by arguing for education that promotes agency and responsibility through dialogic and co-constructive practices. Music education is consistently seen as holding significant potential for supporting democratic learning – whether through ensemble work that values every voice, classroom structures that encourage co-design, or activities that cultivate participation and agency (Bylica, 2024; Woodford, 2005; Allsup, 2007; Stade, Perakaki & Buchborn, in review).

Digitalisation has profoundly transformed the way we make and experience music, introducing new devices, software, and digital instruments that expand creative possibilities while reshaping musical cultures (Ruthmann & Mantie, 2017). In music education, digital tools and practices are often highlighted as ways to scaffold inclusion, accessibility

and participation (Gall, 2017; Gall & Backman Bister, 2024; Perakaki, 2025). At the same time, the interwoven dynamics of exclusion and hegemony of digital (music) practices are discussed critically (Selwyn et al., 2020; Treß, 2024). Further, the rapid spread of digital technologies often conflicts with principles of sustainability, raising questions about resource use, energy consumption, and long-term ecological impact (Stade & Buchborn, 2025). In this context, a post-digital understanding of music education becomes essential – one that critically engages with technology while situating it within social, cultural, and environmental frameworks (Buchborn & Treß, 2023; Treß et al., in press). The Swedish project *The Digital Student* exemplifies this approach, using Educational Design Research (EDR) to explore how Electronic Digital Instruments (EDIs) can function as instruments in their own right (Houmann et al., 2025). Findings highlight both technical challenges and creative opportunities, informing the development of the EDI Guidelines (Houmann et al., 2024) as resources for participatory and flexible digital musicking. Artificial Intelligence (AI) adds another layer of complexity, presenting both general educational challenges and specific implications for music education – from creative processes to ethical considerations – while also raising important questions about democracy and sustainability in how technologies are developed, accessed, and used (Bell et al., 2025). Addressing these developments requires innovative educational approaches that balance technological innovation, critical reflection, and sustainable practice (Selwyn, 2022, 2024).

This example demonstrates the interconnectedness among the three areas of sustainability, democracy education and digitalisation. Many authors emphasise a systemic and participatory approach. Overarching, Barrett and Westerlund (2023) argue for a transformative ecopolitical professionalism in music education, in which educators recognise their responsibility not only to musical expertise but also to social, ecological, and political systems. Through musicking (Odendaal et al., 2014; Small, 1998) and place-conscious pedagogies (Shevock, 2024), educators can address justice, equity, and ecological awareness. Maker music education (Treß, 2024) offers further ways to strengthen connections and dependencies.

Through integrative approaches, music education moves beyond siloed competences toward a coherent framework in which sustainability, democratic engagement, and digital skills mutually inform each other, supporting both ethical reflection and practical action in future-making.

Despite tendencies toward fragmentation on the level of generic competence models, in music education we already observe suitable concepts for integrating digitalisation, sustainability, and democracy education. Drawing on these discourses, the *TEAM* project sought to implement and explore the integration of sustainability, democracy, and digitalisation in music education using Design-Based Research. The next section outlines this research approach and explains how iterative design cycles and participatory processes shaped the development of the learning offers presented in the results.

## Designing future-making learning offers – Researching future-making practices

Design-Based Research (DBR) is an approach that explores learning within real educational environments by repeatedly designing and refining interventions (Brown, 1992; Bakker, 2018; McKenney & Reeves, 2019). It emphasises studying complex problems in context rather than in controlled 'lab' settings, allowing researchers to collaborate closely with practitioners to develop solutions rooted in authentic practice (Collins, 1992). This collaborative, context-rich process helps DBR generate both practical innovations and theoretical insights that reflect "challenges of context, design, and enactment" (The Design-Based Research Collective, 2003, p. 5). A key element of DBR is working in iterative cycles of design, implementation, and analysis that contribute to improving the intervention and developing the underlying theoretical assumptions (Edelson, 2002).

Following this approach, the central objective of *WP3* is to co-create, implement and evaluate future-oriented learning offers and disseminate OERs for music education that address the outlined issues of sustainability, democracy, and digitalisation in different practice contexts in music education. Across multiple cycles of design, implementation, analysis, and re-design, the development of learning offers is informed by theoretical, empirical, and practical insights (see Fig. 1). Grounding interventions in school and university realities and co-developing them highlights both the practice-oriented and interventionist character of our study.

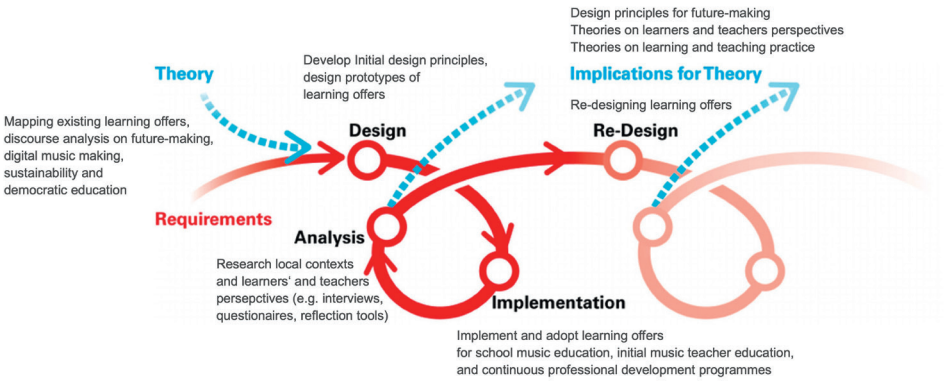


**Fig. 1:** Adapted version of Design-Based Research as an ongoing process of innovation (Fraefel, 2018, p. 9)

Our design and research efforts address multiple educational levels, target groups and stakeholders: In-service and pre-service teachers: as key mediators of change in music education. Music teacher educators: involved in professional development and music teacher education. Pupils and students: as active participants contributing their perspective to iterative refinement.

For development and testing we worked in schools, in university contexts and in ongoing teacher education institutes from the *TEAM* Consortium or the *TEAM* Associate Partner network. In this way, we were able to gain perspectives from Austria, Belgium, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Lithuania, Portugal, Slovenia, and Sweden. In addition, international workshops held as part of the conferences of the European Association for Music in Schools (*EAS*) enabled us to engage with music educators from further countries. The extent to which the learning offers can be used across different groups depends on their specific design and context. Because the materials are conceived as adaptable resources, the co-design approach enables educators and learners to modify and further develop them according to their local needs.

The co-design process combines two components: prospective planning based on theory and empirical insights, and reflective redesign informed by feedback. In line with DBR's aim to generate theory, our goal is not only to design learning interventions that advance educational practice but also to gain insights into classroom practices, the perspectives of teachers and learners and the implicit logics of approaching future-making issues in music education. Therefore, we used multiple strategies and data collection tools to capture both immediate feedback and deeper insights into practice. Across the design cycles, we employed:

- Participant feedback through short questionnaires and structured reflection tasks.
- Learning diaries, where participants documented their experiences, challenges, and reflections on the activities.
- Group discussions, enabling dialogic feedback and collaborative sense-making.
- Platform-based feedback on the EDI guidelines, where users could comment and suggest improvements directly on the resources.
- Observation during interventions, particularly in workshops and seminar settings, to analyse interaction and engagement as a basis for educational reflection.
- Iterative design reviews, where feedback was discussed collectively by the project team before implementing changes.

To deepen understanding beyond surface-level feedback, we integrated the *Documentary Method* (Bohnsack et al., 2010) in selected cases. This reconstructive approach goes beyond what participants explicitly state by analysing the implicit knowledge structures and orientations that guide their actions and interpretations. It delves into the underlying nuances, shedding light on the less visible dimensions. Through comparative analysis of verbal data we collected in the design implementations, the documentary method allowed us to uncover everyday theories and tacit assumptions – for example, how students perceive democratic participation in music education (Buchborn & Stade, 2025) or how music educators implement digital music practices in music teacher education.

By connecting DBR with the Documentary Method, we established what Buchborn (2022) terms documentary design research – an approach that combines iterative design and reconstructive analysis. This dual perspective ensures that learning offers are tested and refined in practice and simultaneously, theoretically grounded in the lived experiences and orientations of educators and learners.[5]

Rather than outlining every stage of the iterative redesign, we turn to two illustrative examples that show how feedback informed the design process:

- Example 1: *sustain_sound* – A five finger feedback system on what went well and what could be improved, revealed comments such as *'Good use of the ritual of Schafer's Sound Education'* (Schafer, 1992), *'Discuss more texts'*, and *'How can soundscapes be used in school?'* These insights led to adjustments across cycles: balancing input and practical tasks, reintroducing composer involvement, and expanding focus on school implementation. This demonstrates that design development is far from linear.
- Example 2: *Who sets the tone here?* – Following the steps of the Documentary Method we analysed group discussions of the participating students. The formulating interpretation revealed 'what' was said, while the reflective interpretation shows 'how' content was discussed and processed in the interaction. This analysis uncovered not only the everyday theories, norms and beliefs of the participants but also the implicit assumptions about participation and group dynamics (Buchborn & Stade, 2025). In response, the third cycle introduced reflective tasks based on transcribed discussions and expanded opportunities for co-design and shared decision-making.

This illustrates how a DBR framework enhanced by reconstructive approaches like the Documentary Method can contribute to both practical and theoretical development in music education. The project not only created context-sensitive OERs but also expanded understanding of how educators and learners understand themes such as sustainability, democracy, and digitalisation.

[5] Detailed information on the format, methodological foundations and research practice of Documentary Design Research is given in Buchborn & Völker (2025).

## Results: Design principles and learning offers

The following section presents the results of our Design-Based Research. All learning offers are available on an open platform *OMA* (https://openmusic.academy) as OERs under the Creative Commons license and also from the *TEAM* website. The platform invites music educators to explore, publish, co-design and adapt learning and teaching material for schools, music schools, higher education and informal learning environments. In line with the *OMA*'s philosophy, we encourage educators and students to use and further develop the *TEAM* learning offers across diverse European and international contexts. It is important to note that these learning offers with their different scopes only provide small, focused contributions to the vast discourses surrounding sustainability, democracy, and digitalisation. They are intended to spark reflection and serve as starting points for lifelong engagement with these topics rather than as comprehensive solutions.

Before presenting the individual learning offers, we make explicit five principles that guided their development. These principles, which will be introduced below, emerged from three bodies of sources:

- Policy papers (Council of the European Union, 2021; European Commission, 2019, 2020; European Parliament & Council of the European Union, 2006) and competence frameworks *DigComp*, *GreenComp*, *RFCDC* (Bianchi et al., 2022; Council of Europe, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c; Ferrari, 2013; Redecker & Punie, 2017; Vuorikari et al., 2016, 2022), which emphasise digital competence, sustainability, and democratic participation but remain largely disconnected.
- Content-specific theory and concepts in music education on sustainability, democracy and digitalisation, including their interconnectedness and empirical findings (see literature review above).
- Insights from our *Documentary Design Research* approach, which highlighted the need for participatory, adaptable, and solutions that foster creativity.

The European policy papers emphasise digital literacy, sustainability, and democratic participation as essential for lifelong learning. However, as mentioned earlier, related competence frameworks remain largely disconnected from each other, creating challenges for educators who aim to integrate these dimensions coherently (Stade & Buchborn, 2025). Our principle of *integration* (DP 1) directly responds to this gap, ensuring that sustainable, democratic, and digital aspects are treated as interrelated components of music education. The *RFCDC* (Council of Europe, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c), which focuses on civic engagement, informed our principle of *participation* (DP 2), embedding co-design with teachers, students, pupils, and researchers into every stage of the development. Additionally, *flexibility* (DP 3) reflects the European Education Area's (Council of the European Union, 2021;

European Commission, 2020) call for adaptable learning environments that respect diverse national and local contexts. Moreover, *creativity and criticality* (DP 4) respond to the need for education that not only adopts technology but also interrogates its cultural, ecological, and ethical implications. Finally, *open Access and collaboration* (DP 5) align with the EU priorities for open educational resources and knowledge sharing across borders. These five design principles were further refined through DBR cycles. Feedback from educators, pupils and students underscored the importance of modular resources and activities that enable artistic exploration while encouraging critical reflection.

In their final version, the design principles form a coherent framework for designing learning offers that address future-making themes and embody the democratic and inclusive spirit envisioned by European education policy:

- DP 1 – *integration*: Each design seeks to connect sustainable, democratic, and digital dimensions in a meaningful and responsible way rather than treating them in isolation.
- DP 2 – *participation*: Teacher educators, teachers, students, pupils, and researchers act as co-designers, ensuring that learning offers are grounded in real educational contexts.
- DP 3 – *flexibility*: Resources are modular in design and can be adapted to different school types, national contexts, and learning needs.
- DP 4 – *creativity and criticality*: Activities encourage artistic exploration while fostering multi-sited reflection on sustainability, democracy and technology.
- DP 5 – *open access and collaboration*: All offers are published as interactive OERs to promote sharing and collaborative improvement.

The table below summarises the learning offers underpinning these principles as well as their target groups, aims, and methods:

| Learning offer | Main target groups | Aims in relation to the three dimensions | Content and methods |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Musical social hour* (project-based learning activity) | Pupils | Link music to SDGs and community engagement | Project-based learning; Design thinking; collaborative projects |
| *sustain_sound* (workshop and modular seminar) | Pupils, students, teachers, teacher educators | Explore soundscapes and ecological sensitivity | Acoustic ecology; listening and composing |
| *sound_stories* (workshop) | Pupils, students, teachers, teacher educators | Address sustainability through music and storytelling | Narrative-based composition; concept mapping |
| *Democracy in music education* (workshop) | Students, teachers, teacher educators | Reflect on democratic practices in education | Group discussions; participatory warm-ups |
| *Who sets the tone here?* (seminar) | Students, teachers, teacher educators | Practise rotating leadership and co-design | Barcamp-inspired seminar; rotating leadership, collaborative decision-making |
| *EDI Guidelines* (modular resources) | Pupils, students, teachers, teacher educators | Integrate electronic digital instruments as creative instruments | Practice-based (EDI), participatory approach; 10 thematic sessions |
| *Songwriting and AI* (workshop and self-learning course) | Pupils, students, teachers, teacher educators | Explore AI in songwriting and critical reflection | Modular design; songwriting tasks; reflective discussion |

**Table 1:** Overview of the future-making learning offers

The first column shows what we mean by the term learning offer. A learning offer can be a short workshop or a single seminar session, but also a longer seminar or a modular seminar concept in which individual sessions can also be used independently or in a different combination, a proposal for project-oriented work, a self-study or training course. Some learning offers are also available in several versions or can be used in different educational contexts. In the second column, we therefore indicate the target group for whom the offer is primarily intended: pupils in general education schools, music education students, or teachers who are already working in schools.

Having outlined the guiding principles and having provided an overview of the learning offers, the following subsections illustrate how these principles were applied in practice and how the learning offers bring together sustainable, democratic, and digital dimensions.

### *Musical social hours*

The idea for the learning offer *Musical social hours* originated from internship formats that are established at many schools in Europe. Pupils perform social services for the community in the context of their school during so-called social hours. They help people with disabilities, elderly people or families in stressful situations in everyday life, working in nursing homes, hospitals or other charitable institutions. *Musical social hours* developed this format further in a subject-specific manner. As part of a workshop based on design thinking approaches (Gekeler, 2019; Knapp et al., 2016), participants explore ways of doing social work through musical engagement. The *Sustainable Development Goals* (United Nations, 2015) serve as a starting point. Pupils familiarise themselves with the *SDG*s and their different dimensions and relate these goals to their local context. Further, they explore formats that connect musical activities with social and sustainable engagement and foster local collaboration. After designing individual formats, the students test them in the local community. The learning offer closes with reflection on the field-based experiences.

The learning offer integrates issues of sustainability with democracy education by focusing on participation and social engagement in local contexts (DP 1). Aspects of digitalisation could play a role, if students are addressing them in the development of their formats. However, they are not central to the concept. The open, project-based format invites educators and students to adapt it to different school types and national contexts (DP 2 & 3). Exploring the individual needs of learners and people in their local environment is a key element of the concept, as well as fostering creativity and connecting it to critical reflection of issues of sustainability (DP 4).

Students prepared sound installations that were presented at school for Earth Day. The first of them, called *Music to My Ears*, included playing classical music combined with their own recordings of the sounds of nature. With this project, students introduced the idea of attentive listening to nature, inviting others not only to reflect on its beauty but also on its problems. A second composition featured a musical performance using different materials considered waste – plastic bottles and bags, cans of sugary drinks, and others. By presenting these items as instruments worth listening to, students encouraged people to think more broadly about possibilities for reuse. In another notable project, students prepared a concert for a retirement home. The theme of the concert was framed as a question: *'What does it mean to be sustainable today?'* In this project, students rethought their musical pieces in light of different SDGs.

Testing the design in school contexts revealed students' need for guidance and references, especially in the phase of development in younger age groups. Structured scaffolding in the beginning, in turn leads to motivated and independent social engagement in the implementation of the individual projects and a high level of identification with one's own ideas in retrospect.

***sustain_sound***

*sustain_sound* is a modular seminar and workshop concept that explores the relationship between sound, sustainability, and futures-thinking in music education (Völker et al., 2025). The programme, rooted in acoustic ecology (Truax, 1978), offers a reflective and creative exploration of changing sound environments (DP 4). It begins by theorising listening as a mode of cultivating resonance with nature (Schafer, 1994). The concept addresses the gap between climate knowledge and climate action, drawing on Schneider's claim that rational information alone fails to mobilise societal engagement (Schneider, 2023, p. 132). Bridle (2023) explains the lack of emotional attachment to the non-human world as a key barrier to behavioural change. Finally, a sustainable and ecological music education perspective frames a disciplinary approach as human-nature relationships through artistic and sensory experiences (Eusterbrock et al., 2024; Shevock, 2018; König, 2024).

Building on this foundation, Schafer's listening practices (Schafer, 1992) and the soundscape movement are introduced, outlining Schafer's and Westerkamp's seminal contributions (Schafer, 1994; Westerkamp, 2002). Soundscape practices such as archiving environmental change through field recordings like the *World Soundscape Project* (Schafer, 1994), documenting ecological loss (Krause, 2013), and improving acoustic environments through acoustic ecology and acoustic design (Schafer, 1994; Moshona et al., 2024) are discussed. Practical assignments include drawing soundmaps and going for a soundwalk (DP 4).

Finally, *sustain_sound* merges the creation of soundscapes with futures thinking (Voros, 2001) to stimulate creative engagement with alternative ecological futures. The central assignment asks learners to select a personally meaningful place and compose soundscapes that explore how it might sound across different possible futures, considering disappearing, persisting, and emerging sounds, envisioning both dystopian and utopian sonic futures. In response to participants' feedback, school projects were incorporated into the seminar version of the learning offer, where students teach parts of the approach. The project concludes with a presentation and a reflection on the pedagogical value of artistic-aesthetic work for sustainable education.

Overall, *sustain_sound* can be regarded as a postdigital approach, linking field recordings with attentive and critical listening to the environment. By looking at sustainability from a musical and emotional perspective, it contributes to a democratic shaping of futures (DP 1). The fact that participants choose their own focus and create their own sonic futures makes the learning offer highly participatory (DP 2).

***sound_stories***

The workshop *sound_stories* introduces sustainability through music and storytelling, aligning with the aim of fostering future-making practices that integrate sustainability, democracy, and digitalisation. Its design is grounded in a transformative learning philosophy (Lange, 2023) and highlights the role of emotions (Grund et al., 2024; Ojala, 2013). The relationships between the sustainability dimensions form the basis for the storylines of one fictional and one research-based story (Lawrence, 2014). The participants use these stories as prompts to reflect on what sustainability means in their own context.

They collaboratively build a physical concept map using papers and yarn on the floor. Concept mapping is regarded as an active learning tool (Cañas et al., 2023), where the process matters more than the outcome. This collaborative mapping fosters deliberative communication, contributing to democratic goals in public education (Ojala, 2013). This pluralistic approach acknowledges sustainability's complexity, including uncertainty, dissensus and value conflicts (DP 2).

Moving from collaborative mapping to smaller groups, participants examine personal habits and norms and listen to others' perspectives. Based on these conversations, they create their own stories and compositions. These compositions connect musical elements to specific sustainability issues and incorporate real-world sounds (Alvim, 2021), either live, digital or recorded. The central issue here is therefore the creative and critical examination of sustainability (DP 4).

Participant feedback underlined the constructive role of emotions and the need for a safe, participatory learning environment. For instance, the concept mapping was added after the first trial. Together with the stories, it encouraged ongoing dialogues that highlighted various perspectives on sustainability. Acceptance of divergent understandings (Ojala, 2013) and acknowledgement of participants' emotions is important to create a learning environment that is "safe enough" (Grund et al., 2024, p. 319). In this sense, sustainability is not only to be regarded as topical knowledge, but as a pedagogical orientation that shapes and foregrounds democratic learning and teaching experiences.

In each cycle, the participants developed highly individual and original musical sketches, some of which told moving stories related to sustainability. This shows that the format offered participants the opportunity to bring up topics related to personal, and sometimes emotional experiences. Overall, by combining collaborative reflection, creative composition, and possible digital sound practices, *sound_stories* integrates sustainability, democracy, and digitalisation in music education (DP 1). At the time of writing, the learning offer is being adapted for younger learners (DP 3).

***Democracy in music education***

The workshop *Democracy in music education* foregrounds democratic participation in music education. Building on the aforementioned literature on democracy education, it is important to note that democracy and democracy education are complex concepts that encompass many different and even conflicting interpretations, such as formal versus social models, consensus-oriented versus conflict-oriented approaches, or republican versus liberal conceptions (Mouffe, 2000). Therefore, the workshop focuses on two key aspects: participatory warm-up activities and opportunities for individual and collective reflections on democracy and participation. In our view, it is essential to foster an open exchange about democracy and democratic education for music teachers and students, rather than imposing a shared and concrete definition.

As Buchborn and Stade (2025) highlight, music students perceive their daily university experience as not being particularly democratic. Addressing this problematic insight, the learning offer begins with participatory warm-up activities that encourage learners to enter into dialogue through musical activities. Through joint improvisation, shared pulse exercises, and collaborative sound exploration, participants directly experience principles of democratic participation – listening to one another, negotiating ideas, and shaping the collective outcome. Within this framework, a learning environment is established where each voice can contribute and be valued (DP 2).

Afterwards, participants engage in personal reflection, connecting to previous experiences of democracy and participation in school, university, and teaching, before entering into dialogue and collaborative group discussions or parallel sessions on different democratic approaches in music. In this learning offer, as well as that of *Who sets the tone here?*, group discussions provide opportunities for meaningful exchange. Feedback in the seminars so far indicates that such dialogic and reflective spaces are rare.

Following these reflections, we introduce and discuss key concepts of democracy and explore how democratic education can be implemented within music classrooms and music education settings. These impulses cover aspects such as different definitions of democracy or the ladder of participation as a tool to reflect on music education. The *RFCDC* (Council of Europe, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c) serves as another starting point for reflecting music education praxis (Stade, Perakaki & Buchborn, in review). Finally, concrete examples are presented and discussed to illustrate how democratic methods and topics can be implemented. This is complemented by an online idea pool.

Foremost, the learning offers show connections between democracy and sustainability. Democracy is a social construct and deeply connected to social dimensions of sustainability, inclusion and accessibility. Therefore, the workshop should reflect this intersection as well, illustrating how democratic education can become a lived experience within the future-making framework (DP 1).

***Who sets the tone here?***

The short workshop concept of *Democracy in music education* serves as a basis for reflecting on democracy and participation. The learning offer *Who sets the tone here?* takes the same approach, but delves much deeper into exploring and experiencing what democratic music education can or should look and sound like. Building on pre-existing seminar concepts by Theisohn (in press), this learning offer emphasises shared responsibility, participatory structures, and rotating leadership. It is designed for music students and can be implemented flexibly, ranging from short modules to a full seminar. Central aims include exploring democratic forms of music-making, enabling students to co-design seminar sessions, and promoting reflective engagement with participation and power dynamics. One principle is not to teach democracy but to build a democratic space – often in surrounding hierarchical power structures of music universities or schools (DP 2).

The learning offer begins with self-reflection tasks like in the previous learning offer. Afterwards, the following actions have been developed to make the offer as democratic as possible:

- Rituals such as participant-led warm-ups and the use of democratic hand signs establish a collaborative culture from the outset.
- Excerpts from transcripts of group discussions derived from the accompanying *WP3* research serve as ways to reflect on implicit knowledge that structures everyday life.
- A dedicated module on feedback uses deliberately incorrect feedback strategies to help students derive criteria for constructive, respectful, and recipient-centred feedback.
- Subsequent inputs introduce concepts such as the *veto-joker* (Plath, 2023), the ladder of participation (Hart, 1992), the *RFCDC* (Council of Europe, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c), and children's and human rights (UNICEF, 2019; United Nations, 1948, 1989).

The core of the seminar consists of student-driven sessions, in which participants choose topics, plan activities, and lead participatory musical practices among themselves but also at school (DP 2). Following their own interests, democracy in music and – vice versa – music in democracy are two emerging guidelines on how the participants can explore possible connections between music and democratic practices.[6] Democracy in music can mean democratic composition techniques like the 12-tone scale or creative low-barrier methods of musicking (DP 4). Music in democracy can focus on discrimination in the music business or music in political protest and political representation. Participants came up with very different ideas like leading an ensemble or a choir with and without a conductor, using

[6] See also "identities in music and music in identities" (MacDonald & Saarikallio, 2022)

dance to promote bodily experiences with music, or discussing music on social media as part of protest movements.

Another important part of the learning offer is contact with the world outside the learning group: Depending on the local possibilities, this can lead to visiting barcamps,[7] going to rehearsals of community music projects or inviting conductors or ensembles that embrace democratic participation and artistic citizenship (Elliott et al., 2016) in their artistic work (DP 3). The course concludes by coming back to the student's self-reflections from the start and reflecting on what has been changed since then. In a group discussion, the participants share their thoughts.

Looking into the connections between the future-making topics (DP 1), digital elements like etherpads, where every participant can write anonymously and simultaneously, and also transparent literature resources are additionally important in deepening participation in digital communication. In order to connect democracy education with sustainability, the learning offer follows the structure of doing, reflecting and critically discussing. Topics range from how students understand *Bildung* (education) as a top-down or bottom-up approach (Buchborn & Stade, 2025, p. 35) to challenge of sustaining democracy as a globally declining form of government in the face of rising autocratisation (Nord et al., 2025).

### *EDI Guidelines*

The *EDI* learning offer is grounded in the Swedish national project *The Digital Student* created by Anna Houmann, Joakim Barfalk, Per Berlin Englund and Erik Lundahl (Houmann et al., 2024; Houmann et al., 2025), a practice-based research initiative commissioned by the Swedish government (2017–2024) under the ULF (Utbildning, Lärande, Forskning) [Education, Learning, Research] agreement. This project aimed to strengthen collaboration between academia and schools by developing sustainable models for research-informed teaching (Houmann et al., in press). At its core, the project explored how Electronic Digital Instruments (EDIs) – composite systems of computers, user-configure software (such as Ableton Live or FL Studio), and digital controllers – can function as instruments in their own right within music education.

Through iterative cycles of Educational Design Research (McKenney & Reeves, 2019), researchers, teachers, pupils and students co-designed and tested interventions in instrumental and ensemble courses, capturing lived experiences of teachers, pupils and students. These interventions revealed both opportunities and challenges of integrating EDI into teaching – from technical troubleshooting to creative possibilities such as live remixing, finger drumming, and ensemble synchronisation. The findings informed the

[7] A barcamp is an open, participantdriven event where attendees collaboratively create the session schedule and actively share knowledge and ideas.

creation of the original *EDI Guidelines* (Houmann et al., 2024), which emphasise creativity and criticality (DP 4), flexibility (DP 3), and participatory approaches (DP 2) to digital musicking.

Adapted, translated, and expanded within the *TEAM* project, the *EDI* learning offer introduces educators and learners to EDIs as creative tools in music education. The resource consists of ten thematic sections that explore both the opportunities and challenges of integrating digital instruments into teaching and learning. Examples include activities such as "Play your DAW", where pupils use their digital audio workstation as a live instrument, and "Controller exploration" (Houmann et al., 2024), which encourages learners to experiment with different surfaces to create unique soundscapes. These tasks illustrate how EDI can be integrated into ensemble settings, improvisations, and composition, while fostering critical reflection on technology's role in music-making (DP 4). The guidelines encourage a practice-based, participatory approach (DP 2), where users experiment, adapt, and reshape digital tools according to their own educational contexts. Designed for pupils, music teacher students, and teachers, the learning offer promotes flexibility (DP 3), creativity (DP 4), and inclusivity, inspiring educators to view technology not as an add-on but as an instrument in its own right – expanding the expressive and pedagogical possibilities of music education.

The *EDI* learning offer exemplifies the *TEAM* project's commitment to future-oriented, research-informed design. At its core, it integrates digital tools with reflective practices and sustainable concerns (DP 1), encouraging educators to consider resource use and ethical implications alongside technological innovation. Developed through participation in iterative co-design workshops and classroom interventions (DP 2), the offer reflects the lived experiences of teachers and students and ensures practical relevance.

### *Songwriting and AI*

*Songwriting and AI* learning offer was initially developed as part of the project *KuMuS-ProNeD*[8] and is aimed at school music teachers as well as students in music teacher education and school music education. In *TEAM*, the learning offer was adapted, translated, implemented and tested in further European contexts of music teacher education and continuous music teacher education.

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[8] *KuMuS-ProNeD* (01JA23K05D, https://kumus-proned.de) is funded by the *European Union – NextGenerationEU* and supported by the German Federal Ministry for Education, Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. The views and opinions expressed are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union, European Commission or the Federal Ministry of Education, Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. Neither the European Union, the European Commission nor the Federal Ministry of Education, Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth can be held responsible for them.

The design connects songwriting and digital music production with critical reflections on the implications of AI use in different contexts of the creative processes. The aim of the learning offer is to teach competences that enable learners to use digital tools and artificial intelligence in a self-determined and critical manner (Buchborn & Treß, 2023). The approach is in line with the UNESCO (2024) *AI competency framework for teachers* that was developed in the context of the *Global Education 2030 Agenda* (United Nations, 2016). The framework emphasises the importance of a "human-centred mindset" that "defines the values and critical attitudes teachers need to develop towards human–AI interactions" and calls for a "deeper understanding of fundamental ethics of AI (Wieczorek et al., 2025), skills to make safe and responsible use of AI, and comprehensive competencies to participate in the adaptation of ethical rules" (UNESCO, 2024, p. 23).

Connecting these aims with the competence frameworks *DigComp* (Vuorikari et al., 2022) and *DigCompEdu* (Redecker, 2017) leads to the following goals of the respective learning offer (Buchborn et al., in press):

- Teachers and/or students explore AI tools and use them in postdigital songwriting processes (*DigComp*, 5.3).
- Teachers and/or students critically reflect on creative postdigital processes with regard to legal, ethical, moral implications, questions of originality, ownership and creativity (*DigComp*, 3.3, 4.2).
- Teachers develop learning and teaching scenarios for songwriting with AI and support and accompany students' independent, artistic and creative processes (*DigCompEdu*, 3.1).
- In a professional community of practice, teachers and students in music teacher education reflect on their classroom practice (*DigCompEdu*, 1.3).

The different versions and the modular concept of the learning offer give educators flexibility and invite them to adapt to a variety of music education contexts, and learner needs (DP 3). Participants in different stages of music teacher education collaborate with pre-service and in-service teachers in co-creating learning offers for students in schools and test them in real educational contexts (DP 2). Moreover, students and educators are invited to explore GenAI tools and practices in creative processes of songwriting, while continuously reflecting on possible impacts critically. Putting critical reflection in the centre of the learning offer also leads to critical engagement and reflection of issues related to sustainability and democratic music education – e.g. by revealing questions of GenAI – related hegemonies and reproduction of stereotypes (DP 1 & 4).

## Discussion and Outlook

There is a critical gap: While European competence frameworks provide guidance on sustainability, democracy, and digitalisation, they remain largely disconnected (Stade & Buchborn, 2025). Addressing this gap has been central to our work. Building on existing work by music education researchers who actually do link the topics, the *TEAM* project sought to bridge these gaps through Design-Based Research and participatory approaches, resulting in learning offers that embody five guiding principles: *integration*; *participation*; *flexibility*; *creativity and criticality*; and *open access and collaboration*. The approach thus demonstrates a path from abstract political goals to concrete teraching practices.

*Integration* was not only a theoretical aspiration but a practical necessity. While some learning offers, such as *Musical social hours*, focus primarily on sustainability and democracy, digitalisation plays a more optional role. This is intentional since the design prioritises local, social engagement and participatory practices, where digital tools may not always be necessary or contextually relevant. However, the overall set of learning offers collectively addresses all three dimensions – digitalisation is central in offers like *EDI Guidelines* and *Songwriting and AI*, while sustainability and democracy are foregrounded in others. Together, these resources form a balanced portfolio that operationalises integration across diverse educational contexts, ensuring that no single dimension dominates but that all are represented within *WP3's* future-making vision. For example, the *EDI* learning offer goes beyond teaching skills by embedding sustainability concerns – such as discussions on energy use and resource implications – into activities like "Play Your DAW" and "Controller Exploration" (Houmann et al., 2024). Similarly, *sustain_sound* combines acoustic ecology with futures thinking, prompting learners to create soundscapes that reflect ecological transformations while engaging in democratic decision-making during group work. These examples illustrate how integration transforms abstract policy goals into classroom practices.

*Participation* emerged as a cornerstone of both design and enactment. Drawing on Dewey's (1916) concept of education as a social process and Freire's (2015) emphasis on dialogic pedagogy, our learning offers positioned teachers, pupils, students, and researchers as co-designers. In the learning offer *Who sets the tone here?*, rotating leadership and barcamp-inspired formats challenged hierarchical norms, promoting agency and shared responsibility. Feedback from students confirmed the value of these approaches, while also revealing the rarity of such participatory spaces in higher music education (Buchborn & Stade, 2025).

*Flexibility* was essential given the diversity of European classrooms in terms of resources, curricula, and cultural expectations. Modular designs allowed adaptation to local contexts. For instance, the *Songwriting in AI* offer provides flexible modules for professional development or single lessons, while *sound_stories* enables educators to tailor

narrative-based composition tasks to sustainability issues. This adaptability aligns with the European Education Area's call for context-sensitive learning environments (Council of the European Union, 2021; European Commission, 2020).

*Creativity and criticality* were not add-ons but integral to every design. Activities such as remixing folk songs with EDIs (Houmann et al., 2024, 2025) or composing sonic narratives of melting glaciers in *sound_stories* exemplify how artistic exploration can coexist with critical reflection on technology, ecology, and ethics. These approaches resonate with Bates' (2024) call for music educators to move from the sidelines to active engagement in shaping sustainable futures.

Publishing all resources as *Open Access* on a *collaborative* platform like the *OMA* reflects EU priorities for knowledge sharing and positions OER as catalysts for Open Educational Practices, where educators continuously adapt and improve resources through collaborative networks. The OERs are also supplemented by publications that provide insights into the accompanying research and evaluations carried out as part of *WP3*. Our document analysis provides detailed insights into the alignment of policy papers and competence frameworks and refers to the compatibility issues cited at the outset (Stade & Buchborn, 2025). A reconstructive study focusing on a first cycle of testing *Who sets the tone here?* at a music university in Germany revealed, for instance, how students perceive democratic participation in music education (Buchborn & Stade, 2025). We reconstructed a discrepancy between the normative ideas of democracy held by the students interviewed and how democracy is actually practised in the university context. Opportunities for participation in everyday university life appear to be limited and seem to be better utilised by high-achieving students. In addition, diverging concepts of good education come to light in the context of participation, and the logic underlying group work processes becomes clear. We are currently comparing these insights with the data we collected in Belgium, Greece, Slovenia and Sweden. This gives us a nuanced picture and provides insights into local and institutional trends in different parts of Europe.

Further, we examine how digital music practices are implemented in higher education. Analysing a first set of data from German higher education reveals how hegemonies connected to conservatory traditions are framing such a process of change in teacher education: Our interpretations show, how processes of designing entrance exams and curricula aiming to offer music teacher education for musicians socialised in postdigital practices are conflicting with implicit knowledge guiding everyday practice in the conservatories. Orientations towards traditional concepts of music theory and piano performing, and the prioritisation of live, embodied performance over asynchronous studio production, mean that the new courses are perceived as alien in the institution. Insights like this not only informed iterative redesign of our learning offers but also validated the five guiding principles as practical and theoretically grounded approaches for future-making in music education.

However, scaling these practices across Europe requires a culture of openness – educators and institutions must share materials, insights, and approaches. If this spirit of exchange grows, platforms like *OMA* can become key enablers for participatory, inclusive, and forward-looking music education.

Our experiences highlight four implications:

- Balance global and local: Music education can connect global challenges with local contexts, engaging students creatively and reflectively through sound, movement, and dialogue.
- Balance sustainability, democracy and digitalisation: Constant reflection on missing, existing, or contradictory connections between future-making topics remains a key challenge.
- Democracy as lived practice: Participatory learning must move beyond ideals to become tangible experiences through shared leadership, co-creation, and critical inquiry.
- Dialogic innovation: Iterative design, feedback cycles, and cross-national exchange help redefine what democracy, sustainability, and digital literacy means in diverse contexts.

Taken together, our findings show how policy frameworks, participatory design, and iterative research can converge to create actionable strategies for music education. The results demonstrate that integrating digitalisation, sustainability, and democracy is not only possible but pedagogically enriching when guided by coherent principles and participatory processes. Each learning offer, whether focused on EDIs, soundscapes, storytelling, or democratic leadership, serves as a microcosm of the broader aim articulated in the introduction: to prepare learners to actively and critically shape cultural and educational futures in time of global change. Music education can move beyond adaptation to actively co-create the futures it envisions.

At the same time, the project revealed new questions. Co-design processes can themselves reproduce gaps or imbalances – for example when technological enthusiasm overshadows ecological concerns, or when participatory formats remain superficial. Addressing these challenges requires continuous reflection on how responsibly the three dimensions are connected and how educators can support learners in making informed decisions about their actions.

Working across national boundaries revealed both the richness and complexity. Interpretations of sustainability, digitalisation, and democracy vary widely, requiring sensitivity and adaptability. Technical barriers and differing levels of digital competence remain challenges. Convincing participants to actively use the materials, provide feedback, and develop them further directly on the *OMA* is time-consuming and challenging. However,

these obstacles also underscore the importance of flexible, participatory, and open resources that can evolve through collective effort.

Looking ahead, integrating digital, sustainable, and democratic dimensions will remain central to reimagining music education. According to the results of *WP3* we see three key priorities:

(1) Deepen integration of the three themes, moving beyond silos toward holistic learning experiences.
(2) Investigate long-term impact and advance knowledge on music education for future-making.
(3) Expand cross-national comparative studies to understand trends and local adaptations.

Further methodological development is also needed. Criteria for participatory quality can strengthen collaborative processes and research-practice partnerships. Sustained collaboration between universities and schools will be important for scaling and embedding these approaches. Ultimately, music education holds the potential not only to respond to global change but also to shape it by enabling learners and educators to co-create futures through participatory and creative practices. In doing so, music education could fulfil its transformational potential – empowering learners and educators to shape cultural and educational futures in times of global change.

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# II. MOBILITY FOR MUSIC EDUCATION STUDENTS

Angeliki Triantafyllaki & Jens Knigge

# Section Introduction

## Mobility in Music Teacher Education

Mobility in music teacher education is not merely a generic form of international experience but rather a specific pedagogical, relational and institutional practice (Buschmann & Malmberg, 2025). Yet student teachers, in particular, appear to participate less frequently in mobility opportunities than other student groups (Hovdhaugen & Wiers-Jenssen, 2021; Schirmer, 2024); the same would seem to apply for music student teacher populations, with curricula constraints such as one-to-one tuition, locally embedded pedagogical practices and a wide diversity of programme structures across Europe being foregrounded in the literature (Economidou Stavrou & O'Connell, 2022). Within the activities of the *TEAM* project, particularly its *Work Packages 4 & 5*, mobility is seen less as a supplementary component and more as a means of professional and pedagogical transformation. By engaging with contexts beyond their own, future music teachers can gain fresh insights, extend their (intercultural) competences, and build relationships of lasting value for music education across Europe. A 2024 European Council recommendation specifically positions teacher mobility as a strategic component of teacher formation, including initial teacher education (Council of the European Union, 2024).

The chapters in this Section advocate for the need to create the conditions under which such opportunities in music teacher education programmes are accessible, educationally meaningful and better supported. They discuss the ways in which mobility experiences may be structured, guided and directed towards lifelong learning and personal and professional development. Moreover, they identify the barriers that students participating in such mobility schemes face, as well as the forms of mobility most appropriate to their personal and professional development. In this sense, the following chapters document

how mobility is currently conceptualised and enacted in European music teacher education (MTE hereafter), while also arguing for forms of mobility that are more intentional, better supported, and more firmly embedded within the educational purposes of higher music education curricula. An underlying claim is that mobility matters not because international experience is inherently beneficial, but because well-designed encounters with other institutions, schools, pedagogical cultures, and musical and cultural worlds can play a vital role in the formation of reflective, dialogic, and professionally adaptive music graduates and music teachers (Knigge et al., 2026, in this volume; Steinmetz & Chrysostomou, 2026, in this volume).

Despite urgent calls to action for diversity in cultural expressions that foster understanding and global dialogue (World Alliance for Arts Education, 2024), a 2024 OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) reports that "while a large majority of teachers report that their initial teacher education prepared them well to deal with traditional topics like subject content (…) 33 % of recent graduates feel prepared to teach in a multicultural or multilingual setting" (OECD, 2025, p. 137). These new findings unfortunately mirror a similar study conducted in 2018 (OECD, 2019) which showed that only one-quarter of Europe's teachers feel well enough prepared for intercultural education and only one-third during their studies were able to work in multicultural and multilingual contexts. Student teacher work experience or internships abroad represent one important form of immersive intercultural learning within teacher education and music teacher education. Research suggests that they can provide future music teachers with meaningful, and in some cases transformative, opportunities to develop intercultural awareness alongside professional and personal knowledge and skills that can be mobilised in internationally and culturally diverse (music) teaching and learning contexts (Di Pietro, 2022; Westerlund et al., 2020; Miller & Gonzalez, 2016). This section addresses this obvious gap in both research and practice, while simultaneously acknowledging and addressing the complexities and needs that surface when mobility in MTE is embraced.

## Forms of Mobility

Mobility in European music teacher education may take at least two distinct forms. The first involves study abroad models, whereby a music student teacher undertakes a period of study at a host university, ranging from short-term exchanges of a few weeks to a full semester or up to an academic year. This model is primarily organised through a university-to-university relationship, with both institutions functioning as higher education partners within an academic exchange framework. The second is an international placement model, discussed through the framework of the school internship abroad (SIA), in which a university sends a student teacher into a host school, which may or may not be formally connected

to a university in the host country. In this model, mobility is not centred on transfer between two higher education institutions, and the associated recognition of study, but on entry into a professional school-based setting shaped by local pedagogical cultures, mentoring practices, and institutional arrangements between the sending university and the host site(s). The above distinction is not merely administrative; the two models involve different forms of engaging with the host institution, different forms of hosting and pedagogical expectations, and certainly different structures of support. In this sense, mobility is not merely about moving between places; it involves specific conditions, structures and design features through which music students and student-teachers feel welcomed, are guided and supported and, importantly, enabled to learn.

***Study Abroad in Music Teacher Education***

Study abroad in music teacher education presents a distinctive set of challenges that go beyond those typically encountered in other disciplines. Music programmes are characterised by tightly structured curricula, sequential practicum requirements, and highly individualised components such as one-to-one instrumental or vocal tuition, all of which make it difficult to integrate a period of study at another institution without risking delays, gaps, or loss of continuity. Students frequently face uncertainty about whether courses taken abroad will be fully recognised, and the specific nature of music study – in which progress on a principal instrument depends on sustained, trusting relationships with individual teachers – means that even a well-planned exchange can feel like a disruption rather than an enrichment.

At the same time, research within the *TEAM* project reveals that when mobility is well supported, it can offer music students distinctive learning opportunities that are difficult to replicate at home: encounters with unfamiliar pedagogical traditions, exposure to musical practices and repertoires rooted in other cultural contexts, and the experience of navigating professional and artistic expectations in a foreign setting (Economidou Stavrou et al., in review; Fretheim & Jenssen, in review). Yet these benefits are neither automatic nor equally distributed. In their chapter, Knigge et al. (2026, in this volume) examine a persistent paradox: Mobility in music teacher education is constrained simultaneously by a lack of clear structure – including inadequate information, housing insecurity, and bureaucratic delays – and by the inflexibility of existing programme frameworks. When institutions fail to address this paradox, the uncertainty and risk associated with mobility are effectively transferred onto students, raising serious concerns about equity and access. Students with fewer financial resources, limited language confidence, or less prior international experience might be disproportionately affected, which means that without deliberate institutional action, mobility risks reinforcing the very inequalities it is often expected to reduce.

For the study abroad model, the *TEAM* project's work on mobility (Knigge et al., 2026, in this volume) will show that meaningful exchange depends less on individual student resilience than on the institutional conditions that surround it. Drawing on interviews with students, teacher educators, and administrative staff across seven European countries, and on a subsequent design-based development process, the chapter proposes a framework of five interconnected focus areas: (1) foundations and motivations for mobility, (2) institutional collaboration and communication, (3) curriculum and course design, (4) cultural immersion and socio-cultural experiences, and (5) student support. These areas are operationalised through thirteen design principles that address, among other things, how institutions can promote a culture of mobility rather than treating exchange as an exceptional event; how curricula can be designed with sufficient flexibility to accommodate mobility without requiring excessive ad hoc adjustments; how strategic partnerships between institutions can reduce the burden on individual students to negotiate credit recognition and course alignment; and how reliable practical and pastoral support can prevent avoidable hardship before, during, and after the exchange period.

A central concept introduced in the chapter is supported uncertainty: the recognition that mobility inevitably involves unpredictability – unfamiliar teaching styles, different assessment cultures, new social dynamics, etc. – but that this uncertainty becomes educationally productive only when institutions collectively share the responsibility rather than leaving students to manage it alone. Where flexibility, trust, and care are built into institutional structures, students are more likely to experience challenge as generative rather than overwhelming. Where these conditions are absent, even highly motivated students may find that the transformative potential of mobility remains unrealised. The practical translation of this framework, through the digital *Mobility Designer* tool developed within the *TEAM* project, offers institutions a means to assess their current mobility practices against these principles and to identify concrete areas for improvement.

***School Internships Abroad (SIA)***

In the contributions of this Section focusing on school internships abroad, mobility is mediated more directly through school placements in the host country, participation within professional work communities, and interpersonal support in the form of mentoring. The student is received not primarily as an exchange student within a host university, but as a novice professional entering a school setting. As the dedicated chapters in this Section reveal, this is not without its challenges, many of which are unique to SIAs: linguistic barriers, unfamiliar professional norms and work cultures, as well as novel educational policies, curricula and classroom pedagogies. The concepts of hospitality and mentoring are especially valuable for understanding mobility in SIA. Hospitality, as a spatial, affective and relational practice (Zembylas, 2020), draws attention to everyday experiences of welcome, discomfort, vulnerability, recognition, and belonging during the SIA. Students who

move into unfamiliar educational settings do not simply arrive in neutral systems; they enter institutional and interpersonal spaces in which inclusion, welcome, and recognition are actively produced (or even possibly withheld). During the SIA, hospitality may take the form of access to classrooms of other subjects (besides Music), access to staff meetings and staff continuing professional development, and the host institutions' willingness to accommodate a visiting student-teacher within their curricular and social life, enabling different forms of student-teacher participation.

The contributing chapters emphasise that SIA in music teacher education are framed both as a response to the growing internationalisation of education and a means of rethinking how future music teachers are prepared for culturally diverse, uncertain, and changing professional contexts (Steinmetz et al., 2026, in this volume; Steinmetz & Chrysostomou, 2026, in this volume). As these contributions will show, *Work Package 5* (*WP5*) of the *TEAM* project initially sought to develop workable SIA formats for music education students. Second, it aimed to strengthen the mentoring structures surrounding these internships so that student teachers would be better supported, especially in intercultural contexts. To this end, *WP5* used an iterative DBR process across seven internship cycles, each with three phases: pre-internship preparation, fieldwork during the internship, and post-internship debriefing. Across these cycles, the research team actively designed, tested, evaluated, and revised SIA tools through collaborative work, including an introductory conversation guide, voice-memo prompts, photo-journal prompts, a debrief guide, a cultural self-reflection exercise, and mentoring checklists. Data were collected from 10 student teachers, 3 mentor teachers, and 2 teacher educators, using these tools as both research instruments and practice tools.

In substantive terms, the following chapters will show that SIA can foster intercultural learning, professional identity development, and reflective growth, but that these outcomes would seem to depend on clear communication of expectations and requirements and, importantly, purposeful mentoring (Malmberg, Triantafyllaki & Dimitrakoulakos 2026, in this volume). Within SIA, learning is mediated through relationships that help the student translate unfamiliar practices, negotiate uncertainty, and connect experience to developing understandings of teaching. Malmberg et al. (2026, in this volume) discuss how mentoring in SIA often operates through a triadic or multi-layered relationship involving student-teacher, school mentor, and university teacher educator; it is conceptualised as dialogic, interpretive and relational, and supports student-teachers in making sense of unfamiliar pedagogical norms, school cultures, and professional expectations.

## Coda

The chapters in this Section focus on intentionally creating learning experiences for student teachers studying and working abroad. They suggest that mobility in music teacher education should be understood as a relational, institutional, and pedagogical ecology. Whether mobility takes the form of a week, a semester or a year of studying abroad, or a school-based internship abroad, its educational value depends on existing yet also flexible structures of mentoring, reflection, and collaboration. These are not supplementary dimensions added to an otherwise complete mobility experience; they are the very conditions through which mobility becomes possible and professionally significant. The chapters that follow therefore invite the reader to think beyond mobility as movement alone and toward mobility as a form of educational design through which future music teachers may encounter difference, negotiate identity, and expand their understandings of pedagogy and practice across Europe.

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# Redesigning Mobility in European Music Teacher Education

## From Barriers to Opportunities

**Abstract**

Student mobility is a key ambition of European higher education policy, yet participation in music teacher education remains low. This chapter reports on a strand of the *TEAM* project examining how mobility is organised, experienced and potentially redesigned. Drawing on design-based research, we combined document analysis of 13 partner institutions with interviews and focus groups involving students, academic and administrative staff from seven countries. The analysis highlights barriers and conditions across practical, curricular, socio-cultural and emotional dimensions. We developed an online tool for reflection and planning, building on five focus areas and thirteen design principles that address cultures of mobility, information and support structures, curriculum alignment, partnership development and student well-being. We situate this framework within debates on inclusive internationalisation.

**Keywords:** music teacher education; international student mobility; design principles; design-based research; higher education internationalisation

## Introduction

International student mobility has become a central ambition of European higher education policy, framed as a driver of quality, employability and intercultural competence (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2020; Teichler, 2017). Yet the everyday reality for many music education students can look different. As one student put it, "When we got there we realised how isolated we were (…) the days just felt longer …" Another described the physical strain of everyday logistics abroad: "I cycled 50 minutes each way with my trombone, laptop and food. I felt like a donkey." Voices such as this, gathered from the *TEAM* project[1] interview study (Economidou Stavrou et al., in review), capture the gap between optimistic institutional rhetoric and the often messy, unpredictable lived experience of mobility. The students' voices point to a central paradox: mobility is undermined both by the absence of clear structures and by the rigidity of existing programme frameworks (Economidou Stavrou & O'Connell, 2022). Navigating between these two poles – developing structures strong enough to handle uncertainty without constraining students – is essential if mobility is to become accessible, equitable, and genuinely educational.

### *Mobility in European Higher Education and Teacher Education*

In recent years, Europe's leaders have doubled down on mobility as a cornerstone of internationalisation. The Council of the European Union has set a target that "at least 23 % of graduates in higher education should have a learning mobility experience by 2030" (Council of the European Union, 2024). These policy goals rest on the widely held belief that study abroad fosters personal growth, intercultural competence, and professional skills (Teichler, 2017). Research corroborates many of these benefits: for example, preservice teachers who complete an international placement often report increased independence, self-awareness, and adaptability (Leutwyler & Meierhans, 2013). Mobility is championed as a high-impact practice to broaden students' horizons.

Yet mobility participation rates tell a sobering story. Mobility is unequally distributed across disciplines and student populations. Overall, all European countries remain far from the 23 % target in many fields, and teacher education is especially under-represented (Hovdhaugen & Wiers-Jenssen, 2021; Schirmer, 2024). In some countries, almost no student teachers go abroad; in Serbia and Poland, for instance, the number was close to zero as of a few years ago (Vögtle, 2019). Even in traditionally outward-looking educational systems like Finland and Norway, only about 10–12 % of student teachers had international

[1] *TEAM* (https://teacher-academy-music.eu) is funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the authors only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

experience around 2019 (Vögtle, 2019). Unfortunately, specific data on music teacher education (MTE) is scarce, but their mobility figures are likely to be even lower.

Some of the challenges relevant in this context have already been identified in MTE research: One-to-one tuition, locally embedded pedagogical traditions and diverse programme structures across Europe create significant constraints (Economidou Stavrou & O'Connell, 2022). On the other hand, studies confirm that mobility in MTE can offer significant personal and professional benefits – enhanced independence, intercultural awareness, and expanded pedagogical perspectives (Bayley & Mio, 2020; McBride & Nicholson, 2023; Walling, 2020). However, these outcomes are far from guaranteed. Without curricular alignment, supportive guidance and social integration opportunities, mobility risks become fragmented, stressful or academically disconnected. Despite these insights, research on mobility in MTE remains limited, particularly regarding system-level obstacles and multi-stakeholder perspectives.[2] Most studies focus on student experiences, rarely examining the viewpoints of teacher educators, international coordinators, or programme leaders who ultimately shape whether mobility is encouraged, feasible, and educationally meaningful.

Therefore, our study addresses this gap by adopting a holistic approach spanning programme structures, administrative processes, academic considerations, and lived experiences. Rather than treating mobility as an individual endeavour, we approach it as a design challenge that requires coordinated attention to institutional culture, curricula, partnerships and student support. This perspective frames mobility not only as movement across borders, but as a pedagogical and organisational challenge requiring intentional design to unlock its full potential in MTE.

### *The* TEAM *Project and its Work Package on Mobility*

This chapter arises from the *ERASMUS+ Teacher Education Academy for Music (TEAM)* project, a pan-European initiative to reshape music teacher education in Europe. *TEAM* addresses multiple fronts, ranging from digital innovation to networking, and one key focus is student mobility and intercultural learning. *Work Package 4*, titled *Mobility in Music Teacher Education*, focused on examining and improving international mobility as an integral part of MTE. In the *TEAM* project's broader vision, mobility is not viewed as an add-on but rather as a catalyst for innovation. By enabling future music teachers to step outside their home contexts, there is the aim to offer new perspectives, skills, and networks that will ultimately enrich music education across Europe.

Within *TEAM*, our work package had a dual mission to understand the current barriers and enablers for mobility in music teacher education, and to redesign mobility practices through research-based innovation. To do this, we combined empirical research

[2] A more comprehensive literature review can be found in Economidou Stavrou et al., in review.

with a design-based development process. First, we mapped the status quo of mobility in MTE programmes by analysing documents and gathering stakeholders' experiences. Then, we used those insights to develop and test new design principles for mobility structures. Crucially, our study brought together perspectives from students, academic staff, and administrators across multiple institutions, recognising that meaningful change in mobility requires buy-in and insight from all stakeholder groups.

## Research Design and Data Material

Our study is inspired by a design-based research (DBR) approach (e. g. McKenney & Reeves, 2018), moving from an initial mapping of existing mobility practices in MTE to the development and refinement of design principles for future mobility practices. The purpose of this approach was not to produce a single empirical study, but to generate actionable knowledge through iterative cycles of investigation, reflection and redesign.

Our first step was to understand how mobility is currently organised. By conducting a systematic document analysis, we reviewed study plans, course catalogues and mobility guidelines from 13 European *TEAM* partner institutions to map the structural conditions for incoming and outgoing students. To complement this structural overview, we conducted semi-structured focus groups and individual interviews with students, music teacher educators and international office staff across multiple institutions. These conversations were interview guide-based and explored motivations, expectations, academic and social experiences, administrative challenges and perceptions of support before, during and after mobility. In total, our dataset comprises interviews with 27 participants (13 students, 9 teacher educators, and 5 administrative staff) from seven higher music education institutions in seven European countries (Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Germany, Ireland, Lithuania, Norway), yielding a rich dataset of over 90,000 transcribed words. Data was analysed using the constant comparative method (e. g. Boeije, 2002; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), a well-established approach in qualitative research that is rooted in Grounded Theory Methodology but also widely applied beyond grounded theory studies. This method involves a systematic process of continuously comparing data segments during coding and categorisation to identify patterns, similarities, and differences across the dataset. This analysis forms the empirical foundation of the preliminary design principles introduced later in this chapter.[3]

In a third step, we brought those preliminary design principles back to students, academic and administrative staff familiar with mobility in MTE. Through facilitated group discussions at four partner institutions, 41 participants assessed the clarity, relevance and

[3] A more detailed description of our methodological approach in the interview study can be found in Economidou Stavrou et al., in review.

feasibility of our preliminary set of design principles derived from the interview analysis. In addition, we presented and discussed the design principles with the *TEAM* scientific advisory board (seven participants which represent national perspectives from Türkiye and the UK as well as international music education networks like *AEC*, *EAS*, *EMC*, *EMU*, ISME),[4] which brought in further perspectives from additional countries and institutional settings. Together, this feedback helped refine both the substance and the formulation of the principles, ensuring they are usable across diverse institutional contexts.

Together, these three strands – document mapping, stakeholder interviews and collaborative refinement – constitute an integrated research process. Rather than treating findings as the end point, we used them as the basis for developing and iteratively improving a framework that institutions can apply to redesign mobility in MTE.

## Results I: Barriers and Enabling Conditions in Mobility for MTE

The empirical basis for this initial results section is presented in two publications drawing on our interview material: a qualitative study of students', teachers' and administrators' perspectives on mobility in MTE (Economidou Stavrou et al., in review) and a poetic-inquiry study focusing on students' 'not-so-glossy' mobility narratives (Fretheim & Jenssen, in review).[5] While student experiences form the most visible thread in the following synthesis – as they are the primary experiencers of mobility – the analysis systematically draws on teacher educator and administrator perspectives to contextualise and complement student accounts. Together, our studies show that mobility in MTE is shaped by interlocking practical, structural, curricular, socio-cultural and emotional conditions. Barriers and enabling factors are thus rarely separate lists; they are different outcomes of the same design choices and institutional cultures. The following synthesis introduces the main thematic areas that later inform our design principles.

### *Practical Conditions: Housing, Visas, Finances, and Administrative Load*

A first cluster of themes relates to basic practical conditions. Housing was a recurring concern: students described difficulties securing affordable, suitable accommodation and, in some cases, experiences of being scammed or forced into long daily commutes (Economidou Stavrou et al., in review). Visa procedures, insurance requirements and

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4 Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (*AEC*), European Association for Music in Schools (*EAS*), European Music Council (*EMC*), European Music School Union (*EMU*), International Society for Music Education (ISME).

5 Unless otherwise indicated, the findings reported in this section draw on the publications: Economidou Stavrou et al., in review and Fretheim & Jenssen, in review. Specific citations are provided where a finding derives predominantly from one source.

unfamiliar welfare systems added further layers of uncertainty, particularly beyond the EU/EEA area, and demanded substantial administrative expertise from institutional staff. Financially, although *Erasmus* and national grants mitigated costs, many students still experienced mobility as economically demanding, which discouraged participation among those with fewer resources. Administrative processes such as learning agreements and credit transfer were perceived either as manageable learning experiences when guided by named contact persons, or as opaque and exclusionary when institutional support was weak. Administrators echoed these concerns but from a different vantage point. They described the administrative workload involved in managing learning agreements, insurance obligations and visa procedures – particularly for non-EU destinations – as substantial and often underestimated by their institutions. Several emphasised that without dedicated training and adequate staffing, administrative staff cannot provide the reliable guidance that students depend on. One administrator also highlighted the value of staff visits to partner institutions, noting that first-hand knowledge of host campuses and cities enabled her to give students realistic, trust-building information – a resource that no website or brochure could replace (Economidou Stavrou et al., in review).

***Information, Communication and Programme Structures***

A second group of themes concerns information and the organisation of exchange programmes. Students often struggled to find reliable, up-to-date information on institutional websites, particularly regarding what courses were available for exchange students, in what language, and how courses could be combined (Economidou Stavrou et al., in review). In practice, many relied on informal channels such as peer networks and social media, which they perceived as helpful but also unreliable. Information sessions at home institutions, along with accessible departmental mobility coordinators, emerged as key enabling structures that made mobility appear realistic and legitimate. From the perspective of programme coordinators and administrative staff, long-term, trusted partnerships with precise knowledge of each other's curricula and academic calendars enabled smoother learning agreements and credit recognition, whereas superficial or poorly maintained partnerships tended to generate mismatches and additional work for all parties (Economidou Stavrou et al., in review).

***Curriculum Experiences: Alignment, Flexibility and Local Specificity***

Curriculum design appeared as a double-edged condition. On the one hand, tightly structured teacher education curricula and music-specific components such as one-to-one tuition and school placements often made it challenging to integrate a mobility period without delays or gaps. Students feared that credits would not be fully recognised or that they would miss essential content, and staff described the complexity of aligning different systems as a deterrent (Economidou Stavrou et al., in review). Notably, administrators and programme coordinators navigated a tension that students were often unaware of: the need to remain both

flexible and academically accountable. As one administrator put it, she wanted to be flexible but also "correct in a way that in the end we do not disappoint the students" (Economidou Stavrou et al., in review) – balancing individual adaptation with institutional obligations. Some programme leaders also pointed to a structural paradox: the more individualised adjustments each mobility case required, the less sustainable and scalable the process became. One administrator argued that mobility would be far easier to promote if it required fewer ad hoc modifications, suggesting that the real challenge lies not in accommodating individual students but in redesigning programme structures so that mobility becomes a standard rather than an exceptional pathway. On the other hand, where institutions created mobility windows, allowed flexible combinations of courses and collaborated across home and host institutions on individual study plans, mobility became a way to access distinctive local offerings and pedagogical approaches. In such cases, students reported that mobility broadened their musical and professional perspectives rather than disrupting their study trajectory.

***Motivations, Participation and Unequal Access***

Students' motivations to go abroad centred around personal development, cultural curiosity and specific academic or artistic interests, such as studying with particular teachers or encountering different musical traditions. Staff generally endorsed these motivations and framed mobility as a "golden opportunity" (Economidou Stavrou et al., in review) for growth. However, the studies highlight persistent inequalities in participation: financial constraints, caring responsibilities, language insecurities, concerns about academic or musical "standards" (Economidou Stavrou et al., in review) and a general fear of the unknown discouraged many from applying. In several contexts, mobility appeared to attract those who were already confident and resource-rich, reinforcing rather than reducing inequalities. Staff attitudes also mattered: supportive teachers who helped redesign study plans enabled participation, whereas sceptical or reluctant staff effectively signalled that mobility was an exception rather than a normalised part of the programme.

***Socio-Cultural Experiences, Language and Belonging***

Our findings underline that mobility is a socio-cultural as much as an academic experience. Belonging and friendship emerged as central to whether exchanges were perceived as enriching or isolating. Music-making in small ensembles or projects often facilitated integration, while large lecture-based courses could leave exchange students at the margins (Economidou Stavrou et al., in review). Institutional support structures such as welcome weeks, buddy schemes and student-led events played a significant role in creating bridges between local and international students; where these were absent or superficial, students reported loneliness and being reduced to national stereotypes (Fretheim & Jenssen, in review). Language functioned simultaneously as a barrier and a resource. English-taught courses and linguistically confident peers eased participation, whereas local-language-only

settings and separate "international" tracks sometimes reinforced segregation, even as several students identified language learning and communicative flexibility as important outcomes of their stay.

***Well-Being, Emotional Labour and the Fragility of Transformation***

Finally, our findings foreground the affective and existential dimensions of mobility. Many students described their exchanges as transformative, pointing to increased confidence, broader horizons and changed professional aspirations. At the same time, their narratives included episodes of loneliness, anxiety, exhaustion and encounters with unfamiliar or distressing social realities, such as financial challenges and perceived insecurity in host cities (Fretheim & Jenssen, in review). Fretheim and Jenssen conceptualise mobility as "stepping into the world" in ways that expose both privileges and vulnerabilities, and that demand considerable emotional labour from students. Whether these demanding moments became meaningful learning experiences or overwhelming burdens depended strongly on the availability of support: realistic pre-departure preparation, ongoing academic and pastoral care during the stay, and structured opportunities for post-return reflection all functioned as crucial enabling conditions. Without such structures, the much-invoked transformative potential of mobility remained fragile and unevenly distributed.

## Results II: From Empirical Insights to Focus Areas and Design Principles

Having identified the barriers and key conditions for successful mobility, the next step in our work was to translate these insights into a set of design principles. This section explains our rationale for creating design principles, how we developed and refined them, and provides an overview of the focus areas into which the design principles are grouped.

***Why Design Principles for Mobility?***

Design principles are a common outcome in design-based research and educational development projects. They bridge research and practice by articulating what needs to be achieved without dictating a single implementation pathway. We chose this format for several reasons. Firstly, mobility in teacher education involves many stakeholders and context-specific variables. A single standard solution (implement programme X everywhere) is neither realistic nor desirable. Instead, design principles provide a flexible template: they name what matters most, while allowing institutions to adapt how they get there. Secondly, the challenges we identified are systemic and interconnected. They cannot be resolved through isolated fixes but require coordinated changes in policy, curricula and everyday practice. Principles help to keep the broader goals in view (such as student support or curriculum alignment) while leaving room for multiple concrete actions. Thirdly,

we wanted the findings to be directly usable for practitioners and decision-makers. Long research reports rarely tell a programme leader what to do next. Clear, concise principles can function as a checklist or source of inspiration, answering the question: What should we pay attention to if we want to improve mobility in music teacher education? Finally, design principles can also be used for reflection and evaluation. Institutions can employ them to review current practices (Do we foster a culture of mobility? How robust is our student support?) and identify gaps. In this way, they offer a shared language for discussing and improving mobility across institutions and systems.

### *How the Design Principles Were Developed*

The principles emerged from a design-based research process combining document analysis, interview findings, and iterative practitioner feedback (see the "Research Design and Data" section). A preliminary version of design principles (v1.0) was developed from the thematic analysis of interview data and institutional documents (section 3). This version was then refined through structured group discussions at partner institutions, leading to a revised and more coherent set of design principles (v2.0). The refinement process strengthened clarity, removed overlap, and ensured that the principles were meaningful, feasible, and aligned with real institutional needs. Finally, this process yielded 13 design principles which could be grouped into five focus areas that reflect the most salient domains requiring attention (see Fig. 1): (1) Foundations and Motivations for Mobility, (2) Institutional collaboration and communication, (3) Curriculum and Course Design, (4) Cultural Immersion and Socio-Cultural Experiences, (5) Student Support.

**Fig. 1:** Focus areas and design principles for mobility in music teacher education (Screenshot *TEAM* website)[6]

[6] https://teacher-academy-music.eu/study-abroad

***Focus Areas and Design Principles in Detail***

Below, each focus area is first introduced in general terms, followed by concise descriptions of its associated design principles (DP). Full, expanded versions that include detailed examples, roles, and implementation strategies are available in our digital tool, *The Mobility Designer* (see the Mobility Designer section).

Focus Area 1 – Foundations and Motivations for Mobility: This focus area addresses how institutions frame and value mobility. Our findings showed that where mobility was treated as marginal or optional extra, participation remained low and unequally distributed. By contrast, institutions that communicated mobility as a standard, expected and educationally meaningful part of the programme created more robust participation patterns. Focus Area I, therefore, concentrates on institutional culture and the narratives surrounding mobility.

> DP 1.1 – Promote a Culture of Mobility: Many institutions treat mobility as an add-on rather than an integrated part of the study programme. DP1 aims to embed mobility into programme identity and communication from the outset, so that going abroad is seen as a realistic and legitimate option for a broad range of students. (Example: First-year orientation sessions introduce mobility opportunities, their timing in the programme, and funding options.)
>
> DP 1.2 – Promote Mobility as a Growth Opportunity: Students emphasised that mobility boosted their confidence, adaptability and musical development. Institutions should frame mobility not primarily as a logistical challenge but as an educational pathway for personal and professional growth and recognise these outcomes explicitly. (Example: Returning students share mobility reflections in core courses, linking exchange experiences to teacher competences and career trajectories.)

Focus Area 2 – Institutional Collaboration and Communication: Mobility depends on more than individual student initiative; it is enabled or blocked by relationships between institutions and by internal coordination. The data revealed that weak or inactive partnerships, unclear responsibilities and fragmented communication often undermined otherwise promising mobility plans. Focus Area II, therefore, targets how institutions collaborate, both externally and internally, to make mobility workable.

> DP 2.1 – Strategic Institutional Partnerships: Not all exchange partnerships are equally useful for MTE. This DP calls for deliberate, reciprocal partnerships with institutions whose programme structures, pedagogical approaches and language

offerings align with MTE needs. (Example: Programme leaders annually review partner institutions and prioritise a small set of well-aligned mobility partners for targeted promotion and development.)

DP 2.2 – Academic and Administrative Collaboration and Communication: Breakdowns in communication between academic and administrative staff frequently hinder mobility. Therefore, this DP encourages joint processes, clear responsibilities and regular coordination within and between institutions to ensure consistent information and coherent support for students. (Example: Before departure, a brief joint meeting between the student, the programme leader and the international coordinator is used to finalise the learning agreement and clarify roles.)

Focus Area 3 – Curriculum and Course Design: Structural rigidity was one of the most pervasive barriers we found in our data: tightly sequenced curricula, incompatible course formats and opaque recognition rules made mobility risky and unpredictable. This area concentrates on the design of curricula and courses, aiming to create structures that enable rather than obstruct mobility, while preserving academic standards.

DP 3.1 – Alignment of Partner Curricula: Differences in course structures, credit systems and assessment formats often block mobility. Aligning core elements between partners makes mobility more predictable and reduces the burden on individual students to negotiate ad hoc solutions. (Example: Institutions jointly create a mobility matrix mapping equivalent courses and workloads across programmes.)

DP 3.2 – Student-Specific Curriculum and Course Planning: Even with aligned curricula, students need flexible, personalised planning. This DP facilitates adaptations before and during mobility, guided by learning outcomes rather than rigid course lists, and backed by trust in students' capacity to make well-informed choices. (Example: If a student discovers a particularly relevant local ensemble project, advisors could swiftly approve it as a substitute for an elective course.)

DP 3.3 – Predefined Mobility Packages: Predefined packages offer structured sets of courses and co-curricular experiences, reducing uncertainty and making exchange options more transparent and attractive. (Example: A Community Music Semester package could combine pedagogy courses, a school-based practicum, ensemble participation and a local culture module.)

DP 3.4 – Transfer of Credits Process: Students often experience anxiety around credit recognition and graduation timing. Institutions should ensure transparent, efficient and predictable credit transfer procedures. (Example: Concise guidelines outlining grade conversion rules, required documentation and a maximum processing time for recognising exchange credits.)

Focus Area 4 – Cultural Immersion and Socio-Cultural Experiences: Students described mobility as transformative when they were able to participate meaningfully in local musical and social life; conversely, isolation and cultural disorientation were significant sources of dissatisfaction. Focus Area IV emphasises the socio-cultural dimensions of mobility, recognising that intercultural learning is not automatic but requires intentional preparation and facilitation.

DP 4.1 – Communication Competence (General and Music-Related): Language and communication challenges influence both learning and social integration. Institutions should support students' communicative readiness and highlight musical communication as a core intercultural skill. (Example: Incoming students receive access to short host-language courses and are paired with language buddies from the music student community.)

DP 4.2 – Socio-Cultural Awareness and Engagement: Cultural disorientation and loneliness were frequent challenges. Structured social opportunities and transparent cultural information can mitigate these effects and turn difference into a resource for learning. (Example: Host institutions organise welcome events and ensemble projects where international and local students rehearse and perform together.)

DP 4.3 – Culture as Part of Exchange Study Plans: The local culture should not remain purely extracurricular. Integrating culturally specific artistic and educational practices into formal study plans enriches mobility and strengthens intercultural pedagogy. (Example: Exchange students enrol in a course on local music traditions or join a folk music ensemble as a recognised component of their academic programme.)

Focus Area 5 – Student Support: Finally, even the most well-designed curriculum and partnerships cannot compensate for serious practical or emotional difficulties. The participants in our study highlighted housing, finances, health and well-being as decisive factors for whether mobility remained sustainable. Focus Area V, therefore, consolidates principles related to practical support and care.

> DP 5.1 – Practical Support Services (Housing, Visa, Finances): Practical obstacles such as housing insecurity, unclear visa procedures or financial strain can overshadow the academic value of mobility. Institutions should provide reliable, centralised support before and during mobility. (Example: Host institutions maintain a verified housing list, provide up-to-date visa guides for common countries they receive students from, and coordinate with home institutions on available funding schemes.)
>
> DP 5.2 – Health and Well-Being: Students' emotional and physical well-being directly affects their capacity to learn abroad. Dedicated points of contact and structured check-ins help maintain safety and support throughout the mobility cycle. (Example: Each outgoing student is assigned a named contact person who checks on them during the first weeks abroad and can facilitate access to counselling or other services if or when needed.)

Together, these five focus areas and 13 design principles form the basis for our *Mobility Designer* framework (Section 5). In practice, they are not isolated silos, rather they reinforce one another. For instance, a strong partnership (Focus II) is what makes curriculum alignment (Focus III) feasible, and both are bolstered by a culture that values mobility (Focus I). Likewise, good support (Focus V) ensures students can fully engage in cultural experiences (Focus IV).

## *The Mobility Designer*: From Principles to a Digital Tool

Design principles are only beneficial if they are actually used. To support institutions in applying the design principles introduced above, we developed the *Mobility Designer* (link to website), which is an online tool that translates the principles into a practical and accessible resource. While the principles provide conceptual direction, the tool offers a structured way for programme leaders, teachers, international office staff and students to explore, reflect on and operationalise these principles in their own contexts.

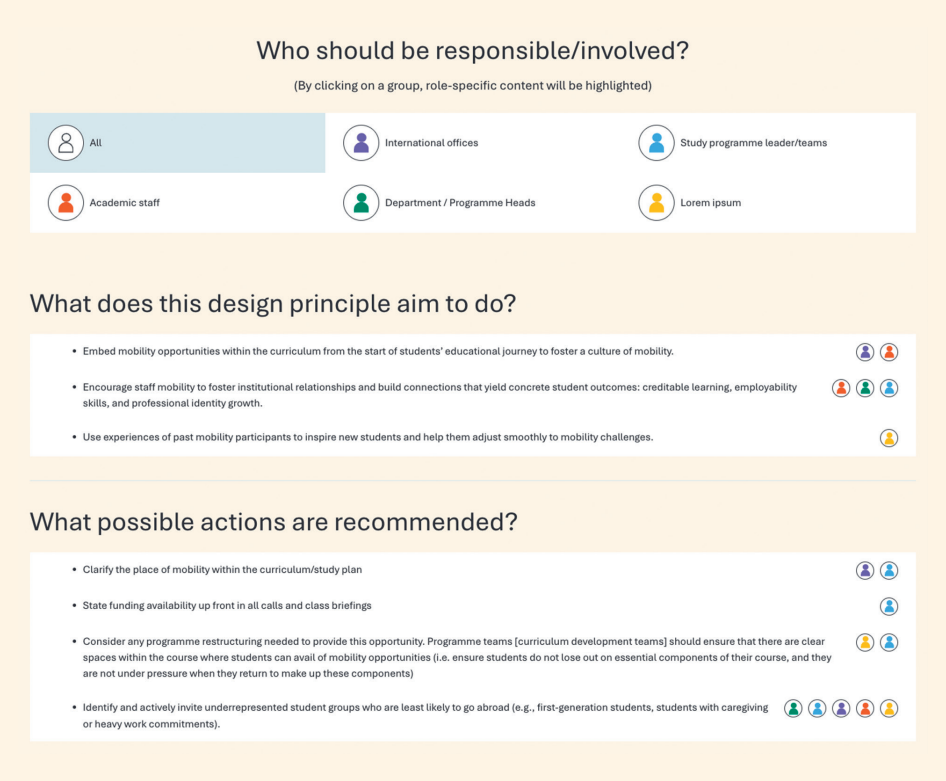


**Fig. 2:** Actions section as part of design principle 1.1 in the *Mobility Designer* (Screenshot *TEAM* website)

The tool is organised around the five focus areas and 13 design principles, each presented through concise explanations and key considerations. Before users are invited to explore the various design principles across multiple levels, from overarching goals to concrete implementation details, the *Mobility Designer* first introduces each focus area through a short video. In these videos, students, teachers and international office staff share their experiences, giving an initial sense of what each focus area is about and why it matters for mobility in MTE.

In addition to the content of each design principle as outlined in Section 4, the *Mobility Designer* adds two further layers. First, for each design principle, the tool indicates when in the overall timeline of mobility, it is most relevant, from preparation through the mobility period itself to post-return follow-up. Second, it offers a range of "specific actions" for each design principle that institutions can use as concrete inspiration for implementation in their own contexts.

Furthermore, users can navigate the tool according to their role or primary interests: programme leaders may focus on curriculum alignment or partnership development, while students may be more interested in cultural engagement or support services. A role-specific filter function allows users to activate a particular role; the *Mobility Designer* then highlights the aspects of each design principle that are especially relevant for that role, making the principles more directly actionable. At the same time, the *Mobility Designer* allows institutions to self-assess their current mobility practices. By comparing existing structures with the design principles, users can identify strengths, gaps and areas for improvement. Therefore, the tool functions as a developmental guide and as an evaluative instrument for monitoring progress over time. Its modular structure allows institutions to work incrementally, focusing on selected focus areas or principles rather than attempting comprehensive reform all at once.

As this chapter cannot provide extensive detail on each design principle, readers are encouraged to engage directly with the open-access *Mobility Designer* in its online form.[7]

## Discussion and Outlook: Towards Cultures of Mobility in MTE

The design principles and the digital tool developed highlight a shift from understanding mobility as a series of logistical arrangements to viewing it as an intercultural and pedagogical endeavour – one in which students' encounters with unfamiliar educational traditions, musical practices and social norms become central to their professional formation. The findings presented in this chapter emphasise that mobility becomes meaningful and sustainable when institutions move beyond treating it as an exceptional opportunity to embedding it into everyday structures, expectations and relationships. This requires not only curricular and administrative adjustments, but a broader transformation of institutional culture – that is, in how institutions collectively imagine, value and support international experiences for their students.

Normalising mobility begins with acknowledging its complexity. For many students, going abroad is not simply a matter of choosing a destination, but rather involves navigating uncertainty, negotiating identity and, in some cases, overcoming genuine barriers related to finances, well-being or access. Institutions that recognise these realities and respond with coherent strategies such as clear structures, active partnerships, flexible curricula and reliable support, in turn, create the conditions for mobility to become a realistic option for a broader and more diverse group of students. In doing so, they also help shift mobility from a peripheral activity to a recognised component of becoming a music teacher in a globalised educational landscape.

[7] https://teacher-academy-music.eu/study-abroad

At the same time, our work points to the need for continued research. The design principles and the *Mobility Designer* represent a significant step in conceptualising how mobility can be redesigned, but they also open new avenues for inquiry. From this stage, future research projects should focus on how institutions actually engage with the tool, which principles are prioritised, and what kinds of changes occur when programmes and international offices adopt them in practice. Evaluating implementation processes and subsequent student experiences will be essential for refining the framework further.

Future work may also explore how the principles intersect with broader developments in higher education, such as hybrid mobility formats, digital exchange platforms or evolving teacher education policies across Europe and beyond. Understanding how these innovations interact with the existing challenges identified in this study will help ensure that mobility in music teacher education remains responsive, inclusive and educationally grounded.

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# Design-Based Research in an International, Multilingual and Interprofessional Setting

## Facilitating School Internships Abroad in European Music Teacher Education

**Abstract**

This chapter presents the methodological framework of a large-scale, interprofessional, international, and multilingual Design-Based Research (DBR) project conducted within *Work Package 5* of the *Erasmus+* co-funded *TEAM* project (*Teacher Education Academy for Music*). The project brought together music education researchers, university teacher educators, and school-based mentor teachers across five European countries to develop theoretical knowledge and practical tools supporting school internships abroad (SIAs) for music education students. Drawing on DBR as articulated by Bakker (2018) and McKenney and Reeves (2019), the research unfolded across seven iterative cycles, each comprising a complete SIA with data collection across preparation, placement, and debrief phases. Four data collection instruments and a broader set of open educational resources (OERs) were iteratively developed throughout the project. The chapter traces the evolution of selected design principles, instruments, and tools as exemplars of this iterative process, and reflects on the advantages and challenges of conducting DBR in a complex, cross-institutional setting – offering methodological insights for researchers undertaking similarly broad, multi-stakeholder projects in education.

**Keywords:** Design-Based Research, School Internship, Mentoring, Teacher Professionalisation, Music Education

## Introduction: A Collaborative Large-Scale Design-Based Research Project

This chapter describes and discusses a research collaboration whose scope is diverse in several respects. In the project presented here, music education researchers worked together with university teacher educators and music teachers in schools (mentor teachers) across five European countries to develop both theoretical knowledge[1] and practical tools[2] for diverse actors engaged in music teacher education. The project was therefore designed to be interprofessional, international, and multilingual.

Within the three-year, large-scale *Erasmus+* co-funded project *TEAM – Teacher Education Academy for Music: Future-Making, Mobility and Networking in Europe*[3] we formed the working group *Work Package 5: Internships Abroad and Mentoring*. The first goal of our work package (*WP5*) was to develop *internship formats* for music education students wishing to complete a school internship abroad (SIA) at a general school during or directly following their domestic teacher education programmes. The second goal was to further develop the quality of student support – mentoring – during SIAs by providing helpful tools and informational materials to mentor teachers (MTs). In this text, we present our broad yet systematic research collaboration: specifically, the design-based research approach (DBR) and how it structured our work. We refer to content such as the state of research, results or products only to clarify our methodological decisions, which must of course be appropriate to the object of study. We begin by briefly outlining the state of existing research within our topic and how it was conducted. We then describe our own approach, illustrating it by presenting some of our research instruments in more detail. We conclude with reflections on the advantages and disadvantages of our methodology to provide insights for similar projects in the future.

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1 see Malmberg et al., 2026, in this volume; Steinmetz & Chrysostomou, 2026, in this volume

2 https://teacher-academy-music.eu/

3 *TEAM*, the *Teacher Education Academy for Future-Making, Mobility and Networking in Europe* aims to provide mappings of European music educational systems, foster mobility (Erasmus semesters as well as Internships Abroad), and offer future-making OERs and a set of European-wide Learning Outcomes for Music Teacher Education. https://teacher-academy-music.eu/
*TEAM* is funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

## Research on School Internships Abroad and Mentoring: Scope and Approaches

The teaching profession faces increasing challenges, including digitalisation, global uncertainty, and increasingly diverse student populations, alongside the imperative of preparing students for complex and unpredictable futures (Townsend & Bates, 2007; Westerlund et al., 2020). Music teachers, serving as both mediators of musical tradition and agents of change, play a key role in supporting students' engagement with evolving cultural and societal realities (Westerlund et al., 2020, p. 4). Consequently, music teacher education must equip future teachers to "think globally, have international experience, and […] integrate a global dimension into the teaching process" (Auni et al., 2022., p. 2763).

Over recent decades, this has led to an expansion of exchange programmes, school internships abroad, and interinstitutional collaboration in teacher education broadly (Bates, 2008) and in music teacher education specifically (Westerlund & Karlsen, 2018; Westerlund et al., 2020). These initiatives provide crucial opportunities for the development of both intercultural competencies – broadly understood here as the ability to engage in appropriate and effective interaction, exchange and negotiation between two or more cultures (Deardorff, 2006; Byram, 2020) – as well as broader professional competencies.

In parallel, a substantial body of research has examined student mobility and the benefits students gained during periods of study or internships abroad (Bloch et al., 2022, p. 107). For example, Kercher and Schifferings (2019) conducted a meta-analysis of 33 international studies investigating the impact of student mobility programmes on student teachers (STs). Of these, 30 studies demonstrated impact across several key areas: increased cultural sensitivity and intercultural competence, a reduction in stereotyping and an increased openness to new experiences. Similarly, Giorgi Di Pietro (2022) carried out a systematic review of international internship programmes, focusing on the competencies and skills students acquire or develop during these internships abroad. In his review, Di Pietro (2022, p. 13) proposes an understanding of intercultural teacher competence acquired through SIAs that encompasses cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity and cultural appreciation alongside adaptability, flexibility and open-mindedness. However, though his findings indicate considerable potential for the development of intrapersonal skills, they also reveal "no consensus on what students actually gain from this experience" (Di Pietro, 2022, p. 19). Di Pietro (2022) argues that the existing studies rely too heavily on student self-reporting and have other methodological issues, which makes achieving consensus difficult.

Within the field of music teacher education, research on immersive intercultural learning experiences – both short- and long-term – indicates that prospective music teachers often report meaningful and sometimes transformative learning experiences. Studies in this area point to the development of intercultural awareness, as well as professional and personal skills that can be applied in international and culturally diverse contexts (e. g.,

Emmanuel, 2005; DAAD, 2018; Westerlund et al., 2020; Miller and Gonzalez, 2016). Nevertheless, empirical research on international teaching experiences within music teacher education – particularly in the European context – remains limited. More broadly, comparable data on their effects on professional competence and the long-term sustainability of these effects are still scarce (Goethe-Institut e.V., 2022, p. 10; Bloch et al, 2022, p. 107).

In response to the complexity, scale, and multi-stakeholder nature of these initiatives, broader research and development infrastructures that bring together international research teams with institutional partners have begun to emerge. For example, the *Forschungshub* (research hub) at the Goethe-Institut combines theoretical and empirical approaches to evaluate processes of internationalisation in teacher education, adopting an interdisciplinary perspective on international internships and aiming to generate systematic insights into the significance and effectiveness of mobility programmes for educational systems in general (Goethe-Institut e.V., 2022, p. 7–8). Within this context, Kluge et al. (2022) represent a move toward more systematic, longitudinal research by examining the development of STs' competencies, beliefs, and motivations during international teaching internships.

Alongside these research initiatives, universities have developed formats that structure and accompany international internships in teacher education. For instance, the University of Cologne has implemented the programme *internships@schoolsabroad*, which offers a unique form of support for both students completing internships abroad and partner schools. The programme includes preparatory meetings, an accompanying online seminar during the internship, and a follow-up seminar aimed at reflecting on the experience (Felske et al., 2022, p. 30). Similar approaches can be found at the University of Potsdam, where accompanying online seminars focus on language-sensitive subject instruction during internships abroad following Felske's online seminar approach (Felske et al., 2022, p. 39), and mentoring formats, which aim to provide subject-didactic guidance during placements (Buschmann & Malmberg, 2025).

Beyond individual support, some institutions embed internationalisation within broader collaborative frameworks that involve sustained partnerships with schools, universities, and educational organisations abroad. At Goethe University Frankfurt, for instance, the field of *International Teacher Education* was established in 2016 to support students going abroad while strategically coordinating exchange between universities and partner schools. A key component of this programme is a blended-learning concept designed to support students, facilitate self-directed learning, and foster collaboration between university staff and MTs at host schools (Hänssig, 2019; Felske et al., 2022, p. 33). In addition, the university has built up an international network of cooperating schools (Felske et al., 2022, p. 35). Collectively, these initiatives illustrate how large-scale, international programmes provide a framework for the investigations into the professional and institutional development of internships in teacher education.

In European teacher education, formalised structures for SIAs appear to be less common outside of Germany. Rather than being organised as independent programmes, opportunities to complete SIAs may be embedded in existing internship structures in many European contexts (Steinmetz et al., in review). In summary, it can be said that while there is evidence of significant international cooperation to enable STs to complete SIAs, development is uneven overall. Initial materials for supporting such internships are available in some places; however, accompanying research either covers only small samples or describes bilateral exchange programmes between two countries and their limited effects. Moreover, most of the research focuses on exchange programmes in which the local language does not pose a major obstacle to students – either because they are studying the language of the host country (foreign language internship) or because the programmes involve schools abroad that use the same language (e.g., German Schools Abroad, or U.S. students going to England). To date, no research on projects involving interprofessional teams with a broad international and linguistic profile has been published.

Addressing these research gaps, the *TEAM* project (*WP5*) is exploring and mapping different models, designs and structures for music-focused SIAs in Europe. By investigating the perspectives of multiple stakeholders (universities, schools, student teachers, mentor teachers), the project aims to understand the impact of international experiences on both an individual and institutional level.

Yet in this chapter, we do not primarily focus on our research results or the theoretical insights acquired (for detailed accounts of these findings, see Malmberg et al., 2026, in this volume; Steinmetz & Chrysostomou, 2026, in this volume) but rather show in detail how we worked methodologically. We therefore pose and discuss the following question: How can a coherent research design be established and implemented in a large-scale DBR project on internships abroad and mentoring within an interprofessional, international and multilingual educational context? What advantages can such a broad research setting offer, what difficulties arise, and how can these be mitigated?

## Methodology

In the following section, we describe our research approach and the stakeholders involved. We also provide selected examples of the research instruments used, the sample, and our analytical method to illustrate our work.

### *The Design-Based Research Framework*

Design-Based Research (DBR) provided the framework for this research project (Bakker, 2018; Reinmann et al., 2024). We draw on DBR in the sense articulated by Bakker (2018), who suggests it is a "genre of flexibly using existing research approaches for the purpose

of gaining design-based insights and research-based designs" (p. 7). While the notion of design is quite prominent here, McKenney & Reeves postulate the following definition of DBR, emphasising a more multifaceted educational approach: "Educational design research blends scientific investigation with the systematic development and implementation of solutions to educational challenges" (McKenney & Reeves, 2019, title page). According to this definition, the central premise of DBR is to yield both theoretical insights and solutions applicable to practical contexts. Thus, the research process in DBR has a dual focus and can be defined as both theoretically oriented and interventionist: theoretically oriented in the sense that DBR aims at the "development of theoretical understanding" (McKenney & Reeves, 2019, p. 13) and interventionist as it impacts practice, e. g., via educational products or programmes.

The interprofessional composition of this research links practitioners' knowledge with researchers' conceptual and structural knowledge.

Our international research group comprises the following stakeholders from various European countries:

- university-based teacher educators (TE; also acting as practitioner in the ST-MT-TE-triad),
- researchers with expertise in mentoring during practical phases,
- researchers who had developed and implemented mentor training programmes,
- coordinators of practical phases and subject-didactics specialists, and
- individuals who are or have been mentors.

We worked in several national languages, with English serving as the shared language. On the one hand, this collaborative structure accounts for high complexity (in terms of organisational and interactional matters) and on the other hand, this co-designing process enabled reciprocal knowledge transfer (Reinmann et al., 2024) and contributed to bridging the "research-practice gap" (Bogaerds-Hazenberg et al., 2019, p. 1).

Another foundational element of DBR is its cyclic nature and iterative setting, which enable empirical investigation and thus produce usable knowledge (McKenney & Reeves, 2019, p. 6). The term *usable knowledge* can be traced back to Lagemann (2002), who highlighted the importance of educational products as the relevant outcome of such research. Each cycle generates usable knowledge, which is shared and distributed among researchers and practitioners (McKenney & Reeves, 2019, p. 6). As educational research is particularly concerned with practical learning outcomes and applications, the empirical setting needs to be constantly adjusted to newly acquired insights and is therefore highly adaptive (Bakker, 2018, p. 5; McKenney & Reeves, 2019, p. 11). The following sections lay

out the ways in which our initial focus areas – through collaborative research work and the application of DBR framework – developed over time and contributed to the maturation of the tools and insights arising from the SIAs from May 2024 until July 2025.

### *Pilot Study*

Initial discussions within our international research and practitioner group made clear that although domestic school internships are an element of teacher training in all ten *TEAM* consortium countries, their format, allocation and focus differ significantly. Therefore, prior to designing the first cycle, we conducted a small pilot study (Steinmetz et al., in review), surveying music education experts from 18 countries about school internship practices in their respective teacher education programmes. Equipped with knowledge about their domestic school internships, we aimed to develop formats and tools to enable the manageable integration of school internships abroad for as many European music teacher training institutions as possible. The survey revealed that, despite differences, there is significant overlap in school internship content and requirements, providing a shared basis for planning and implementing school internships abroad on a European level.

Having established the theoretical grounding for school internships abroad and having identified the organisational and practical aspects that are necessary for their implementation, we discussed a first set of *design principles* (Euler, 2017). The design principles, which characterise prescriptive theoretical understanding (McKenney & Reeves, 2019, p. 38), guided our intervention design and were themselves iteratively refined three times during our project, as new empirical and theoretical knowledge was acquired.[4]

### *Cycles and Their Data Collection Instruments*

In our DBR process, each school internship comprised three phases: preparation (pre-internship), placement (fieldwork; during the internship) and debrief (post-internship). Data were collected across all three phases using instruments we developed and iteratively refined throughout the project. These instruments also served as prototypes for future practice tools, available as open educational resources (OERs)[5], in keeping with DBR's dual focus on both theory and practice. They are briefly introduced here; a more in-depth discussion of their use and iterative refinement is found below. Each cycle comprised the completion of a SIA in its entirety, including data collection via our instruments across all three phases and subsequent data analysis, which informed redesigns. Between some cycles we also refined our design principles.

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4 An overview of the design principles' iterative development is presented from pages 91–95, along with a more detailed presentation of several exemplars. The mature version of the design principles in their entirety can be found in Appendix A.

5 https://oer.mdw.ac.at/oer/publication?collection_name=TEAM&query=&sort=dateIssued_desc&page=1

### Preparation: Reflecting and Preparing

*Data Instrument 1: Introductory Conversation Guide* (Appendix B)
A conversation guide was developed for use by the mentor teacher (MT) and student teacher (ST), aiming to assist in cultural self-reflection, exploring contextual differences in music education, and articulating goals, hopes and expectations for the SIAs. Furthermore, it aimed to establish rapport between MT and ST. This first prototype proved useful and underwent only minor revisions throughout subsequent cycles.

### Placement: Reflecting and Documenting

*Data Instrument 2: Voice memo prompts* (Appendix D)
STs were asked to record 3–5 voice memos per week during their school internships abroad and send them directly to the researcher studying their placement. The recordings were typically recorded on the STs' smartphones and stored by the researcher in a GDPR-compliant repository, accessible to all research team members. These voice memos encouraged ongoing self-reflection and provided near-real-time data rather than post hoc recollections. An initial set of prompts (Appendix D/see also section Practice Tools below) was refined over the first four cycles as we sought to move from more superficial lists of activities ('This is what I did today') to STs reflecting on a meta-level why events were significant and how actions connected to learning processes.

*Data Instrument 3: Photo journal prompts* (Appendix E)
Both ST and MTs were asked to take photos during the internship: These photos were to be used as a guide during the debrief interview, allowing the students to talk about people, places and activities that had been particularly meaningful to them. The depth and reflectiveness of the photos were initially inconsistent, so we developed a photo journal guide after Cycle 5 that aimed to help students take more thoughtful, intentional photos for their journals.

### Debrief: Reflecting and Transferring

*Data Instrument 4: Debrief conversation guide* (Appendix F)
A debrief conversation guide was created to gain further insight into the ST's experiences abroad. For data collection purposes, these conversations took place in the form of qualitative interviews between a researcher and one ST. Later, the conversation guide was refined so that STs could also use it for self-reflection, with the option of integrating references to their photo journals and voice memos.

Instruments 1–4 functioned as research instruments and were also iteratively refined to become tools and to be made available as OERs after the conclusion of the project. Further tools were also developed within this research project, including the *Cultural Reflection Tree* (Appendix C), *Checklist for Mentor Teachers* (Malmberg et al., 2026, in this volume) and *Tips for Language-Sensitive Music Teaching* (Appendix G).

| | | | Phases of the SIA | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Tools Developed** | **People Involved** | **Data Instrument** | **Preparation** | **Placement** | **Debrief** |
| **Introductory Conversation Guide** | ST and MT, Optional TE | Instrument 1 | Yes, for planning and preparation | – | – |
| **Checklist for Mentor Teacher** | MT | – | Yes, for planning and preparation | Yes, for use during placement | May be helpful in debrief phase |
| **Cultural Reflection Tree** | ST, MT or ST, TE or ST, MT, TE | – | Yes, optional | Yes | Yes |
| **Tips for Language-Sensitive Music Teaching** | ST optional MT TE | – | Yes, for planning and preparation | Yes, for use during placement | – |
| **Voice Memo Prompts** | ST | Instrument 2 | Could begin in planning phase | Yes, for use during fieldwork | Could be used during debrief phase |
| **Photo Journal Prompts** | ST optional MT | Instrument 3 | – | Yes, for use during fieldwork | – |
| **Debrief Conversation Guide** | ST and MT or ST and TE or ST, MT and TE | Instrument 4 | – | – | Yes, at the end of or after placement |

**Table 1:** Developed tools, target groups, instruments for data collection and their use in phases of the SIA

### *Data Collection, Sample and Analysis*

Data were collected throughout all seven cycles using the four instruments listed above with the STs (N = 10; 7 female, 3 male); instrument 1 was also used with the MTs (N = 3). Data collection was further supplemented by semi-structured interviews with the MTs (N = 3) as well as TEs from the sending universities (N = 2) toward the end of their involvement in the project. All data were digitally captured, stored and managed in a GDPR-compliant repository made available by the host institution. The interviews and voice memos were transcribed and analysed[6] using MAXQDA (VERBI Software, 2022).

[6] The photos in the photo journals have thus far only been used as memory aids during debrief interviews and have not yet been systematically evaluated.

The analysis was conducted as structuring qualitative content analysis combining inductive and deductive coding (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2022). Two to three researchers independently coded each dataset to achieve intercoder agreement. Broader analyses were discussed either within the research group or the whole *TEAM* consortium (Barbour, 2001), in keeping with the collaborative nature of DBR (Bakker, 2018). The results after each evaluation shaped subsequent cycles and at three points also led to a refinement of our design principles.

The participating students were bachelor or master music education students at universities represented in the *TEAM* consortium. An open call was sent out to music education students at these institutions inviting them to take part in a SIA. Students expressing interest received more information and were invited to participate in the accompanying research project. Once their participation consent was obtained, the students began applying for funds through their university's *Erasmus* office, and an introductory meeting with the MT was scheduled via Zoom. The MTs were all in multiple roles as TEs, music teachers, and/or music education researchers, with two MTs being highly involved in the *TEAM* project. STs were informed by their mentors about school policies regarding photographs; pictures taken by STs and MTs and used as part of data collection were GDPR-compliant and conformed to individual school policies.

Data collection was compliant with the ethical and data protection regulations of the *TEAM* project. Participation in the research component of the SIA was voluntary; informed consent was obtained from all participants, and all data were pseudonymised for analysis.

## Process and Results

The following section gives insight into the DBR kitchen and describes key processes in our study which prove relevant to the evaluation of our results. First, we outline the organisational framework of the SIAs we facilitated and provide a brief overview of each cycle, including the actors involved. Second, we introduce the design principles and trace their iterative development across the seven cycles, with particular attention to three exemplars. Third, we present tools designed during the project, highlighting the iterative development of one exemplar (the voice memo prompts).

***Organisational Framework***

Following consultation with university *Erasmus* officers, two funding programmes[7] were identified as suitable options for SIAs: the blended mobility programme (for stays of 5–30 days), or traineeships abroad (for internships lasting 2–12 months). Learning agreements were in each case set up between a sending university and a host school of general education, but did not include a receiving university as would be typical for *Erasmus* study abroad. The internships could be non-credited, meaning students received no ECTS but rather an addendum to their diploma supplement. Alternatively, the sending university could consider the SIA as an obligatory internship and credit the student the corresponding number of ECTS.

***Receiving Institutions (Schools)***

Three secondary schools in three different countries hosted SIAs as part of the research project. All internships were focused on music education, and all MTs were music teachers. As presented in Table 2 below, in schools 2 and 3, the local language is spoken, while school 1, an international school, uses English for instruction and all other school activities.

| | **School 1** (Cycles 1,2,5 and 7) | **School 2** (Cycles 3 and 6) | **School 3** (Cycle 4) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **School Type** | International private school within a network of similarly structured schools | Public school in local school system in major central European city | Public school in national school system |
| **School Focus** | Follows the International Baccalaureate curriculum | Music emphasis | Strong music specialisation; emphasis on choral singing and traditional folk music |
| **Age of Pupils** | Secondary school, grades 6–12 | Lower secondary school, grades 5–8 | Secondary school, grades 5–12 |
| **Instructional language** | English as *lingua franca* for all school communication | Local language | Local language |
| **Student Body Composition** | Diverse student body, highly international with no one dominant culture | Diverse student body diverse both linguistically and culturally | Relatively homogeneous student body |

**Table 2:** Internship schools: Levels, student body and teaching languages

[7] https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/opportunities/opportunities-for-individuals/students/traineeships-abroad-for-students [29.11.2025]

### *Cycle Composition and Participants*

The DBR cycles are displayed in Table 3 according to cycle number, length, country, whether or not it was credited, and language of instruction. The MT, TE and ST(s) for each cycle are also indicated. In total, ten STs participated in the SIAs from four sending institutions across Europe.

| **Cycle** | | **Sending Institution (University)** | | | | | **Receiving Institution (School)** | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No. | Duration | Country | STs | STs | TEs | EC | Country | MT | EN/local language |
| **1** | 10 days | CO4 | ST1 | – | TE1 | no | CO1 | MT1 | EN |
| **2** | 3 wks | CO4 | ST2 | – | TE2 | no | CO1 | MT1 | EN |
| **3** | 4 wks | CO5 | ST3a | ST3b | TE3 | no | CO2 | MT2 | LL |
| **4** | 2 wks | CO6 | ST4a | ST4b | – | yes | CO3 | MT3 | LL |
| **5** | 9 wks | CO7 | ST5a | ST5b | TE4 | yes | CO1 | MT1 | EN |
| **6** | 2 wks | CO6 | ST6 | – | – | no | CO2 | MT2 | LL |
| **7** | 10 wks | CO7 | ST7 | – | TE4 | yes | CO1 | MT1 | EN |

**Table 3:** Cycles and involved parties, sample overview

Time was a restricting element in this research project as we were bound not only to various school calendars and university semester plans, but also to a fixed project deadline. In a few instances, minor adjustments were made to the design mid-cycle – such as, for example, updating the voice memo or photo journal prompts.

### *Design Principles*

Our initial design principles (DPs) were developed based primarily on theoretical insights from the literature review and empirical findings gained from the pilot survey, as well as professional experience from within the research team. These first DPs (Fig. 1: DP1) then guided the creation of the first design (Fig. 1: Design 1), which we conceptualise as comprising the SIA supported by practical tools, some of which also function as data collection instruments. The initial design and the resulting data set together comprise Cycle 1 (Fig. 1: Design 1 and Data Set 1; each oval indicates one cycle).

Data were collected throughout each cycle (Data Set 1–7) and evaluated upon completion. Where applicable, findings informed refinement to the subsequent design – that is, the SIA supported by accompanying tools – resulting in a series of iterative cycles (Designs 1–7). Because we had several redesigns and some cycles partially overlapped (see Fig. 1: e.g., Cycles 5, 6 and 7), we opted for a numerical labelling system (Designs 1–7) for clarity and a better overview.

During in-person meetings of the research group, which took place before the Cycle 1 and then again after Cycles 2, 5 and 7, we collaboratively reviewed the analysed data and corresponding design modifications; these discussions then informed subsequent iterations of the DPs. Overall, our collaborative and iterative process resulted in smaller, cycle-specific refinements and broader, cross-cycle refinements that contributed to the evolution of the DPs. The structure of Fig. 1 is partly inspired by Fraefel (2014, p. 9).

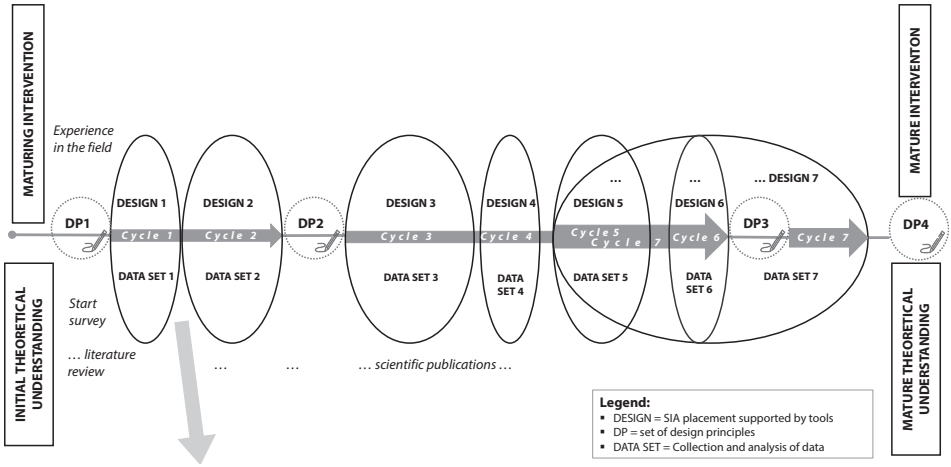


**Fig. 1:** Seven shorter and longer cycles (each oval being one cycle), three moments of DP revision

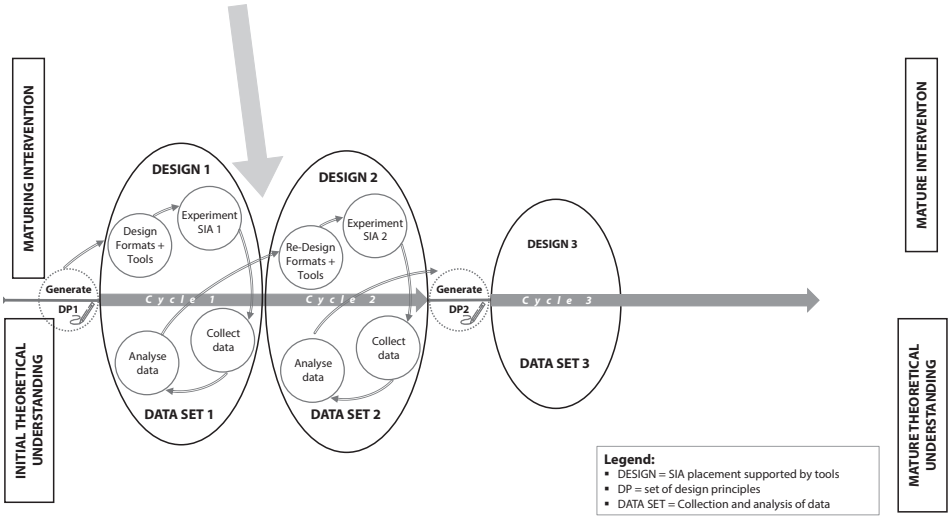


**Fig. 2:** Zoom into Cycle 1 and Cycle 2

Below we present the development of three DPs as exemplars: the evolution of two DPs is traced from their origins as initial design principles to maturity, and a third demonstrates the development of a DP as it emerged from the data.

***Initial Design principle:*** *Clarify expectations and framings to establish appropriate matching of mentee and mentor/school.*

Clarification proved to be a central element in planning and implementing SIAs. While our initial concern focused on ensuring sensible partnerships, the issue of clarity extended much further, which is unsurprising, given the diversity of language, educational systems and institutional requirements involved.

For example, a vague learning agreement and insufficient communication led in one instance to confusion as to what the ST actually needed to complete during her SIA. Because this particular ST was near the end of her studies and had already completed her internship requirements, she was free to design her SIA in alignment with her professional interests. However, this information was not communicated to the MT, who reported feeling stressed about whether all requirements were being fulfilled. In another example, STs completing a credited SIA had very specific requirements, which led to a greater workload for the MT than originally anticipated. This was ultimately unproblematic, but greater clarity beforehand would have allowed for better planning.

Other issues concerning administrative and organisational aspects (e.g., Who are the partners? Who is responsible for what? How and when will communication take place? What form will feedback take?) also arose throughout the cycles. Because SIAs are less standardised than other mobility programmes, and because intercultural and linguistic dimensions add layers of complexity, clarifications are particularly critical. Therefore, the element of clarity from the initial DP proved to be correct but was too narrow in scope, and the respective DP was refined to reflect this. Clarity is key to a smooth and successful SIA not only in the planning phases, but throughout the internship abroad.

***Final Design Principle:*** *Clarity is key: expectations, framing, and requirements for SIAs should be explicitly and formally communicated to all participants.*

***Initial Design Principle:*** *Engage in a high level of cultural self-reflection*

Although frequently described in the literature as one of the most important learning areas of international internships (e.g., Pence & McGillivray, 2008; Cheng & Huang, 2023), data collection throughout the research project indicated that intercultural learning is not automatic, but must be supported essentially by self-reflection (Malmberg et al., 2025). We understand the term intercultural as referring to interaction, negotiation and/or exchange across two or more cultures (Deardorff, 2006; Byram, 2020), and define intercultural learning as an ongoing process which supports the development of skills for effective and appropriate intercultural interaction, such as intercultural teacher competences as conceived by Di Pietro (2022): cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity and cultural appreciation alongside adaptability, flexibility and open-mindedness.

While STs often downplayed intercultural aspects in their internships, describing cultural differences as unimportant or insignificant, data revealed that they did indeed notice them, although they did not necessarily identify these differences as being cultural in nature (Steinmetz & Chrysostomou, 2026, in this volume). Evolving data collection instruments – such as voice memo prompts, photo journal prompts, and debrief interview guides – sought to help STs engage in deeper self-reflection, thereby enhancing intercultural learning. Therefore, the imperative shifted over the cycles from engaging in reflection to providing tools for reflection. This led to refinements, particularly to the voice memo prompts and the debrief interview guide, which were developed as OERs to support SIAs.

It also became apparent from interviews with both student and mentor teachers that the MT's reflection practice was also significant; the MTs not only encouraged and facilitated self-reflection in their STs but modelled this practice themselves. Our data analysis yielded many codes related to teaching philosophies, and it was meaningful for the STs to hear from their MTs about the why behind their teaching approaches. Ultimately, the initial DP proved to be both too general and too small and became:

***Final design principle:*** *(Self-) reflection for transformation: Provide students with opportunities and tools for intercultural self-reflection.*

The following DP first emerged after Cycle 6. During the portion of the debrief interview in which the students shared photos they had taken that were meaningful to them, they often brought photos of places or experiences outside of school. In conversations about these photos and experiences, it became clear that these activities were also impactful during the SIA. Visiting museums or historical sites, attending concerts, spending time in nature, taking day trips, or going on daily long walks were just some of the examples STs gave of activities beyond the school that were meaningful to them and that appeared to enhance their intercultural learning. From the beginning, we had included DPs about being involved in broader school life and specified that the SIA should encompass aspects of being a teacher beyond direct classroom teaching, such as participating in meetings, attending various school events, and involvement in intraschool structures and communication. This remains a DP, but it became evident that the STs benefit from engagement with the host environment beyond the school itself. Unlike a domestic school internship, an SIA removes students from their daily lives and typical responsibilities and activities once the school day ends. This time is a valuable element of their SIA, and the way that they spend it is not irrelevant to their experience, but integral and meaningful. Consequently, we refined the photo journal prompts (Appendix E) to also encourage reflection on experiences outside of the school and refined the design principles to include:

***Emergent design principle:*** *Holistic engagement beyond the school: Enhancing learning during the SIA.*

### *Practice Tools – Focusing on Voice Memo Prompts*

The current section illustrates the maturing interventions and the development of SIA tools through the DBR approach. It does so by focusing on one of the data collection instruments, thereby highlighting one segment of the DBR process, including the data collection and analysis from two to three cycles and the relevant DPs that were developed on this basis. The intention here is to present a focused snapshot of tool development, revealing the intricate processes involved and highlighting the inclusion of the aforementioned practical and diverse experience contributed through the *WP5* team's collaboration.

Keeping a reflective journal is a common practice during domestic internships and is often one part of student portfolios that are submitted for evaluation upon completion of the internship (Lindroth, 2014). During the initial design stage, we explored various tools encouraging STs to reflect in real time on their SIA experiences. One such tool, introduced in Cycle 1, was a set of prompts for brief – initially 90 seconds in the first two cycles, then

3–5 minutes from Cycle 3 onward – student-recorded voice memos (VM) that could be swiftly collected by the *WP5* team and that informed the ongoing DBR procedure. As mentioned earlier, the voice memos (VM) aimed to present an authentic picture of students' experiences on a near-daily and at least weekly basis. The initial set of prompts, compiled through relevant literature and *TEAM WP5* expertise, was refined throughout the cycles through continuous revision of tools, DPs, and collaborative reflection on the content and quality of the collected data. In Table 4 below, data excerpts from Cycles 1 and 2 are presented in response to the initial three VM prompts designed in May 2024 and a fourth prompt added in July 2024.

| Prompts | Voice memo data |
|---|---|
| ***May 2024*** | |
| How did I feel today/ How did I feel like it went today? | *I got the chance to not play one of the traditional instruments, but to copy the movements on a regular drum. (.) Initially, I was unsure how well the teaching assistants would go today, but with excellent material and support, I was really really glad to always have someone to talk to and to just exchange some experience. I had a great time and found the experience very enjoyable. (Cycle 1)* |
| What were the most memorable impressions? | *Today's experiences emphasise the importance of clear communication, structure support and adaptability in teaching. Each class presented unique challenges from handling technical issues to ensuring all students are engaged and supported. Today reinforced the need for thorough preparation and flexibility in both teaching and administrative tasks. (C1)* |
| What concerns me, or what is occupying my mind the most? | *I started off the day with an observation of a grade seven theatre class and they were very vivid and wild and very loud. (…) And it was kind of hard to, like, to stay in the class because they were like, was really, really loud and really annoying. (C2)* |
| ***July 2024*** | |
| What would I like to try out tomorrow/ the next days? | *I'm very excited to (..) see what's coming up the next days. (…) I'm also gonna be, like, watching and probably maybe participating in, like, the band rehearsals and the choir rehearsals. (..) Which are gonna come up tomorrow, I think. And also tomorrow there's gonna be, like, a teacher meeting which I can participate in (C2)* |

**Table 4:** Cycle 1 & 2 Voice Memo prompts & data (May–July 2024)

As is evident from the data collected through the VMs in Cycles 1 and 2, the students focused mostly on describing their daily school experiences rather than using the VMs to reflect more deeply on them. The ways the prompts are used may depend on the framing of the SIA, for example its length. As shown in Fig. 1, the initial cycles were shorter than subsequent cycles, some of which extended across 8–10 weeks (Cycles 5 and 7).

Introductory guidelines were subsequently added to the VM instructions, and these appear to be equal in importance to the actual prompts. For example, by Cycle 3 (October 2024), the guidelines read: It is very important that you share with us your true impressions and thoughts – especially your reflections and 'ideas behind your ideas'. You might want to make some notes ahead of recording, or you can just speak freely.

In Table 5, the shifts in prompts are evidenced through more specific foci on memorable impressions, encouraging STs to focus on instances especially significant to them and to include these in their brief – now four minutes in length – VMs. They also aimed to foster forward-thinking about the STs' positioning and developing identity as future teachers. The prompt sheet also included an additional set of sub-prompts to encourage optional further reflection:

- Did something go particularly well – or not so well?
- What do I hope to try out and experience tomorrow/or in the next days?
- What did I learn from the mentor teacher?
- What questions do I have for my mentor teacher, or for my mentor at my university?
- What did I learn that I want to take with me going forward? What do I want to leave behind?
- How is music education at this school different from what I am used to? Or maybe what is different about music education in this region or country?
- What did I learn about classroom management?
- How did I see faculty members working together?
- How have I learned from my peers?

| Prompts | Voice memo data |
|---|---|
| ***October 2024*** | |
| These were my most memorable impressions today … | *'So I, I try to not interfere, to just do observations. But I had to. So I went to the student and gave him my book and pen and just challenged him to draw. So we had a drawing contest, which was very fun. He was very, very good and I'm awful at drawing. So he won. And that was a nice moment. And after I went to him, he started working on his own. So I gave him the attention that the teacher couldn't because she was busy.' (C3)* |
| These are the reasons why they are memorable (e. g. because they were fascinating/striking/ challenging/occupying my thoughts …) to me | *'Why is it memorable? It's a subject I'm a fan of. I want to have special pedagogy as my second subject, and just seeing a kid being left alone for that long is it makes an impact sitting just on the floor. That's not good. But again, the teacher had no choice.' (C3)* |
| This is the connection between today's experiences and how I see myself as a (future) teacher | *'I want to have a free class, but with structure. I don't want to, but I want to let them explore the music. Music isn't just a solution. It has a path which everyone needs to explore. If not, then what's the point? Yes.' (C3)* |

**Table 5:** Cycle 3–4 voice memo prompts and data (October 2024)

Across Cycles 1–4 that involved STs completing shorter in length SIAs (1–4 weeks), the prompts focused on heightening self-awareness, drawing out issues of direct concern, yet also encouraging, to the extent possible, future-thinking in terms of teaching practice and teacher identity. As evidenced in the development of the VM tool in Cycles 3–4, ST reflection is now channeled towards specific memorable experiences rather than generic feelings and emotions – which, as the data reveals, are intertwined with reports of these instances (*'that was a nice moment'*).

Thereafter, in Cycles 5 and 7 that involved STs completing more extended SIAs (8–10 weeks) the VM prompts aimed to develop metacognition and deeper reflection on teaching practices and philosophies. In Cycle 5, the SIA was undertaken simultaneously by two STs travelling together from their home university, which added a further layer of prompts to the fourth iteration of the VM guide sheet (Table 6).

| Prompts | Voice memo data |
|---|---|
| What were my most memorable impressions since my last voice memo? | *'It had to do with Papua New Guinea and everyone had a role that had to do with that society. It was like a normal debate, let's say, that you see on television where they discuss with each other and important issues that have to do with the country. And it was also very interesting that we saw the position of the children and the questions they asked and the answers they gave. They were very mature (.).' (C5)* |
| What was particularly interesting about them? | *'(.) I don't know, I think it's very important that things like this happen in schools. Because this is really part of the future. Once again, I was speechless in a good way. And I'm glad that at least somewhere in the world some things are happening right when it comes to education.' (C5)* |
| What have I learnt for myself as a music teacher? | *'(.) we see things from a completely different perspective now. Because it's one thing to be a student and prepare a piece, to play, and another to be a teacher, who at the same time helps the students with all this, and is part of the rehearsals, to help and give feedback, and at the same time organises all this, the running is double (.) at the same time it's what we have to think about what the other people who help organise are going through.' (C5)* |
| Further questions were provided based on the data from the longer length of Cycle 5:<br>• Are my initial SIA expectations being met? If so/if not, in what ways?<br>• Are there similarities/differences between what I know already about being a teacher and my SIA experience? (In thinking about this question, you may also reflect on your developing teacher identity)<br>• Are there similarities/differences between music teaching and learning in my own context and in the SIA experience? (In thinking about this question, you may also reflect on your developing teaching philosophy)<br>• What knowledge and skills am I bringing into the SIA from my own context (subject-specific knowledge/musicking skills, personal wisdom, technical expertise)?<br>• What did I learn from my student teachers as peers and what did they learn from me? How does having student teachers-as-peers support me during my internship? (where applicable) | |
| Data from Cycle 5 on student teachers-as-peers | *'Today we said we would start with [peer student teacher] to give some lessons to the children about Greek music. And we started with the 11th grade and we realised how much there is and that at least I don't know, marginally in some things I watch [peer student teacher] who gives lessons and I learn at the same time and I want to learn other things about my tradition to teach the children.' (C5)* |

| | |
|---|---|
| For longer term SIAs, a further set of prompts were offered:<br>• What has changed/shifted for me, during my internship? In what ways has this changed? Specify the reasons this has changed. How has the knowledge and skills that I brought into the SIA from my own context (subject-specific knowledge, personal wisdom, technical expertise) changed as I applied it in the new context?<br>• What knowledge, skills, impressions, values will I take back with me to my home institution? In what ways will they be useful back home?<br>• Looking back at the start of my student teaching experience, what specific areas have I grown the most in, and how can I continue to improve in these areas?<br>• As the SIA reaches its end, what are the key lessons from your SIA regarding becoming a music teacher that you will take with you?<br>• What did you contribute to your SIA that you are you particularly proud of? | |
| Data from Cycle 7 on developing a teaching philosophy and a professional teacher identity | *'As we are reaching the end of the school year, a lot of exciting things are happening every day. We finished with the middle school's musical showcase, the kids did great, all the hard work really paid off! All the lessons keep running as normal, getting each day closer to the final exams, with that having a bit of an impact on the students' psychology, as they're more stressed than they were when I first came to school. But all the teachers – me included – we're trying our best to boost them and make them feel more confident for when that day arrives.' (C7)*<br><br>*'For now, I feel more grateful than ever, because I feel this journey has shaped me as a person, as an educator, and more broadly, as a whole human being. Being alone in a foreign country was a completely new experience for me – it was the best opportunity to become more familiar with myself and my emotions, as I experienced everything in the most intense way.' (C7)* |

**Table 6:** Cycle 5–7 voice memo prompts and data (February–June 2025)

The VM prompts that give rise to the data in Cycles 5 and 7 seem to indicate deeper reflection on STs' developing professional identities and practices. The development of the VM tool indicates that a range of prompts need to be available for STs; for those in short-term SIAs, prompts should focus on reflection and analysis of same-day experiences, promoting self-awareness and creating links with STs' own experiences and contexts. For longer SIAs, VM prompts may gradually shift from the here-and-now to future-thinking, changing perspectives and professional identity development.

A final consideration concerns the language used in the voice memos and its potential impact on ST self-reflection. From Cycle 2 onward, STs whose primary language was also spoken by a member of the research team were given the option to record their voice memos in that language. This appeared to facilitate deeper reflection, though it is interesting to note that some STs chose to speak in English toward the end of their placements even when they could have recorded the memos in their primary language.

## Discussion

This section reflects on the practice-based knowledge arising from our project, including both the research format and the design implementation, as well as its longer-term sustainability.

The interprofessional composition of our research team reflected the blend of academic and practitioner perspectives made possible by DBR. Our research team was composed of music educators with specialties ranging from instrumental pedagogy to general music education. Some research team members are regularly involved in music education research and music teacher education and early career mentoring, and most have been or are currently classroom music teachers. For the purposes of this project, the majority served as researchers, with one also fulfilling the role of mentor. Against this backdrop, some contributed primarily to academic research while others brought insights grounded in professional practice – an arrangement consistent with Easterday et al. (2018) description of DBR as involving both academics and practitioners.

Differences in research backgrounds and practices within the research team require additional coordination. The international composition of the research team extended beyond professional background, including German, Austrian, and Greek researchers, as well as U. S. researchers long based in Germany and Luxembourg. Additionally, all members have been shaped by their differing international professional and educational experiences. The diversity of professional and cultural backgrounds fostered an international, multilingual and cross-institutional team dynamic, contributing to a broader spectrum of perspectives in intervention design, data analysis and intercoder discussions. While occasionally complicating the data analysis process, it also helped reduce the risk of interpretive blind spots and supported the development of theoretical understanding and maturing interventions that may be applicable across varied institutional and educational contexts.

It remains difficult to find a balance in data collection and analysis between a shared research language and the primary languages of individual actors. The range of languages available in our multilingual research team often enabled us to collect data in the participants' primary languages. Where possible, a linguistically competent researcher conducted the debrief interview; otherwise, English was used. For us, this meant that some researchers developed a deeper familiarity than others with certain subsets of the data. This proved to be a practical and methodologically appropriate way of working with a large data corpus, but it did necessitate ongoing coordination and communication to support collaborative analysis and interpretation within the research team.

Large-scale DBR projects like ours make it more difficult to adhere to research plans. While not presented with significant obstacles, our research team was confronted with the need to negotiate between an ideal research plan and what is actually feasible in a real-world research setting as frequently discussed in the literature (e. g., McKenney

and Reeves, 2019, p. 107; Anderson & Shattuck, 2012; Aigner & Malmberg, 2022). Most of the challenges pertained to time: determining when students could apply for institutional funding, when they could be physically absent from their universities, how school holiday periods from one country aligned with university semesters in another, and when examination periods in schools made placements impractical, as well as when data collection for the project should conclude given its timeline. The combination of all these factors sometimes caused an overlap in cycles (see Fig. 1), meaning that it was not always possible to completely finish data collection and analysis from each cycle before beginning the next, which occasionally led to smaller design adjustments mid-cycle. The possibility offered by DBR to combine cycles of varying scope (Fig. 1) highlights the flexible, iterative nature of the approach and its suitability for complex, authentic settings. Still, the research team had originally intended to revise the DPs more frequently, ideally after each cycle. This was not possible due to the time constraints during data collection, which necessitated both cycles occurring in quick succession and cycles occasionally overlapping.

The international and cross-institutional nature of projects like ours does create organisational challenges generally. As indicated in the DP Clarity is Key, the amount of communication necessary to organise and execute SIAs effectively is considerable – likely greater than what is typically necessary for a domestic school internship. Coordination between universities and schools operating within different educational systems necessitates significant clarification around regulations, requirements, roles and goals. The level of involvement desired from the university also varied greatly. In some instances, the STs designed their SIA according to their own interests and in consultation with the MTs; the TEs were only minimally involved and had no contact with the receiving school or MT, and also little to no contact with the ST during their placement. In other instances, the TEs were involved in the planning of the SIA, participated in the introductory conversations, and maintained close contact with the STs during their time abroad with the goal of supporting them during what might be understood as a challenging experience. While this variability is in itself not necessarily problematic, the potential for mismatched expectations between institutions is significant and can lead to frustration. Important to note here is that in each of the SIAs in our study, a researcher actively coordinated the organisation and communication. Although she sought to minimise her role, particularly as the project progressed, STs, MTs, TEs, university international officers and school administrators often called on her for assistance with the inter-institutional collaboration. It is our hope that the tools we have created will fulfil the need for organisational guidance, thereby supporting the sustainability of SIAs and facilitating their uncomplicated planning and implementation even without external coordination.

It is difficult to achieve the recognition of courses across national borders in a project like this. All SIAs in our study were voluntary. At one institution, the TE was able to negotiate within their institution to allow one of the mandatory domestic internships to

be replaced by the SIA. The other institutions did not offer this option. At the time of this writing, the format does not allow students to earn ECTS at the vast majority of institutions, and during this project we did not have the opportunity to integrate SIAs into any institutional curricula. There are challenges specific to music education as well: none of the STs in our study had the opportunity to continue with individual instrumental or vocal lessons during their SIAs, which would put them at a disadvantage, as this type of tuition is typically ongoing through most music teacher education programmes. Furthermore, SIA formats in this study were only tested in schools of general education. In some European music teacher education programmes, students are required to complete additional internships in music and art schools (e. g., *Musikschulen, Kulturskolan*): developing formats for internships abroad in these types of educational settings would also be worthy of researchers' attention, providing for an even more holistic experience of music pedagogy in the host context. A meaningful next step in establishing SIAs as part of European music teacher education would there be to pursue broader institutional integration while documenting the challenges that arise at various levels. This will require increased institutional acceptance of SIA formats, including the bureaucratic flexibility to make necessary compromises for international, cross-institutional collaboration. This institutional acceptance also includes cooperation from all instructors, who would be advised to offer flexible attendance and exam formats to students who are participating in a SIA, ensuring that these students are not penalised for being abroad during their studies.

***Limitations***

Despite the project's breadth of scope, there were foundational limitations, many of which concerned the sample. We did not find many interested students, which contributed to our relatively small sample size. In contrast to study abroad programmes, SIAs are not very common and there are few well-established practices for how to implement them. Few students choose to participate, or are aware that the opportunity is likely available to them. Furthermore, in several cases in our study, there was no funding allocated for internships in the institutions' *Erasmus* budgets, which prevented their students from participating in a SIA either completely or until a much later date. Given the project's temporal constraints and the amount of time required to organise and implement a SIA, it would in any case have been difficult to include more students.

Our sample also included a relatively small number of schools and MTs. This was mainly due to organisational challenges, but also because of the close and time-consuming collaboration of MT and research team throughout the process. Our SIAs took place only in secondary schools. The project was also limited to Europe, and the geographical spread within Europe was relatively modest, with only seven countries represented in the sample.

In some instances, language was a limiting factor. Although data collection in the earliest cycles indicated that voice memos and interviews conducted in the participants'

primary languages likely generated deeper and more substantive data, this was not always possible. All researchers in our team spoke English either as native speakers or at a high level of proficiency, and every researcher also spoke either German or Greek. This did not cover all participants' primary languages, and it also meant that not all researchers had identical access to each data subset. The continued development and improvement of GDPR-compliant translation and transcription software sensitive to meaning beyond mere literal translation will likely further reduce complications of this kind in international research settings.

## Outlook: Opportunities for Further Research and Practice

At the conclusion of this research project, the research team sees many possibilities for further research. An exploration of SIAs beyond Europe would present the opportunity to consider the challenges and benefits of an even broader setting. Also of interest would be a study on the implementation of our design principles and tools in novel contexts in order to evaluate the impact of knowledge transfer into other educational settings. These novel contexts could include greater geographic diversity (e.g. beyond Europe), but could also include domestic school settings with highly diverse populations where intercultural competence and language sensitivity are called for. Apart from this, institutions other than schools of general education, such as music and art schools, and subject areas beyond music are also worth considering.

To prevent a loss of momentum after the project's conclusion, we are currently examining the integration of our network of schools and universities into a longer-term system. We call this network *TEAM-IN* (see Malmberg et al., 2026, in this volume, https://teacher-academy-music.eu/student-mobility/school-internships-abroad/team-in-network), which, accompanied by the tools developed throughout this project, will facilitate the organisation and implementation of SIAs like the ones experienced by the ten young people who participated with us, even after the *TEAM* project has ended.

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# Mentoring in Collaboration

## Co-constructing Music Education Competencies in School Internships Abroad

**Abstract**

This article examines how mentoring practices in School Internships Abroad (SIAs) for music education students are shifting from traditional, hierarchical models toward collaborative and co-constructive forms of professional learning. Drawing on findings from the *Erasmus+* project *TEAM – Teacher Education Academy for Music*, we analyse seven design-based research cycles involving student teachers, mentor teachers, and teacher educators across several international placements. Qualitative data from orientation meetings, in-situ voice memos of student teachers, and post-internship interviews reveal that SIAs create immersive, highly participatory learning environments in which STs engage deeply with school life, take on collegial roles, and stimulate intercultural reflection among staff. Differences between educational contexts often foster reciprocal mentoring, while increased time on site promotes shared inquiry and collaborative teaching practices. Based on these insights, we outline key characteristics of effective mentoring in SIAs and present a practical *Mentor Teacher Checklist* to support co-constructive learning in international music education internships.

**Keywords:** School internship abroad, music teacher education, mentoring, collaboration, co-construction

## Introduction

Europe is growing ever closer together, due not least to our increased mobility (Delhey, 2022). Young people in particular use the independence afforded them during their studies to spend time learning or working in another European country. In this text, we take a closer look at a particular form of learning and working internationally: teaching internships that music education students complete in a school abroad – either during or after the completion of their studies in their home country. Our findings are based on the experiences and research results from the large-scale *Erasmus+* co-funded project *TEAM – Teacher Education Academy for Music: Future-Making, Mobility and Networking in Europe*.[1] Within the *TEAM* project, we formed the work package *School Internships Abroad and Mentoring*, focusing on increasing the mobility of music education students by enabling them to complete school internships abroad (SIAs) as well as to receive support through high-quality mentoring. Mentoring – the induction of student music teachers (STs) into school by an experienced music teacher – is considered one of the key factors in achieving sustainable learning gains during school internships (Hascher & Kittinger, 2014; Malmberg, 2023).

In this chapter we will show that mentoring is increasingly perceived less as a top-down activity, with an experienced mentor teacher (MT) instructing a novice teacher, than as a participatory activity in which learning gains are co-constructed, a tendency highlighted both in recent literature and in our data. This may be particularly true for school internships abroad, where collaboration between two people with very different backgrounds takes place; such a model of co-construction could be implemented as a deliberate strategy in the future. In this text, we first review existing literature on mentoring, including existing findings on SIAs. We then provide insights into our research methodology, followed by a presentation of relevant data on mentoring in SIAs. We conclude our text with insights into a practical tool arising from this research investigation and collaborative work – the *Mentor Checklist* – and provide an outlook on the emerging school-university network *TEAM-IN*, which is intended to enable universities, music students and schools to jointly benefit from the possibility of SIAs in the future.

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[1] *TEAM*, the *Teacher Education Academy for Future-Making, Mobility and Networking in Europe* aims to provide mappings of European music educational systems, foster mobility (*Erasmus* semesters as well as Internships Abroad), and offer future-making OERs and a set of European-wide Learning Outcomes for Music Teacher Education. https://teacher-academy-music.eu/
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## Mentoring in School Internships

This section presents some of the literature on mentoring in school internships drawing on both generalist education and music education literature specifically. It aims to portray the mentoring roles that schoolteachers take on and refers, in particular, to questions of collaboration and cooperation.

### *Roles and Responsibilities of Mentors*

What is the role and what are the responsibilities of mentor teachers during school internships? Wittek et al. distinguish three forms of mentoring: professional, personal, and social support (Wittek et al., 2017). The Swiss educationalist Alois Niggli draws a very similar distinctions. He structures the mentoring process in his *Standard-Based 3-Level Mentoring in Teacher Education* (Niggli, 2003; 2005) into three content areas, all of which should be present in mentoring, but which differ in objective and conversation style: (1) optimising skills, (2) differentiating professional background knowledge (including subject-specific knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge), and (3) clarifying self-knowledge. Research on mentoring dialogues describes the ways in which MTs fulfil the roles of model, facilitator, evaluator and co-musician, and also how classroom and ensemble activities influence these roles (Munroe, 2021).

Yet, the approach to mentoring appears far from standardised. Despite these classifications, mentors' understanding of their role varies considerably. One important reason for the lack of consistent understanding – as well as a lack of comprehensive descriptions and research findings on mentoring – is that the length, content and requirements, and the timing of mentoring placements within teacher training vary considerably between institutions (Reintjes et al., 2018) and countries (Kuhn et al., 2024). Furthermore, the structure of the mentoring relationship also differs: specifically, whether it involves primarily the mentor teacher (MT) and student teacher (ST) dyad, or whether a university-based subject specialist – a teacher educator (TE) – is equally involved, possibly acting as a mentor on behalf of the university. When universities co-construct student internship formats together with schools/mentors and the student teacher in a triad, collaboration and relationships can be enhanced and reflective dialogue deepened (Hagen, 2022). Another factor that makes mentoring a difficult field to research is that there are few training programmes or professional learning groups for mentors. At least in German-speaking countries, systematic training for mentors only began in the past ten years – nevertheless, many teachers continue to act as mentors in whatever way they believe might be helpful. An examination of existing mentoring programmes, understood here as training formats and mentoring groups which may function as professional learning groups, for example, reveals a tension between the desire to provide individualised support to mentor teachers on the one hand, and the need to uphold increasingly stringent quality standards on the other (e.g., Košinár, 2018, p. 67;

Malmberg, et al., 2018; Dressler et al. 2018; Schnebel, 2018). All these questions already apply to domestic school internships. The limited experience with and research and publications on school internships abroad suggest that the concept of what mentoring can and should achieve is even less clear in an international context. This is where our study comes in.

***The Concept of Mentoring Transforms towards Participatory Approaches***

Mentoring has consistently been conceptualised through a more traditional lens, which the following quote from Ziegler (2009) exemplifies:

> Mentoring is a relatively stable dyadic relationship over time between an experienced mentor and their less experienced mentee. […] [The mentoring relationship] is characterized by mutual trust and goodwill; its goal is to promote the learning and development as well as the progress of the mentee (Ziegler, 2009, p. 5).[2]

As stated in the introduction, the concept of mentoring in educational and internship settings has been evolving toward more collaborative understandings over the last two decades (Braun et al. 2022). Current mentoring concepts place greater emphasis on learning and development on both sides, known as reciprocal mentoring (Ellis et al. 2020). These approaches also emphasise peer mentoring and co-constructive learning, positioning mentors and mentees as partners in many respects, engaged in shared inquiry and mutual learning. In internship contexts, student teachers are increasingly seen as co-constructors of learning who actively contribute to developing professional knowledge and practice. Through our own literature review, three themes were identified that in recent years have been seen as key to fostering successful teaching internships: (1) partnership ecology: collaboration and dialogue within the triad (ST, MT, TE); (2) mutual support: mentorship models focused on inclusive voices in internships; and (3) culturally responsive and responsible music education: music teaching as a mutual agenda contributing to shaping identity and efficacy.

*(1) Partnership Ecology (ST, MT, TE): Reenvisioning the student teaching experience:* Dorfmann reports that MTs recommend more alignment between university courses and school practice (Dorfman, 2018). Further research demonstrates that the success of student internships largely depends on the quality and effectiveness of the collaboration within the ST, MT, and TE triad; recent calls for equal partnerships between universities and schools hosting internships can be viewed as a kind of paradigm shift or reconfiguration of the relationship between universities and the school sector (Ellis & McNicholl, 2015). This is particularly evident in cases where cooperation between MT and the university is poor: MTs communicate both commitment and frustration regarding student teaching placements. They appreciate the mentoring process and value giving back to the education system of

[2] Translation by author 1.

the future, but also note disparate levels of communication, little recognition for their work, or unclear expectations from universities (Russell, 2019; Baugh & Conway, 2024). Several studies examine the mixed roles of STs, MTs, and TEs, and the discrepancies between what each stakeholder interprets as good teaching and feedback (Pellegrino, 2015). Together, the triad of STs, MTs, and TEs can form a partnership ecology that necessitates common tools such as observation rubrics, mentoring protocols, frequent two- and three-way communication and explicit role expectations. the development of high self-efficacy in STs is based on gaining positive experiences and receiving constructive feedback from their MTs and TEs, highlighting the importance of differentiated mentoring (Sander, 2020).

*(2) Mutual Support: Mentorship Models focused on Inclusive Voices:* Sustained confidence, continued musical activity and reciprocal learning for generalist teachers, mentors and students are possible outcomes from engaging and effective student teaching experiences in schools (Barrett & Zhukov, 2024). Student teaching experiences that broaden participation of the respective parties involved (STs, MTs, TEs, students, and other colleagues) can also be transformative. Paired student teaching placements can facilitate peer planning and reflection, although this type of placement may create certain tensions with teaching practices if roles and responsibilities are not co-constructed across the ST-MT-TE triad (Do & Hascher, 2023). Viewing classroom pupils as active participants in ST learning experiences shifts the praxis into a circle of reciprocity, not a hierarchy (Pattison-Meek, 2024). Within the broader theme of mutual support, these studies demonstrate the importance of conceptualising the ST-MT-TE partnership as one which prioritises the creation of an engaging and scaffolded set of learning experiences.

*(3) Cultural Responsiveness and Responsibility as a Shared Goal:* Culturally responsive education, introduced by Bond (2017), is an educational concept that specifically addresses the fact that our school classes increasingly include children from diverse backgrounds. This concept, with its intercultural foundation, may also include aspects relevant to SIAs. Culturally responsive education comprises five major areas: (a) identity and achievement, (b) equity and excellence, (c) developmental appropriateness, (d) teaching the whole child, and (e) student-teacher relationship (Bond, 2017). A significant body of research asserts that culturally responsive music learning and teaching in internships will better develop through the triadic relationship of ST, MT, and TE. Multiple studies have set forth various principles and frameworks that connect repertoire and pedagogy to learners' identities and communities (Abril, 2013; Palmer et al., 2022; Bennett, 2023). For example, Abril (2013) argued for shifting pedagogical focus from content to learners' socio-musical identities shaped by ethnicity, race, and language; Palmer et al. (2022) proposed a four-quadrant framework – teacher competencies, informed choices, authenticity, and holistic/comparative lessons – offering K-16 teachers actionable methods for inclusive music instruction; and Bennett (2023) identified thirteen facets of culturally responsible teaching, finding that teachers' methods, aims, and beliefs determine the degree to which their pedagogy

is culturally responsive. In non-Western cultures, the role of ethnic identity is important, requiring the triad of ST, MT, and TE to draw on local cultural connections when planning and making decisions about student teaching experiences (Guan et al., 2023). Culturally responsive music learning and teaching can connect well to classroom management: Robison even introduces an extended format for settings in which family partnerships are also involved alongside the ST, MT, and TE triad (Robison, 2020). Questions of repertoire, content, culturally shaped musical practices and the ways in which music education traditions relate to each other naturally arise in a very particular form in a school internship abroad, which is an inherently intercultural encounter.

### *Mentoring in School Internships Abroad*

SIAs have been discussed in generalist teacher education literature since the early 1990s (Major & Santoro, 2016; Mahan & Stachowski, 1990; Pence, 2008; di Pietro, 2022), but knowledge about the special requirements for mentoring in SIAs is still relatively scarce. Some studies point to the element of reciprocity: the further away a school is from the university of the ST (for example in transcontinental SIAs), the more likely it appears that the school will ask from the outset what it stands to gain from the arrangement – an interesting dynamic that may lay the foundation for a reciprocal attitude (Aamaas et al. 2020). Yet, intercultural professional learning communities (PLCs) demonstrate how cross-institutional partnerships (in the case of school internships, university and host school) might co-construct knowledge and negotiate power and context (Timonen, 2021). If the triad of STs, MTs, and TEs is a PLC built upon trust, reciprocity and local responsiveness, there is an improved chance for greater depth of learning; however, this PLC must be designed with intentional practices to be successful. Especially in SIAs, the partnership ecology between ST, MT and TE is even more challenging to achieve than in domestic school placements.

### *Research Question*

The question we seek to answer in this text is therefore: In what ways, and in what moments has the shift towards collaborative learning been evident in our school internships abroad? Furthermore, which aspects facilitate this, and which aspects tend to hinder it? Or, to reformulate the title of our chapter: When and how does mentoring happen in collaboration? How are music teaching competencies co-constructed in SIAs?

## Methodology

In this chapter we refer primarily to data and findings on mentoring from the larger research process of *TEAM Work Package 5, School Internships Abroad and Mentoring* (for further details, see Steinmetz et al. (2026, in this volume).

### *Design-based Research Setting*

We employed a design-based research approach (DBR) (Bakker, 2019; Design-Based Research Collective, 2003). DBR combines the systematic, empirically supported development of practical tools on the one hand with contributions to theoretical knowledge in the field through data analysis on the other. McKenney and Reeves (2019) call this the "dual focus" (p. 86), as researchers at the same time are advancing the "maturing intervention" (p. 83) as well as "theoretical understanding" (p. 43).

As is typical of DBR approaches, we worked in iterative cycles. One cycle comprised the planning and preparation, implementation, and post-processing of our design: a school internship abroad for a music education student – meaning that a ST from one country completed a school internship in another country – supported throughout by mentoring tools we developed. Furthermore, the cycles included data collection throughout, as well as data analysis at the end of each cycle in order to inform re-design for the next cycle. Data were collected using instruments we developed (see Steinmetz et al., 2026, in this volume); data analysis served as the basis for evaluation, decisions regarding the re-design, and the acquisition of theoretical knowledge. A total of seven cycles took place. We collected our data using three instruments: transcripts of the (1) orientation meetings between MT and ST entering the internship, which were conducted using our Introductory Conversation guide (Appendix B); (2) voice memo prompts (Appendix D) and the STs' (N = 10) recorded voice memos, made during their placement (between 7 and 20 brief voice recordings per student), and transcripts of (3) a debrief interview after completion of the SIA, which were conducted using our Debrief Interview Guide (Appendix F). In addition, we conducted semi-structured interviews with the MTs (N = 3) towards the end of our study, as well as with the TEs (N = 2) involved.

All data were evaluated qualitatively by building three different coding systems: one system for the seven cycles described above, which includes ST voice memos, introductory conversations with the MT and debrief conversations with the teacher education and research team; one for MT interviews; and one for TE interviews. Each of the three coding systems was used by two members of the research group to independently code the data. The two members met afterwards to discuss discrepancies and collaboratively reach consensus regarding the final codes (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2019). The data were analysed using qualitative content analysis (Kuckartz, 2019). For this text, we reread the data with a particular focus on the collaborative, dyadic, or triadic design of our SIAs, working with all codes and coded segments from the main categories Mentoring, Mentee Experiences, Teacher Educator, and Mentor-Mentee Dyad, as well as drawing on all memos created both during individual initial coding and in the subsequent exchange between the two co-coders. The findings were incorporated into the revision of the design principles (see below) and into the refinement of our tool (*Mentor Checklist*, see Table 2).

***Design Principles: Guidelines between Maturing Design and Growing Theoretical Knowledge***

At four points throughout data collection, we supported the refinement of the design as well as the clarification of our theoretical findings through the development of design principles (Euler, 2017). Here, we demonstrate the gradual development of one design principle which illustrates the shift described above. The following design principle has shifted from an open initial question to a more MT-centred formulation, then to one oriented toward the ST's competence, to an explicitly co-constructive version in the end (Table 1). Design principles are used to guide the creation of the practical tools: they "provide guidance and direction, but do not give 'certainties'" (Plomp, 2007, p. 22) and are refined step by step according to data analysis, acting as a link between design development and growing theoretical understanding. The design principles were refined across four points: Before the start of our first cycle we defined design principles based on existing literature, our own mentoring experiences and experience as teachers and teacher educators, as well as a pilot study on domestic school internships throughout Europe (Steinmetz et al., in review). After the second cycle, the design principles were discussed and adapted according to the knowledge acquired to that point; the same occurred upon conclusion of the sixth cycle. At the end of the study a final fine-tuning took place based on the completed data analysis and our joint discussions and interpretations within the research group; we also made decisions regarding their format for their final publication (see APPENDIX A):

| Version | Design Principle (DP) | Methodological commentary |
|---|---|---|
| Initial version | How and to what extent can students get involved in all levels of school life/*'teachering'*? | We formulated this aspect as a question of the STs perspective, not yet as a principle, using the expression *'teachering'* (= all activities of STs alongside teaching) which had been an in-vivo quote from our pilot survey. |
| After 2nd cycle | **Play your local strengths**<br>• Raise awareness for your music educational specialities, school culture and National requirements, e. g. technology, choir singing<br><br>**Teachering as holistic endeavour**<br>• Involve the students in all levels of school life (cf. *'Teachering'*) | Cycle 1 and 2 were carried out in an international school with a MT who is a strong networker, so the DP seemed valuable.<br>At this point, the DP was divided it into two areas, both with more explicit content and foregrounding, the perspective of the MT. We also noted that this could become more problematic in the next cycle with potential language issues in a national school. |

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|---|---|---|
| After 6th cycle | **Foster developing collaborative working skills in school settings**<br>• Involve STs in collaborative work such as curricular planning, school events, bigger projects, field trips, etc.<br>• Discuss how effective teams work: allow everyone's voice to be heard, listening skills, feedback policy, …<br>• Give insight into faculty peer-learning and collaboration structures between teachers at school. | Due to sufficient data from the students' perspectives and their comments on learning paths, this DP now focuses on the competence development of the STs in its title (collaborative working skills). The core of this DP – the reason why it is central – has become clear, and it has become more differentiated – taking into account the many layers of STs' experiences. The immersiveness of SIAs opened a lot of *'teachering'* possibilities. The foreign language issue continues to be absent. |
| Final version | **ACT AS A TEAM PLAYER: Develop collaborative learning and working skills in school settings**<br>• Involve student teachers in collaborative work such as school curriculum design, planning school events, projects, field trips, etc.<br>• Discuss how effective teams work: ensuring all voices are heard, developing listening skills, establishing clear feedback policies.<br>• Give insight into faculty peer-learning and collaboration between teachers at your school. | The final version shows how the entire set of DPs has evolved more towards co-constructive learning. The bold title of the design principle is no longer solely attributable to the mentor, but could largely be interpreted from various perspectives (MT, ST, TE, or even school leader).<br>The DP also reflects the common format of the final DPs decided upon by the research group: affirmative opening title, explanatory sentence and further sub-points that describe details of the addressed topic. |

**Table 1**: Gradual development of one design principle

## Findings

In the following, we primarily present results relating to aspects of collaboration – the interactions and relationships between participants – or their (joint) learning.

The SIA as an unusual construct with few familiar structures: The often extensive negotiation of conditions that a SIA requires from the outset can strengthen collaborative, but it can also lead to more uncertainty than in familiar and domestic internships. In our SIAs, this departure from familiar structures almost always had a positive impact on collaboration, a fact that we also attribute to the structured introductory discussions (APPENDIX B, Introductory Conversation Guide).

The SIA as an immersive endeavour for STs: An important factor that distinguishes SIAs from domestic internships is the STs' more holistic involvement. SIAs can almost be described as immersive: All ten STs participating in our study spent significantly more time at the school in comparison to what is typical during domestic school internships,

and gradually became more and more involved in school life, sometimes very intensively. This may be because they were abroad and wanted to get as much as possible out of their SIA, and also because there are fewer rigid performance assessments than in their home institution. It may also be due to the lack of a supportive home environment, meaning there is essentially no reason to go home, as one ST describes in a voice memo:

> *'Yeah, and then at the end of this day there was this thing called TGIF. Thank God it's Friday and that's a thing the teachers do at the start of the school year where on Friday they just meet after the last [00:05:12] period and have some drinks, have some snacks. That was really cool. I got to chat with some of the, like, other colleagues I haven't met or met on that day or met before, whatever.* […], *I already got, like, some fear of missing out of, like, the weeks that come after I leave because it's really nice here and I hardly imagined leaving.'* (ST5_VM5, Pos. 6)

Spending more time at school in SIAs positions STs as colleagues: The mere time spent in school seems to have contributed to a more collegial atmosphere, sometimes leading, for example, to extended discussions about teacher beliefs, as one STs describes:

> *'Yes, in the morning we didn't have class, first period, but the teachers of the music department were going to have a meeting to discuss various things and* [MT1] *told us to go and attend. And in the end it was interesting because we discussed what everyone's philosophy is on teaching music. And obviously it was very interesting to see the, while there are only four people, I know, there were all four, let's say, sides, let's say, they all had different opinions on the subject, which is very interesting,* […].*'* (ST5a_VM15, Pos. 6)

In the following situation, this even led to the ST independently deciding to take on upcoming tasks for the music teaching team and to acquire skills that will be useful to them:

> *'And, yeah, then* […] *I unpacked some packages which came and there was some live music production, like, there were some production tools, like, where you can, like, produce music live and I tried that out and I think that was, like, the highlight of my day because I got to experiment with that also and I did it, like, by myself.* […].*'* (ST2_VM5, Pos. 5)

In SIAs the differences can become thought-provoking for all actors: The fact that STs and MTs come from different countries and contexts seems to have promoted openness to different viewpoints and reciprocal mentoring. It can encourage all parties to question what they take for granted. The following MT describes how STs' viewpoints helped her to rethink her own teaching goals:

> *'And it was very nice. It's, it's also,* […] *an enriching experience to see that* [..] *I might have different goals, uh, of music education and, uh, imagine a successful music lesson differently. And it's just as valuable. Uh, so, uh, for, for me, you know, especially in our school where we are so eager to impress most of the time.* […], *it was for me. It was very, very nice just to step back from that mindset of ours and to look at the music education differently.'* (MT3_DI, Pos. 210)

SIAs as places of intercultural learning for the teaching staff: Another consequence of the strong involvement of STs in school life is that in SIAs, the student teacher seems to belong to the whole school more than in domestic internships. One MT describes how the student teachers' mere presence and the mutual dialogues in the teachers' meeting room prompted him and his colleagues to reflect on similarities, on differences, and on intercultural learning as such.

SIAs empower students in school in terms of language skills: SIAs can also shed new light on students and their abilities. Both mentors from the national schools (where English is not the standard language of instruction) reported how surprised they were by their pupils' ability to navigate the new language situation.

Conversely, SIAs necessitate that MTs require linguistic precision in critical moments: The mentors also reported instances in the classroom in which the STs had formulated tasks that were unclear both linguistically and in terms of content, which significantly reduced the success of the learning sequence for the students.

In SIAs collaborative mentoring support from TEs can foster STs Learning: More examples of collaboration between the ST-MT-TE triad are needed than those found in the *TEAM* project; nevertheless, we refer here to some positive examples of collaborative and supportive assistance additionally provided by university teachers from sending institutions in *TEAM*. The respective TE describes this in their interview:

> '[…] *because at some point I talk to them the most, uh,* [… the MT] *put them on a call with me. Um, and we had a very quick conversation, and then he took his laptop and he showed me the students as they were teaching in the next room. Oh, which was great.* […] *Different kinds of communication channels I think.* […] *you know, I, I really kind of encourage them. I say, oh, you know, you look like professionals. You're not, you know, student teachers, you know, like professionals and so forth, you know, and really just providing a lot of encouragement to them.'* (TE2_I, Pos. 31–33)

SIAs foster non- and paraverbal music leading: Finally, we take a look at mentoring in relation to specifically musical activities – music-making in the classroom, for example. Our results show no major differences from the typical role of a mentor as found in domestic internships, such as that of a role model. There is one difference, however, which points anew to reciprocal mentoring: Due to language difficulties present among STs, there is a constant search for ways to of guide music-making either nonverbally or with minimal language use. Increasing the capability to, as one student put it, *'Do*

*more, talk less!'* (ST3b, 2024) is not only a goal in SIAs, but also a methodological area of exploration for teachers in many countries who teach classes with a large number of migrant children.

## Discussion

The findings of this study highlight that school internships abroad (SIAs) in music education constitute a unique pedagogical space in which traditional assumptions about mentoring, teaching, and professional learning are productively unsettled. SIAs are characterised by intensified immersion, unfamiliar structures, and heightened intercultural encounters. These conditions can accelerate the shift from hierarchical mentoring models toward collaborative and reciprocal forms of professional development. In this sense, and in keeping with Timonen (2021), SIAs serve as laboratories for revisiting fundamental questions about the nature of mentoring: Who holds expertise? How is professional knowledge constructed? And what forms of collaborative support encourage student teachers' growth most effectively?

Central to our discussion is the observation that SIAs often dissolve rigid roles. Student teachers were not only learners but also contributors to school life, artistic partners, and catalysts for intercultural reflection among mentors and the wider teaching staff. The mere presence of an ST from a different educational background sometimes triggered school-wide discussions about music teaching, cultural assumptions, and varying approaches to student engagement. This reciprocity – where mentors and colleagues learn from the student teacher – challenges persistent narratives of unidirectional expertise transmission. It also underscores the importance of situating mentoring within dynamic, participatory professional communities rather than within a dyadic expert-novice frame.

Another key finding is the central role of time and immersion in shaping collaborative learning. STs in SIAs spent far more time at school than during typical domestic placements, resulting in deeper involvement in school routines, informal learning moments, and shared responsibilities. This extended presence facilitated a collegial atmosphere in which professional dialogues emerged naturally and spontaneously. At the same time, the immersive character of SIAs brings challenges: mentors must be attentive to emotional strain, potential overextension, and the linguistic demands placed on STs. Clear communication, structured reflection, and scaffolded independence become essential elements of effective mentoring. More than usual, mentors should support STs through difficult situations or setbacks and should be mindful of potential overexposure. One could say that the three support levels (professional, personal, and social support; Wittek et al., 2017) need to be rebalanced. At the same time, MTs can assume that STs in SIAs are generally very open to all kinds of involvement, which can lead to positive and dynamic collaborations.

Our results finally point to the importance of the triadic relationship between ST, MT, and TE. Although SIAs pose logistical challenges for triadic collaboration, even occasional moments of joint communication – such as shared feedback sessions or video-based observations – proved highly supportive for ST learning. Strengthening these triadic structures could further enhance the co-constructive potential of SIAs.

## The Practical Tool: *Mentor Teacher Checklist*

Based on the data analysis conducted over seven cycles in our project, we developed the *mentor teacher checklist*, one of the empirically supported practical tools resulting from our DBR approach. The checklist contains twelve guidelines that can help (music) mentors who want to host a student teacher from another country during preparation and implementation of a school internship abroad. In this chapter, this tool serves as a concise and practice-oriented summary of our findings on mentoring music STs in SIAs.

| | Practical Guidelines for Mentor Teachers. A Checklist | ✓ |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | **Lay the groundwork for the internship: Connect and prepare**<br>Take enough time for an introductory conversation in which the MT explains the school context and daily life; the role and content of music lessons; and very specific things (e. g. a typical day, list of instruments, etc.). Take your time to answer all questions and ideas that the ST may have.<br>Clarify and agree on responsibilities and requirements of both the MT and sending institution (TE). Be aware of the ST's learning in an unfamiliar international setting (away from home, typical immersiveness of internships abroad, lack of peer network or personal support system) and think about offering local cultural orientation and support. | |
| 2 | **Discuss the why: Music teaching beliefs and philosophies**<br>Share examples of diverse music teaching philosophies.<br>Encourage STs to create and reflect on their general teaching philosophy and values regarding ME, and what their overarching aims and objectives when teaching music are. | |
| 3 | **Reflect on different levels: Similarities and differences**<br>Address and discuss ST's experiences regarding the intercultural (school, professional settings, and beyond).<br>Provide reflection tools for intercultural learning experiences like the *intercultural reflection tree*.<br>Explore the role that music plays and how music is taught in a different context. | |
| 4 | **Facilitate peer mentoring among STs**<br>Support peer learning among STs through group reflection and facilitate interdisciplinary networking. | |

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| **5** | **Embrace different forms of musical communication**<br>Encourage STs to take advantage of the SIA to communicate through music and nonverbal means.<br>Keep in mind: Do more, talk less. | |
| **6** | **Support adaptation of teaching in a foreign language**<br>Offer teaching materials in English (or the language of instruction that is used) so that songs, further material and subject-specific terms can be used well right from the start.<br>Encourage clear and concise communication during key moments in the lesson (e. g. by written preparation).<br>Language adaptation needs time; trust that the mentee will learn quickly. | |
| **7** | **Learn from each other, share learning opportunities (reciprocal mentoring)**<br>Benefit from what the STs can offer from their home institutions (universities and schools), from personal skills or from experiences with different musical styles.<br>Raise awareness for your music educational specialities, school culture and national requirements.<br>From time to time, ask for and benefit from feedback for yourself as MT. | |
| **8** | **Progress gradually from observation to independent teaching**<br>Offer observation of your teaching to clarify questions, norms, atmosphere and the ability of pupils.<br>Offer opportunities for 1-to-1, small group, co-teaching, and full-class teaching responsibilities.<br>Facilitate observation of colleagues' teaching as well. | |
| **9** | **Provide constructive feedback on and encourage discussion of music-didactic principles**<br>Create space for regular conversation and reflection on teaching via a medium that is best for everyone.<br>When mentees observe your teaching or teach themselves, clarify and explain the patterns behind your teaching actions, as this strengthens teaching practice. | |
| **10** | **Feature the student teacher as an artist**<br>Provide opportunities for ST to share and implement their musical/artistic personalities, interests, skills and competences in the school. | |
| **11** | **State the importance of and model reflective practice**<br>Demonstrate your own self-reflection methods and tools, highlighting their benefits.<br>Encourage, support and participate in (as needed) ST's self-reflective, self-assessment activities.<br>Support the ST in systematic documentation (e. g., of lesson planning, feedback, personal learning). | |
| **12** | **Enable the development of collaborative working skills in the school setting**<br>Involve STs in collaborative work such as curricular planning, school events, larger projects, field trips, etc.<br>Discuss how effective teams work: ensuring all voices are heard, developing listening skills, establishing clear feedback policies.<br>Give insight into faculty peer-learning and collaboration structures between teachers at your school. | |

**Table 2:** The *TEAM* tool *Mentor Teacher Checklist*.

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In the *TEAM* project, ten young people, three schools, and five universities were given the opportunity to collaborate productively in SIAs. We expressly thank them for their courage, their willingness to break new ground, and for making their data available to us. Their contribution is important for the future of music teacher education. We are currently working towards the school-university network *TEAM-IN*,[3] a partner-finding tool that shall continue to contribute to international mobility and meaningful education of STs even after the *TEAM* project's end.

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Lauren Steinmetz & Smaragda Chrysostomou

# Crossing Borders, Shaping Professional Selves

## Preservice Music Teachers in School Internships Abroad

**Abstract**

School internships abroad (SIAs) are increasingly promoted in teacher education as opportunities for developing intercultural competence. This chapter examines the experiences of ten European preservice music teachers who participated in SIAs designed within the Erasmus+ project *TEAM – Teacher Education Academy for Music*. Using a design-based research framework, the study drew on preparatory conversations, voice memos, and post-internship interviews to explore how students navigated unfamiliar educational contexts and how these experiences shaped their emerging identities as music teachers. Deductive analysis based on the *Intercultural Development Inventory* (*IDI*) orientations, combined with inductive qualitative coding, revealed that participants often minimised or downplayed cultural differences, despite implicitly engaging with them. While students rarely described their learning in explicitly intercultural terms, they demonstrated qualities associated with intercultural competence – such as openness, adaptability, and flexibility. Across all cases, SIAs fostered increased confidence, resilience, and clarity about the kind of music teacher they wished to become. The immersive and intensive nature of these placements afforded focused opportunities for reflection that contributed meaningfully to teacher professionalisation. The chapter concludes by discussing the benefits and limitations of SIAs and outlining directions for future research and implementation.

**Keywords:** School internships abroad, music teacher education, intercultural competence, teacher professionalisation, teacher identity, design-based research, Intercultural Development Inventory

## Introduction

In recent years there has been a discernible emphasis on the importance of international experience and transnational exchange in teacher education, prompted by the need to respond to an increasingly interconnected world and growing cultural diversity in the classroom (Auni et al., 2022; Bartleet et al., 2020). School internships abroad are designed to help preservice teachers become adept at engaging thoughtfully and effectively with diverse student populations (Çakmak et al., 2018; Miller & Gonzalez, 2016). The potential impact of such transnational internship experiences on developing teacher identity is also significant in music teacher education, as students immersed in diverse educational settings are often spurred to reconsider their beliefs, values, and professional roles, which can result in a more flexible, reflective and globally minded approach to music education (Ballantyne et al., 2012; de Bruin, 2016; Triantafyllaki, 2013), as well as increased intercultural competence.

This chapter examines the experiences of preservice music teachers as they navigated unfamiliar school environments during school internships abroad. The findings draw on a study conducted within the large-scale *Erasmus+* co-funded project *TEAM – Teacher Education Academy for Music: Future-Making, Mobility and Networking in Europe*,[1] carried out by the working group *Work Package 5 (WP5): School Internships Abroad and Mentoring*[2], which aimed to support mobility in music teacher education by improving the accessibility and quality of school internships abroad and the mentoring structures that support them.

Considering that school internships are a central element in student teacher identity development, international placements may provide distinctive opportunities to develop teacher identity, advance professionalisation and strengthen intercultural competence. This study therefore investigates whether and how such professional learning processes were evident in the participants' experiences, aiming to identify features that may more consistently support these forms of learning in school internships abroad.

This text begins with a review of relevant literature, including findings on school internships, both domestic and international; theories and models that seek to characterise dimensions of intercultural competence and its development; and the impact of student teacher (hereafter ST) mobility on intercultural competence. Insights into the

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[1] *TEAM*, the *Teacher Education Academy for Music: Future-Making, Mobility and Networking in Europe* aims to provide mappings of European music educational systems, foster mobility (*Erasmus* semesters as well as Internships Abroad), and offer future-making OERs and a set of European-wide Learning Outcomes for Music Teacher Education. https://teacher-academy-music.eu/
*TEAM* is funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

[2] For more information about the work of *Work Package 5* within *TEAM*, see Steinmetz et al., 2026, in this volume.

methodology used in the study are then given, followed by a presentation of selected results, with a particular focus on findings related to STs' intercultural competence, professionalisation, and developing teacher identity. The chapter concludes by considering the benefits and challenges presented by school internships abroad, as well as an outlook on their further development and implementation.

## School Internships and Mobility in Teacher Education

School internships are a particularly impactful part of teacher identity development, giving students supervised opportunities to practise thinking, feeling, and acting like teachers (Heinz, 2024; Zeichner, 2012). In teacher education – and more particularly music teacher education – there is broad consensus that meaningful field experiences are essential to a music education degree programme and have a positive effect on student teachers' perceptions and confidence (Chrysostomou, 2009; Chrysostomou & Triantafyllaki, 2020). During their placements, STs gain understanding about themselves and their pupils (Ballantyne & Packer, 2004). The pedagogical exchange of ideas fosters significant professional learning and enhances STs' teaching practices, as do the reflective problem-solving and continuous self-assessment taking place during these internships (Conkling, 2003). This process not only strengthens student teachers' pedagogical efficacy but also facilitates the construction of their professional identity (Auni et al., 2022; Egeland, 2016).

At the same time, growing global interconnectedness and increasing cultural diversity in classrooms have made the integration of global perspectives into teaching practices – and thus into teacher education – essential in Europe and beyond (Cheng & Huang, 2023; Huang et al., 2023). This shift reflects a growing awareness of how educational systems relate to and influence one another globally, as well as the insights gained through cross-cultural exposure (Westerlund et al., 2020). As Westerlund et al. (2020) argue, there is a need for inter-institutional and transnational collaboration in teacher education that challenges participants to step outside their comfort zones in the co-creation of new knowledge. Through collaboration and learning within and beyond institutional and geographical borders, future teachers can "develop various levels of consciousness of their own taken-for-granted boundaries" (Westerlund et al., 2020, p. 4).

According to a meta-analysis by Huang et al. (2023), prior studies on studying abroad show varying but generally positive influences on preservice teachers' learning, attitudes, and identities, although differing goals and implementations lead to inconsistent findings on programme effectiveness. The literature consistently highlights that intercultural experiences challenge preconceptions, foster adaptability, and enhance pedagogical and musical skills, while also presenting difficulties related to cultural adjustment, language barriers, and professional expectations (Barry & Durham, 2017). Williams et al. (2023), for

example, found that exposure to diverse cultural contexts positively influenced teacher candidates' cultural responsiveness and their ability to engage effectively with students from different backgrounds. Collectively, the literature argues for the benefits of mobility in teacher education programmes, as these experiences may equip them to better work in culturally diverse educational settings.

### *School Internships Abroad*

Mobility in teacher education may extend beyond study abroad programmes to include practical teaching experience, usually in the form of an internship undertaken in a school in the host country. Immersion in diverse settings while teaching has been shown to elicit deep reflection on teaching practices (Altiparmak et al., 2025), increase self-awareness, and support the development of critical skills such as improvisation, classroom management, and intercultural communication (Ballantyne et al., 2004; Westerlund et al., 2015).

Moorhouse and Harfitt (2019) investigated preservice and in-service teachers' professional learning during a teaching-abroad experience and concluded that the pedagogical exchange of ideas fostered significant professional learning, enhancing participants' teaching practices. Similarly, Yang, Zheng, and Wang (2024) found that an integrative approach combining diverse teaching methodologies, cross-cultural exposure, and self-reflection supported interns in developing resilience and competency for navigating globalised educational contexts. Borbon et al. (2025), examining teachers' lived experiences of international macro-exposure, also concluded that such experiences translated into cross-cultural competencies. Intercultural understanding can be fostered when preservice teachers critically reflect on biases and assumptions, build cultural knowledge, develop cultural reflexivity through perspective-taking and empathy, and engage in direct contact experiences that promote positive interpersonal and intergroup collaboration (Walton et al., 2013). Intercultural encounters such as SIAs thus allow individuals to view their own and others' identities relationally. It is in this self-reflective space that one can move beyond stereotypical identities and recognise that identity is not limited to "nationhood, ethnicity, or language(s) spoken" (Holmes et al., 2015, p. 17). SIAs can support professional learning and the development of intercultural competence primarily by combining pedagogical challenge with cross-cultural dissonance, prompting deeper reflection and identity work.

### *School Internships Abroad in Music Education*

There is a scarcity of literature focusing specifically on SIAs in music teacher education. One example is a study conducted by Bayley and Mio (2020), who investigated Canadian music education students' perceived personal and professional experiences during a teaching internship in China. Their findings suggested the STs experienced intellectual, social and personal growth as a result of their placement, but with no evidence that these effects would be sustained.

Music itself can play an influential role in enhancing future music teachers' experiences and knowledge: Barry and Durham (2017) describe the insights student teachers gained about themselves and their growing confidence in teaching music, while also recognising the importance of music for children's development; they also present music as a catalyst for transcending language barriers in culturally diverse environments. Similarly, Phillips et al. (2023) found that placements in various music academy settings were considered by all stakeholders to be highly important – and sometimes pivotal – in the development of musical identities. There is still much opportunity to explore the potential of intercultural experiences in music teacher education; research conducted within the *TEAM* project makes a contribution in this area, including not only this chapter, but also others in this book: Jenssen & Steinmetz, Knigge et al., Malmberg et al., Steinmetz et al., and Triantafyllaki & Knigge (2026, in this volume).

Finally, Emmanuel (2005) argues that intercultural skills are vital for music teachers because music is an expression of cultural identity. Within a music classroom, different cultural identities are expressed and shared; therefore, it is essential that they are valued within an atmosphere of acceptance, respect, and safety created by an interculturally competent music teacher.

### *Developing Intercultural Competence*

There are numerous theoretical models that seek to conceptualise intercultural competence, a prominent theme across much of the research related to intercultural educational settings, and to assess how it develops. An early and well-established exemplar is Bennett's *Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity* (DMIS; 1986, 1993), which categorises intercultural competence broadly into ethnocentricity and ethnorelativity. These two categories contain three stages each through which individuals traverse on their way to intercultural competency: the ethnocentric stages are *denial*, *defence* and *minimisation*, and the ethnorelative stages are *acceptance*, *adaptation* and *integration*. Frequently drawn upon by researchers to explore aspects of intercultural learning in international education experiences, the DMIS has also been criticised for oversimplifying a complex, nuanced phenomenon, as well as for its linearity, which critics argue represents a Western bias (Bennett, 2017). Ichikawa and Kim (2025) express appreciation for the model's usefulness in understanding individuals' development of intercultural competence, but acknowledge that a lack of nuance makes its application difficult when dealing with transnational people, and that its assumption of (Western) individualistic notions of culture limits its usefulness in non-Western contexts.

A contrasting, non-linear model is found in Deardorff's *Process Model of Intercultural Competence* (Deardorff, 2006, 2009). In contrast to Bennett's linear conception of intercultural competence development, Deardorff's model is cyclical and is portrayed as

a continuous process with no fixed endpoint (Ichikawa & Kim, 2025). According to this model, intercultural competence is based on the requisite attitudes of *respect*, *openness*, and *curiosity* (Deardorff, 2006, Figure 3).

In her 2020 *Manual for Developing Intercultural Competencies*, Deardorff suggests that a consensus definition has been reached of intercultural competence as "communication and behavior that is both effective and appropriate across difference" (Deardorff, 2020, p. 5). She goes on to propose a further composite definition: "intercultural competencies in essence are about improving human interactions across difference, whether within a society (differences due to age, gender, religion, socio-economic status, political affiliation, ethnicity, and so on) or across borders" (Deardorff, 2020, p. 5). Mu et al. (2022) define intercultural competence as "the abilities that people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds employ to communicate effectively and appropriately so as to transcend their differences and build and maintain relationships" (p. 30). Taken together, these frameworks and definitions paint a picture of intercultural competence that is communicative and relational and that requires curiosity and engagement – and that is indeed a competence, a skill, that can be used to mediate in culturally diverse contexts.

For this study, the research team drew upon the *Intercultural Development Inventory* (*IDI*) framework to gain insight into the evolving intercultural competencies of the STs participating in SIAs through *TEAM*. Though proprietary, the *IDI* is well represented in academic literature as a means of conceptualising and measuring intercultural competence and sensitivity (e.g., Kruse et al., 2014; Crystle et al., 2024), and its reliability and validity are regarded as well-established (Paige et al., 2003; Hammer, 2011; Ichikawa & Kim, 2025). Based on the *DMIS*, the *IDI* continuum adapts the stages of the earlier model and progresses from monocultural to intercultural orientations across five stages: *denial*, or failure to notice deeper cultural differences; *polarisation*, or viewing cultural differences from an oppositional stance; *minimisation*, or emphasising similarities while overlooking deeper differences; *acceptance*, or recognising and appreciating cultural differences and commonalities; and *adaptation*, or the ability to shift between cultural perspectives and behave in culturally appropriate and authentic ways. The criticism of the *IDI* is similar to that of its predecessor, with Western-centrism and oversimplicity being common concerns (Ichikawa & Kim, 2025). Mindful of those limitations, we determined that the *IDI's* linear structure would provide a suitable framework for observing the development of intercultural competencies during SIAs, and anticipated that it would lend itself more readily to deductive coding than Deardorff's process-oriented cyclical model, as the stages themselves also provided sufficient structure while still accommodating sub-codes, leaving room for the nuance the framework is sometimes said to lack. This is particularly true in the early stages of analysis; ultimately, however, Deardorff's model proved more compatible with our interpretive findings, as we discuss later.

## Method

This research was conducted within the *TEAM* working group *School Internships Abroad and Mentoring*, which designed and facilitated school internships abroad (SIAs) for ten music education students from four European countries. The internships took place in three additional European countries, with supervision from three mentor music teachers (hereafter MTs). An open call was distributed via email through the institutions represented in the *TEAM* consortium, informing music education students about the SIA opportunity. All students who expressed interest and met their institutions' eligibility requirements were invited to participate, and those who agreed to join the accompanying research provided informed consent.[3]

During the SIAs conducted within the *TEAM* project,[4] STs observed music classes taught by multiple teachers and, in some cases, classes in other subjects. The STs also taught, either individually or together with a MT or a peer, planned lessons, received feedback, and engaged in reflection. Additionally, some STs attended faculty meetings and participated in professional development sessions, fully immersing themselves in the culture and activities of the school and experiencing broader aspects of the teaching profession.

### *The Design-Based Research Framework*

The research team followed a design-based research approach (DBR; Bakker, 2018; McKenney & Reeves, 2012, 2019), characterised by iterative cycles in which theoretical understanding is developed and practical tools are refined. In this study, practical tools collaboratively developed by practitioners and researchers included the SIA formats and the self-reflection materials, all of which were prototypes intended for future publication as open educational resources[5]. Some tools also functioned as data-collection instruments, including a preparatory conversation guide, voice-memo prompts, photo-journal prompts, and a debrief conversation guide.

Theoretical insights developed through the DBR process were characterised in emerging Design Principles (Appendix A; Euler, 2017; McKenney & Reeves, 2019), which capture understandings gained from each cycle and support their transfer to other contexts. While the interventions (designs) were refined after each cycle, the design principles were specifically revisited after Cycles 2, 5 and 7 to capture substantive developmental shifts. This practice aligns with the DBR approach, in which cycles may vary in scope (McKenney & Reeves, 2012).

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[3] Ethics approval for this study was obtained through the researchers' home institutions, and data collection complied with the ethical and data protection regulations of the *TEAM* project. Participation in the research component of the SIA was voluntary, informed consent was obtained from all student teachers, and all data were pseudonymised for analysis.

[4] For a comprehensive account of our sample, methodological process and internship formats, please see Steinmetz et al., 2026, in this volume.

[5] To access these materials, now available as OERs, please go to https://oer.mdw.ac.at/oer/collections/3ba78ede-a4b7-4177-9205-d8fd3ea3939b

This DBR study comprised seven cycles. Each cycle included three internship phases: preparation (pre-departure), fieldwork (during the internship placement), and post-internship. The ten STs were distributed across the seven cycles; four cycles were completed by a single ST and three cycles by pairs, creating opportunities for peer learning. The design of the first cycle was informed by empirical findings from a pilot survey on domestic school internship practices in eighteen European countries (Steinmetz et al., in review), a literature review, and the professional experience of the research team. After each cycle, data were analysed by the research group to refine the SIA intervention and to contribute to a growing body of theoretical understanding.

### *Data Collection and Analysis*

Data collection occurred at three points in each DBR cycle: before, during and after the internship placement. The introductory conversation (Appendix B) took the form of a dyadic interview (Morgan et al., 2013) between ST and MT, with observation by a researcher and, in two instances, participation by a university teacher educator (TE). This conversation provided an opportunity for MT and ST to become acquainted, reflect on their goals and expectations for the SIA, clarify organisational and structural details, and ask questions.

Researchers asked STs to record short voice memos multiple times a week throughout their placements, responding to self-reflective prompts developed by the research team (Appendix D). The goal of these voice memos was to support the STs' reflective practice; they also allowed for real-time documentation of their evolving experiences. After returning from their placement, the STs participated in a debrief interview with a member of the research team (Appendix F), reflecting on their time abroad, the impact of their internship on their developing teacher identity, and the intercultural aspects of their SIA.

All data were independently coded by two to three members of the research team using MAXQDA (VERBI Software, 2022); any discrepancies were resolved through consensus discussions with the broader research group (Barbour, 2001). The data were coded both deductively and inductively using qualitative content analysis (Kuckartz, 2019), enabling the application of pre-existing concepts to the data while simultaneously allowing new categories to emerge entirely from the data (Williamon et al., 2021).

Deductive coding was informed in part by the *Intercultural Development Inventory* (www.idiinventory.com) framework. The flexibility with which the *IDI* framework can be applied, along with its fairly simple and open structure, made it well-suited to the hybrid deductive-inductive coding approach adopted by this transnational, intercultural DBR study. The *IDI* is a standardised questionnaire with fifty items that assesses where individuals or groups fall along a developmental continuum of intercultural competence. The questionnaire was not administered to the STs in this study; rather, the orientations found in the framework were used to guide deductive data analysis.

## Findings

In this section, we present student statements from voice memos and interviews across all seven cycles,[6] examining coded segments categorised under the *Intercultural Development Inventory* (*IDI*) orientations as well as inductive codes related to intercultural experiences, professionalisation, and teacher identity development.

The *IDI* orientations informed deductive category development in this study, enabling the research team to identify how STs navigated the intercultural aspects of their SIA placement and how their intercultural learning may have been impacted. In this section, findings are presented according to these categories.

### *Denial, Polarisation and Minimisation*

When given the opportunity to engage in cultural self-reflection before the internship, STs reported having no concerns about the intercultural aspects of their placement beyond potential communication challenges and teaching in English. This held true during post-internship reflections, in which STs tended to downplay cultural differences when asked about them directly. However, in voice memos and interviews the students expressed thoughts and feelings which indirectly revealed they were indeed aware of differences, such as contrasting approaches to pupil assessment and different conceptions of the teacher role. Still, the STs did not necessarily identify the differences they encountered as being cultural in nature and these responses were therefore categorised using the *IDI* orientations of *denial* – a general dismissal of the presence of differences – and *minimisation*, an acknowledgement that differences were present, but denying or downplaying their impact.

Two possible explanations for this emerge from the data: First, European students were interning in European schools, and they may associate cultural differences with more far-flung locations, attributing instead the differences they encountered to the culture of the specific school in which they were interning (Malmberg et al., 2025).

> *'I found it very difficult to find very big differences.* […] *Yeah. It's not like I was on the other side of the world'* (ST6).

Second, it is noteworthy that two of the three host schools had multicultural student bodies. One was an international school without a single dominant national culture, while the other was located in a major city characterised by a culturally diverse community.

[6] Because the research was conducted in multilingual contexts, many STs used English as an additional language. To ensure readability while retaining the meaning and character of participants' speech, quotations have been lightly edited for clarity, but their intent and substance were not altered.

The impact this had on the STs' perceptions of their intercultural learning compared with working in more homogeneous groups is not evident from our data. However, STs did mention the diversity of the student body when minimising cultural differences.

> *'I think I didn't pay so much attention to it other than the language barrier. I think it's more, like multi-country,* […] *all these different countries just in one school'* (ST3b).

*Polarisation* is characterised by judgment, becoming overly critical either of other cultural groups or of one's own culture (*Intercultural Development Inventory*, n. d., 1:43). Although they tended to minimise or deny cultural differences, the STs did nonetheless compare and contrast their home and host countries. Much of what was said comparatively is better categorised in the *IDI* orientation *acceptance*, because the students acknowledged differences but often withheld the judgment that characterises the *polarisation* orientation. There were, however, a few exceptions.

The allocation of resources for music education in the host country versus the home country was a frequent comparison made by the STs, as well as the standing of music education in the respective societies. All of the STs commented positively on the resources available in the host schools, such as instruments in the classroom, sound equipment, music software and other digital resources.

> *'It's also cool just to see all the music equipment they have. That's not common to see. It just shows that if* [you have] *all of this equipment, there* [is] *so much you can do, so much you can learn'* (ST3b).

> *'I didn't* [see] *any lessons where they used the Boomwhackers or the sound bellows, but I was just surprised about how many they had, because in* [home country], *you always have to fight to have it'* (ST6).

In these examples, students moved beyond noticing differences to judging them, especially in relation to the perceived support of music education, which aligns with the polarisation orientation in the *IDI*.

The STs also reflected on the role and societal standing of music education in the home versus the host country. Several of the STs expressed frustration about the lack of resources allocated for music education in their home countries:

> *'Being proud of singing is a big thing there* [in host country]. *And just being proud of having music. Like, for us* […] *especially the money of the government, it's not going there anymore. It's like we have to keep quiet and hopefully they don't see the music schools. Because otherwise they will take money from them. But there* [in host country …], *music is such a big thing. It's like, so important'* (ST4a).

The STs made very few negative statements about the host schools and the host teachers' pedagogical practices. However, when criticism of the host country was found, it tended to centre around the relationship to and assessment of pupils. This was particularly true for two students, who completed their SIA together.

> *'It's not that they* [teachers at host school] *don't care* [about the pupils], *they are quite warm, but it's much less than what we're used to* […] *I don't want to teach like that* […] *the way in how they are around students, I would not want to end up like that'.* (ST3a).

***Acceptance and Adaptation***

The STs' responses largely demonstrated openness, curiosity and respect toward the host context. They expressed appreciation for different approaches to music and to teaching music, and generally accepted differences in setting musical goals (e. g., product vs. process orientation; emphasis on music-theoretical and music-historical knowledge vs. creative expression). Importantly, this *acceptance* did not result in a negative judgment toward the common music-pedagogical approaches in their home context, but rather supported reflection on their own attitudes as well as openness toward trying new ways of dealing with music.

> *'And it's also a cultural thing or just the focus of the school to really work towards a product and to improve the product and get a high quality …* [My] *background says the process and interactions between the people are also so important* […] *This is what interests me,* […] *the wider focus of the school'* (ST4a).

Many ST statements reflected attitudes associated with early *adaptation*, where individuals begin to adjust their behaviour to operate effectively across cultural contexts. In the statement below, the ST considers how they can implement approaches, methods and materials in their future teaching practice:

> *'I think that's really important for me as a teacher, just to learn from the other systems and sit down, compare it. I've got a lot of activities or tasks and worksheets and everything – we need to just translate it. And now we can use it in* [home country's] *schools. And I see it works because I'm just understanding like, why is this working? Like if I had done this in* [home country], *this would I just know that this will work'* (ST3b).

While the *IDI* framework provided a useful lens for understanding how STs perceived and navigated cultural difference, the inductive analysis revealed additional themes that extended beyond intercultural orientations to broader aspects of professional learning. These findings include reports from STs about how they understand their SIAs to have shaped their emerging teacher identity and professional development.

***Confidence and Resilience: "I did it and I can do things."***

Increased confidence in their teaching ability and confirmation of their decision to become music teachers were conveyed by each ST, either directly or by indicating how much they had enjoyed teaching in the classroom or by expressing assurance in their abilities as a teacher. While open about challenges they faced, particularly regarding communication and dealing with the language barrier, the STs reported overall that they were excited about all they were learning and looked forward to implementing what they had learned in their own (future) teaching practice.

> *'I have more self-confidence, like, okay, I did it and I can do things. And I saw a lot in* [host country], *a lot of things that I want to try in my own lessons* […] *I will take it with me to do in my lessons in the future'* (ST6).

Although the language situation did present some challenges, most STs indicated that this ultimately bolstered their confidence in their ability to be an effective teacher. Several STs reported that these linguistic challenges actually improved their teaching by reinforcing the importance of giving clear and concise directions – and of simply not talking too much. They also expressed that teaching in English was a challenging, yet significant and positive, aspect of their SIA: even without the familiar phrases or vocabulary that they would normally rely on while teaching, they were nonetheless able to teach effectively.

> '[We're taught that] *you should do more, talk less. But it's always easier to just say.* […] *But here, but here, I got, got forced to, like, do it, because I couldn't use my words'* (ST3b).

> *'When I become a teacher in* [home country] *probably it would seem to me like easier, like okay I handled, I managed to teach in English so what could go wrong in my home country, you know?'* (ST7).

Beyond language issues, completing an internship in an unfamiliar environment provided the STs with particular challenges and opportunities for self-reflection. For example, one student noted that lesson planning was difficult early in the internship because not only was the specific group of pupils unfamiliar, but the ST also had no idea what to expect from the various grade levels in that educational system. Although some relevant information had been discussed in an introductory conversation with the MT, the unfamiliarity of the situation made reacting flexibly and spontaneously in the classroom even more urgent, as was the ability and willingness to receive feedback and reflect on the lessons they had given.

> *'I also had a lesson that didn't go well, and I really felt bad afterwards, but I think I also learned probably the most out of it* […] *It's not knowing students. Um, that's also a bit a difficulty in the context of international internship, I think* […] *And afterwards I thought,* [..] *what do I really want from the students? Or what is the end goal of the lesson?'* (ST4b).

***Developing Teacher Identity***

One ST described the SIA as a chance to *fill the teacher suitcase*, where they learned many new things that would inform and shape their future teaching practice. This was echoed by all STs who participated in the study. Indeed, STs indicated that their placement had had a significant influence on their emerging professional identity, due not only to skills or pedagogical approaches acquired during their SIA, but because their understanding of the role of teacher had been profoundly impacted. Some also reported beginning to appreciate the necessity of developing their professional skills and knowledge, realising that teacher professionalisation is an open-ended process with continuous opportunities for growth, resilience, development and engagement.

> *'And that made me realize as well, like, to become a teacher, you have to do it. Just do it a lot, a lot, a lot. And the first years I don't think I would be a good teacher. I'll try, of course, but you could see, like the teachers who are teaching here for long years. You could see they do well because they're trying and trying and they make mistakes and try again'* (ST4b).

> *'Because every child is different* […] *we as teachers* […] *must find a way to teach children and not have children adapt to our own way of teaching, and we must always be open to new ways of teaching that we may not have thought of or been taught either at university or elsewhere but must constantly evolve so that we can help children evolve* […] *I really believe that I have started to choose and take from each one the elements that I think suit me and the way I want to teach, as well as the elements that the teacher must have to help the children'* (ST5a).

These realisations shaped the way the STs see themselves as teachers; they expressed a commitment to the teaching profession and to honing their skills and deepening their professional knowledge, and showed intention to work with engaged persistence. Most STs also expressed a desire to pursue their professional development with the aim of increasing their flexibility and adaptability, and finding the approaches that work best for them while centring the pupil. Importantly, multiple STs reported that the MTs at their host schools modelled this behaviour for them by expressing their own desire to be continuous learners and through openness about their own growth and reflection processes (see also Malmberg et al., 2026, in this volume).

## Discussion

The STs universally reported increased confidence and resilience as a result of their SIA, and findings suggest that they grew in their ability to cope with uncertainty and adapt to unfamiliar surroundings. No ST explicitly reported that their intercultural competence had been strengthened through navigating an international teaching placement, nor that intercultural learning had occurred as a result of the SIA. Rather, they tended to minimise the intercultural dimensions of their experiences, emphasising instead the impact of the SIA on their emerging teacher identity, such as increased confidence, strong conviction in their desire and ability to become teachers, and a wish to develop their adaptability and flexibility. They also expressed openness to many of the approaches to music teaching encountered during their placements. Yet it is precisely these qualities – adaptability, flexibility, openness – that appear in many definitions of intercultural competence. This tension highlights the complexity of distinguishing between perceived versus actual intercultural learning and engagement, as STs often downplayed the intercultural nature of their experiences. It also underscores the difficulty of assessing phenomena related to culture and identity, as these and other related terms are frequently loaded with expectations, preconceptions, and (mis)understandings.

The *IDI* model can be applied flexibly and was useful in categorising the data in this study, despite not having administered the *IDI* questionnaire to STs. However, some aspects of the STs' experiences that could arguably be understood as dimensions of intercultural competence – such as flexibility or the ability to cope with uncertainty – do not always fit neatly into the IDI orientations, raising the question whether the IDI's stage-based model as applied here was fully capable of capturing forms of intercultural learning that manifest differently than the model expects. This further demonstrates the challenges of measuring culture, identity, and even learning. Broader, more open definitions of intercultural competence provide a more comprehensive framework for interpreting such qualities – such as, for example, Deardorff's cyclical and open-ended model (2006, 2009) or Mu et al.'s understanding of intercultural competence as a range of abilities employed to communicate effectively and appropriately across linguistic and cultural differences in order to build and sustain relationships (2022, p. 30). When the *IDI* is used as an analytical framework, it may therefore be advisable to draw on broader conceptualisations of intercultural competence to inform interpretation of the orientations and to support greater nuance in identifying intercultural learning.

The STs portrayed their SIAs as having a positive influence on their development as teachers. They indicated a deepened appreciation for and renewed commitment to the teaching profession, and considered what type of teacher they want to be. The challenges they faced were by and large viewed positively, having strengthened their resilience and confidence. Furthermore, the STs were exposed to new, unfamiliar approaches toward

music education, leading them to question – though not necessarily negatively evaluate – the ways in which music is taught in their home context. This, too, contributes to the building of their own teacher identity, as they decide which elements they will leave behind and what they will integrate into their future teaching practice, and what their core values are. Still, specifically musical aspects of the SIAs were rarely foregrounded by participants in data collection; STs tended to mention music obliquely as part of the context they were in, rather than discussing music as the focus. When music was mentioned, STs most often noted contrasting foci on product versus process orientation, and the value of speaking less when leading practical musical activities, which they realised due to the communication challenges they encountered while teaching in English.

While the content and structure of SIAs may not differ substantially from typical domestic school internships, and although the internships were comparatively short, lasting from just 10 days to 10 weeks, the SIA context appears to have had a significant impact on the way STs experience the placement:

> […] *the only thing I had to do here was my internship. And when you're home, you have to do this and this and this and this and this. So, I could really focus on the internship and I could put all my energy in there, that made it very valuable.* […H]*ere you can really focus on it and, uh, let it sink in.* (ST4a)

Being situated in a new environment grants more singularity of focus than might typically be given a school internship, providing particular opportunities for teacher professionalisation and the development of teacher identity (Malmberg et al., 2025). The immersive and intensive nature was a clear theme in the data, as STs were removed from their everyday surroundings, including their university environment. Importantly, this intensity was not described as burdensome; rather, the STs portrayed it as conducive to self-reflection and learning. This aligns with Selby's (2008) assertion that international student experiences accelerate student maturation due to their immersion in other points of view and the subsequent necessity to come to terms with who they are and what they value (p. 2).

SIAs, then, appear to contribute significantly to teacher development and to competences that are advantageous in the classroom, including intercultural competence, although the intercultural dimensions were not necessarily highlighted by participants. Indeed, the most significant feature of the SIA may be its intensity; the immersion in unfamiliar surroundings, viewpoints, and ways of doing school and teaching music creates conditions that may prompt reflection. This potential can be strengthened when university teacher educators and MTs provide opportunities for both guided and self-reflection, as well as tools that support these reflective practices.

## Limitations

SIAs are not yet well-established. In contrast to more traditional study abroad programmes, such as an *Erasmus* semester, international internships are less common in European music teacher education. A pilot survey conducted within the *TEAM* project revealed that in many higher education institutions that educate music teachers, there are no clear procedures and practices for setting up an SIA, and students may not know that this possibility – and funding – is available to them. Where it is more widely known, students do not often choose to participate. This is in alignment with findings indicating low participation among music education students in mobility programmes generally (see Knigge et al., 2026, in this volume).

The small sample size was a further limiting factor in the study. As participants responded to an open call, the sample comprised only those with interest and motivation to undertake an SIA. These students were particularly open to participating in the reflection exercises, and several STs also expressed enthusiasm about contributing to the research project; this may have impacted the research results.

Furthermore, the study took place within Europe, which seemed to contribute to the students' minimisation and denial of intercultural dimensions ('*It's not like I was on the other side of the world.*'). While a relatively broad geographical spread within Europe is represented in the sample, on a global scale the geographical scope of the study remains quite limited.

The small sample size also applies to the MTs; all three were previously known by members of the research team and two were highly involved in the *TEAM* project – though only one was a member of this particular research team. The tools developed for these SIAs have not yet been tested with further MTs. Additionally, the internships only took place at secondary schools (grades 5+) with strong specialist music teachers; the tools were not tested in other school forms or with generalist teachers.

Assessing dimensions of culture and identity was challenging. Though the *IDI* framework and further theoretical foundations found in the literature aided researchers in data categorisation, the inherent complexity of interpreting individuals' perceptions of culture, identity, and learning persisted, and elements of researcher judgment inevitably shaped analysis.

## Outlook

Building on the limitations identified above, we see several reasonable next steps for expanding this research. First, as the SIA formats and accompanying tools[7] resulting from this DBR research project have thus far only been tested in European schools of general education, and exclusively in secondary schools, possibilities for expanding SIAs beyond European contexts could be explored, examining how STs' emerging teacher identity and intercultural competencies develop in even more varied educational and cultural environments. Furthermore, implementing the formats and tools in elementary schools or even in contexts beyond schools of general education (e. g., instrumental tuition or adult continuing education), as well as in subjects beyond music, may also provide opportunities to support a wider range of STs in their intercultural learning and teacher identity development. Domestically, formats and tools could be adapted for use in schools and music classrooms characterised by high levels of cultural and linguistic diversity, particularly in classes for newly arrived pupils with limited proficiency in the local language, to investigate how such settings impact STs' intercultural learning.

SIAs require institutional support in order to become more firmly established. The findings of this study indicate that SIAs are beneficial for music STs, and it is the research team's conclusion that mobility in European music teacher education merits support. This necessitates fostering a culture of mobility (see Triantafyllaki & Knigge, 2026, in this volume; Knigge et al., 2026, in this volume; Jenssen & Steinmetz, 2026, in this volume); specifically, the promotion of SIAs on an institutional level, access to *Erasmus* funding for this purpose, and flexibility regarding requirements (e. g., internship requirements or exam formats that enable STs to be physically absent from campus).

To this end, we are developing a network of universities in schools – the *TEAM* internship network, or *TEAM-IN* (https://teacher-academy-music.eu/student-mobility/school-internships-abroad) – that will continue to facilitate SIAs after the conclusion of the *TEAM* project, as well as supporting SIAs through the tools we developed. It is our hope that SIAs will become a well-established element of European music teacher education, within the overall culture of mobility *TEAM* encourages.

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[7] These are: Introductory Conversation Guide to assist in planning and preparing the SIA; Voice Memo Prompts and Photo Journal Prompts to support STs' self-reflection during their placement; Checklist for Language-Sensitive Music Teaching, for helping STs teach in English in linguistically complex situations; Checklist for Mentor Teachers, to support MTs throughout the SIA; the Cultural Tree Self-Reflection Exercise, a further self-reflection tool for STs; and a Debrief Conversation Guide, for guided reflection between ST and MT and/or university teacher educator.

The long-term sustainability of the beneficial impacts of SIAs remains uncertain. Nonetheless, the findings demonstrate that SIAs contribute positively to developing teacher identity, professionalisation and intercultural competence, and they may well be a valuable component in preparing confident and interculturally competent music teachers.

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Runa Hestad Jenssen & Lauren Steinmetz

# Designing for Leaks

## An Outro in Movement

### Where Do We Begin?

Lauren and Runa sit in their separate offices. Runa, a singer, teacher, and researcher at Nord University in Norway. Lauren, a cellist, teacher, and researcher at the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna. Our voices met through the *TEAM* project, both of us researching student mobility: Runa with *Work Package 4* (*WP4*), focusing on study abroad programmes, and Lauren with *Work Package 5* (*WP5*), exploring school internships abroad. We resonate across distance. Between emails and meetings that begin and end too quickly. We are asked to write an outro chapter for the mobility section of the *TEAM* book. Where do we begin? With a conclusion? A summary? A set of answers? No. This time we begin with a leaking story from Runa:

#### *A Leaking Story*

> *In the corridors at Nord University, we have beautiful glass walls and ceilings. The only thing is that sometimes, they leak. Water drips down and forms small puddles on the floor. People walk around them. Some sigh. I stop for a moment. I actually think it is a bit beautiful.*
> *It makes me think that perhaps we need to let nature and the world enter our walls a little more – to open up. To let something in. To allow the boundaries to become more porous. Maybe we do not always need to fix the leaks as quickly as we discover them.*
> *When water drips from the ceiling, something shifts in the room. People move differently. They look down. They adjust their steps. Maybe they even begin to think a little differently.*

> *I have started to think that music teacher education might need these kinds of leaks. Small openings where something from the outside can seep in. Where other voices can find space. Where what does not quite fit within the structure can still be allowed to be there.*
> *Leaks are not only failures. They can be connections. Perhaps it is in these small openings that something new can emerge?*

***What Leaks – and Why it Matters***

"What is leaking?" Lauren asked Runa after listening to her story. "What a good question!" Runa replied. Water can be damaging. But water also gives life. What leaks in and out – and where – matters. The previous chapters in this volume remind us that mobility is not simply movement between places, but a carefully (or carelessly) designed encounter with difference. What leaks in such encounters are not only practical matters – housing, information, structures – but also assumptions, identities, and ways of knowing. As Triantafyllaki and Knigge (2026, in this volume) emphasise, mobility is not merely about moving between places, but involves the conditions and structures through which students are welcomed, guided, supported, and enabled to learn. It also means encouraging students to share aspects of themselves in their host contexts, and doing so with a spirit of generosity, curiosity, and humility. In the following pages, we reflect on what we have learned through our work studying mobility in music teacher education during the past few years in the *TEAM* project: what sparked our imagination, and what questions remain open.

## From Inside to Outside (and Back Again)

In the *TEAM* project we started from the inside – from the local knowledge we all carry as teachers, researchers, and practitioners situated within specific national and regional contexts. Working from the inside made us capable of seeing and feeling beyond, of acting locally and thinking globally (Braidotti, 2011). The goal of mobility is not merely to further ideals of internationalisation, but to strengthen local contexts and the individuals within them through connection and exchange. Mobility is not masses of faceless and placeless students going abroad; rather, it enables interaction between both individuals and local contexts: particular students from particular places going to particular places, and then bringing the knowledge gained through their experiences back home. Perhaps this is what leaks do: they do not respect the walls we build between local and global, between inside and outside. We want to acknowledge, however, that from a global perspective, the *TEAM* project did remain local in the sense that our initiatives remained focused on Europe. We see opportunities – and perhaps even needs – for expansion. What could be shared and learned through mobility in even broader contexts?

We also began from the inside regarding our own subject area: music education. When we began from within our own practice – from what we already knew and carried – we found that we had also begun to move outward. When creating the Design Principles in *WP4* (Knigge et al., 2026, in this volume), we were initially concerned that they were not music-specific enough. We even tried to musify them, but it did not work. Now, we see that the Design Principles go beyond music. They are applicable in other subject areas. They address a challenge – and offer a response – that exists beyond music. Working from the inside, from the local, opened us up to the outside. The leak moved both ways.

This also proved true for *WP5*'s study of school internships abroad. While music of course played a role in the student and mentor teachers' experiences, they rarely emphasised aspects of music teaching and music-making in their reports. Much of what we learned about the benefits and challenges of school internships abroad could be applied to other subject areas as well, making our findings, design principles and tools relevant and readily adaptable for a wide range of student teachers (see Steinmetz et al., 2026, in this volume; Malmberg et al, 2026, in this volume.; Steinmetz & Chrysostomou, 2026, in this volume).

## Sustainability as What Lingers

We would be remiss here if we neglected the issue of sustainability, a topic which arose repeatedly throughout the *TEAM* project, both in our own discussions and in conversations following presentations on our work. It is a question that needs asking: Is mobility sustainable?

Lauren remembers:

> *A curator friend of mine and I were talking about the challenges of sustainability in her field – how works of art are flown around the world accompanied by curators, for example. Later in our conversation, I recalled an exhibit I had seen over ten years prior, sharing how it had completely changed the way I view cities and architecture and how, more than a decade later, I still think about it nearly every day. My friend then reflected: "You're still talking about this so many years later … so isn't that a kind of sustainability, too?"*

Stade et al. (2026, in this volume) remind us that, when considering the United Nations' *Sustainable Development Goals* (United Nations, 2015), sustainability is multidimensional, concerned not only with ecology but also with inclusion, equity and a range of other social and economic issues (Stade et al, 2026, in this volume). The word sustain itself carries multiple nuances of meaning, all rooted in the idea of holding something up: referring not only to longevity, but also to having endured something, often a type of pressure or injury, or to having supported life, in the sense of sustenance. If we take all three meanings into

consideration, we might ask: Does this action or this attitude create a weight that is too great for our resources to bear? Does it nourish us and our world, or does it impoverish and injure? What long-lasting impact will this have on us – and on our world?

bell hooks urges her readers to consider embracing "an ethos of sustainability that is not solely about the appropriate care of the world's resources, but is also about the creation of meaning – the making of lives that we feel are worth living" (2009, p. 1). If we embrace this ethos, then we can indeed cautiously understand the types of immersive international experiences presented in the preceding chapters as sustainable. International mobility experiences for future teachers are valuable because, as important types of intercultural education, they facilitate personal development as well as the "construction of individual and collective identities" (Beacco et al., 2016, p. 9), preparing them to respond to increasingly diverse classrooms and an urgent call to support social cohesion on a local scale.

Turning again to our metaphor of leaks, we acknowledge that just as water can be beautiful and life-giving in some places while destructive in others, international travel can also be environmentally costly, and it is worth exploring how ecological impacts may be mitigated in future mobility programmes. For example, we simply do not yet know what possibilities artificial intelligence (AI) may open in this respect, or how technological advances may improve exchange; speculating on such developments is beyond the scope of our expertise. Still, based on what we have learned through our work on mobility in the *TEAM* project, we argue that immersive, embodied international experiences where students are confronted with unfamiliar local knowledge and ways of being should be prioritised and made integral to teacher education programmes. Aligned with the United Nations' fourth *Sustainable Development Goal* of quality education for all (United Nations, 2015), we propose that education is itself inherently sustainable, and that investment in music teacher education will indeed have a long-lasting, nourishing impact on both collective and individual flourishing.

## Imagining Otherwise

Maxine Greene (1995) reminds us that imagination is not something extra we add to education, but something that allows us to see the world differently – to become, in her words, "wide-awake to the world" (p. 35). To be wide-awake is not simply to observe what is already there, but to notice what might be missing. To sense tensions. To feel where something does not quite fit. Greene (1995) writes that imagination makes it possible to look at things "as if they could be otherwise" (p. 16). We stay with that. Because perhaps mobility in music teacher education is not only about going somewhere else. It is also about becoming capable of imagining differently from where we already are.

Imagination, however, is not neutral. It is entangled with power. With whose perspectives are centred, and whose are left unheard. With which stories are made visible, and which remain at the margins. To imagine otherwise, then, is also an ethical act. It asks us to question what we take for granted. To unsettle dominant ways of knowing. To listen for voices that do not easily enter our structures.

And perhaps this becomes even more urgent in a time when new technologies, including artificial intelligence, are beginning to shape how knowledge is produced, accessed, and valued within music teacher education. AI may open doors. It may create new forms of access, connection, and exchange. And yet, it may also reproduce existing structures. Reinforce dominant perspectives. If imagination is ethical work, then so is our engagement with technology. The question might not only be what AI can do for mobility, but what kinds of worlds it helps us imagine, and which ones it leaves behind.

## Designing for Permeability

We return to the leaky corridor at Nord University, listening to the water drip and watching light reflect off the puddles. Maybe we feel a bit uncomfortable and we would rather be dry and warm – a reasonable thought. Still, we propose that, at least metaphorically, we do not aim for a watertight space that sees leaks as breaches in the walls of a closed and stagnant academic system. We aim instead for designed permeability: openness to dynamic exchange that enables a responsive, evolving internal ecosystem while still maintaining coherence and identity within.

This permeability requires trust. Trust that what students and staff learn when they move – through unfamiliar corridors, alongside unfamiliar colleagues, within unfamiliar pedagogical cultures – is more than good enough to bring back home. The curriculum and study plans might not fit perfectly when they return. If they did, what new perspectives would have been won? Such trust is not naïve; it must be built into institutional structures, not left to individual goodwill. It requires flexibility from institutions and a genuine commitment to fostering a culture of exchange, one in which mobility is not treated as an exceptional event but as a valued, designed dimension of teacher formation.

## We Don't End Here

We began with a leaking ceiling in a corridor. We end there too, because the puddle is still forming, and someone else might walk past it, and stop, and wonder. Therefore, this chapter does not close the discussion. It opens it. We do not offer a final framework. We offer a way of thinking. A way of noticing. A way of allowing something to leak. And perhaps that is where music teacher education begins again.

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# III. MUSIC EDUCATION IN EUROPE: MAPPING THE FIELD

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# Mapping Music Teacher Education in Europe

## From Design to Implementation

**Abstract**

This chapter reports on the methodology of *Work Package 7: Mapping Music Teacher Education*, which was embedded in the three-year, large-scale *Erasmus+* co-funded project *TEAM – Teacher Education Academy for Music: Future-Making, Mobility and Networking in Music Education* that aimed to map the landscape of European music teacher education. Commencing with a comprehensive review of relevant sources and guided by similar European project reports and methodologies, a mapping template with sample descriptors was designed, focusing on key thematic areas within music teacher education. The design of the mapping grid was drafted and re-drafted through joint discussion within our work package group, within the Consortium more broadly, drawing on the expertise of our Associate Partners, broadly representing 24 European countries. The completion of country-specific templates by experts (*EAS's* National Coordinators) was followed by a double-review process, using an extensive list of review criteria. The final, submitted mapping templates were analysed through thematic coding and content analysis, aiming to organise and compare national approaches to music teacher education across Europe. The work reported herein informs academic discussions and provides practical guidance for policymakers and educators; moreover, the research supports the enhancement of music teacher education at both national and European levels.

**Keywords:** Music teacher education, mapping templates, thematic areas, comparison, methodology

## Introduction

Music teacher education (MTE) is central to broader debates on educational quality, cultural participation, and equitable access to the arts. The *Council of Europe* (1986) recognised music as a key element of Europe's cultural heritage and social development, stressing that it should be taught by qualified professionals and given strong emphasis in the preparation of pre-primary and primary teachers. Although decades old, this principle still guides European policy. Yet many countries continue to rely on generalist teachers in primary schools, a structure that affects the quality of early music learning and reinforces the need for robust professional training (OECD, 2024; Eurydice, 2009). Recent European research further highlights ongoing challenges in specialists' teacher preparation. *Eurydice* (2021) notes that initial teacher education must integrate subject knowledge with pedagogical, technological, and professional competences, demands that are especially complex for music educators. This agenda has been reinforced by two key UNESCO documents: the *Framework for Culture and Arts Education* (UNESCO, 2024) and the *Athens Declaration* (WAAE, 2024). Both emphasise that well-prepared music teachers are essential for ensuring inclusive, culturally relevant learning and for upholding the right to participate in cultural life. They call for strong pedagogical, creative, and intercultural skills, as well as specialised training and collaboration with cultural institutions, to guarantee authentic, high-quality musical experiences for all learners. Music Teacher Education (MTE) is a vital part of cultural and educational systems, shaping the future quality of music learning. This chapter outlines the work accomplished by *Work Package 7* (*WP7*) within the *TEAM* project[1], which aimed to establish a comprehensive, current map of MTE programmes across Europe. The main goal of this work was to create a shared knowledge base to foster meaningful collaboration, innovation, and evidence-based policy development within the European music education sector. Bringing together Consortium Members, Associate Partners, and the valuable network of the *European Association for Music in Schools* (*EAS*) National Coordinators, this collaborative effort documented key features of MTE. The core methodology of *WP7* combined systematic document analysis, literature review, and the development of a common mapping framework to ensure consistency in data collection. Following this, Europe-wide data collection and collaborative validation were undertaken. This rigorous process has produced 26 country-specific descriptions and a European comparative report. These critical outputs, which are accessible on the project website[2], serve two main purposes.

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[1] *TEAM – Teacher Education Academy for Music: Future-Making, Mobility, and Networking in Europe* (https://teacher-academy-music.eu/) is funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are, however, those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

[2] https://teacher-academy-music.eu/

Firstly, they greatly improve transparency across the complex European MTE landscapes. Secondly, they act as a valuable, foundational resource for all key stakeholders, educators, researchers, and policymakers, who are dedicated to fostering stronger, more connected music teacher education in Europe (Symeonidis, Hellmann & Laux, 2024).

The chapter initially presents and discusses the comprehensive literature review that guided the methodological design of *Work Package 7*, drawing on two strands of literature: research on music teacher education and reports from previous European mapping projects. Insights from this literature review informed the methodological steps of the work package, clarifying the thematic areas to be examined, and the types of evidence needed, which, in turn, led to the development of the mapping template. The chapter then explains how these methodological decisions provided the basis for collecting, reviewing, and analysing national data on music teacher education across Europe.

## Europe-Wide Research and Reports on Music Teacher Education

The mapping of music teacher education across Europe, realised within the *TEAM* project through *Work Package 7*, drew on a rich database of existing EU project reports and policy frameworks that have significantly contributed to the field of music teacher education. Analysing the impact of such reports provided valuable insights into their objectives, methodological approaches, and the ways in which they have shaped professional preparation across diverse contexts. Given the rapid educational, technological, and societal changes of the past decade, it was particularly important to examine initiatives developed during this period. Therefore, this section focuses specifically on programmes, projects, and policy developments from the last ten years, highlighting how contemporary European actions have contributed to redefining standards, expectations, and innovation in music teacher education.

The *Music Education Network: A European Network for Communication and Knowledge Management in the Field of Music Education* (*meNet*) project (Hennessy et al., 2013; *meNet*, 2009), implemented by the *European Association for Music in Schools*, although not a recent one (2006–2009), is the one most directly connected to the mapping of music teacher education we were aiming at in the *TEAM* Project. It was designed to strengthen communication, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing in music education, with a particular focus on understanding and comparing music teacher training across Europe. It brought together twenty countries to produce a coordinated set of national reports, each following the same structured format. In every report, contributors described their systems using the section titles *I. Background/Organisation*, *II. Curriculum*, *III. Learning and Teaching Approaches*, *IV. Assessment/Examination*, and, where relevant, *V. Current and Future Challenges*. This common framework ensured that each country addressed the same

core aspects of music teacher education, from institutional structures and programme content to pedagogical practices and evaluation methods. By gathering these national descriptions under unified section headings, the *MeNet* project created a coherent, comparable body of knowledge that supported cross-national understanding, the exchange of professional practice and a broader insight into how music teachers are prepared across Europe (Hennessy et al., 2013).

*Full Score* (*AEC*, n. d.) was a three-year project that ran from 1 September 2014 to 31 August 2017. It was led by the *Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen* (*AEC*) and supported by the European Commission through the *European Networks* initiative of the *Creative Europe* programme. This six-strand project aimed to improve the support *AEC* offers to music schools and colleges across Europe. *Full Score* included meetings, conferences, and workshops that encouraged collaboration among music educators and institutions. The project also created useful tools and resources to enhance music education. Overall, *Full Score* added important new elements to *AEC's* regular programmes and helped strengthen the community of music educators and institutions throughout Europe.

The key result from the second strand of the above project, *Evaluation for Enhancement*, was the *MusiQuE Standards for Classroom Music Teacher Education Programmes* (2018), which offers structured criteria and reflective tools for evaluating programmes, focusing on curriculum coherence, student progress, quality culture, and stakeholder involvement (*MusiQuE*, 2018). The project's methodology effectively merged sector expertise with European-level quality assurance standards, and its outcomes continue to influence institutional practices.

In January 2025, the New *MusiQuE Standards* were revised to offer a focus on Classroom Music Teacher Education programmes. According to this document, these programmes must articulate clear aims that reflect national frameworks while integrating artistic, pedagogical, and scientific components into the curriculum. They should emphasise diversity, inclusion, and responsiveness to current challenges – such as digitalisation and evolving school needs – ensuring that graduates are equipped to navigate contemporary educational environments. The structure of the curriculum is expected to balance performance, pedagogy, and research, while offering opportunities for creative projects, reflection, and the gradual development of a teaching identity. A strong focus is also placed on preparing students for real classroom contexts through practicum experiences and mentoring structures tailored to music teaching in schools (*MusiQuE*, 2025).

In 2023, the *World Alliance for Arts Education*, in collaboration with UNESCO (WAAE, 2023), developed a survey to gather global perspectives on the state of arts and culture education. It was an online survey completed by 1,361 respondents from 113 countries, including a large proportion of arts and culture educators, among whom music educators were strongly represented. Most participants were experienced teachers working in the

public sector and holding postgraduate qualifications. The survey collected data on the objectives, competencies, training needs, and structural challenges of arts education, with several questions directly addressing teacher education, both pre-service and in-service (WAAE, 2023). Results relevant to our work revealed a pressing need for enhanced training, with respondents highlighting high-quality in-service and specialised teacher education as crucial. Significant gaps in current preparation models were also identified: music educators felt unprepared for diverse, interdisciplinary classrooms that utilise digital tools. There was a call for more time to be spent on teacher preparation and better alignment between research, pedagogy, and practical contexts. Equity across all art forms was also emphasised, particularly in drama and dance, indicating the need for music educators to collaborate across disciplines. Competencies such as creativity, critical thinking, communication, and social skills were highlighted, shifting the focus of music teacher education towards holistic learner development and inclusive pedagogies. Additionally, training in resource management and advocacy was considered vital for music teachers. Finally, calls for institutional and governmental support were emphasised, with insufficient funding identified as a significant challenge. Overall, the survey underscored the need for strengthening research and data collection in arts education, highlighting the importance of preparing teachers as both practitioners and researchers (WAAE, 2023).

The survey led to the *Athens Declaration for Arts Education* (WAAE, 2024), created during the *WAAE Global Arts Education Summit*, held at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens from 17–19 October 2024. This summit, organised by the *World Alliance for Arts Education* (WAAE) within the broader context of UNESCO's initiatives in culture and arts education, gathered participants from 33 countries and representatives from 55 universities to explore the future of arts education on a global scale. The declaration calls for a stronger global commitment to integrating the arts across formal, non-formal, and informal education systems, and emphasises the importance of preparing educators to facilitate artistic learning effectively. A central concern highlighted in the discussions was the professional preparation of arts teachers, including music educators. The document advocates enhanced initial teacher education, interdisciplinary training, and continuous professional development, enabling teachers to respond to contemporary challenges such as technological change, cultural diversity, and the role of the arts in wellbeing and community life. Within this framework, the *Athens Declaration* underscores the need to support music teacher education programmes that combine artistic expertise, pedagogical knowledge, and collaborative practices, ensuring that music educators can foster creativity, intercultural dialogue, and inclusive learning environments across educational contexts. The same year, the *AEC Policy Paper on Key Criteria for Innovative Music Teacher Education* (2024) synthesised insights from European and international policy developments. Developed through sector consultation and review of documents such as the *European Agenda for Music* (*EMC*, 2018), the *Porto Santo Charter* (2021) and the *UNESCO Framework*

(UNESCO, 2024; WAAE, 2023), it identified key policy criteria for accessible, future-oriented, and collaborative music teacher education. Its methodology combined comparative policy analysis with expert input from higher music education institutions; its results include actionable recommendations regarding curricula, access, funding, lifelong learning, and intersectoral cooperation (*AEC*, 2024).

In light of these projects and policy documents, the importance of undertaking a comprehensive and systematic mapping of music teacher education across Europe becomes increasingly evident. This endeavour demands methodological approaches that recognise the rich diversity present within national education systems and the evolving needs of the profession. The above initiatives across Europe served as valuable models for this undertaking.

## Structure and Content of Music Teacher Education Programmes

The review of relevant and recent policy documents and EU project reports foregrounded a series of key issues and concerns in initial music teacher education that are, herein, presented and enriched through a review of research literature in the field.

Music teacher education around the globe continues to be shaped to a considerable extent by Western classical music traditions, although the nature and intensity of this influence vary across national, institutional, and cultural contexts (Christophersen, 2021). The current chapter, which focuses on MTE in Europe, cannot provide an overview of MTE across the globe. Still, regional tendencies can be observed in the literature. For example, North America often prioritises technology-enabled innovation through various media and emerging pedagogical tools (Zhang et al., 2023). Other regions, such as Asia and Africa, are increasingly incorporating indigenous musical forms and culturally relevant pedagogies into their teacher training programmes, reflecting a broader movement towards decolonising music education curricula (Joseph & Hartwig, 2015). This global shift underscores a critical re-evaluation of established canons and a move towards more inclusive and culturally responsive teaching practices (Palmer et al., 2021).

Turning our focus to Europe, music teacher education programmes typically adhere to the *Bologna Process*, which promotes harmonisation across higher education systems through standardised bachelor's and master's degree structures (Espeland, 2021). This framework facilitates student mobility and mutual recognition of qualifications, yet it also presents challenges in maintaining the distinct national and regional pedagogical traditions within music education (Triantafyllaki et al., 2025). Consequently, while the *Bologna Process* aims for convergence in educational structures, the content and delivery of music teacher education within European countries often reflect unique cultural and historical trajectories, requiring careful consideration of local contexts. According to Aróstegui

(2011), within Europe, the same policies are having different effects "due to the different circumstances every country or region has to face" (p. 201).

In terms of content, music teacher education programmes across Europe frequently integrate a foundational curriculum that balances theoretical knowledge with practical pedagogical skills, preparing future educators to address the diverse needs of students within evolving educational landscapes (Christophersen, 2021; Espeland, 2021). However, there is an ongoing discussion about whether the current programmes adequately prepare students for the full spectrum of competencies required, particularly concerning practical skills such as instrumental playing and singing (Begić et al., 2017). This debate often centres on the tension between developing deep musical artistry and acquiring comprehensive pedagogical expertise, a balance that varies significantly across different European institutions (Christophersen, 2021). In our mapping work within the *TEAM* project, exploring current university curricular content and structure in initial teacher education seemed to be a key thematic area.

Closely linked to the above discourse is the perennial debate as to whether specialist music teachers or generalist teachers are better suited to deliver music instruction in schools, which remains a central and often contentious issue within music education research (Aróstegui, 2011; Chrysostomou, 2007; Aróstegui & Kyakuwa, 2020). Discussion often centres on pedagogical efficacy, resource allocation, and the broader philosophical underpinnings of music's role in the curriculum. A significant point of contention revolves around the perceived subject-matter expertise and pedagogical confidence of generalist teachers in comparison to their specialist counterparts (Moore et al., 2023; Christophersen, 2021). Many studies, for instance, investigate the degree to which generalist teachers feel confident about teaching music, often revealing lower self-efficacy compared to specialist music educators (Suomi et al., 2022; Hennessy, 2017). This apprehension among generalist teachers often stems from a lack of formal training in music pedagogy and a belief that music instruction demands advanced instrumental competence, reinforcing a perception that music is a specialist domain (Welch & Henley, 2014).

Consequently, one of the main areas explored in our mapping work was the profile of the music teacher across Europe-that is, who teaches music in each country and at each educational level. This issue is closely tied to the structure and content of teacher education programmes and to how effectively they prepare future teachers to deliver music instruction. In many cases, generalist primary teachers receive only a single compulsory music course during their training, which can leave them feeling underprepared and apprehensive about teaching music (Moore et al., 2023; Sirek & Sefton, 2023).

Despite the common framework across Europe, where music teacher education curricula encompass music theory, history, performance, and pedagogy, often augmented by practical teaching experiences and specialised didactics for various age groups and educational settings (Garro & Sanz, 2019), significant variations exist in the depth and

breadth of these components, reflecting diverse national educational priorities and cultural contexts. The balance between traditional and innovative pedagogical practices, including creative and improvisational approaches, is a recurring theme, with some institutions actively integrating these elements while others maintain a more conventional instructional focus (Espeland, 2021; Symeonidis, 2017).

Within the literature, new developments are further emphasised; for example, the emphasis on twenty-first-century skills, such as critical thinking, collaboration, and communication, that prepare preservice teachers to navigate complex educational environments and foster these abilities in their future students (Yoo & Kang, 2021) or the integration of digital technologies into music teacher education (Calderón-Garrido et al., 2020). Yet, the extent to which these skills are genuinely embedded in mandatory modules, as opposed to being optional or implicitly addressed, varies considerably, highlighting a need for more systematic integration (Altiparmak et al., 2025).

An important focus area integrated within most EU music teacher education curricula is school internships or practicums (Zeichner, 2012). These focused periods of professional training and in-school experience often bear credit and explicitly combine subject studies, pedagogy and "sufficient classroom practice" (Eurydice, 2021, p. 66). While varying widely across institutions (Heinz, 2024), the internship usually involves a planned period progressing from structured observation to teaching, either independently or with a peer. Student-teachers' engagement in staff meetings, assessment and reporting, communication with parents, extra-curricular activities, and other collegial tasks such as encouraging social connections with other members of school staff (Dreer-Goethe, 2025) are equally important. Domestic internships, thereby, have become sites for the development of professional identity, agency, and a sense of belonging to the teaching profession, yet are not without their challenges such as issues of mentoring, university-school collaboration, and forms of delivery (Heinz, 2024). Recent literature (Di Pietro, 2022), as well as a dedicated strand within the *TEAM* project – presented herein in Section II Mobility in Music Education – highlight the additional benefits and challenges of organising school internships abroad.

During the internship, the mentoring of student teachers emerges as a crucial element contributing to its success (Weiss et al., 2024). EU reports highlight the importance of systematic preparation for their role, time, and recognition within school staffing structures (Eurydice, 2021). Intentionally designed, research-informed mentoring arrangements can address the specific vulnerabilities and strengths of music student teachers as they transition between university and school settings (Jenssen & Haara, 2024). School-university collaborations are increasingly framed in EU policy as a shared long-term responsibility for student teacher learning with empirical work revealing the potential of creating third

spaces in which university teacher educators, school mentors and student teachers co-construct practice, negotiate curriculum and engage in joint inquiry (Christophersen, 2024; Heinz & Fleming, 2019).

*Eurydice* (2021) reports underline a broad policy consensus that becoming a teacher is a gradual process spanning initial teacher education, induction and continuing professional development, with induction designed to consolidate knowledge, connect it to the realities of school life and provide individualised support to novices. Structured induction is associated with smoother transitions, higher self-efficacy, and more coherent early-career learning opportunities, yet provision remains uneven and often fragmented across Europe. Recent EU-funded initiatives such as the TeacherEd Guide *Effective teacher induction systems* further conceptualise induction as an ecosystem involving employers, mentors, teacher education institutions and new teachers themselves, arguing that well-designed early-career support can simultaneously benefit individuals, schools, and wider education systems (Grainger Clemson & Fernandes, 2024).

Taken together, the wide range of literature reviewed for the design and initial drafts of our mapping template led to the development of six key thematic areas (or pillars) as focus areas in EU music teacher education.

## Methodology

The methodological process for *Work Package 7* (*WP7*) in the *TEAM* project was designed to systematically and comparably map current Music Teacher Education (MTE) across the participating countries in Europe. The aim was to gather detailed, contextually grounded descriptions of existing systems, identify ongoing challenges, and document examples of good and innovative practices. The process advanced through sequential and interconnected phases, spanning from July 2023 to August 2026: (1) literature review and template design, (2) coordinated data collection, (3) multi-layered quality review and refinement, and (4) publication of the comparative analysis report on the *TEAM* website. Overall, 26 countries participated in this work, some of which entered the project at later stages. Table 1 summarises the processes followed, showing when each action took place and who was involved.

| Phase 1 – Literature review and Design (Late 2023–Feb 2024) | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Date** | **Action** | **Who Was Involved** |
| Jul 2023–Feb 2024 | Review of literature; analysis of *meNet* and European documents | *WP7* |
| Sep–Nov 2023 | Development of a six-pillar mapping template | *WP7* |
| Nov 2023 | Presentation of the mapping template to the consortium meeting- feedback | *TEAM* consortium |
| Dec 2023–Feb 2024 | Revision and finalisation of the mapping template with sample descriptions | *WP7* |

| Phase 2 – Data Collection (Feb 2024–May 2025) | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Date** | **Action** | **Who Was Involved** |
| Feb 2024 | Invitation sent with mapping template and guidelines to 30 *EAS* National Coordinators | *WP7* + *EAS* National Coordinators (NCs) |
| Mar 2024 | Zoom meeting to explain the process and address questions | *WP7* + NCs/ other experts |
| May 2024 | Preliminary/draft/ bullet point reports submitted from 10 countries | NCs/ other experts |
| Jun 2024 | Workshop at *EAS* Dublin; preliminary findings presented and discussed | *WP7* + NCs + conference participants |
| Jul–Aug 2024 | First-round review of preliminary reports; general weaknesses identified; guidelines drafted, and general guidelines were sent to all to consider while preparing their full report | *WP7* |
| Sep–May 2025 | Full reports were submitted, new NCs/ or other authors were invited, reminders sent to those who had not submitted full reports | *WP7* + NCs/ other experts |

| Phase 3 – Review & Quality Check (June 2024–Feb 2026) | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Date** | **Action** | **Who Was Involved** |
| Jul–Oct 2024 | WP7 internal review of the same reports | *WP7* |
| Nov 2024 | Consortium members, in pairs, reviewed the full report of each country | Consortium members |
| Nov–Dec 2024 | Development of review criteria and template | *WP7* |
| Dec 2024–Jan 2025 | Systematic double-review of all reports – sent back to authors together with general feedback. | Two *WP7* reviewers per report |
| May–Oct 2025<br>Oct–Dec 2025 | Revisions submitted<br>Second-round review | *WP7* + NCs/authors<br>*WP7*'s 4 members who did the initial review + 5th member as critical friend |
| Dec–Mar 2026 | Second-round revisions | NCs/authors |

| Phase 4 – Final Comparative Analysis (Feb 2025–August 2026) | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Date** | **Action** | **Who Was Involved** |
| Apr–Jun 2026 | Final check of country reports and publication on the website | *WP7* |
| Jul 2025–Aug 2026 | Comparative analysis; preparation of reports and articles | *WP7* |

**Table 1.** WP7 Methodology Timeline

***Phase 1. Literature Review and Mapping Template Design***

The methodological process began with an extensive literature review phase that served as the empirical and theoretical foundation for the research goals of *WP7*.

The researchers conducted a systematic examination of two distinct categories of literature: European policy statements and reports on music teacher education, and international and European research literature on the same topic. This dual-track literature review approach directly reflects examples of good practices outlined in comparable European education mapping projects, particularly the *Eurydice* methodology (2009, 2021), which emphasises the importance of grounding mapping exercises in comprehensive understanding of existing policy and research landscapes. The *WP7* team identified the *meNet* project – which had previously documented music teacher education across 20 European countries – as particularly relevant, leading to a detailed analysis of all *meNet* reports to identify elements that could enrich the developing framework (Hennessy et al., 2013; *meNet*, 2009).

Over four months, this process resulted in a four-page list of bullet points. The following stage involved organising these findings, removing repetition, identifying broad categories, and determining the most coherent way to structure all elements within the categories. This required numerous discussions, constant rearranging of items, revising wording for clarity, and repeatedly returning to the literature for confirmation.

As these discussions progressed, the team aimed to categorise all aspects of music teacher education under broader umbrella pillars. This was a demanding task, as many aspects had to be moved between categories until the best fit was found, with careful attention to avoiding duplication, identifying missing elements, and ensuring that the framework remained coherent and consistent while respecting the diversity of countries and regions.

This process, which includes reflexive inquiry cycles, characterises qualitative research methodology. Moreover, a recent publication by Udayanga (2025) describes thematic analysis as an ongoing, iterative, and reflexive process which facilitates research from its inception to the final analytical claim. We consider our methodological framework to have many common elements with this model, as our continuous cycles of reflection and interpretation of the data led to a continuing refinement of key categories or pillars.

Through this process, the *WP7* team developed a mapping template to guide data collection, with sample descriptions and word limit for each pillar, to help national representatives understand the expected structure and depth of the country reports. Learning from other projects, we ensured we were specific in what we asked, in order to ensure comparability (e.g. Eurydice, 2021; Eurydice, 2009), yet allow for flexibility through open-ended questions within the mapping template (see, for example, the TE4I project methodology [European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2024]). The pillars or key thematic areas were structured in accordance with:

(1) The Profile of the Music Teacher: who teaches music in schools, qualification requirements, and hiring or appointment procedures.
(2) The Background and Organisation of MTE: Institutions offering programmes, programme types, entry requirements, duration, and study formats.
(3) The Curriculum in Higher Education: Types of programmes (music, music education, combined models), balance between musicianship and pedagogy, preparation for various educational levels, number of music education courses, and opportunities for teaching practice. Where relevant, the treatment of music in generalist teacher programmes was also documented.
(4) Induction Training After Graduation: Requirements beyond the degree for securing teaching positions, including induction programmes and any examinations.
(5) Current and Future Challenges: Structural, cultural, pedagogical, or systemic difficulties faced by MTE in each country.
(6) Innovative or Good Practices: Examples of practices that are considered effective or promising in the national context.

The initial draft of the mapping template was presented in a workshop during the first consortium meeting and discussed among the consortium members, who provided feedback on points that lacked clarity or did not align with all countries' or regions' situations, offering us additional perspectives and feedback from more than 20 consortium members; these we noted, discussed throughout the meeting and considered in our revisions and refinement of the mapping template in the months that followed.

In the above process, reflexive iteration was at the heart of visiting and revisiting the data and connecting them with emerging insights, progressively leading to refined focus and understandings, thereby conceptualising "the role of iteration, not as a repetitive mechanical task but as a deeply reflexive process, was key to sparking insight and developing meaning" (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009, p. 77).

***Phase 2. Completion of the Questionnaire and the Reviewing Phase***

Data collection in Phase 2 employed a structured yet flexible approach that balanced standardised data gathering with strategic expansion of participating countries. Similar to the *Eurydice* project that collected information on educational policies through a questionnaire that was completed by national experts and/or the national representative of the *Eurydice Network* (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2021, p. 26), the final mapping template was administered to National Coordinators for music in schools through the *EAS* network. A zoom meeting held in March 2024 provided an opportunity for national representatives to clarify the completion process and address contextual questions specific to their national systems.

The project established a preliminary deadline of May 2024, creating an opportunity to present initial findings from participating countries at the *EAS* Conference in Dublin in June 2024. This strategic timing – gathering preliminary data while simultaneously disseminating findings to a professional audience – served multiple functions: it generated discussion about challenges identified across diverse national contexts, encouraged additional country representatives to participate, and validated the preliminary findings through expert community feedback. The preliminary presentation drew contributions from 12 countries with various levels of data completeness, yet sufficient to generate meaningful comparative insights about challenges in music teacher education across European contexts (Economidou Stavrou et al., 2024).

Following the *EAS* Conference, the project entered an extended data collection phase lasting through May 2025, during which reminders were sent to non-contributing countries and new National Coordinators representing additional countries/regions were welcomed. The extended timeline for Phase 2, spanning over a year, acknowledged the reality of researcher and practitioner availability while maintaining momentum toward comprehensive participation. By the conclusion of Phase 2, approximately 26 countries had engaged with the project, though entry points varied, with some countries joining later in the process (Economidou Stavrou et al., 2025).

***Phase 3. Multi-Layered Review Processes and Iterative Refinement***

The quality assurance and refinement mechanisms implemented in Phase 3 represent the most distinctive and complex element of the *WP7* methodology. This phase demonstrates application of multi-phase mixed methods design principles, where multiple cycles of review and feedback create embedded iterations within a larger sequential structure (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). The review process proceeded through four clearly defined procedural steps, each adding distinct perspectives and quality assurance mechanisms.

(1) Consortium Paired Review: The first review step involved 25 *TEAM* consortium members dividing into pairs, with each pair reviewing one submitted country report. This paired review process examined reports for completeness of information, clarity of descriptions, and alignment with the six mapping pillars, while also inviting broader commentary on factors that might enhance clarity. The consortium review served multiple functions simultaneously: it provided substantive feedback from diverse geographic and professional perspectives, it engaged consortium members directly in the analytical process, and it generated preliminary criteria emerging from the collective review observations. This multi-stakeholder review approach reflects the collaborative methodology emphasised in Design-Based Research, where practitioners and researchers engage together in systematic evaluation and refinement (McKenney & Reeves, 2018).

(2) *WP7* internal review: In the second step the *WP7* team re-examined the same reports independently, carefully comparing their observations with the consortium comments received. This dual-layer review strategy created a quality checkpoint ensuring consistency in evaluation standards across different reviewers while also building team expertise and shared understanding of quality benchmarks.
(3) Development of review criteria and template: Following several *WP7* meetings and discussions, the team consolidated insights from previous steps into a list of review criteria and created a review template to ensure consistency in the review process. This step formalised what constituted clarity, adequacy, and completeness in the reports.
(4) Systematic Double-Review: Once the criteria were finalised, the *WP7* team moved on to the systematic review stage. By this point, 22 reports had been submitted. Two *WP7* members reviewed each report to ensure balanced evaluation and consistency across the dataset.

Following the initial assessment, the double reviews were sent back to the authors, who were asked to revise their contributions accordingly. The complexity of Phase 3 intensified further through multi-dimensional second-round review processes. The four *WP7* members who conducted initial reviews, together with a fifth member acting as critical friend, carefully assessed whether all first-round comments had been adequately addressed. Simultaneously, National Coordinators and authors engaged in additional review rounds ensuring coherence, accuracy, and alignment across the entire contribution set.

This multi-layered review process operationalised iterative refinement cycles central to both Design-Based Research and qualitative research methodology more broadly. Rather than applying quality standards only at the end of data collection, the researchers in *WP7* approach embedded quality assurance throughout the process, with each review cycle informing subsequent refinements (McKenney & Reeves, 2018; Udayanga, 2025).

***Phase 4. Comparative Analysis***

The fourth and final phase involves final verification of all country reports, preparation for publication and the full comparative analysis that will synthesise findings across pillars and nations. This includes reviewing the documents for internal consistency, ensuring that all earlier comments and recommendations have been fully addressed and synthesising the findings from the national reports and identifying key patterns, differences, and emerging insights. By the time of publication, a comprehensive comparative report will be available on the *TEAM* website.

This work aligns with the broader aims of *Erasmus+* Teacher Academies, which promote transnational cooperation and professional development across European teacher education; indeed, one aim of the scheme is to survey effective practices to inform policies

in the field (European Commission, 2024). Such surveying or mapping practice is deemed important, as European music teacher education reflects a wide range of institutional contexts and curricular models, alongside differing professional expectations for specialist and generalist teachers (Hennessy et al., 2013; Rodríguez-Quiles y García & Dogani, 2011). In the past, comparative projects such as *meNet* have shown that systematic cross-national mapping can generate a stronger evidence base for dialogue, mutual learning, and the articulation of common reference points in music teacher education (Hennessy et al., 2013; Rodríguez-Quiles y García & Dogani, 2011). As Johansen (2013) points out, "by not engaging in comparative cross-national and cross-cultural projects we ignore valuable information that might be accessed by placing ourselves in the context of others, and by inviting others to place themselves in our context, metaphorically as well as literally" (p. 42). In music education, such cross-national mapping does more than document national differences: it enables the field to identify both shared challenges and context-sensitive forms of good practice (Johansen, 2013; Kertz-Welzel, 2015).

Within this broader landscape, the work of *WP7* gains significance precisely because it attempts to transfer knowledge and understandings from dispersed national reports into a shared European knowledge base that can inform reflection, cooperation, and future developments in line with the wider aims of *Erasmus+* teacher education partnerships (European Commission, 2024; *TEAM*, n. d.). The comparative analysis in the work of *WP7* has been ongoing since the very first data were collected. More specifically, it started at the end of the first year of the project, with the attempt to identify common challenges from 12 preliminary reports in June 2024, continued with 24 (half preliminary and half complete) reports in June 2025, where good practices and challenges were discussed. The country reports were analysed using the web version of ATLAS.ti 25.0.02 (ATLAS.ti Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2025), in order to conduct independent open coding, with two researchers working on each pillar. Codes were created inductively, refined collaboratively during team meetings, and then organised into broader thematic groups. Analysis so far has yielded 109 quotations and 56 codes, supported by memos, frequency counts, visual maps, and word clouds extracted directly from the dataset. Some of the comparative results are presented below.

## Challenges and Good Practices: A Glimpse into the Findings

A rich dataset is emerging from the qualitative analysis of the collected country reports. Herein, we focus on just two of the pillars or thematic areas that the analysis of reports from the *EAS* National Coordinators and key stakeholders across Europe unfolded: significant challenges faced by the field of music teacher education in Europe, and innovative and successful practices being implemented currently across Europe.

The findings reveal three interconnected areas of concern that shape the landscape of music teacher education today. A significant challenge emerging across many European contexts is the increasing reliance on generalist teachers to deliver music education, particularly at the primary level. In many cases, music is not taught by specialist music educators but by general classroom teachers whose preparation in music is limited in both scope and depth. This reality is closely linked to the broader shortage of specialist music teachers and the persistently low status of music within school curricula. Consequently, the quality and consistency of music education vary considerably, as generalist teachers often lack the confidence, pedagogical content knowledge, and musical expertise needed to provide rich, meaningful learning experiences. This situation not only constrains students' musical development but also reinforces the marginalisation of music as a subject, maintaining a cycle in which limited preparation and weak institutional support continue to undermine its educational value.

At the same time, there is widespread recognition that existing music teacher education programmes are not adequately preparing future educators for the complexities of contemporary classrooms. There is an urgent need to modernise curricula so that they encompass a wider range of musical genres, reflect culturally diverse learning environments, and integrate digital competencies that are now central to both music-making and teaching. Moreover, greater emphasis is required on intercultural understanding and on addressing discrimination, ensuring that future teachers are equipped to create inclusive and equitable learning environments. Persistent structural issues also remain, particularly the fragmentation between theoretical, practical, and pedagogical components of training, which are often treated as separate rather than interconnected domains. In addition, teacher preparation for early childhood music education remains underdeveloped, despite clear evidence of the importance of the early years, revealing further gaps in the scope and orientation of current programmes.

These curricular and structural shortcomings are further worsened by deeper systemic issues that challenge the long-term sustainability of the profession. The low status of music as a school subject is reflected in reduced funding, its marginal place within curricula, and limited opportunities for meaningful professional development. At the same time, inconsistencies across teacher education programmes in different contexts create inequalities and a lack of coherence in professional preparation. These issues are intensified by the declining prestige of the teaching profession, especially in music, despite the increasingly high expectations placed on student teachers, who must develop a broad range of skills within limited timeframes. Additionally, the growing focus on research within teacher education, when seen as disconnected from classroom realities, may lead to student disengagement. Together, these pressures have caused a decline in interest in music teaching as a career, leading to a shortage of specialist teachers and, in some cases, the closure or weakening of music teacher programmes. This downward trend affects the

quality of music education available to learners and damages the profession's ability to attract and retain skilled, motivated music teachers.

Across the good practice sections of the reports we analysed, a common theme emerges across different contexts: MTE programmes see it as important not to treat theory and practice as separate entities but to blend them throughout the learning journey. They aim to offer a broad scope of knowledge through a mix of regular classes, tutorials, and practical work. The curriculum covers everything from basic pedagogical methods to the use of modern technologies and didactic approaches specific to music teaching. This multi-dimensional training ensures that future educators are grounded in both fundamental theory and modern classroom practices.

Similarly, a well-balanced approach that combines theoretical knowledge, the development of musical skills, and pedagogical competence is emphasised. The teacher education model reflects practices that focus not only on learning about music or teaching in theory but also on preparing students to perform and teach simultaneously. The integration of theory and practice is further strengthened by the inclusion of creative elements. This model, which combines theoretical study, practical application, and creative exploration, encourages critical thinking, promotes reflective practice, and fosters deeper engagement with musical content and educational innovation. Students are not just trained to teach music but also to reflect on their roles as educators and creators. Creativity is also highlighted as a vital element of good practices identified in various countries, ranging from designing lessons to address students' different skill levels and cultural backgrounds, to enhancing teachers' musical and pedagogical creativity through new courses and professional development programmes. Incorporating improvisation and creative music-making into curricula, alongside interdisciplinary projects such as composing, underscores a commitment to imaginative and exploratory learning processes in music teacher education. Another aspect involves integrating interdisciplinary and inventive projects, where students design and execute work across subjects, art forms, and communities. These experiences foster creativity, collaboration, and innovation.

Perhaps one of the most prominent themes in our dataset is the enhancement of digital skills and awareness of emerging technologies. Throughout the reports, numerous examples of good practice mention using new technologies as teaching tools in teacher education programmes, including courses in music technology such as music production, and employing technology for music composition, collaboration, and performance.

In exploring music teacher education across various contexts, a central and recurring element emerges: the teaching practicum, which acts as a link between theoretical preparation and professional practice. A notable trend is the early and ongoing involvement in classroom teaching. Recognising that effective teaching develops gradually through continual guidance and reflection, in some cases, practicums start as early as the first year of study and continue throughout the programme, culminating in a final-semester school

placement. Several programmes allocate a significant number of ECTS credits to practicum, emphasising its importance within the curriculum and encouraging students to take it seriously. A feature of successful practicum programmes is collaboration with schools and community partners. Students also have the opportunity to engage in community-oriented educational and artistic activities, broadening the practicum beyond the school setting into wider social and cultural environments. Another key element is the presence of strong mentorship structures within various MTE programmes. Mentoring is integrated into the practicum, with student portfolios that include feedback from experienced teachers, fostering dialogue and meaningful interaction. Reflection also plays a vital role, with structured activities such as journals, discussions, and self-evaluation prompting students to think critically about their teaching. Teaching portfolios are increasingly important, containing lesson plans, music activity descriptions, feedback, and self-assessment. These serve both as records of development and as resources to be utilised when entering the profession. Peer collaboration and peer feedback in teaching practicums are recognised as best practices, fostering shared learning, problem-solving, and mutual support. Practicum experiences may also incorporate creative and community-based activities in which students apply their teaching skills in dynamic, artistic settings.

Across MTE programmes, there is also a shift towards greater curriculum flexibility and student autonomy. These elements enable students to shape their own learning journeys and customise their education to reflect their artistic and pedagogical identities. An evident example of this is the availability of elective pathways and specialised tracks, allowing students to focus on areas of interest. Furthermore, various MTE programmes across Europe offer versatile, comprehensive professional training that integrates music teaching didactics with performance-based development, equipping future teachers to work with choirs, soloists, and instrumental ensembles. This highlights the importance of musical expertise alongside pedagogical training, fostering a strong connection between performing and teaching.

Together, these practices reflect a move toward more flexible, learner-centred approaches in which autonomy, creativity, and adaptability are embedded within music teacher education.

## Coda

The mapping of music teacher education across 26 European countries is grounded in a rigorous multiphase research methodology specifically designed for this endeavour. A key strength of this approach is its balanced combination of comparative structure and contextual sensitivity. Rather than imposing a rigid model on diverse educational systems, it integrates structured data collection with iterative refinement processes that adapt to

national differences. However, there were some limitations in the methodological process. In some cases, the mapping template was completed solely by the National Coordinator who may not have had access to the entire spectrum of MTE programmes and practices in their country/region. In all cases, in order to secure a multi-lens perspective, the primary contact person was invited to collaborate with other key stakeholders in completing the template or reviewing the final version of the report, yet this was not always feasible. Nevertheless, the team-based analytical design using collaborative template development and paired reviews further strengthened validity by incorporating multiple perspectives and reducing individual researcher bias.

The methodological framework that was created and used by the team in *WP7* could be of particular importance for similar future projects. The extended timeline, multiple review cycles, and responsive expansion of participation reflect a sophisticated understanding of the complexity of educational systems. Future research of a similar nature should recognise that generating meaningful insights requires sustained engagement, iterative refinement, and collaborative knowledge building as the way forward.

This systematic mapping documents existing practices and illuminates the educational landscapes that shape music teacher education across Europe. By identifying challenges, highlighting successful examples, and providing evidence-based insights, the research offers valuable resources for music educators, teacher educators, researchers, and policymakers. It establishes a shared foundation for comparative learning and informed decision-making. The project's significance extends beyond its immediate outputs. The open publication of reports on music teacher education in 26 European countries/regions and the comparative report on the *TEAM* project and *EAS* websites ensures broad accessibility, fostering greater connection and collaboration among European music education stakeholders.

Ultimately, music teacher education plays a crucial role in sustaining cultural and educational systems and shaping the future of music learning. This mapping project provides the groundwork for meaningful and lasting improvement. It is now up to the broader music education community to translate these insights into concrete actions that strengthen teacher preparation, enhance professional support and status, and ensure that music education continues to thrive.

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# Mapping the Present and Shaping the Future

## Insights on School Music Education in Europe

**Abstract**

This chapter offers a cross-national mapping of school music education across 31 European countries within the *TEAM* project. Methodologically, it combines a mapping approach with qualitative comparative analysis, drawing on a collaboratively designed questionnaire completed by national experts, and generates both factual data and interpretative insights. The analysis addresses three interrelated areas: music in schools, curriculum and assessment, and future developments. The findings reveal a shared commitment to music education alongside marked structural diversity. While music is broadly included in compulsory education, its status, curriculum allocation, and continuity vary across educational stages. Variation is also evident in curriculum design, assessment practices, and teacher roles, and is shaped by differences in policy frameworks, cultural traditions, and resource contexts. At the same time, the data point to converging trends, including curriculum reform and the expanding role of digital technologies, alongside persistent inequalities in access and provision. By mapping these dynamics, this chapter provides an empirically grounded overview of music education in Europe and offers a basis for critical reflection on future trajectories.

**Keywords:** School music education, Comparative mapping, Music lesson provision, Curriculum and assessment, Future developments

## Introduction

Music education in schools across Europe has a long-established tradition. While it reflects a diversity of cultures and approaches, significant areas of commonality also exist. Yet, apart from the *SOCRATES-COMENIUS* funded *music education Network* (*meNet*) project from 2006–2009,[1] and edited publications by Hargreaves & North (2001), and Cox & Stevens (2010, 2016), comprehensive cross-national mapping studies remain surprisingly scarce. Fostering an understanding of how music education operates in schools is crucial for sustaining it into the future. Developing comparative perspectives enables us to identify which challenges are unique to a particular national context and which are shared more broadly across Europe. As Schippers (2010) reminds us, every music education system emerges from specific cultural and historical conditions; looking only inward risks overlooking how structural or political choices shape everyday musical experiences in schools. Comparative research therefore offers a way to understand not only what happens within individual systems, but also how these systems relate to one another.

The wider field of comparative education requires researchers to step outside national boundaries. Bray et al. (2014) argue that cross-country analysis exposes assumptions that often go unnoticed within a single system. When viewed alongside other contexts, familiar practices can look quite different, revealing alternative possibilities. In music education, this perspective enables a clearer understanding of how different countries balance compulsory curriculum requirements with local autonomy, how they support teachers, and how cultural identity shapes what is taught and valued.

Against this background, there is a need for research that consolidates the fragmented knowledge that currently exists. The present study aims to address this gap by mapping music education across 31 European countries through a collaboratively designed questionnaire completed by national experts. The intention is not to rank systems but to provide descriptive insights, highlighting both shared trends and significant differences. Such research not only fills a gap in the existing literature but also lays the groundwork for establishing a critical discourse on school music education across Europe and for anticipating its future directions.

[1] More information about *meNet* can be found in the publication of Rodríguez Quiles y García, J. A., & Dogani, K. (2011) https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235935364_Music_in_schools_across_Europe_analysis_interpretation_and_guidelines_for_music_education_in_the_framework_of_the_European_Union

## Research Design

This study adopts a comparative mapping approach to examine the current state of music education in schools across Europe. The research followed a coordinated and collaborative design within the *TEAM* consortium,[2] drawing on shared instruments, common procedures, and ongoing dialogue. This approach ensured methodological consistency across countries while incorporating diverse professional perspectives and contextual knowledge.

A central task of *Work Package 8* (*WP8*), *Mapping Music Education*, was the development of a questionnaire that was distributed across all participating countries. Building on the thematic framework of the earlier *meNet* project (García & Dogani, 2011), the instrument was expanded to address contemporary issues such as inclusion, assessment, cultural diversity, and emerging challenges. The initial draft was circulated among 13 *TEAM* partners from 11 countries. Feedback from the partners informed subsequent revisions that clarified terminology, refined content, and ensured the questionnaire could capture both common trends and country-specific nuances.

National experts were selected as respondents. The questionnaire was distributed to 31 European contexts, with Spain represented by Catalonia and the United Kingdom by Wales and Scotland due to their autonomous education systems. Responses were collected between December 2024 and March 2025. Participants were encouraged to consult with colleagues in order to ensure accuracy, completeness, and triangulation. Consequently, some responses were completed by individual experts in consultation, while others were prepared collaboratively by small teams of music educators or researchers.

The questionnaire generated both factual data and interpretative insights, informed by policy documents, research literature, curriculum frameworks, and professional experience. National experts were asked to provide links to primary sources, clarify terminology, and indicate areas of local variation. Given the diversity identified in earlier *meNet* findings, both within and between countries, the questionnaire was designed to accommodate variation while maintaining a structure suitable for comparative analysis. All responses were reviewed and cross-checked by *WP8* team members. Where necessary, follow-up communication was undertaken to resolve ambiguities, supply missing information, or verify interpretations. The validated data were then organised into thematic categories, enabling both an overarching perspective and the inclusion of illustrative national examples.

Methodologically, the project combines a mapping approach with qualitative comparative analysis. In this context, mapping provides a contemporary overview of how music education is structured across Europe, highlighting similarities and differences

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[2] *TEAM* is funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them. https://teacher-academy-music.eu/

between systems, and identifying emerging issues. The questionnaire addressed key areas, including political and policy frameworks, school structures, provision of music in compulsory education, curriculum design and assessment, equality and inclusion, national challenges, and examples of innovative practice.

Several limitations within the study should also be noted: responses varied in depth and level of detail; respondents' expertise differed; linguistic and terminological issues arose; and some topics were interpretative in nature. While these factors shape the scope of analysis, they are inherent in large-scale comparative research across multiple education systems. Despite these constraints, the study provides a comprehensive and timely account of music education in Europe. The findings presented in this chapter focus on three core areas: music in schools, curriculum and assessment, and current trends. As music education is closely linked to broader political, social, and cultural values, mapping these structures offers insight into how different countries position music within their educational priorities. In line with the aims of the *TEAM* project (*WP8*), this mapping is grounded in country-specific data and analyses, providing the empirical foundation for the sections that follow.

## Music in Schools

Music in schools across Europe reflects a complex interplay of national curriculum structures, cultural priorities, and local practices. To understand how students encounter music throughout their schooling, this section examines provision across educational stages, extra-curricular opportunities, teaching personnel, and the financial, material, and cultural factors shaping music education.

### *Music Provision Across School Levels*

Table 1 provides an overview of the ages at which music is included in education across 29 European contexts. It illustrates the general continuity of music education from early childhood to the end of upper secondary education, without detailing lesson numbers, optional pathways, or other national variations (see Appendix 1 for a more detailed presentation of music provision). In some cases, a single national overview is not possible because education systems are organised regionally or federally. Therefore, Spain is represented by Catalonia, Belgium by Flanders, and Germany by the federal state of Berlin. Wales and Scotland are not presented separately, as music provision in both contexts varies considerably between schools and is largely shaped by local curriculum decisions and school priorities.

| Early childhood | Primary school | Lower secondary school | Upper secondary school |
|---|---|---|---|
| COMPULSORY | COMPULSORY | COMPULSORY | COMPULSORY |
| OPTIONAL | OPTIONAL | OPTIONAL | OPTIONAL |
| NO MUSIC | NO MUSIC | NO MUSIC | NO MUSIC |

| COUNTRIES | | AGE RANGE | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| AUSTRIA | AT | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| BERLIN (GERMANY) | DE | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA | BA | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| BULGARIA | BG | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CATALONIA (SPAIN) | ES | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CROATIA | HR | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CYPRUS | CY | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CZECH REPUBLIC | CZ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ESTONIA | EE | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| FINLAND | FI | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| FLANDERS (BELGIUM) | BE | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| GREECE | GR | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| HUNGARY | HU | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| IRELAND | IE | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ITALY | IT | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| LATVIA | LV | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| LITHUANIA | LT | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| LUXEMBURG | LU | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| MONTENEGRO | ME | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| NETHERLANDS | NL | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| NORWAY | NO | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| POLAND | PL | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| PORTUGAL | PT | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| SERBIA | RS | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| SLOVAKIA | SK | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| SLOVENIA | SI | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| SWEDEN | SE | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| SWITZERLAND | CH | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| TÜRKIYE | TR | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

**Table 1**

While music often begins early in children's schooling, its structure, intensity, and continuity differ considerably from one educational level[3] to another. Based on the data collected in this study, music in early childhood education is available in most countries but is typically optional, reflecting both the voluntary nature of participation and a pedagogical emphasis on holistic development rather than subject-based instruction.

At primary level, provision becomes more consistent. Despite structural differences in the length and age range of primary education across European systems (see *Eurydice* classifications and comparative tables in this volume), music appears in the curriculum of every participating country and is usually compulsory. This ensures that all children encounter formal music learning during their foundational years. Typically, countries allocate one to two lessons per week, although the intensity may vary from year to year within the same system. Some countries combine music with other arts subjects or thematic learning modules, while others employ specialist teachers to deliver a distinct subject.

Provision at the lower secondary level remains widespread but exhibits greater variation across national educational systems. In most countries music continues to be taught, although the number of compulsory years varies: some retain it throughout the entire stage, whereas others make it optional after one or two years. These differences reflect national curriculum policies and the balance between core subjects and elective possibilities. Weekly allocations typically remain at one lesson per week, sometimes supplemented by optional ensembles, school choirs, or elective arts modules.

Upper secondary education shows the widest diversity. In some countries, music is compulsory for only one or two years (e.g. Slovenia, Slovakia), while others maintain compulsory provision throughout upper secondary schooling (e.g. Estonia, Serbia). A hybrid model exists in countries like Lithuania, Hungary, and Austria, where compulsory learning in the earlier years is followed by elective options in the final grades. A few systems (most notably Italy and Greece) exclude music education entirely from the general upper secondary curriculum, although schools may still offer extra-curricular ensembles, choirs, or other arts-related activities.

In summary, across all music educational stages, weekly lesson allocations vary considerably, as do models of curriculum delivery. Many countries grant schools substantial autonomy, resulting in multiple approaches within the same national system. Depending on the cultural environment, the availability of specialist teachers, school traditions, and programme structures, music may be provided as a compulsory subject, an optional subject, or through integrated curricula linking it with visual arts, drama, heritage studies, or broader interdisciplinary learning. Taken together, these patterns reveal a continent-wide

[3] The structure of European education systems https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/data-and-visuals/european-education-structures

commitment to music education, albeit implemented through diverse structures that reflect local histories, educational philosophies, and practical realities.

### *The Musical Life Beyond the Classroom*

Having outlined the place of music education within formal national curricula, we now consider extra-curricular musical activities in relation to formal provision. While formal provision ensures access for all children, extra-curricular activities extend and enrich musical experiences beyond the classroom. Extra-curricular activities refer to music learning opportunities offered outside regular lessons: before or after school, during lunch breaks, or as part of weekend programmes. These activities may take place within schools (e. g., ensembles and choirs open to all students) or outside school (e. g., private or community provision). While extra-curricular activities can provide a culturally meaningful dimension to students' musical lives, they function as an addition to, rather than a substitute for, general music education.

Across Europe, the most common forms of extra-curricular music activities include choirs, instrumental ensembles, school bands, and musical theatre productions. Choirs are particularly widespread and culturally embedded in many traditions. In countries such as Estonia, Latvia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, extra-curricular choirs play an essential role in preparing students for national festivals and major cultural events (e. g. the Song Celebrations). In Hungary, choirs linked to Music and Art Schools serve children and young people up to age 23. Instrumental ensembles also have a strong presence, though their availability depends on resources. The Netherlands hosts numerous school orchestras and big bands, while Croatia's tamburitza groups and Portugal's percussion ensembles reflect local traditions. In Sweden and Belgium, instrumental activities often rely on collaboration between schools and external music institutions.

Musical theatre and interdisciplinary projects are especially prominent in Italy, Spain (Catalonia), and Türkiye, where musicals may be integrated into broader school arts programmes. However, the sustainability of such activities often depends heavily on teacher initiative and school leadership.

Systemic factors strongly shape the extent of extra-curricular musical provision. Countries with well-funded arts education frameworks – such as Slovakia's elementary art schools or Portugal's municipal projects – offer rich opportunities, whereas others face financial constraints or the lack of available staff. Socio-economic disparities also affect access, as seen in Ireland and Türkiye. Cultural heritage plays a major role: in the Baltic states, for instance, long-standing choral traditions ensure strong community support. Although extra-curricular musical activities thrive where policies, resources, and traditions align, many schools still depend on the dedication of individual teachers to maintain meaningful programmes.

### *Who Teaches Music in Schools?*

The complexity of music education in Europe cannot be fully understood without significant attention paid to the question of who teaches music throughout the various stages of schooling. The greatest diversity occurs in primary education, where music may be taught by generalist classroom teachers, specialist music teachers, or external professionals. In many countries (e.g. Austria or Poland in grades 1–3) generalist teachers, who teach most subjects, also take responsibility for music. In others, such as Germany, Finland, or Portugal, the arrangement depends on school size, staffing, and the availability of specialists, meaning that music may be taught either by a generalist or a specialist. Only a few countries, such as Greece or Latvia, employ specialist music teachers at primary level. From lower secondary onwards, provision becomes more uniform: all countries require music to be taught by subject specialists with formal qualifications in music and teacher education.

### *Financial, Material, and Cultural Dimensions of Music Education*

Music education across Europe is shaped not only by curricular structures and teaching personnel but also by the availability of funding, resources, and cultural partnerships. These dimensions vary widely, producing significant differences in the accessibility, quality, and richness of students' musical experiences. This section highlights the key factors underpinning these disparities: funding models, teaching materials and instruments, and cultural initiatives that extend learning beyond the classroom.

Funding constitutes one of the most decisive considerations. While most European countries provide some level of public financing for music education, the amount, stability, and mechanisms of support differ considerably. In countries such as Austria, Belgium, Hungary and Ireland, music education is funded through general state-funded education budgets, ensuring systematic provision of teaching materials, instruments, and extra-curricular opportunities. Slovenia similarly covers the costs of regular music lessons through state budgets, although parents often contribute to optional activities.

Decentralised systems create more variation. For example, Sweden and Bosnia and Herzegovina exemplify how regional governance leads to unequal provision, with wealthier municipalities offering more robust resources than rural or economically challenged regions. In the Netherlands and Finland, head teachers enjoy autonomy in spending their allocated budgets, resulting in locally driven priorities that can either enhance or limit access to music education. In other systems, such as Italy or Portugal, a dual system operates in which specialised music schools receive substantial public funding, while general schools have comparatively fewer resources.

Material resources also differ considerably between countries. Textbooks remain common in countries (e.g. Slovakia, Lithuania, Türkiye), where ministries provide standardised texts aligned with national curricula. In contrast, Belgium, Ireland, and Finland rely less on textbooks and more on teacher-designed materials, audio-visual media, and

improvisational or interactive approaches. The availability of instruments also varies from country to country. Slovenia, Germany, and Sweden report well-equipped classrooms, while Montenegro and some regions of Latvia or Serbia struggle to secure even basic instruments.

Digital technologies are increasingly integrated in music education across all 31 countries, although their use remains uneven across countries and school contexts. While many education systems have introduced national platforms or school-based digital tools, access and implementation still vary, often reflecting broader inequalities in resourcing and infrastructure. In several countries (e. g. Lithuania, Spain, Portugal), digital practices continue to develop gradually, with schools adopting tools at different rates depending on local priorities, teacher expertise, and available funding.

Cultural projects and partnerships constitute a third crucial dimension, enriching music learning through concerts, workshops, artist residencies, and collaborations with professional institutions. For example Norway's *Cultural Schoolbag*[4] ensures nationwide access to high-quality cultural experiences, while Scotland's combined government and Creative Scotland[5] funding provides free instrumental tuition and links schools with professional musicians. Estonia, Croatia, Spain (Catalonia), and Luxembourg also maintain strong networks with orchestras, conservatories, and cultural centres, enabling regular school visits and artist-led activities. In Ireland, where access to quality music education has historically been limited, the *Music Generation* initiative – originally funded by the Irish rock band U2 and now supported by the government – has significantly expanded opportunities for performance music education both within and beyond school music. In contrast, Greece, and Türkiye show more uneven provision, often contingent on school leadership, parental involvement, or local cultural infrastructure.

Overall, the financial, material, and cultural conditions of music education across Europe demonstrate both shared aspirations and significant inequalities. Well-funded systems with national initiatives provide equitable access, while decentralised or locally dependent models risk uneven opportunities. Ensuring sustainable, high-quality music education will require ongoing investment, structural support, and cultural partnerships that reach all learners.

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4 https://www.denkulturelleskolesekken.no/english-information/this-is-the-cultural-schoolbag/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

5 https://www.creativescotland.com/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

## The Music Curriculum and Assessment

Curriculum is both a complex and contested term, and in its broadest sense encompasses all activities that occur within schools (Connelly, 2013; Priestley & Philippou, 2018). In this section, however, the term is used in a narrower sense, referring specifically to official curriculum documents. Over the past three decades, curriculum reform has shifted from highly prescriptive, content-oriented curricula toward outcomes-based frameworks (EACEA/Eurydice, 2012; NCCA, 2019). These frameworks articulate what learners should be able to do, and emphasise the development of key competences and relevant transferable skills (e.g. critical and creative thinking, communication skills, intercultural skills etc). The aim is to ensure that education has relevance for young people in contemporary society. Correspondingly, this signals a broader pedagogical transition from teaching content to fostering effective learning strategies. Music education reflects these wider reforms, with a clear emphasis on the fostering of musical skills, knowledge and attitudes through active music engagement.

While all countries operate nationally- or federally-prescribed curriculum frameworks within state schools, it becomes clear that diversity remains a defining feature of the European music education landscape.[6] This section explores the common trends and differences across music curricula, including their structure and content, implementation, and assessment.

### *Music Learning – Curriculum Structure, Content and Competencies*

A common feature across all curricula is a clear rationale for the place of the arts, including music, within formal education. Typically, this rationale has two complementary dimensions. First, music is valued for its contribution to students' holistic development, including intellectual, emotional, artistic, and personal growth. In line with competency-based approaches, it is also recognised as fostering key competences such as creativity, communication, literacy (including digital literacy), cultural understanding, and critical reflection. Second, and more specifically, music learning develops the specific music skills, understanding and dispositions necessary for students to participate artistically in music-making and to respond as musically-informed listeners.

An important factor influencing the structure, content, and level of prescriptive detail in music curricula is whether music is conceived as a stand-alone subject or incorporated into a wider arts education programme. A strongly integrated arts education curriculum is evident in only a few countries. In the Netherlands, for example, the generic arts education

[6] For a more detailed overview of the curriculum structures etc., please see individual country reports on the *TEAM* website https://teacher-academy-music.eu/music-education-and-music-teacher-education-in-europe.teacher-academy-music.eu/ as well as Girdzijauskienė et al. (2026)

curriculum does not outline distinct learning outcomes for music. As a result, music may or may not be included. Similarly, in Belgium (secondary schools), Wales and Czech Republic (revised curriculum), learning outcomes outline the development of generic aesthetic and artistic skills and knowledge that are transferable across all arts subjects. Nonetheless, music exists as a distinct subject in these countries. While a number of other countries also subsume music education into broader arts education programmes (e.g. Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg and Scotland), discipline-specific learning outcomes and/or content are outlined within the curricula. At the same time, cross-curricular teaching is encouraged. In general, these outcomes-based curricula are not overly prescriptive regarding music content and repertoire.

On the other end of the spectrum, curriculum documents provide more music-specific content (e.g. Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Montenegro). There is greater detail regarding the content to be taught, including the music concepts and theoretical knowledge that students are expected to know as they progress through the education system. In some cases, repertoire is also prescribed. In other countries (e.g. Austria, Germany, Finland, Norway, and Spain), curricula mention the inclusion of theoretical knowledge and literacy but do not provide specific detail. Often, the level of prescriptiveness reflects distinct national traditions. For example, choral singing and national folk music is evident in Estonia and Latvia, and learning national dances is included in Poland. The singing of national folksongs is also an important aspect of Hungarian music education.

Although there are differences in structure and degrees of prescriptiveness, several common trends occur across all curricula, particularly in relation to musical processes. In general, there is a strong emphasis on active participation and learning music procedurally through engaging in active music-making. Typically, activities encompass singing, performing on musical instruments, movement, composing, arranging and improvising.

Listening and responding, and learning to become critical listeners is a feature of all curricula. Through active listening, students learn to analyse music, deepen their musical understanding and become familiar with a broad range of genres and styles. Some countries prescribe specific repertoire, whereas most do not. However, familiarity with the national folkmusic and composers of the country is generally encouraged. Typically, music history is implicitly embedded within curricula, most often through listening and the exploration of music within its cultural and historical context. However, in some countries, it is articulated as a discrete requirement, for example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Estonia, Hungary and Slovenia.

In line with increasing globalisation, all curricula emphasise the development of cultural competences. Listening to and performing folk music from their own region or art music from one's own country is understood to help students foster cultural literacy and an appreciation of their own heritage. Engagement with music from many different traditions,

styles and genres is understood to cultivate students' openness and understanding of how people all over the world and of all ages attribute meaning to music, thereby supporting the development of global citizenship.

### *Curriculum Implementation*

One implication of the shift towards outcomes-based curriculum frameworks is the increasing importance of teacher capacity and autonomy (Gleeson et al. 2020). Resonating with the literature, most respondents noted that while teachers are required to adhere to core competencies and learning outcomes of official curricula, they have greater agency regarding the implementation of the music curriculum within their own context, including the selection of repertoire and teaching approaches. However, some exceptions are reported. In Hungary, teacher autonomy is described as minimal due to the prescriptiveness of the curriculum and textbooks. In Cyprus, while in principle, the secondary school curriculum allows for flexibility, guidelines published by the education ministry prescribe sequenced thematic units and repertoire, thereby limiting teacher discretion. Teacher autonomy is also curtailed by high stakes examinations. For example, in Ireland, the state examinations at the end of secondary education significantly shapes both the music content and how it is taught.

Student voice is gradually gaining prominence in curriculum implementation, particularly through formal participatory structures like advisory boards and school councils in Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Lithuania. In Finland and Lithuania, students co-create learning paths, while extra-curricular activities, such as choirs and ensembles, serve as platforms for student decision-making in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, and Italy. Despite these developments, the extent to which student voice is genuinely integrated often depends on individual schools and teacher practices, highlighting the need for teacher training in fostering student agency.

### *Assessment Practices in Music*

Assessment in European music education reflects the complex interplay between curriculum frameworks, pedagogical priorities, and culturally based values. Music, as a multidimensional discipline, encompasses performance, aesthetic experience, listening, creating, and theoretical understanding, making assessment inherently challenging. In line with the curriculum content and the focus on learning through active music-making, assessment in most countries takes place across multiple domains, including performing, listening, and creative tasks, alongside propositional knowledge such as theory and music history. For example, Bulgaria evaluates performing, composing, listening skills, and musical knowledge, while Finland adopts a more holistic approach, assessing cooperation, creative expression, cultural awareness, and even well-being and safety in music. Similarly, Croatia and Cyprus include creative tasks such as composing and improvisation, while Poland integrates rhythm and movement, highlighting the breadth of assessed competencies.

Creative activities in the form of composing, arranging, and improvising, are widely assessed, notably in the Czech Republic, Italy, Scotland, Spain, and Sweden. Finland emphasises interdisciplinary projects and the integration of technology in composition tasks. However, disparities exist: Slovenia assesses composition only at upper secondary level, and Serbia prioritises listening and theoretical knowledge over performance and creativity. Across all countries, listening assessment focuses on identifying musical elements, analysing structure, and recognising genres, while performance assessment involves solo and ensemble contexts, often incorporating folk traditions.

Assessment types reveal a strong shift toward formative practices, particularly in primary and lower secondary education. Formative assessment, defined as evidence-based instructional adjustment (Black & Wiliam, 2009) from which teachers make "inferences" to support student learning and progression (Booth & Fautley, 2026), is becoming increasingly embedded in European classrooms. In Italy, this is considered as fostering engagement, in Norway as promoting competence, and in Türkiye as creating supportive environments for exploration. Common formative strategies include continuous observation (e. g., Bulgaria, Greece, Ireland), project work and portfolios (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Scotland), and systematic feedback. Most curricula emphasise the importance of 'quality' feedback which is comprehensive and constructive. Descriptive individualised feedback (both oral and written) is most common. In countries where numerical grading exists (e. g., Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Montenegro, Poland, Scotland, Serbia and Slovakia), descriptive feedback is used in conjunction with grades. Peer- and self-assessment are integral in countries such as Finland, Ireland, and Norway, promoting self-awareness and learner autonomy.

Summative assessment remains quite prevalent, particularly at the end of secondary education, where it often forms part of the matriculation process. Hungary and Switzerland employ regular testing, while state examinations in Croatia, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales assess theoretical knowledge, aural skills, composition, and performance. Hungary's oral exams include performing folksongs and sight-singing, while written examinations address theory and analysis. In The Netherlands, listening and theory are externally examined, but performance and composition are internally assessed. Slovenia's state exams are in written form only and assess theoretical knowledge and analysis.[7]

In summary, assessment increasingly transcends technical proficiency, valuing creativity, cultural understanding, participation, and reflective learning. The convergence of formative and summative approaches underscores a European trend toward holistic, learner-centred assessment, integrating continuous feedback with certification of achievement.

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[7] These exams take place within the context of the *National Assessment of Knowledge* which occur in the final year of primary education. Music may be chosen as one of the options on a rotational basis. It is not included every year.

Having analysed the current state of music in schools and explored some issues around music curricula and assessment, the next section will now bring together some of the current trends in music education in European schools as well as focusing on the potential future for music education.

## Future Developments for School Music Education

The questionnaires provide vivid insight into current trends and future development: school music education in Europe is in motion. Rather than a linear story of progress, the data reveal a landscape shaped by different rhythms – some steady, some unexpected, some boldly experimental. To navigate this diversity, this section highlights three themes as illustrative lenses through which current trends and future developments become particularly visible: the reimagining of the music curriculum, the expanding role of digital technologies in musical learning and the evolving music teaching profession. These themes do not claim to represent the entirety of future developments, but they illuminate distinct pathways through which countries are reimagining the place of music in schools. Other dimensions such as sustainability, inclusion, or community engagement play an equally meaningful role in the broader European picture and are explored in depth in separate *TEAM* publications.[8]

### *Reimagining the Music Curriculum*

Across Europe, curriculum reform is portrayed not simply as a technical update but as an ongoing negotiation about what music should mean in contemporary schooling. The national reports reveal a landscape where systems are rethinking aims, content and cultural responsibilities, each in ways that respond to local histories and emerging societal needs. While the pace and scope of reform differ, the underlying impulse is shared: to ensure that music remains relevant, rigorous and connected to students' lives. Numerous countries are actively engaged in, or are planning, comprehensive curriculum reforms. A common thread in these reforms is an emphasis on fostering creativity, critical thinking, and the practical application of musical knowledge as can be seen in the Czech Republic:

> *Future developments in music education in the Czech Republic are guided by the Strategy 2030+, which aims to modernise the education system. This strategy focuses on revising the music curriculum to emphasize creativity, critical thinking, and practical application of knowledge.* […] [It] *aim*[s] *to create a more dynamic, inclusive,*

[8] These issues are explored in greater detail on https://teacher-academy-music.eu/music-education-and-music-teacher-education-in-europe; Girdzijauskienė et al. (2026), Malmberg & Stolle (2026)

> *and engaging music education system, preparing students for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century, modern world.* (E_CZ)[9]

Building on similar ambitions, several countries emphasise the need for more interconnected and future-oriented curricular designs. Spain's LOMLOE[10] reform anticipates a more explicitly interdisciplinary approach, embedding music within broader cultural and historical learning and further connecting it to creativity and critical thinking (E_ES). Finland is moving towards integrating sustainability as a guiding principle in future curricula, aligning musical learning with wider societal priorities, alongside creative practices such as composition (E_FI). In Sweden, recent reforms strengthen factual knowledge while reinforcing digital competence and creative engagement, illustrating how curriculum renewal can bridge traditional content with contemporary demands (E_SE). Other countries such as Italy, link curriculum change to long-term cultural goals, seeking to cultivate early musical encounters in primary education while deepening students' engagement with national heritage in later years (E_IT). Bosnia and Herzegovina also links curriculum change to wider structural aims, with ongoing revisions aligned to common national core guidelines which are expected to expand across regions (E_BA). Bulgaria, meanwhile, anticipates a curriculum that brings together STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics)-based innovation and strengthened folk traditions, merging technological and cultural priorities (E_BG).

Across these examples, curriculum reform is not only about updating content, but also about redefining music's purpose in schools. This reinterpretation of aims and responsibilities also prepares the ground for a second major development visible across the national reports: the growing influence of digital technologies on how students learn, create, and experience music.

### *The Expanding Role of Digital Technologies in Musical Learning*

As seen in the previous section, curriculum reform and digitalisation are intimately connected. Many countries describe the digital turn as one of the most influential forces shaping the future of music education, not only in terms of tools and resources but also in how students engage with musical creativity and expression. Across the national reports, digitalisation appears as a shared aspiration, yet its interpretation and implementation diverge widely across contexts.

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9 Throughout this chapter, expert contributions are identified by the code E_XX, where XX denotes the two-letter country code provided in Footnote 1 (e.g., E_SE for Sweden and E_LT for Lithuania).

10 LOMLOE refers to Ley Orgánica de Modificación de la LOE (Organic Law Amending the LOE). LOE stands for Ley Orgánica de Educación (Organic Law of Education), Spain's core education law from 2006, which LOMLOE revised in 2020.

A large group of countries including Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Spain, and Sweden explicitly identify digitalisation as a priority for the coming years. Some anticipate incremental expansion, others envision more ambitious shifts. Spain reports, that

> [o]*ne of the prominent trends in Spanish music education is the integration of digital technologies. Schools are increasingly incorporating music production software, digital instruments, and online learning platforms into the curriculum. This shift helps students engage with modern music-making tools, allowing them to compose, produce, and perform music using technology. The incorporation of digital tools also supports the teaching of music theory and composition in innovative ways.* (E_ES)

Bulgaria, for instance, reports that the Ministry of Education and Science is working to broaden access to digital resources, enabling students to experiment with composition software, virtual instruments, and online learning platforms. Similarly, Lithuania highlights the growing use of online platforms, interactive applications, and multimedia tools:

> *Trends in music education also include a growing emphasis on inclusivity and digital tools. The integration of digital learning resources and technology in music classrooms has been a response to changing educational needs. This includes video lessons and other online resources aimed at making music education more accessible.* (E_LT)

Sweden, too, emphasises digital production tools and online learning environments, describing them as key drivers for modernising music education and improving accessibility:

> *The use of new technologies in music education, such as digital tools for music production and online learning platforms, is becoming more prevalent. This trend is helping to modernize music education and make it more accessible.* (E_SE)

Alongside these systemic developments, several countries are beginning to explore more experimental forms of technological innovation. Greece is a notable example, where plans to integrate artificial intelligence into both music education and teacher training are expected to fundamentally reshape teaching and learning. According to the national expert, AI is anticipated to equip teachers and students with sophisticated tools that can support musical development, increase teaching efficiency, and foster creative exploration (E_GR). In Switzerland, AI is discussed within a broader reorganisation of schooling, pointing to a future in which machine-assisted learning could play a structural role in education more generally (E_CH).

***The Evolving Situation of the Music Teaching Profession***

Across many of the national reports, the future of school music education is closely tied to the question of who will teach it. While countries outline ambitious visions for curriculum renewal and digital transformation, several emphasise that such developments can only be realised if music teachers themselves remain supported, adequately trained, and sufficiently available. The questionnaires reveal a field navigating both structural shortages and shifting professional expectations.

A number of countries highlight pressing concerns regarding teacher supply, particularly in rural or economically disadvantaged regions. Montenegro, for example, reports that

> [o]*ne of the key issues in music education in Montenegro is the lack of qualified music teachers, especially in* [the] *north of the country and in rural areas. Due to this shortage, music lessons are taught by teachers who do not have formal qualifications in music education, which affects the quality of teaching and students' ability to develop proper musical skills and knowledge.* (E_ME)

Lithuania likewise reports growing difficulties in filling posts outside major cities, noting that the increasing demand for music teachers in rural areas and schools with fewer resources is one of the ongoing key challenges (E_LT). A similar challenge appears in Germany, where rural regions also face a persistent shortage of qualified teachers. In response, several federal states have introduced targeted measures to attract young educators to underserved areas. One such measure is the *Brandenburg-Stipendium für Landlehrerinnen und Landlehrer* (Brandenburg Scholarship for Rural Teachers) (MBJS, n. d.),[11] which provides financial support during teacher education in exchange for a commitment to work for several years in a *Bedarfsregion* (staff-shortage region) after graduation (E_DE). In addition, Germany has introduced nationwide policy measures to address general teacher shortages. In June 2024, the *Kultusministerkonferenz* (The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education, Science and Cultural Affairs) adopted the resolution *Gestaltung von zusätzlichen Wegen ins Lehramt* (Creating Additional Pathways into Teaching), which outlines new qualification routes such as lateral-entry master's programmes and dual study models that combine university coursework with early and continuous school-based experience (Kultusministerkonferenz, 2024).[12]

The situations in Montenegro, Lithuania and Germany resonate with developments in other countries. In Austria, for instance, the current system is comparatively well resourced, with a strong music-school network and stable institutional structures, yet the expert warns of

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[11] More details see https://mbjs.brandenburg.de/bildung/lehrerin-lehrer-in-brandenburg/lehrkraefte-grundstaendige-ausbildung/lehramtsstudium/brandenburg-stipendium-landlehrerinnen-und-landlehrer.html

[12] For a detailed analysis of music education in Germany see: Stolle et al. (2026).

> […] *the shortage of music teachers. Lateral entry programs and an increase in the number of students are current strategies. However, in a few years a wave of retirements will again drive many music teachers out of schools, and the problem will continue to be very serious. The shortage is leading to a worsening image of music teaching and also to some school management replacing music teaching with other subjects – as long as their timetable allows them to do so.* (E_AT)

Latvia also reports that, despite official requirements mandating specialist teachers, some schools now appoint instrumentalists without full teaching certification to cover empty positions (E_LV). In Wales, too, the shortage of qualified music teachers has become a structural issue, sometimes resulting in non-specialists delivering lessons (E_WAL).

Across these varied contexts, a common thread emerges: the future of school music depends on the people who teach it, and on the systems that enable their work. Without a stable and well-supported teaching profession, even the most ambitious curricular visions risk remaining unrealised.

## Conclusion

The mapping presented in this chapter reveals a European landscape of school music education that is diverse and continuously evolving. The picture that emerges resembles a mosaic, shaped by distinct traditions, governance structures, and educational priorities. In some countries, music is firmly rooted in curriculum frameworks, while in others, it is carried by passionate teachers. Moreover, in some contexts, music in schools extends beyond the school boundaries, drawing on community partnerships or cultural heritage practices. Despite this patchwork, what binds these diverse settings together is a shared conviction that music has value; it matters in the lives of young people.

However, the findings highlight different areas where this conviction meets uneven realities. Opportunities vary as students progress through the education system. Many enjoy adequate timetable allocation, ensemble participation, creative projects, digital studios, and vibrant musical partnerships, while others experience only fragmentary or limited provision due to competition within crowded timetables. Curriculum frameworks range from outcome-based flexibility to highly prescriptive approaches, which potentially curtail teacher and student agency. Assessment systems attempt to balance holistic, formative intentions with the demands of high-stakes certification. Structural inequalities such as funding gaps, regional disparities, teacher shortages, and resource limitations continue to shape access and opportunity.

These differences remind us that music education is not only pedagogical but deeply political, reflecting societal values, national priorities, and investment in the arts. Yet, the data indicate currents of renewal. Ongoing curriculum reforms, expanding digital

possibilities, and increasing attention to student voice offer real potential for re-imagining what school music can be.

A bird's eye view of the European music education landscape reveals a map in which some areas are densely cultivated with musical opportunity, others sparsely planted, but with most areas undergoing transformation. The challenge ahead is to redraw this map so that every learner, regardless of where they live, can progress through an enriching harmonious musical terrain.

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# IV. ADVOCATING FOR MUSIC EDUCATION IN EUROPE

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# The *TEAM* Learning Outcomes for Music Teacher Education in Europe

## Abstract

This chapter presents the *TEAM Learning Outcomes for Music Teacher Education in Europe*, a future-oriented framework supporting high-quality classroom music teaching in primary and secondary schools. Building on *meNet* and *EAS* sets, *TEAM* descriptors emerged from a data-driven, multi-stakeholder process. The chapter situates the new outcomes within the harmonisation of the European Higher Education Area and clarifies the learning outcomes principle. It introduces 20 core and 5 transversal descriptors, formulated as short imperatives. Key formulation principles include the integration of musical and pedagogical competences, the use of a single set for generalists and specialists, the omission of EQF levels, and a degree of abstraction. The chapter details the design process and explores applications in curriculum development, in-service teacher learning, and advocacy, positioning the *TEAM Learning Outcomes* as a dynamic reference point.

**Keywords:** Classroom music, Curriculum, Future demands, Learning outcomes, Music teacher education

## Introduction

The question of what we expect prospective music teachers to be able to do as soon as they begin to teach independently in the classroom, and how this enables them to shape current and future classroom music education in primary and/or secondary schools, is

central for music teacher education, policy work and (higher) music education practice. This is why we addressed this issue in the *TEAM* project.[1]

As a starting point, we made use of two existing and widely used sets of descriptors of learning outcomes: the *meNet Learning Outcomes* (Hennessy et al., 2009), for specialist music teachers, and the *European Association for Music in Schools* (*EAS*) *Learning Outcomes* (Hennessy et al., 2013), for generalists teaching music, taking on the challenge of revising them in relation to current needs and possible future demands such as inclusivity and global responsibility. This chapter introduces the new set for the first time and, therefore, serves as the official presentation of the *TEAM Learning Outcomes*.

After setting the stage by exploring the idea of harmonising the European higher education area, specifically in music, the chapter elucidates our definition of learning outcomes, explains the principles related to the term and briefly connects our current work with the original descriptors. The new learning outcomes are then presented in full, alongside the formulation principles we chose to use, which readers should keep in mind when consulting the descriptors. Additionally, we describe the design process, then explore possible applications of the learning outcomes within music teacher education and in-service professional development, and as a means of advocacy. Although descriptors are formulated on an abstract and somewhat theoretical level, we believe the set can become a powerful reference document for shaping the future of music teacher education in Europe.

## Learning Outcomes in European Higher Education

### *Harmonisation of the European Higher Education Area in Music*

Europe – and especially the European Union (EU) – is an educational area interconnected in many ways. The idea of creating a *European Education Area* dates back to a communication from the European Commission in September 2020. In February 2021, the EU education ministers not only took up this concept but reaffirmed their intention to continue working on the European Education Area beyond 2025. The interconnectedness is intended, not least, to strengthen the common European identity. The idea has played an important role in the field of higher education since 1999, when 29 European education ministers launched the so-called *Bologna Process* (European Commission, n. d.). This coordination process, which now encompasses 49 countries, aims to create a European Higher Education Area in which degree programmes and qualifications are harmonised.

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[1] *TEAM – Teacher Education Academy for Music: Future-Making, Mobility, and Networking in Europe* (https://teacher-academy-music.eu/) is funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are, however, those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

The programmes are harmonised, yet not standardised, because for the EU member states the principle of subsidiarity applies in the field of education: the Treaty of Maastricht (European Union, 1992) stipulates that the EU contributes to quality education by encouraging cooperation between member states and, where necessary, supporting and supplementing their activities, "while fully respecting the responsibility of Member States for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity" (Article 126). For teacher education, this principle of subsidiarity means that local autonomy, for example, is retained in defining learning outcomes and in setting guidelines for curriculum design.

As a previous study has shown (Knill et al., 2013), convergence has been uneven across countries. While a certain degree of convergence can be observed, especially with regard to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), it is hardly possible to speak of an alignment of higher education policies. With the focus on the Lisbon Strategy (European Union, 2007), the Europe 2020 Strategy from 2010 onward (European Union, n. d. a), and the European Green Deal (European Union, n. d. b) which came into effect in 2021, European education policy initiatives are moving toward a cross-cutting policy.

In the domain of music, the three main European associations in the field of formal music education – the *Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen* (*AEC*), *the European Association for Music in Schools* (*EAS*) and the *European Music School Union* (*EMU*) – took up the aim of harmonisation. In 2014 they founded the so-called *SCHEME* group, the *Steering Committee for the Harmonisation of European Music Education* (Cox et al., 2016; *SCHEME* group, 2023). Particularly within the *AEC* (representing Higher Music Education Institutions) and within the *EAS* (representing the field of school music and music teacher education), there is a tradition of developing Europe-wide learning outcomes for higher music education and music teacher education, respectively. Within the *SCHEME group*, learning outcomes are understood as a means of stimulating international discourse, increasing the visibility of musical studies, acting as sensors and indicators for larger educational policy developments, and harmonising study programmes.

### *Learning Outcomes: Meaning and Benefits*

Given the evolving European landscape, the clear articulation of learning outcomes becomes central to ensuring comparability across diverse regional systems. In the 2000s, EU higher education policy shifted from content-based curricula to competency-based curricula, in which the objectives were mostly described as learning outcomes. The EQF-Europass project group (2024) defines learning outcomes as "statements about what learners know, understand, and are able to do after completing a learning process" (p. 4). Learning outcomes are the core element of the *European Qualifications Framework* (*EQF*)

(Europass, n. d. b) and can be applied to all learning experiences within higher education. The key characteristic of learning outcomes is their focus on student learning: "One of the main advantages of the […] principle is that, regardless of the pathways through which they are acquired, they focus more on learning outcomes or output in general and less on learning input" (Winterton et al., 2006, p. 5).

All those involved in the educational process – students, university lecturers, curriculum managers, managers and employers – can benefit from the use of learning outcomes. Institutional learning outcomes (i. e. those of a university that educates music teachers) provide transparency regarding the profile of the programme, its focus, and the necessary resources. Thus, they form an important basis for aligning study fields and single modules or courses in terms of content, as well as in relation to resources (e. g., time, learning formats, equipment allocated, and the level of education of the teacher educator) so that they follow a convergent overall plan. They can, for instance, be used to support an internal programme review in which the programme's courses are mapped to the descriptors.

### *From* meNet *and* EAS *Learning Outcomes to* TEAM *Learning Outcomes*

In 2009, the learning outcomes working group within the three-year *SOCRATES/Comenius-3* project *meNet* (*Music Education Network*) developed learning outcomes for specialist music teachers for the first time, the so-called *meNet Learning Outcomes for Specialist Music Teacher Training* (Hennessy et al., 2009). This was followed in 2013 by a set of learning outcomes suited to generalists, the *EAS Learning Outcomes for Generalist Music Teacher Training* (Hennessy et al. 2013).

Both the *AEC* and the *EAS*, which are part of the above-mentioned *SCHEME group*, regularly update their descriptors. The *AEC* completed this step in 2017; this resulted in the current *AEC Learning Outcomes* (for higher music education) (*AEC*, 2025). The three-year *Erasmus+ Teacher Academies project TEAM* (*Teacher Education Academy for Music*), running from 2023 to 2026, has taken on the task of updating the *meNet* and the *EAS* Learning Outcomes for music teacher education. This chapter presents the first official publication of the new *TEAM Learning Outcomes for Music Teacher Education in Europe*.

## The Descriptors

The new descriptors are presented below (Table 1). In the subsequent section, they will be followed by their formulation principles, which are essential for interpretation. We have deliberately chosen to elaborate on the design process (or 'methodology') later, as we first wish the descriptors to speak for themselves and illustrate for the reader what we mean when referring to them.

## Formulation Principles for the New Descriptors

The *TEAM Learning Outcomes* were developed through a data-driven approach, which will be described in the section on the design process. Although much of the work draws on our understanding of education systems across Europe and incorporates input from diverse perspectives gathered throughout the process, we are aware that the descriptors are not entirely neutral but take a position on certain aspects. We have formulated the new descriptors using a range of formulation principles, which will be discussed next. These include deliberate choices such as: distinguishing between core and transversal descriptors, not specifying the *European Qualifications Framework* (*EQF*) level, designing a single set for both generalists and specialists, formulating short descriptors in the second-person imperative, integrating musical and pedagogical competences, and avoiding overly specific details – resulting in a certain degree of abstraction.

Although the order in which the descriptors are listed follows a certain communicative logic, it does not carry substantive importance: the descriptors are all equally important.

### *Core and Transversal Descriptors*

The new set of learning outcomes comprises 25 descriptors divided into two categories: 20 core descriptors (numbered 1 to 20) and five transversal (or cross-cutting) descriptors (labelled A to E). Each transversal descriptor should be considered in relation to all core descriptors. These transversal descriptors refer to competences that are deemed essential for shaping a future-proof music education (namely inclusion, global responsibility, technology, collaboration, and professional development) and are the result of a sub-study within our trajectory (De Baets et al., 2025; briefly described below under the section The Design Process). Combining core and transversal descriptors generate powerful, dynamic and challenging learning outcomes, and can bring possible music education practices to light. For example, descriptors 7 and B can be combined in activities where students arrange short folk songs with recycled instruments and explain their ecological choices. Descriptors 15 and C will both be required when guiding an activity in which the teacher transcribes a melody in traditional notation that students have recorded in graphic notation using an online app. Combining two descriptors makes us reflect on existing professional activities (inside or outside the classroom) and also opens up the possibility of imagining new practices. In that sense, combining core and transversal descriptors is an inspiring exercise for (student) teachers.

# TEAM LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR MUSIC TEACHER EDUCATION

## » CORE DESCRIPTORS

**01 Be a role model**

Inspire learners with one's own musicianship and artistic open-mindedness.

**02 Assist musical journeys**

Support learners in exploring their interests and achieving their musical goals.

**03 Co-create plans for progression**

With students, create plans for their musical progress, taking into account their needs, competences and interests.

**04 Connect with musical cultures**

Understand and respond to the role of music in young people's lives in and outside school.

**05 Enrich school and community life**

Create musical opportunities that connect school life with life outside school.

**06 Foster musical creativities**

Enable learners, collaboratively and individually, to be inventive and inquisitive, and to express and develop their musical ideas.

**07 Compose, improvise, produce, and arrange**

Create music with an understanding of stylistic, theoretical and technical requirements, and learners' needs, musical competences and interests.

**08 Use engaging materials and approaches**

Select, adapt, or create appropriate music materials and methods to create meaningful music learning experiences.

**09 Facilitate varied music making**

Confidently lead singing and instrumental music making activities.

**10 Perform expressively**

Communicate music confidently and fluently, vocally and instrumentally, exploring different styles, and adapting to diverse learning environments and audiences.

**11 Accompany musically**

Play an accompanying instrument (such as piano or guitar) to support learners' musicking.

**12 Lead ensembles**

Guide and assist vocal and instrumental groups in rehearsals and performances.

**13 Promote active music listening**

Offer learners different modes of listening and engage them in shared listening experiences.

TEACHER EDUCATION ACADEMY FOR MUSIC

**Table 1:** The *TEAM* Learning Outcomes for Music Teacher Education in Europe

# IN EUROPE

**14 Teach key elements of music**

Help learners understand and use musical elements within musical experiences.

**15 Read and write music**

Read and write music in traditional and alternative notations and use these to communicate musical ideas.

**16 Communicate well**

Use clear and encouraging musical, verbal and non-verbal communication modes to foster learning.

**17 Promote well-being**

Plan with awareness of the impact of music and music education on learners' physical and mental health, and social issues relating to music.

**18 Manage the music classroom**

Design and facilitate learning activities in diverse group settings, ensuring a positive and safe classroom environment.

**19 Ensure coverage of curricula**

Have a strong awareness of relevant curricula aims and educational policies, particularly those related to music.

**20 Assess and feed back**

Choose appropriate forms of assessment for music education, to provide feedback in order to guide learning.

## » TRANSVERSAL DESCRIPTORS

**A Foster inclusivity and celebrate diversity**

Acknowledge the different layers of intersectionality[2] in order to counter power relations, and celebrate diverse musical practices and traditions.

**B Cultivate global responsibility**

Within music education, promote awareness of societal, cultural, ecological and economic evolution.

**C Use technology where appropriate**

Enhance music learning and creativity through the use of music and other technologies.

**C Use technology where appropriate**

Enhance music learning and creativity through the use of music and other technologies.

**D Collaborate and co-teach**

Work with fellow staff, diverse stakeholders and across subject disciplines to enrich the musical learning experience.

[2] The term *intersectionality* refers "broadly to an intellectual framework for understanding how various aspects of individual identity – including race, gender, social class, and sexuality – interact to create unique experiences of privilege or oppression" (August, 2026).

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### *Undefined EQF Level*

The descriptors are not defined at a specific *European Qualifications Framework* (*EQF*) level. This means they do not directly refer to the first cycle (*EQF* level 6, usually bachelor's level) or second cycle (*EQF* level 7, usually master's level) of the European Higher Education Area (Europass, n. d. a, n. d. b). Given the wide diversity of circumstances throughout Europe, where music teacher education is organised at bachelor's level, master's level, or both in some countries, it is nearly impossible to differentiate. Therefore, the descriptors refer to the outcomes of specialist music and generalist teacher education in a general way, disregarding the relevant *EQF* level and the type of institution in which the programme is offered. They express the competencies that a music teacher should have attained by the end of the training applicable in the respective context. This means that, to add the specific bachelor's or master's dimension, our descriptors must be consulted alongside the generic learning outcomes which define *EQF* levels 6 or 7 (Europass, n. d. a). This is consistent with the approach of the previous descriptors (Hennessy et al., 2009, 2013).

### *A Joint Set for Generalists and Specialists*

The *meNet* and *EAS Learning Outcomes* (Hennessy et al., 2009, 2013) distinguished between generalist and specialist music teachers, resulting in two separate sets of descriptors. Although a large proportion of the descriptors was identical, some differentiation was made regarding teachers' musical and pedagogical competences. Despite these structural differences and the varied realities across Europe, several arguments support the development of a shared framework that can address both profiles. In our new *TEAM* edition, we decided to remove this distinction and present one overall set of descriptors. In 2013, the definition of what constitutes a specialist from a competent generalist appeared blurry (Hennessy et al., 2013, p. 279). While one might associate a generalist teacher with primary education and a specialist teacher with secondary education, we found that this is not always the case throughout Europe. In our understanding, specialist music teachers are primarily trained to teach music lessons, while generalist teachers are responsible for a wide range of subjects, including music. There are many good practices in which specialists and generalists cooperate. The decision to develop a single set for both profiles aligns with the notion of the descriptors representing a minimum level. We believe that the current set articulates the essential criteria for high-quality music teaching, whether one is trained as a generalist or a specialist. We acknowledge that this might not fully reflect the current reality within generalist teacher education. In that regard, the set establishes an ambitious standard for professional practice. Extensive research (e. g. Biasutti et al., 2015; Hennessy, 2000; Nieuwmeijer et al., 2022; Seddon & Biasutti, 2008) has shown that generalist (primary) teachers often experience a lack of confidence when it comes to teaching music. Given their very different training as teachers, generalists may well face particular musicianship challenges, such as performing expressively (10), accompanying musically (11), and acting

as a role model (01). By setting the standard high, our intention is not to increase pressure on such teachers, but to highlight – especially to school managers and policy makers – skills important for high quality music education. It is also important to acknowledge that, although specialists are usually confident in their subject knowledge and skills and are often regarded as more competent music teachers, generalists also bring valuable strengths, since they often "embody the view that music is for all and is an integral part of learning" (Hennessy et al., 2013, p. 279).

***The Format: Short Descriptors in the Second Person Imperative***

Descriptors of learning outcomes are typically formulated in a formal style that is common in higher education: they are often quite lengthy and written in the third person (singular or plural), describing what a student is able to do at the point of graduation. Music teacher educators are accustomed to consulting such documents and are also familiar with expressing learning outcomes for their own curriculum or subject in these terms. The previously published descriptors (Hennessy et al., 2009, 2013) were formatted in this conventional style. Descriptor A3, written in the third person plural, can serve as an example:

> At the completion of their studies, beginning teachers have acquired a broad knowledge of musical styles, genres and traditions; can make informed and imaginative choices in their teaching; and use musical repertoire which reflects both formal curriculum requirements and the larger sphere of musical practice. (Hennessy et al., 2009, p. 5; descriptor A3).

Against that background, the formatting of the new learning outcomes – short and in the second person imperative – may appear unusual. The choice of short descriptors is in line with recent EU-guidelines (EQF-Europass project group, 2024) that promote "short and synthetic descriptions" (p. 4) to "provide an easy access and an entry point for individual learners or employers seeking information on specific qualifications" (p. 4). Indeed, we believe that short descriptors possess stronger communicative power, particularly in an international context. In line with this, we have also chosen to use the second person imperative, directly addressing a specific reader – namely, the student music teacher who is the subject of the learning outcomes. It is our view that this approach aligns well with the idea of engaging trainee teachers in their own learning process. Moreover, it also facilitates the integration of a gender-neutral style in the formulation of the descriptors. The revised formatting also addresses a concern raised during a feedback session within the *TEAM* consortium, where it was proposed that the new learning outcomes should be more "enticing, motivating, inspiring, provoking …" (*TEAM*, 2024, p. 1). Although we had already decided to formulate the new set in English because of the "omnipresence of English in international cooperation" (Niermann, 2016, p. 25) – rather than in English and German, as in the original sets (Hennessy et al., 2009, 2013) – the fact that short descriptors "can be

translated more easily" (*EQF-Europass* project group, 2024, p. 5) was a further argument for our new presentation format. We are aware that our formatting choices might work well in English but possibly less so in other languages, since no language is neutral and each language "implies a certain way of thinking and communication" (Niermann, 2016, p. 25).

***Integrating Musical and Pedagogical Competences***

Knowing that our set will be used in combination with other international and regional guidelines, including general pedagogical framework documents, we opted for a set of descriptors that would feel as specific to music education as possible. This aligns with the ambition already outlined in the formulation principles of the previous set, where "musical and didactic knowledge and skills" were combined "because teachers have to apply their musical expertise in the context of music teaching" (Hennessy et al., 2009, pp. 18–19). As was the case in the existing set, all our current descriptors refer specifically to music teaching, that is, we did not integrate general (pedagogical) competences. Nonetheless, we believe that our set of descriptors reflects the most relevant dimensions of the music teaching profession. We acknowledge that, in this respect, the set does not align with curriculum structures that often distinguish between different areas of learning, such as general pedagogy, subject-specific pedagogy, musicianship, and internships. As all these curriculum areas are expected to contribute to the education of a coherent professional, we believe it makes sense, at least at the level of learning outcomes, to adopt a holistic and integrative approach. This approach may highlight aspects of a future music teacher's pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987), which represents an integration of subject content and pedagogy.

***The Level of Abstraction***

It is recognised that the set of learning outcomes, formulated at a general European level, will be interpreted through the lens of local musical and music-educational traditions and practices. It may also resonate, to some extent, with local music curricula for primary and secondary schools. That is why some formulations tend to remain at a rather abstract level, referring to ideas and concepts without specific examples or illustrations. This is especially evident in reference to, for instance, *modes of listening* (13), *key elements of music* (14), *traditional and alternative notations* (15), *forms of assessment* (20), *music and other technologies* (C), and *diverse stakeholders* (D). To clarify this point, we consider two examples. *Key elements of music* can refer to what we know as musical parameters, principles of music, musical dimensions or building blocks. Diverse curricula also refer to different lists, but they typically include aspects such as rhythm, melody, harmony, and structure. These classifications often depend on dominant local traditions, curricula, and theories. *Diverse*

*stakeholders* could include anyone who can be a meaningful partner for collaboration within and around the educational setting. Some examples are other teachers, parents, school leaders, curriculum developers, researchers, community members, and teacher educators. Locally, such partnerships are often highlighted within curricular frameworks. In other words, whilst some of the descriptors may appear overly global, they should be actively connected to local realities.

## The Design Process

When formulating the new set of learning outcomes, we decided, very early in the process, not to start from scratch. A first step was to analyse the existing *meNet* and *EAS* sets against relation to three parameters: objectives, form and content (autumn 2023). The sets aimed to enhance music teacher education and European collaboration, while promoting flexible, non-binding competencies. The form of these *meNet* and *EAS* sets was defined by abstract language, multilingual accessibility, and a European scope, with separate but overlapping versions for generalists and specialists, and no differentiation in *EQF* qualification levels. Acknowledging Europe's diverse practices of music teacher education, the sets promoted active music making and being a music teacher in a process of lifelong learning.

For the new set, we wanted to balance basics and future-making in pursuit of a new European consensus. To that end, we explored current trends in learning outcome descriptors throughout Europe (spring 2024), as described in De Baets et al. (2025). This scoping review yielded six emergent themes: *collaborations*, *digitisation*, *diversity & inclusion*, *global (artistic) citizenship*, *interdisciplinarity* and *practitioner research & professional development*. These emergent themes can be seen as transversal, cross-cutting, and recurrent, and of great importance both now and in the future. When integrating these findings in the new set of learning outcomes, we decided to create five new transversal descriptors (as described above) based on the emergent themes, rather than six. Given their close relationship, *collaborations* and *interdisciplinarity* were combined to form a broader descriptor that highlights the importance of collaborating and co-teaching with any stakeholder, both within and across disciplines.

The next step was to create a master document that would provide an overview and would highlight recurring trends and themes in the emerging data (October 2024). We deliberately started from the existing sets, which were to be updated, adding comments and discussion points that were provided to us throughout the project. We drew on a variety of input sources:

- We took into account the various emergent themes within our scoping review (De Baets et al., 2025).
- During an early-stage workshop to amend the existing learning outcomes, two groups of participants from within the *TEAM* consortium network were asked to add comments based on their own professional experience, keeping in mind questions such as What is unclear or redundant?, What is outdated?, and What needs to be formulated differently?
- *Work Package 3* of the *TEAM* Project (Music Education and Future-Making) provided specific feedback on Future-Making in Digitisation, Sustainability and Democracy in Music Education.
- The *EAS* Special Focus Groups *PRiME* (practitioner research), *DigiTiMe* (digitisation), *SiME* (singing), *InclusME* (inclusion) and *ImprovME* (improvisation) posed critical questions from their own field of study.
- Lastly, as a working group, we also added comments based on our own professional knowledge and experience. This is where our own position became evident and may reveal our own *personal interpretative frameworks* (Kelchtermans, 2014) as music teacher educators.

We compared and re-ordered the existing sets, combining the learning outcomes that had similar content. Lastly, a keyword was assigned to each descriptor to get a sense of everything that was already present. For example: the descriptor "can plan for the inclusion of music in cross curricular and interdisciplinary contexts to enhance the meaning, enjoyment and quality of learning" (Hennessy et al., 2013, p. 262; descriptor A9) was combined with "have experience and knowledge of how music interacts and combines with other subject areas, and can contribute to cross curricular and interdisciplinary learning" (Hennessy et al., 2009, p. 5; descriptor A12), and was given the keyword *Interdisciplinarity*.

Some keywords that were added after feedback were *Well-being/health*, *Music notation*, *Political dimension of music*, *Democracy*, and *Sustainability*. Some of these fitted well with an emergent theme. *Democracy* and *Sustainability*, for instance, could be classified under *global (artistic) citizenship*.

A list of over forty keywords with possible new or adjusted formulations was assembled. We made the decision to shorten the new set to twenty descriptors to make them easier to communicate and to highlight their importance (March 2025). This led to another editorial intervention to combine certain themes. For example, the keywords *Learner's musical goals* and *Learner's musical interests* were integrated in the descriptor Assist musical journeys (02). Lastly, following the advice from the *TEAM* consortium to make the descriptors more "enticing, motivating, inspiring, provoking …" (*TEAM*, 2024, p. 1) we consulted the AI-assistant Microsoft 365 *Copilot* to suggest a new way of formulating that would be more inspiring and communicative.

This prefinal set of 25 descriptors went through multiple drafts in two main exercises. Firstly, throughout, there were discussions in our working group, to check whether the set could be improved in terms of clarity, wording or relevance (spring 2025). This question was also discussed within the broader *TEAM* consortium. Secondly, we asked the *TEAM* consortium, the associated partners and the participants of our symposium at the June 2025 *EAS* conference (n = 44), to rate the different descriptors on a scale of importance for music teacher education. The result was insightful and affirmative: all the descriptors scored, on average, between 3 and 4 out of 4, and, therefore, were considered almost equally relevant. The final order of the twenty descriptors was decided partly based on the ratings. For example, *Be a role model* (01) scored highly on average, which persuaded us to use this as our opening descriptor. Aside from taking into account the rating results, our working group wanted to design an order that would follow a certain conceptual logic, which is why, in the final set, descriptors such as *Facilitate varied music making* (09) and *Perform Expressively* (10) are presented in close proximity.

## How to Use the *TEAM Learning Outcomes*

### *Music Teacher Education*

Whilst we recognise that the contexts of music teacher education are very different across Europe, it is, nevertheless, common for institutions to be expected to articulate and benchmark the choices they make in designing their programmes – both for internal self-evaluation and for external review. The learning outcomes of a programme are an essential part of this, as is illustrated in the *MusiQuE Standards for Classroom Music Teacher Education Programmes* (*MusiQuE*, 2018) (currently under revision), where it is the very first domain of enquiry: "Programme's goals and context" (p. 4). Within this domain, the first standard requires that "The programme goals are stated clearly, and reflect the institutional mission" (*MusiQuE*, 2018, p. 6; Standard 1). We believe that the *TEAM Learning Outcomes* can serve as an important reference document when formulating and benchmarking institutional programme goals. In a table, for instance, a substantive comparison could be made between locally applicable sets and the *TEAM Learning Outcomes*, identifying concordance between the programme objectives and learning content of the different subjects. Similarly, the new set can guide and support curriculum reforms. We acknowledge that discussing programme goals and curriculum design is a fundamental exercise. Even at a less ambitious level, the new set of descriptors has the potential to make a meaningful contribution to music teacher education. We, therefore, propose three specific applications: the new set of descriptors can serve as a source of inspiration for selecting topics for future-oriented student seminars; it can support the alignment of international mobility programmes; and it can function as a reference document for joint learning activities involving both specialist

and generalist student teachers – facilitating collaboration and the exploration of complementary approaches to co-teaching. Moreover, the way the descriptors are formatted (short and in the second person imperative), makes them well-suited for use in direct dialogue with students, helping to stimulate reflection and facilitate discussion about their learning process as future teachers.

It should be noted that in some countries, learning outcomes are formulated at the regional or national level and cannot be modified by individual institutions. In such cases, the *TEAM Learning Outcomes* can still prove valuable – for instance, for pinpointing specific topics that could be strengthened within national requirements, informing internal quality discussions, or guiding professional development strategies. Therefore, even in contexts where local learning outcomes are fixed, the descriptors can contribute to a programme's future-preparedness.

### *In-service Professional Development*

Learning outcomes can be an important reference document for teachers and a means of reflecting on personal competences that they would benefit from acquiring or updating. As a document for both generalists and specialists, the learning outcomes seem especially useful to the former. Since many generalists arrive at the classroom with little or no formal training in music education (Hennessy, 2017; Russell-Bowie, 2009) this document can be an important tool to raise awareness of skills essential for effective music learning and, consequently, also as a guide toward professional development activities that might be undertaken. Moreover, it can be used as leverage for both specialist and generalist music teachers to persuade school leaders of the importance of continuing professional development for their music teaching staff. This could lead to, for example, the organisation of a dedicated professional development activity focusing on how to use accessible digital musical technologies through which learners can create their own music (07, C). Acknowledging that generalist teachers may have specific core competences on which they need to place specific focus, we believe that, in the context of in-service professional development, the five transversal descriptors are particularly worth considering, as they have the potential to transform current practices.

### *Learning Outcomes as a Means of Advocacy*

In essence, learning outcomes can be used by all stakeholders as a tool for informed discussions about current or potential curriculum priorities. Moreover, they can serve as an advocacy tool: by offering this reference framework for the demands of music teacher education in Europe, we give European institutions the opportunity to refer to a document that proposes a certain quality standard for music teacher education. During the development

and dissemination of the *meNet* and the *EAS Learning Outcomes*, our *EAS* partners reported that, when cuts to hours or resources were imminent, the learning outcomes documents provided support and a strong argument against the proposals. A recent study by Cedefop (2025) underlines this positive dynamic. We hope to achieve similar advocacy effects with the *TEAM Learning Outcomes* and encourage European institutions to use them for this purpose. In this sense, it may be particularly useful to demonstrate to policymakers that the new learning outcomes – and especially the transversal descriptors – resonate well with current and future challenges in education. Another chapter in this volume (Malmberg et al., 2026, in this volume) explores the topic of advocacy in the context of the *SCHEME group*.

## An Open Ending

We conclude this chapter by sharing three reflections that help to place the development and publication of the new learning outcomes in context.

Firstly, while we have explored the different ways in which the learning outcomes can directly impact policies and practices in music teacher education, in-service professional development and advocacy work, the ultimate objective to keep in mind is the delivery of high-quality music education in classrooms. Although the learning outcomes framework may seem disconnected from classroom practice because of its theoretical and rather abstract nature, we believe that focusing on future professionals is highly relevant given their vital role in shaping education.

Secondly, we acknowledge that articulating learning outcomes may risk oversimplifying the complexity of music teaching and learning. For this reason, the framework is presented as a flexible tool to support reflection rather than a prescriptive model. We also want to caution against possible misuse: While the learning outcomes are intended to encourage reflection and empower (trainee) music teachers, they should not be used to evaluate music teachers or their classroom practice.

Thirdly, we want to emphasise that the formulation of the learning outcomes should be considered as an open-ended process. Although the current formulation is based on a data-driven approach, the 'truth' of this new set is inherently relative. As a basis for ongoing discussion, it is expected that the descriptors will be interpreted, adapted and further developed. We can only stress the importance of continuing the debate on what constitutes the profile of a competent music teacher.

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# Advocating for Music Education

## Strategies to Sustain Music in General Schools and in the Wider Music Education Sector

**Abstract**

Music education in Europe is increasingly challenged by shifting educational priorities, limited resources, and a shortage of qualified teachers. This chapter examines the current state of music education across schools and higher education, highlighting structural inequalities, reduced instructional time, and the fragile position of the profession. It argues that safeguarding music education requires coordinated, multi-level advocacy. The chapter outlines key advocacy strategies, including raising public awareness, strengthening research on the value of music education, and fostering European collaboration through networks and joint initiatives. Transnational cooperation is shown to support innovation, mobility, and shared standards, while policy engagement plays a crucial role in influencing educational agendas. Particular emphasis is placed on the importance of high-quality teacher education, inclusive access to learning, and the development of shared resources and benchmarks. The chapter concludes that sustained and collaborative advocacy is essential to ensure that music education remains accessible, relevant, and resilient across Europe.

**Keywords:** Advocacy, Music Ecosystems, Cooperation, Higher Music Education, Music in Schools

## Introduction

Advocacy for music education is essential – in relation to primary and secondary schools, music schools and higher music education institutions. Strong advocacy ensures that music remains a central part of curricula, and secures necessary resources and recognition from policymakers to fully support the development of students' artistic, social, and cognitive skills. Within the *TEAM* project, we have repeatedly addressed how the project's results can be effectively used to strengthen the reputation of music as a subject and to promote advocacy. We already referred to this in the text on learning outcomes (De Baets et al., in this volume). In this chapter, we would like to adopt an even broader perspective by presenting the collaboration of three large Europeanwide associations and its effectiveness in advocacy.

What is meant exactly by advocacy? Advocacy is the act of purposefully supporting or promoting a cause, influencing decision-makers, and raising awareness to create positive change. In the context of education, advocacy can operate at different levels: *school-level* (teachers, students, parents promoting music in the classroom), *institutional-level* (music schools or universities lobbying for resources, programmes, or curricula), and *policy-level* (national or European organisations engaging with government or cultural policy) (Culture Action Europe, 2023). Key players include teachers, students, parents, school managers, communities, professional associations, and policymakers. Ideally, advocacy involves liaison between all groups and at all levels, creating strong networks and shared goals.

This chapter is written by the current members of the *SCHEME Group*. *SCHEME* (*Steering Committee for the Harmonisation of European Music Education*) is formed by representatives of the three major European networks for formal music education: the Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (*AEC*), the European Association for Music in Schools (*EAS*) and the European Music School Union (*EMU*). Together, the *SCHEME* members reflect on what can be done with regard to advocacy; advocacy to ensure that music education in Europe receives the space and resources necessary for music-making to remain a central part of cultural education and human life. We start with a brief overview of the general situation of music as a subject in Europe. Our chapter then introduces five types of advocacy initiatives and explains how their work is already being carried out. We hope to inform even more people about what has been successful, where they can get involved, or even what might inspire them to start their own advocacy initiatives.

## The Current Policy Context of Music Education in Europe

International comparative research plays an important role in understanding the policy context of music education in Europe and in providing evidence for advocacy in music education. Since the early 2000s, several large-scale international studies have analysed how music and other arts subjects are positioned within European education systems, focusing on curricular structures, policy frameworks, and access to learning opportunities (Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA P9 Eurydice), 2009; Niermann, de Vugt, Hennessy & Malmberg, 2011; Economidou Stavrou et al., 2026, in this volume; Girdzijauskienė et al., 2026, in this volume).

One of the most influential sources is the comparative research conducted by the *Eurydice* network of the European Commission. Its report *Arts and Cultural Education at School in Europe* provides a systematic overview of the status of arts education in European general education systems, examining curriculum requirements, teaching time, learning objectives, and teacher qualifications (Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA P9 Eurydice, 2009, p. 9). The study demonstrates that music is formally included in the compulsory curriculum in most European countries, particularly at the primary level, but also reveals significant differences regarding instructional time, resources, and the degree of policy support (p. 27). For more detailed data on the current scope and resources of music education in European schools, see the results of the *TEAM project* (Girdzijauskienė et al., 2026, in this volume).

Complementing the *Eurydice* and *TEAM* analyses, international policy reports and research initiatives have explored broader challenges such as cultural participation, access to arts education, and the role of music education in fostering creativity and cultural citizenship. For example, the UNESCO *Seoul Agenda* highlights the importance of arts education for cultural diversity, creativity, and inclusive education systems (UNESCO, 2010, p. 3). Similarly, European cultural policy reports emphasise the need for stronger institutional support and policy advocacy to ensure sustainable access to music education across Europe (European Music Council, 2006, p. 5). This was also highlighted in the *European Agenda for Music* (European Music Council, n. d.) The European Agenda für Music is significant because it represents the most concerted initiative to date, bringing together many diverse music stakeholders (from media and music industry to education). In the area of education, the agenda established that everyone has the right to access music and musical education and set priorities and recommended measures for musical education in Europe. More important, comparative insights into teachers' professional development, and teaching practices across education systems are provided by the *Teaching and Learning International Survey* (*TALIS*) conducted by the OECD (2025). Although the survey does not focus specifically on individual subjects like music, its findings are relevant for music education as part of the broader category of arts subjects. TALIS' results show that

teachers generally feel well prepared in subject knowledge and basic pedagogical skills, but considerably less prepared for emerging challenges such as multicultural classrooms, social-emotional learning, and the use of digital technologies (OECD, 2025 p. 137). These challenges are also highly relevant for music educators whose teaching often involves collaborative and culturally diverse learning contexts. The survey further highlights the importance of professional learning and mentoring, which are associated with higher job satisfaction and greater fulfilment of lesson aims among teachers (OECD, 2025, p. 140). At the same time, researchers note that large-scale studies such as TALIS often rely on generic models of teaching quality that do not fully capture subject-specific characteristics of music education (Björk et al., 2024, p. 2).

*Teacher shortages* are another aspect that have become a significant challenge not only for music education but for education systems in general across Europe and increasingly affect the quality and availability of music education. International studies show that many European countries face difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified teachers due to demographic changes, increasing workloads, and declining enrolment in teacher education programmes (OECD, 2025, p. 140). As a result, schools often rely on teachers who are not fully qualified in the subjects they teach (such as music students, career changers, teachers without a music background, or project staff). This situation is particularly critical in music education, where specialist pedagogical and artistic competencies are required. Comparative European studies indicate that music lessons are frequently taught by generalist teachers or teachers from other subject areas, especially in primary schools (Bath et al., 2020; Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA P9 Eurydice), 2009, p. 27; Russell-Bowie, 2009). Research suggests that such practices can limit the range of musical activities offered in classrooms and reduce opportunities for creative and practical music-making (Hallam, 2010, p. 270). Consequently, the shortage of qualified teachers not only affects staffing levels but also poses risks to the quality, continuity, and educational impact of music education in European schools. This can create a vicious cycle in which negative developments reinforce themselves. Cuts to teacher education programmes lead to poorer training, which results in fewer applicants, which in turn leads to further cuts. Poor working conditions and a lack of adaptation of the programmes to the realities of today's classrooms further intensify this trend.

The aforementioned studies on public schools in Europe and the subject of music in schools highlight the following objectives for advocacy in particular: The secure integration of music into the general education curriculum must be maintained, as music in schools provides access to musical education for *all* children, regardless of their socioeconomic background. This requirement applies particularly to music in primary schools – here, it is essential to ensure that music teachers receive adequate education. Sufficient university places at music institutions to address the teacher shortage, as well as high-quality, research-based initial teacher education and lifelong professional development that continuously

incorporates current topics (such as democratic education, digitalisation, well-being, and sustainability, see Stade et al. in this volume), will ensure long-term provision of music teachers. In summary, music education in schools must be up-to-date in terms of content so that the importance of the subject remains clear; music lessons must be able to respond methodologically to current societal changes; but at the same time, teacher shortages (not only in music, but in many subjects) and declining numbers of applicants are also placing structural demands on music education in schools. How can advocacy be helpful in this context?

## What Advocacy Work Can Achieve and How to do it

### *Advocating by Visibility and the Involvement of the General Public*

In a number of countries, educational policy has shifted to place strong emphasis on socalled 'core' subjects such as literacy and numeracy (Lilliedahl, 2021; O'Flynn et al, 2022). Such national and often institutional devaluing of music as a subject can have a detrimental influence on parents and guardians who may have little deep awareness of what is involved in classroom music, particularly as this can differ considerably to education they themselves experienced. As such, in many respects, advocacy needs to begin with helping parents and carers and, indeed, school managers, recognising the importance of music education and, thereby, gaining their support in campaigns for improving music education in schools. The following two examples, the *European Day of Music in Schools* and the *European Youth Music Festival*, demonstrate how this problem can be successfully addressed. While these initiatives take place locally, participants simultaneously experience how the initiative connects them with other people in other parts of Europe. The realisation that many others across Europe are also involved can further strengthen their own sense of participation.

One way in which the European Association for Music in Schools (*EAS*) has attempted to influence communities is through its annual *European Day of Music in Schools* (*EuDaMuS*). This venture, begun in 2022, brings together students, teachers, parents, music educators, school administrators and musicians from all over Europe – and beyond – to share musical activities they engage in at school and together to sing the *EuDaMuS* song "Together", composed by Bert Appermont. The focus is an online event for everyone in mid-March. Another regular aspect of the venture is that schools send in videos of a typical classroom music lesson (*Music at My School*). This year, for the first time, a *Music Exchange Activity* was organised. Schools were invited to send in a video of a song that is well-known in their country. Two schools were then matched, by target or age group; they were asked to rehearse and perform the other school's song and create a video of this performance.

The 2026 *EuDaMuS* online event and the associated activities noted above achieved significant reach. The online event involved over 8,000 students and staff from 32 countries; the *Music at My School* videos included over 9,500 children and staff from 24 countries; and there were 23 *Music Exchange Activities* from 10 countries. All materials pertaining to the activities are available via the *EAS* website; and on the *EuDaMuS* 2026 YouTube channel. This year, a playlist with multiple categories was created, enabling quick browsing and comparison. Viewership continues to grow.

Countries across Europe have used *EuDaMuS* as a means of illustrating and celebrating the importance of music – not just in aiding the development of skills within individuals, but as a highly important cultural international bond. In many countries – such as The Netherlands, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Czech Republic – the event has seen liaisons between many national organisations which might not ordinarily come together (Dimitrakoulakos et al., 2026). These have also worked together to advertise the event through a wide range of communication channels: social networks, articles in local newspapers as well as music education journals and teacher-oriented publications, items on the radio, and features on regional and national TV stations (Dimitrakoulakos et al., 2026). This form of advocacy is important not only at adult level: engaging young people in an event which they find exciting and enjoyable (as evidenced in the above-mentioned video footage) is educating the parents and adults of the future about the significance of music education across the world.

In a similar way, the European Music School Union (*EMU*) has developed a model of advocacy that demonstrates the impact of music education through direct artistic encounter and international exchange. Its *European Youth Music Festival* brings together ensembles of all sizes and styles from music and art schools across Europe, enabling children and young people from a wide range of cultural, social and educational backgrounds to meet through music-making (European Youth Music, n. d.). The festival is typically organised within the framework of a *European Capital of Culture*, drawing on the cultural programme and support structures accompanying this title, and transforms the host region into a vibrant musical space over several days, with performances taking place on numerous stages across many cities. At the most recent festival, *RITMIKS*, in Catalonia, Spain, in 2025, more than 170 ensembles representing over 4,000 students from 18 European countries participated, with around 50 cities involved and more than 100 stages forming part of the programme. Moving from one venue to another, performing and meeting peers from across Europe, many participants experience what is often a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, creating memories, friendships and shared experiences that remain long after the festival has ended and that demonstrate in a very concrete way what is possible through music education. For the hosting region, the festival provides a highly visible example of the artistic, social and cultural value of music education, making European cooperation

tangible at a local level and allowing communities to directly experience the diversity and vitality of music education across Europe.

***Advocating by Research on the Value and Impact of Music Education***

There is a common understanding that – as the UK Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (2002) stated – "[m]usic is a powerful, unique form of communication that can change the way pupils feel, think and act. It brings together intellect and feeling and enables personal expression, reflection and emotional development" (p. 2). Some of these attributes are difficult to prove within scientific research, yet many studies do demonstrate the value and power of music education (Valache, Ilie, Sârbescu & Cazan, 2025), and these can play an important role in strengthening its position in public opinion and education policy. Some examples are as follows:

- Studies show that music education contributes to social and emotional development, critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, and communication skills (Yinkun, 2024). This is an important finding. As we demonstrated above using the *TALIS* study, teachers need more support in the socio-emotional development of their students – support that the subject of music can provide.
- Participation in ensembles and collaborative music-making can support cooperation, self-discipline, and a sense of belonging in school communities (Hallam, 2010). Such findings highlight the role of music education in supporting students' well-being and social engagement.
- Research suggests modest effects on specific cognitive processes closely related to musical activities, such as attention or inhibition control (Dege & Frischen, 2022). These effects are typically small and context-dependent, but they demonstrate that music learning can interact with certain aspects of cognitive development (Hallam & Himonides, 2022).
- Evidence shows that music education contributes to students' cultural awareness (Khasanova Navbakhor, 2020) and expression (Martín-Sanz, Curbelo González. & Martínez-Izaguirre, 2025).
- Music can reframe and contextualise relationships and issues in ways that strengthen open-mindedness and empathy; this can contribute to the promotion of just, peaceful and inclusive societies (Howell, 2021; Shank & Schirch, 2008).

In recent years, research has increasingly explored music education from a broader, systemic perspective: an ecosystem (Hahn et al., 2024). From this point of view, the music education landscape can be understood as a network of interacting institutions, including general schools, music schools, higher music education institutions and other community providers. Such approaches highlight how collaboration between these institutions, as well

as partnerships with local communities and cultural organisations, can enhance access and quality in musical learning. As music education is not only an educational activity but also, in its practice, a form of cultural participation, its value can also be understood in terms of its contribution to local communities and to society as a whole. This perspective is particularly relevant in publicly supported education systems and can provide an important additional basis for advocacy.

***Advocating Through Using the Potential and Momentum in European Networking***

A basic challenge for European collaboration and advocacy in the fields of culture and education is that, due to the principle of subsidiarity, culture and education remain the sole responsibility of the EU Member States. As a result, the European Union does not have direct legislative authority or comprehensive official policies governing these sectors. Nevertheless, the EU plays an important role through a range of funding programmes that support transnational collaboration. Initiatives such as *Erasmus+* and *Creative Europe* enable cooperation, mobility, and exchange across borders, while the major research framework programme *Horizon Europe* contributes significantly to knowledge creation, including in the fields of culture and education. It is therefore reasonable to say that, despite the absence of formal policy competences, and despite relatively limited funding compared to other societal sectors, the EU exerts considerable influence on the development and direction of the European education system – not only through its mobility and development opportunities, but also through its policy and advocacy work, whose frameworks and agendas often provide key orientation for national policy development.

A particularly illustrative example of how European networking can create momentum is the cooperation within *SCHEME* which was established in 2016 as explained in Cox et al. (2016). *SCHEME* brings together three European organisations representing relevant actors of the formal music education landscape: the European Association of Conservatoires (*AEC*), a network representing higher music education institutions across Europe; the European Association for Music in Schools (*EAS*), which connects teachers, researchers and other professionals engaged in school music education; and the European Music School Union (*EMU*), the umbrella organisation of national associations representing publicly supported music and arts schools in European countries. Despite their different structures, memberships and institutional contexts, the three organisations share the conviction that the interests of music education can be represented more effectively when they act together (SCHEME, 2019, p. 4). In this way, *SCHEME* functions not only as a collaborative platform, but also as a structural bridge between different sectors of music education. By strengthening mutual understanding and coordinating advocacy at European level, this partnership also serves as a role model for developments at national and regional levels, demonstrating how sustained networking can enhance the visibility, credibility and coherence of music education across the wider field.

The cooperation within *SCHEME* is sustained largely through voluntary commitment rather than through dedicated external funding: through regular exchange of information, joint meetings, mutual participation in general assemblies, events and projects, and the development of shared positions on key issues. This ongoing exchange fosters a more comprehensive understanding of the music education landscape and allows strategies to be developed jointly rather than separately.

***Advocating by Influencing Politics: Policy Papers, Multi-Annual Financial Framework and Core Advocacy Messages to Politicians***

European policy papers presenting analyses and recommendations and calls to action play in our view an important role in shaping dialogue and cooperation across sectors that operate at a continental level. Particularly in the fields of culture and education – where responsibility largely lies with individual member states – policy papers provide a valuable tool for articulating shared perspectives and influencing broader European developments. One of their main benefits is that they help create a shared position among organisations and stakeholders. In Europe, educational systems, cultures, traditions, and policy priorities often differ significantly from country to country. Developing a policy paper requires discussion, negotiation, and consensus-building, allowing partners to define common values, priorities, and goals. In *SCHEME*, we have seen how this process itself strengthens collaboration and mutual understanding across the sector. How do policy papers work when you look more closely, and how are they made to actually have an effect?

- A well-formulated policy paper *allows a sector to speak with a clear and coherent voice* when participating in conferences and interacting with European institutions such as the European Commission, the European Parliament, and national ministries. Even in policy areas where the European Union has limited formal competence – such as education and culture – policy papers can still have considerable influence. By presenting evidence, identifying challenges, and proposing concrete recommendations, they can shape discussions around European programmes, strategic initiatives, and funding frameworks.
- Policy papers *increase the visibility and legitimacy* of a sector within the broader policy landscape. By linking specific concerns within music education to wider societal priorities – such as social inclusion, innovation, sustainability, or wellbeing – policy papers help demonstrate music education's contribution to broader European objectives.
- Finally, they provide *strategic guidance* for a sector's own organisations and institutions. They offer a reference point that can help *align national and institutional strategies* with wider European developments, while also identifying areas where international collaboration and joint initiatives may be beneficial.

Every seven years the European Union decides on its long-term budget, the so-called *Multiannual Financial Framework* (*MFF*). For the *MFF* for 2028–2034, the process started in July 2025 as the European Commission presented its proposal and initiated negotiations. The *MFF* is particularly important as it is accompanied by a large number of new political initiatives. It is the moment when EU recalibrates its strategy for the coming period. Whereas the previous *MFF* processes for 2014–2020 and 2021–2027 were to a large extent a continuation of previous priorities, the *MFF* for 2028–2034 is heavily influenced by current geopolitical tensions, and a stronger demand for an independent Europe that can compete internationally while at the same time maintaining the development towards a more sustainable continent. An important element of the new strategy is the concept of deregulation and simplification – according to the EU Commission – to boost agility and results. The current 52 funding programmes are to be reduced to 16. For one of the smallest budget lines in the budget – culture and education – this presents a serious challenge.

Once the proposal of the *MFF* is published, the budgetary authority of the EU – composed of the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union – begins its internal deliberations. The European Parliament works out its negotiation position through numerous consultations with Parliament committees and societal stakeholders led by the Committee on Budgets. At the same time, the Council of the European Union, representing the Member States, carries out its own review of the proposal and adopts its common position, which will serve as the basis for negotiations with the Parliament (European Union, n. d.). As the final *MFF* will be negotiated between the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, for organisations like *AEC*, *EAS* and *EMU* it is necessary to seek influence on the outcome at both levels. This makes the structure of *SCHEME* particularly useful since all three organisations have active bodies at both European and national levels which enables consistent communication targeting 'both sides' of the negotiation table. Another key element is the creation of ambassadors for one's cause – people who can communicate the message to others and help broaden its impact.

Finally, we – as the *SCHEME* group – present *core advocacy messages* to underline the wider societal relevance of strengthening music teacher education in all our negotiations. The core messages demonstrate that investment in music education and the music teaching profession is a shared interest of all *SCHEME* members. It is not only an educational priority but also a strategic contribution to cultural vitality, social cohesion and individual development across Europe.

(1) *We emphasise the importance of strengthening the status of music teacher education*. Ensuring adequate training capacity and supporting clear professional development pathways can help improve the status and the attractiveness of the profession, thereby, contributing to a more sustainable supply of qualified teachers.

(2) *We highlight that good quality and wide-ranging music teacher education contributes to a stronger and more diverse music life for the benefit of all people*. Music teachers should be able to work across a wide range of genres, traditions and communities. By equipping teachers with competencies that reflect the diversity and evolving nature of contemporary musical life – including intercultural awareness, digital literacy and innovative pedagogies – education systems can support vibrant and sustainable music cultures at local, national and European levels.

(3) *We advocate for greater diversity, equity and inclusion in primary and secondary education, as well as in music schools*. Teacher education programmes which prepare educators to work with learners from diverse cultural, social and educational backgrounds are essential for ensuring that music education is accessible to all children and young people.

(4) *We stress the need for a more integrated policy perspective on music education at European level*. Music learning takes place across a wide spectrum of contexts, including formal education systems, publicly funded music schools, and non-formal or informal learning environments: a broad music ecosystem. Effective policy engagement should, therefore, recognise the interdependence of these sectors and promote stronger connections between them, in order to aid coherent policy development and to maximise the societal impact of music education initiatives across Europe.

Together, these core advocacy messages underline that strengthening music teacher education is a key lever for advancing cultural participation, educational innovation and social well-being, and that coordinated policy action – both at European and national level – can play an important role in enabling this development.

***Advocating by Exchanging Quality Working Material & by Benchmarking***

In addition to the structural cooperation within *SCHEME*, European funding programmes also enable joint projects that contribute to the development of the music education sector. Such projects not only foster exchange and innovation, but also lead to the development of *materials, guidelines and reference frameworks* that can be used to support advocacy, e. g. they are used to ensure quality in music education at different levels. This strategy assumes that if music lessons are delivered to a high standard, or if professionalisation of music teachers is excellent, then the value of music education is evident to all involved.

In the coming months, the three-year *Erasmus+* project *TEAM – Teacher Education Academy for Music: Future-Making, Mobility and Networking in Europe*[1] – will be completed. Numerous *EAS* member institutions are collaborating as a consortium in the *TEAM* project, and its results are intended to directly benefit *EAS* members. With regard to the strategy of benchmarking and materials, we refer here to two examples from *TEAM*: *TEAM* has formulated *Learning Outcomes for Music Teacher Education in Europe* (De Baets et al., 2026, in this volume). Such a resource can be used by member states and teacher education institutions to strengthen the importance of their subject and to establish benchmarks for high-quality music teacher education. In addition, *TEAM* has developed numerous open educational resources (OERs), which are *materials* for school music lessons and for teacher training and professional development. These OERs address highly topical issues for which new and, above all, research-based learning and teaching materials are still urgently needed. For example, OERs on the topics of digitisation, sustainability, and democratic education are currently being published and are freely available to all music teachers in Europe.

The benchmarking dynamic is also evident in the development of the *MusiQuE – Music Quality Enhancement framework* at European level. Initiated by *AEC*, *EMU* and Pearle* (the European federation representing employers in the performing arts sector), and later joined by *EAS*, *MusiQuE* has developed a subject-specific approach to quality enhancement within the music education sector (Prchal, 2008). Through the creation of standards and review procedures for higher music education institutions, schools, music schools and pre-college programmes, the framework has contributed to a shared understanding of quality that reflects the particular artistic, educational and cultural characteristics of music education. By providing common reference points across different types of institutions, this work has strengthened dialogue between sectors and supported greater coherence within the music education landscape. At the same time, such jointly developed frameworks can serve as an important basis for advocacy, as they demonstrate that the field itself takes responsibility for defining, reflecting and continuously improving its own standards at European level.

An equally important task is the translation of European frameworks and project results into national and regional contexts. This often requires work that continues beyond the duration of projects and involves dialogue, adaptation and exchange between organisations, institutions and practitioners. For example, following the development of new *MusiQuE* standards (*MusiQuE*, 2025), *EMU* is currently working with its member countries to explore how these standards can be applied in the context of music and arts schools in the

[1] *TEAM – Teacher Education Academy for Music: Future-Making, Mobility and Networking in Europe* (https://teacher-academy-music.eu/) is funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are, however, those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

respective member countries. Such processes show that the impact of European collaboration depends not only on the creation of common frameworks, but also on continued communication, adaptation and exchange in order to bring them into practice.

## Outlook

Looking ahead, the future of music education in Europe will depend on the ability of stakeholders to sustain and expand the advocacy strategies outlined in this paper whilst, at the same time, adapting to ongoing societal, technological, and political transformations. Despite the structural challenges described – such as teacher shortages, uneven access, and shifting curricular priorities – there are strong reasons to remain optimistic about the continued relevance of music as both an artistic discipline and a core element of cultural education.

Music, as a form of human expression and cultural practice, will remain central to how individuals – and especially young people – understand themselves and relate to others. In an increasingly complex and post-digital world, music offers unique opportunities for creativity, emotional expression, and social connection that cannot be fully replaced by other subjects. The participatory and collaborative nature of music-making continues to foster essential competences such as empathy, communication, and intercultural understanding, all of which are crucial for democratic societies. For younger generations in particular, music plays a key role in identity formation and cultural participation. Whether through formal education, non-formal learning environments, or digital platforms, young people engage with music in diverse and evolving ways. This highlights the importance of ensuring that education systems remain responsive and inclusive, integrating contemporary musical practices, digital tools, and diverse cultural perspectives into teaching and learning processes. At the same time, the long-term sustainability of music education will require continued investment in teacher education, improved professional conditions, and stronger institutional cooperation across sectors. European collaboration – through networks, research, and shared frameworks – will remain a vital driver for innovation and quality development. Advocacy must therefore continue to operate at multiple levels, combining evidence-based arguments, public engagement, and strategic policy influence.

Ultimately, securing the future of music education is not only an educational task but a societal one. By recognising music as both an art form and a vital component of cultural life, policymakers, educators, and communities can ensure that it remains accessible, meaningful, and transformative for generations to come.

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# APPENDIX I:

# WORK PACKAGE 5 SCHOOL INTERNSHIPS ABROAD AND MENTORING

## Design Principles for School Internships Abroad & Mentoring

### *(A) – Internship Formats, Structures & Learning Offers*

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | **Clarity is Key**<br>Clarify expectations, framing, and requirements for the school internship abroad (SIA) formally and concretely.<br>• Is the IA mandatory or voluntary, and how does this impact the structure and content of the SIA?<br>• Determine who is sending and who is receiving – who are the partners?<br>• Provide resources and materials to facilitate clarity, such as infosheets and checklists.<br>• Provide written records of requirements and expectations for the SIA, e. g. Learning Agreements. |
| 2 | **Inter-Institutional Collaboration**<br>Host and home institutional interaction at all SIA phases (before, during, after).<br>• Specify the contact persons for the collaborating institutions.<br>• Keep a formal record of all communication and specify the means of informal communication (e. g. WhatsApp).<br>• Include the mentor teacher (MT) where possible and/or necessary in the specification of internship content. |
| 3 | **Holistic Cultural Engagement Beyond the School**<br>SIAs that provide holistic cultural engagement and immersive experiences offer student teachers (STs) opportunities for intercultural learning, e. g.:<br>• Attending cultural events<br>• Exploring the city<br>• Deepening cultural-historical understanding of the region and host school |
| 4 | **Teachering**<br>Engaging in School Life Beyond the Classroom<br>• Provide opportunities for STs to engage with host institution musical and non-musical activities beyond the classroom.<br>• Include STs in faculty-related activities where possible (professional development, staff meetings).<br>• Encourage faculty to engage with the ST where possible. |
| 5 | **Embracing Multilinguality in the Music Classroom**<br>• Clarify the language of communication.<br>• Consider music as a means of communication.<br>• Explore means of communication (non- and paraverbal communication, technology-related, etc.). |

The OERs listed in Appendices A–G can also be downloaded here: https://oer.mdw.ac.at/oer/collections/3ba78ede-a4b7-4177-9205-d8fd3ea3939b

### *(B) – Mentoring, Teaching & Teachering Content*[2]

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | **Become Visible as Internship School**<br>Provide multiple forms of information.<br>• Provide visual information, website, virtual tour of learning facilities and resources, contacts, school or teacher profile. |
| 2 | **Connect and Prepare**<br>Lay the groundwork of the internship abroad with care.<br>• Take enough time for an introductory conversation[2] in which the MT explains the school context and daily life; the role and content of music lessons; curriculum and unit design; desired teaching methods and the balance between instruction and collaborative work; planning and assessing; materials and learning resources … |
| 3 | **Clarify and Agree**<br>Establish the responsibilities of the ST, MT, and sending institution.<br>• Meet to discuss expectations and desired learning outcomes (university teacher, MT, and ST) together, if applicable.<br>• Take enough time to answer all questions and ideas that the ST may have. |
| 4 | **Create a Supportive Learning Environment**<br>Support the ST's learning in an international setting away from home.<br>• Keep in mind the lack of peer context or personal support system; consider offering local cultural context and connecting the ST to others.<br>• Encourage ongoing dialogue between all stakeholders (in sending and receiving institutions). |
| 5 | **Explore Music Teaching Beliefs and Philosophies**<br>Discuss the "why".<br>• Share examples of diverse music teaching philosophies and discuss their potential impact on teacher practice and student learning outcomes.<br>• Encourage STs to create and reflect on their general teaching philosophy and values in Music Education (ME), including overarching aims and objectives. |
| 6 | **Encourage Dialogue on (Musical) Links**<br>Reflect upon home and host countries/institutions.<br>• Address and discuss the ST's previous experiences of intercultural contexts (at school, in professional settings, and beyond).<br>• Provide reflection tools for intercultural learning experiences.<br>• Explore the role that music plays and how music is taught in a different context. |
| 7 | **Move Gradually**<br>Grow from observation to independent teaching.<br>• Offer observation of your teaching to the ST to clarify questions, norms, atmosphere, and the ability of students.<br>• Offer opportunities for 1–1, small group, co-teaching, and full-class responsibilities.<br>• Offer additional observation of colleagues (musical and non-musical subjects). |

[2] https://oer.mdw.ac.at/oer/publication/5cab69ce-b0ee-4fe2-8bd9-a044ccc58ac1

| | |
|---|---|
| 8 | **Unlock the Artist**<br>Feature the ST as an artist.<br>• Provide opportunities for the ST to share and implement their musical and artistic personalities, interests, skills, and competences in school. |
| 9 | **Share Terminology**<br>Support adaptation of teaching in a foreign language.<br>• Offer teaching material in English (or another shared language of instruction) so that music-related technical terms, songs, and further materials can be used effectively from the start.<br>• Trust that the mentee will learn quickly; language adaptation takes time.<br>• Encourage clear and concise verbal communication in key teaching moments (e. g. when setting a task). |
| 10 | **Embrace Non-Verbal Forms of Musical Communication**<br>Do more, talk less.<br>• Encourage STs to take advantage of the SIA to develop communication through music and other non-verbal means.<br>• Facilitate learning processes without relying on verbal instruction. |
| 11 | **Model Reflective Practice**<br>Highlight its importance for professional development.<br>• Demonstrate your own self-reflection methods and tools and highlight their benefits.<br>• Support the ST in systematically documenting experiences (lesson planning, feedback, personal learning and insights).<br>• Highlight current collaborative reflective practices (collegial exchanges, participation in online teacher-support groups, supervision groups). |
| 12 | **Provide Constructive Feedback**<br>Discuss music-didactic practices.<br>• Address metacognition: clarify and explain the patterns and reasoning behind teaching strategies.<br>• Create space for regular conversation and reflection via the medium that works best for everyone.<br>• Encourage the use of tools for self-reflection (e. g. voice-memo prompts, photo-journal prompts) and self-assessment (e. g. lists of teacher competencies). |
| 13 | **Share Learning**<br>Facilitate Peer Mentoring<br>• Support peer learning among STs through group reflection.<br>• Facilitate interdisciplinary networking (student teachers teach student teachers). |
| 14 | **Stay a Learner**<br>Learn from each other – share learning opportunities.<br>• Benefit from what STs bring from their home institutions, personal skills, and experiences with different musical styles.<br>• Raise awareness of local strengths (music educational offerings, school culture, contextual traditions and requirements, etc.).<br>• Seek feedback for yourself as MT (reciprocal mentoring). |

| 15 | **Act as a Team Player**<br>Develop collaborative learning and working skills in school settings.<br>• Involve STs in collaborative work such as school curriculum design, planning school events, projects, field trips, etc.<br>• Discuss how effective teams work: ensuring all voices are heard, developing listening skills, establishing clear feedback policies.<br>• Give insight into faculty peer-learning and collaboration structures between teachers at your school. |
|---|---|

## Introductory Conversation Guide

***A reflective and planning guide for music education students participating in a school internship abroad***

**General note:** Begin with the ★ questions (discuss together). Each non-starred question is labelled for *student teacher* or *mentor teacher*. Write notes in the corresponding columns. Sections may be revisited throughout the internship.

| Student Teacher Notes | Guiding Questions | Mentor Teacher Notes |
|---|---|---|
| | **1. Context & Orientation** | |
| Notes: | ★ How would you describe the educational and music education system in this school environment? | Notes: |
| Notes: | ★ Which cultural, linguistic, or curricular features are most important to know to complete this internship successfully? | Notes: |
| Notes: | (Mentor Teacher) What are the key characteristics of this school (type of school, students/age groups, music programme, schedule, particular policies, classroom routines, cultural norms)? | Notes: |
| | **2. Aspirations & Professional Growth (expectations, hopes, challenges)** | |
| Notes: | ★ What mutual expectations do you have for a successful internship experience? | Notes: |
| Notes: | (Student Teacher) What specific competencies do you hope to develop/gain during this internship? | Notes: |
| Notes: | (Student Teacher) What feels familiar, and what areas are you eager to explore or find challenging? | Notes: |

| 3. Roles, Activities & Participation | | |
|---|---|---|
| Notes: | ★ What teaching and observation schedule is realistic (hours, groups, repertoire, workload)?<br>★ Is there a preferred type of content/group the student teacher wants to teach (due to previous experience)? | Notes: |
| Notes: | (Student Teacher) In what ways will the student teacher participate in school life beyond the classroom? How does the student teacher feel about participating in teaching beyond the classroom? | Notes: |
| Notes: | (Mentor Teacher) What does the first/typical school day look like, including expectations beyond classroom time (meetings, activities, etc., …)? | Notes: |
| **4. Communication & Feedback** | | |
| Notes: | (Student Teacher) How do you prefer to receive mentor feedback (timing, format, reflective dialogue)? | Notes: |
| Notes: | (Mentor Teacher) In which way would you like to be supported by your mentor (teaching preparation, access to materials/resources, musical pedagogical practice, reflection, etc.)? Is there anything your mentor should know about you? | Notes: |

| 5. Language, Preparation & Logistics | | |
|---|---|---|
| Notes: | ★ What is the language of instruction during the internship, and how will language be managed? | Notes: |
| Notes: | (Student Teacher) What preparation or materials are needed before or early in the internship? | Notes: |
| Notes: | (Student Teacher) Are there concerns related to language use, logistics, or intercultural adaptation? | Notes: |
| Notes: | (Mentor Teacher) Are the expectations and requirements related to the internship, learning agreements, and assessment clearly communicated? | Notes: |

**Additional note:**

- Any other concerns or questions for right now?
- What are you particularly looking forward to?

*This worksheet reflects TEAM's focus on shared reflective practice, professional learning, and meaningful international mobility.*

## Cultural Reflection Tree

### *A reflective exercise for music education students participating in a school internship abroad*

**General note:** This exercise invites you to explore your own cultural identity – including your musical background and understanding of music education – through the image of a tree. You should begin working on it in *preparation for departure*, but you may also return to it *during your internship* and *after you return* as well. What you take for granted in everyday life and communication, as well as in music education – e.g., repertoire, teacher-student relationships, the role of technique or improvisation – is not neutral, but reflects roots, values, and habits that often become more visible when you encounter a different system.

### Draw your tree — and write in your own words what belongs in each part:

| ROOTS | TRUNK | LEAVES |
|---|---|---|
| Origin; a sense of belonging to one or more cultural groups. For example:<br>national/regional background(s) • family & community • musical tradition(s) • education system | Values that are important in your cultural context(s). For example:<br>respect, discipline, creativity … • role of teacher & student • product vs. process orientation | Visible cultural expressions or signs:<br>language & communication style • repertoire & instruments • rituals & habits • dress, gesture, symbols |

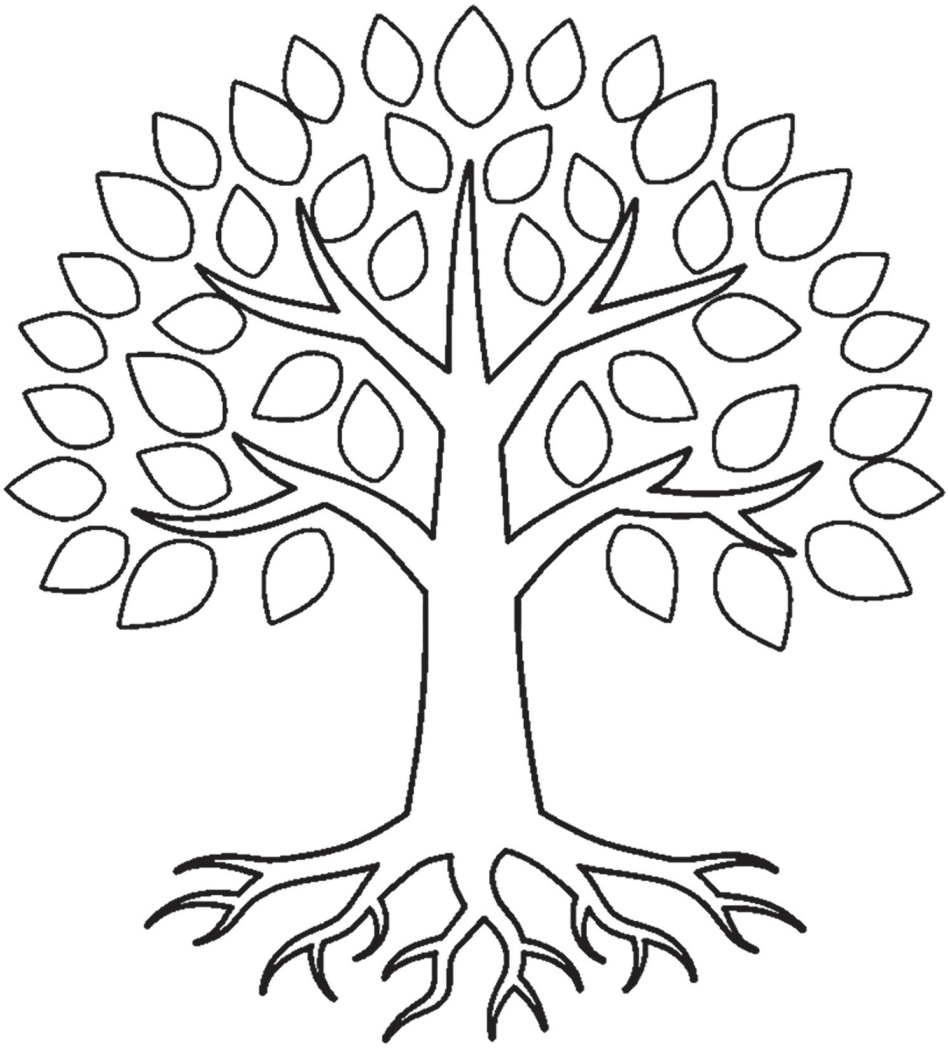
### *Using the exercise in three phases:*

| Phase 1 – Before | Phase 2 – During | Phase 3 – After |
|---|---|---|
| *Draw your tree*<br>• Complete individually before departure<br>• You are welcome to bring it to introductory meeting with your mentor teacher<br>• Keep it – you will return to it | *Update & notice*<br>• Observe what surprises you<br>• Add new leaves, roots, or values as you become aware of them<br>• Note tensions or questions | *Compare & reflect*<br>• What changed, if anything?<br>• Your tree might assist your debrief reflection or portfolio |

### Possible reflection questions:

| Phase 1 – Before | Phases 2 & 3 – During & After |
|---|---|
| • Which cultural group(s) do you belong to? Are your roots multiple?<br>• Which values feel most central to your identity as a musician and teacher?<br>• What assumptions are you bringing about music education abroad? | • What surprised you in the host school – and what does that reveal about your own roots?<br>• Were any of your values challenged? How did you respond?<br>• What did you learn about your own musical education that you could not have learned without going abroad? |

**Sources:** *UNESCO Intercultural Competences Framework (2013); PRACTICE Project, Erasmus+ No. 2018-1-IT02-KA201-048442 (practice-school.eu). Adapted for music education internships abroad.*



*Adapted by Work Package 5 of the TEAM project for music education internships abroad.
Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those
of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union.
The European Union cannot be held responsible for them.*

## Voice Memo Prompts

***A reflective journal for music education students participating in a school internship abroad***

**General note:** It is very important that you reflect on your experiences during your school internship abroad. Each reflection should take no more than four to five minutes, and can be recorded daily, or at least every other day – a minimum of three times a week.
You can record your thoughts in a reflective journal or on a recording device to listen back to later. If recording, you might want to make some notes beforehand, or you can just speak freely.

**If you need some help getting started, here are some things you could think about:**

- What were my most memorable impressions since my last voice memo?
- What was particularly interesting about them? What have I learned about myself as a music teacher?

**Below are a series of questions that might help you reflect more deeply on your SIA experiences:**

- Are my initial SIA expectations being met? If so, or if not, in what ways?
- Are there similarities or differences between what I already know about being a teacher and my SIA experience? (In thinking about this, you may also reflect on your developing teacher identity.)
- Are there similarities or differences between music teaching and learning in my own context and in the SIA experience? (In thinking about this, you may also reflect on your developing teaching philosophy.)
- What knowledge and skills am I bringing into the SIA from my own context (subject-specific knowledge, musicking skills, personal wisdom, technical expertise)?

**If you are on an SIA together with another student teacher, you may additionally ask yourself:**

- What did I learn from my fellow student teachers as "peers" and what did they learn from me?
- How does having "student teachers as peers" support me during my internship? (where applicable)

**For long-term SIA (3+ weeks), you may additionally consider responding to the following questions:**

- What has changed or shifted for me during my internship? In what ways has this changed? Please specify the reasons.
- How have the knowledge and skills I brought into the SIA from my own context (subject-specific knowledge, personal wisdom, technical expertise) changed as I applied them in the new context?
- What knowledge, skills, impressions and values will I take back to my home institution? In what ways will they be useful back home?
- Looking back at the start of my student teaching experience, in which specific areas have I grown the most, and how can I continue to improve in these areas?

**Final note:**

- As the SIA reaches its end, what are the key lessons regarding becoming a music teacher that you will take with you?
- What did you contribute to your SIA that you are particularly proud of?

## Photo Journal Prompts

***A reflective journal for music education students participating in a school internship abroad***

**General note:** It is well-documented that reflection deepens learning and is an important part of teacher training. One way to reflect and document your reflection is by keeping a photo journal during your school internship abroad. This will give you another way to remember your time in the host school and host country, and can help you reflect on what was important to you, and why.

Be on the lookout for concrete things you can photograph that encapsulate what you're learning. For example, perhaps a classroom was set up in a way you had never seen before and you found it worked well. You might take a picture of the set-up and include it in your journal. But please don't stop there: make notes and say why you think it was effective, what it made possible, and maybe why it is so different from the classrooms at home. This can help you to think about what priorities and goals you have as a teacher, as well as what some underlying differences in music education between your home country and the host country might be. The photos do not have to have positive connotations. If you want to document learning a hard lesson, or something you found unpleasant, that's of course also fine.

Some ideas to get you started:

- Places in the school: room set-ups, instruments, special equipment or facilities, common areas, students working on projects or in ensemble rehearsals, teachers teaching, particular teaching materials, etc.
- Cultural places: concert halls where you enjoyed a meaningful concert, art museums, etc.
- Around the city: something on your commute to school, a park you enjoyed, etc.
- … and anything else that was significant to you.

### Further Considerations

- You might want to take many photos to remember your time, but these will not all necessarily belong in the photo journal. In your photo journal you will want to include visual documentation of people, places, or events that were particularly significant during your school internship abroad. Only you can decide which photos these should be.

- Your photo journal – meaning your selected photos and the notes you've written about them – can be formatted however you like, but it's best to keep everything in one place so you can look through it easily and don't have to search for individual components.
- One thing to keep in mind when keeping a photo journal is that different schools have different rules about photography. It is your responsibility to find out what the policy is at your host school. Please ask your mentor teacher explicitly about the school's photo policy, and exercise good judgment and sensitivity when photographing others. Please refrain from posting pictures of others on social media without their permission.
- This photo journal can help you to reflect both alone and together with your mentor teacher and/or university advisor, and will hopefully serve as a memory keeper of your school internship abroad that you can look back on for many years to come.

## Debrief Conversation Guide

***A conversation guide for music education students in school internships abroad***

**General note:** Use this exercise as a self-reflection tool (written or recorded) or as a structured conversation guide between student and university educator. Suitable for final evaluations, *Erasmus* reports, and research assessments. Select 4–5 photos from the internship (see Photo Journal Prompts – Appendix E) before beginning.

| Layer 1<br>Question / Prompt | Layer 2<br>Rationale | Layer 3<br>Interviewer guidance |
|---|---|---|
| **1. Introduction** | | |
| Identify who is speaking/ writing. Note date and time. | *Establishes framing and purpose of the tool for learning and future SIA design.* | Welcome the participant. Introduce the tool. Clarify who holds the results and how they will be used. |
| **2. Opening Narrative** | | |
| Recall the whole arc of your internship – from the first moment of anticipation to today. Which moments were most formative, positive or negative? Describe the situation, its importance, and its effect on you as a teacher. | *Generates narrative reflection to deepen learning; the why and how matter more than description of events.* | Wait before prompting – let silence work.<br>• Repeat their last words exactly<br>• "Can you give me a concrete example?"<br>• "Why is this important to you?"<br>• "Anything else worth mentioning?" |
| **3. Peer Learning** | | |
| If placed with a peer: how did you collaborate? Was it a support or a challenge? Did you reflect together on your experiences? | *Elicits reflection on peer dynamics – mutual learning, co-construction, and the added complexity of shared placements.* | Probe further using the Layer 1 prompts.<br>Raise if not yet addressed. |
| **4. Photo Reflection** | | |
| Look at your selected photos. Why did you choose each one? What aspects do they capture? | *Photos act as consolidation anchors – they surface experiences that language alone may not reach.* | Ask per photo: Where? What were you doing? What were you feeling? Do they show something not yet mentioned? |

| 5. Mentoring and Collaboration | | |
|---|---|---|
| When and how did your mentor support you? Where might more support have helped? How did you work with other teachers or educational staff beyond classroom teaching? | *Current mentoring theory emphasises reciprocal and peer mentoring – mutual learning between mentor and mentee. Explores how this played out in the SIA context.* | Probe further using Layer 1 prompts. |
| **6. Cultural Dimensions** | | |
| Where did you notice differences from your home context – lessons, students, colleagues, school culture? How did you respond? Was the Cultural Reflection Tree (Appendix C) helpful? | *Immersive intercultural experiences are transformative for prospective teachers. Explores development of intercultural awareness and transferable cross-cultural competencies.* | Probe further using Layer 1 prompts. |
| **7. Language as a Barrier** | | |
| What was it like to teach in a foreign language? How did you cope? What advice would you give to others in the same situation? | *Language barriers can impede integration and lead to underperformance relative to domestic peers. Explores specific impediments and coping strategies developed.* | Probe further using Layer 1 prompts. |
| **8. Conclusions** | | |
| What's next? How might this internship influence your professional and personal development? What learning goals or next steps could you imagine for your next placement at home? "The 3 most important things that contributed to the success of my internship were …" | *Forward-oriented consolidation. Connects experience to continued professional development and next steps.* | Ask: "Is there anything important that has not been touched on yet?"<br>Allow time for small talk – important things often surface here. Take notes. |

**Methodological note:** Throughout the reflection, prioritise the why and how over descriptive narration. All sections apply to both interview and self-reflection formats. The tool may be audio-recorded or completed in writing.

## Checklist for Language-Sensitive Music Teaching

***Practical Tools for music education students participating in a school internship abroad***

**"Just do it!" Trust your good communication skills on one hand; prepare yourself deliberately on the other.**

| | |
|---|---|
| **1.** | Acquire key subject-specific vocabulary in English (or the language of instruction) in advance. |
| **2.** | Plan key moments of your explanations very carefully and formulate them in advance (write them down!). |
| **3.** | Students may have varying levels of English; keep this in mind, as it can sometimes be difficult to assess early on and in the moment. |
| **4.** | Gather plenty of teaching and music-making materials and ideas in advance that require little language use. Especially when it comes to speaking in music lessons, "less" is truly often "more." |
| **5.** | Draw on all available means to achieve clarity in communication, such as gestures, facial expressions, conducting cues, changes of position in the room, and using objects or pictures for illustration. Consider establishing rituals, routines and signals together with the students. |
| **6.** | Be aware that there are often significant differences between national and regional contexts regarding physical proximity, touch, and non-verbal communication. Observe your mentors and the students carefully at the beginning, and don't hesitate to ask if needed. |
| **7.** | When observing lessons taught in the local language (e.g. by your mentor), use the opportunity to pay attention to communication that is not verbal – you will notice that a great deal is conveyed at this level! |

# APPENDIX II:

# WORK PACKAGE 8
# MAPPING MUSIC EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

## Music Lessons in European Schools

Appendix H provides a more detailed overview of music provision across 29 European contexts. In addition to indicating whether music is offered as a compulsory, optional, or integrated subject (i. e. arts education), the appendix includes information on the number of lessons allocated to music at different stages of schooling, together with explanatory comments that help to interpret national specificities.

As the appendix demonstrates, the diversity of music provision across Europe is considerable. Music is generally included from the beginning of formal schooling, but the duration, timetable allocation, and organisational arrangements vary substantially between countries. In most cases, music is compulsory in primary education and continues into lower secondary education, whereas provision at upper secondary level shows the greatest variation. Some countries retain music as a compulsory subject until the final years of schooling, while others offer it only as an elective or within specialist pathways.

The number of weekly lessons also differs markedly. Primary education typically includes one or two music lessons per week, although the allocation may vary from year to year within the same level. In lower secondary education, provision often remains at approximately one lesson per week, sometimes complemented by optional ensembles or extra-curricular activities. In upper secondary education, music may range from no compulsory provision to several lessons per week in arts-oriented programmes or schools.

These differences reflect not only national curriculum priorities but also varying degrees of school autonomy. In many countries, schools have considerable flexibility in organising music education, depending on factors such as teacher expertise, type of school and traditions, available resources, and the broader cultural context. As a result, music may be taught as a standalone subject, offered as an optional course, or integrated with other artistic or curricular areas.

| **Primary school** | **Lower secondary school** | **Upper secondary school** |
|---|---|---|
| COMPULSORY | COMPULSORY | COMPULSORY |
| OPTIONAL | OPTIONAL | OPTIONAL |
| INTEGRATED (I) | INTEGRATED (I) | INTEGRATED (I) |
| NO MUSIC | NO MUSIC | NO MUSIC |

° Every row presents one lesson

| COUNTRIES | | Music lessons | AGE RANGE | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| AUSTRIA | AT | ° | | I | I | I | I | | | | | | | | | |
| | | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

*Primary:* one hour per week; a second hour is dedicated to choir or music is integrated into other learning areas. *Upper secondary:* final year students choose between art or music; those who choose music have 2 hours per week. Secondary schools with a music focus (i. e. specialist music middle schools and high schools, music-focused schools ) offer more hours, but the range differs substantially (from 2 hours to 4–5 hours per week.)

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| BERLIN (GERMANY) | DE | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

*Primary:* Students receive two music lessons per week. *Lower secondary:* Timetable allocation varies according to school type. Music is taught together with visual arts, with a joint allocation of between 1.5 and 3 hours per week. The average for music lessons is 1 hour per week. *Upper secondary:* students must choose one arts subject – music, visual arts, or drama – and can take it either as a regular course with 3 hours per week or as an advanced course with 5 hours per week for their Abitur (final upper secondary exams) studies.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA | BA | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

*Primary and lower secondary:* Music education is compulsory in primary schools, but the number of weekly classes varies. Each canton or entity in BiH sets its own educational guidelines, leading to variations in the number of music classes.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| BULGARIA | BG | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

*Primary and lower secondary:* one music lesson per week. *Upper secondary:* music is optional (0–2 hours per week). Specialised schools offer extended study.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CATALONIA (SPAIN) | ES | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

*Primary:* Music is a compulsory subject with at least 1 lesson per week taught by a music specialist teacher. Each school is responsible for offering additional music education in line with its own educational project. *Lower secondary:* Music is compulsory in three of the four years. Schools decide in which years to offer the subject. *Upper secondary:* Multiple pathways exist, but music is only offered in some arts-track options.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CROATIA | HR | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

*Primary:* Students receive one hour of compulsory music education throughout the eight years of primary school. *Upper secondary*: Music is a compulsory subject throughout all four years in classical, linguistic and general gymnasiums. In science- and mathematics-oriented programmes, it is offered only in the first two years of the programme.

| COUNTRIES | | Music lessons | AGE RANGE | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| CYPRUS | CY | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

*Primary and lower secondary:* Two music lessons per week. *Upper secondary:* One music lesson in the first year only. In the final two years, music is available only to those students who choose music as a specialist subject, usually those who wish to pursue further studies in music.

| CZECH REPUBLIC | CZ | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

*Upper secondary:* Music is often an elective subject, with students choosing it based on interest. Some schools may offer specialised programmes. Music education is taught only at grammar schools (gymnázium), where it is allocated 2 hours per week for the first two years. It is not taught in the 3rd or 4th year. In secondary pedagogical schools, it is compulsory and allocated 2 hours per week throughout all four years.

| ESTONIA | EE | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

*Upper secondary:* there are 3 compulsory courses (1 course = 35 lessons of 45 min), which can be organised as one music lesson per week or in intensive cycles.

| FINLAND | FI | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

*Lower secondary:* usually 1–2 hours compulsory until 8th grade, optional in 9th grade. *Upper secondary:* one course in either music or visual arts is compulsory. This requirement can be fulfilled during the second or third year of upper secondary school education. In music-oriented schools, music is compulsory throughout.

| FLANDERS (BELGIUM) | BE | ° | | | I | I | I | I | I | I | I | I | I | I | I | I |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

*Primary:* Music is integrated in the subject *Muzische vorming* (Creative and expressive education). As music is integrated with the other arts subjects, it is difficult to weekly timetable allocation. *Lower secondary:* Music is integrated in the subject *Artistieke vorming* (Artistic education). Depending on the study trajectory and the school, the subject is allotted 0 to 2 hours/week. *Upper secondary:* Music is integrated in the subject *Artistieke vorming* (Artistic education). Depending on the study trajectory and the school, the subject is allotted 0 to 1 hours/week.

| GREECE | GR | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

*Primary and lower secondary:* Music is a compulsory subject and is taught once a week. *Upper secondary school:* Music is not offered in general upper secondary schools – only in specialist music schools.

| COUNTRIES | | Music lessons | AGE RANGE | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| HUNGARY | HU | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

*Primary:* Generally, students receive two weekly music lessons. However, some primary schools offer a special music curriculum, where pupils attend four additional music classes per week. *Lower secondary:* One hour per week in grades 6–8. *Upper secondary:* Music is compulsory in the first two years but is optional thereafter. In both cases, music is typically allocated one lesson per week.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| IRELAND | IE | ° | | I | I | I | I | I | I | I | | | | | | |
| | | ° | | I | I | I | I | I | I | I | | | | | | |

*Primary:* Time allocation for Integrated Arts Education is stated in the curriculum as 9 hours over 4 weeks. Music is integrated with Art and Drama and is not taught as a stand alone subject. The class teacher decides on how the time is divided between Music, Art and Drama.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ITALY | IT | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

*Upper secondary:* While music is not a mandatory subject in most upper secondary schools, extracurricular music programmes, school choirs, and orchestras are sometimes available. Students particularly interested in music usually attend a Liceo Musicale (Music High School), where they receive specialised education in the field.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| LATVIA | LV | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

*Primary school:* Grades 1 to 6 have two lessons per week. *Lower secondary:* Grades 7 to 9 – one lesson per week. *Upper secondary:* Music is offered as an elective subject.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| LITHUANIA | LT | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

*Upper secondary:* 1 hour per week until the age of 16. In the final two years (ages 17–18), students have 2 hours for arts (optional: music, art, theatre, dance or technology).

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| LUXEMBOURG | LU | ° | | I | I | I | I | I | I | | | | | | | |

*Primary:* One hour compulsory, integrated with visual arts. *Upper secondary:* Music becomes optional. However, some specialist pathways are available. Students following these pathways, particularly those also attending a music school/conservatory, may receive up to 15 hours of tuition per week. In schools offering the International Baccalaureate, arts education is compulsory from Primary through Grade 8, and optional thereafter. Some schools also offer the European Baccalaureate or Cambridge International prorammes (IGCSE and A Level), which offer comparable options at the Secondary level.

| COUNTRIES | | Music lessons | AGE RANGE | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| MONTENEGRO | ME | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

*Primary and lower secondary:* Music is compulsory across all nine grades of primary school. As an elective subject in the third cycle (grades 7–9), students can choose Music Workshop, an additional elective (2 classes per week). *Upper secondary:* The elective subject *Music My Language* is taught with two classes per week in the third and fourth grades.

| NETHERLANDS | NL | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

*Primary and lower secondary:* Music is one of the subjects within the compulsory Arts and Culture curriculum, however weekly timetable allocation is determined by the school. Music is compulsory in the first two years of lower secondary education, but only those preparing for higher education continue music into the third year. *Upper secondary:* Music is an optional subject at this level, but not all schools offer it. Where offered, it may be chosen as an examination subject. The information presented in the table above is in accordance with the most recent Dutch primary and secondary education reform and will come into effect from the 2027/2028 academic year. It will become mandatory for all schools from August 2031.

| NORWAY | NO | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

*Primary:* In Norway, each subject is given a specific time allocation for each subject across a programme. Schools have complete autonomy regarding the distribution of these hours. Music in primary education is allocated 285 hours in total. While the time allocated may vary from year to year, typically students receive on average about one hour of music per week. *Lower secondary:* 85 hours are allocated over the three year period. In some schools, students can choose additional classes through elective courses. *Upper secondary*: Music is optional but students can choose music as a specialised programme, where they receive up to 22 hours of music tuition per week. Some schools offer music as an elective subject, amounting to 1–3 hours per week.

| POLAND | PL | ° | | | I | I | I | I | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

*Primary and lower secondary:* Music is compulsory throughout primary school. However an integrated approach to the teaching of all subjects across the curriculum has been adopted for grades 1–3. The class teacher decides how these hours are distributed. From grades 4–7, teaching is subject-based. Music is allocated one hour per week each year. *Upper secondary:* Music is taught only in one year of the four-year programme.

| PORTUGAL | PT | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | ° | | | I | I | I | I | | | | | | | | |

*Primary:* Music is one of four arts subjects, alongside visual arts, drama/theatre, and dance. *Lower secondary:* Music is compulsory in the first two years only, and is taught by a specialist teacher. It may be offered as an optional subject during the final 3 years of lower secondary school.

| COUNTRIES | | Music lessons | AGE RANGE | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| SERBIA | RS | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| All students have one music lesson per week across all levels. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| SLOVAKIA | SK | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| *Upper secondary:* In the Gymnasium, which offers four- and five-year programmes, music is taught as part of a broader integrated subject called Art and Culture. In the National Educational Programme for upper secondary education, Art and Culture is mandatory with one music lesson per week, typically over two years. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| SLOVENIA | SI | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| *Primary:* In grades 1–3, students have two hours of music per week, while in grades 4–5 they have 1.5 hours per week. *Upper secondary*: In the first year of *gimnazija* music is an independent subject and is allocated 70 hours (52 as a compulsory subject and 18 as an elective subject). | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| SWEDEN | SE | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| *Primary and lower secondary:* Swedish schools have autonomy in the allocation of timetabled hours. The total number of hours are distributed across the years at the discretion of the school. Schools may allocate more or less hours to a particular subject in a given year, or operate a rotation system. Typically Music averages 40–60 mins per week. *Upper secondary:* Students accepted into the National Aesthetic Programme (Music) take subjects compulsory across all national programmes, with additional music hours varying according to individual choices and profile. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| SWITZERLAND | CH | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| *Primary and lower secondary:* The number of lessons varies by canton, ranging from 1–2 hours per week. *Upper secondary:* Students choose from various profiles; depending on their choice, music may not be offered at all or provided intensely,with up to 5 lessons per week. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| TÜRKIYE | TR | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | ° | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| *Lower secondary:* Music is compulsory at this level with a one-hour per week allocation. Students can also take an additional two hours of Music as an elective. *Upper secondary:* Music is offered as an elective course, serving as an alternative to the Visual Arts. If a student chooses music, they can take up to three hours of music in 9th and 10th grade and up to two hours in 11th and 12th grade as part of Arts Education. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

**Table 1:** Number of Music Lessons in the European Countries

# The Editors

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is full Professor of Music Education at the University of Music and performing Arts Vienna (mdw), Austria, where she leads the study programme for music education in secondary schools. She holds a Master's degree in music education and French, and a PhD in music education – both from mdw. She is past president of the *EAS*, has been the coordinator of the COMENIUS-3-Network *meNet*, and chair of the Editorial Board of *EAS*' book series European Perspectives on Music Education. Currently she is leading the ERASMUS Plus Teacher Academies project *TEAM* (Teacher Education Academy for Music), running 2023–2026 and connecting 13 music teacher education institutions from 10 countries. Research interests: mentoring in music, teacher professionalisation in school internships, sustainability, transculturality and design-based research.

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Simone Dudt studied cultural sciences in Hildesheim, Germany and Marseille, France focusing on Fine Arts and Music. She worked for the educational programmes of several museums and music schools. She has been working for the European Music Council since 2004. Today, she is Secretary General of the European Music Council in dual leadership with Ruth Jakobi. Ruth and Simone are responsible for *EMC*'s strategic development, for advocacy work in cultural policy, as well as for the planning and implementation of international cooperation projects. On behalf of the *EMC* she has been responsible for the implementation of the EU funded (*Music Moves Europe*) project *MusicAIRE*, a project that re-distributed EU funding for the post COVID recovery of the music sector. She is author of diverse articles on music and cultural policy as well as a speaker on these topics at European conferences.

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Natassa Economidou Stavrou is a Professor of Music Education in the Department of Education at the University of Nicosia. Her research interests focus on music curriculum design and implementation, student voice, early childhood music education, and music teacher education. She served as a board member of the International Society for Music Education (2020–24) and the European Association for Music in Schools (2015–19). Natassa is currently on the editorial boards of the International Journal of Music Education, the International Journal of Music in Early Childhood, and Music Education Research. Since 2012 she directs her own early childhood music centre, offering group music classes for children aged 6 months to seven years old.

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Solveig Fretheim is an associate professor of music at Nord University, Norway, where she teaches music education with a particular focus on interdisciplinary approaches and creativity. Her research interests include the philosophy of arts education, music and gender, and autoethnographic and narrative inquiry methodologies. She enjoys exploring what academia might be.

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Michaela Hahn's professional career brings together practice, research, and European advocacy in the field of music and art schools. For more than two decades, she directed the Music and Art School Management of Lower Austria, significantly shaping the country's largest music and art school system. Today she coordinates the *KOMU* (*Conference of Austrian Music Schools*) and works as Senior Scientist at the mdw – University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, where she pioneered the field as the first Professor of Music School Research (2018–2021). Internationally, she has served on the boards of *EMU* and *MusiQuE* and, in 2023, was elected President of *EMU*. In this role, she promotes the voice and active participation of young people and highlights the role of music and art schools as key drivers of social change.

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Ruth Jakobi has been Secretary General of the European Music Council (*EMC*) since September 2003 and today holds this position in dual leadership with Simone Dudt. The European Music Council, the regional group for Europe of the International Music Council, is the broadest umbrella organisation for musical life in Europe. Ruth Jakobi and Simone Dudt are jointly responsible for the strategic development of the *EMC* as a member organisation, as well as for cultural policy work and the planning of international cooperation projects. Ruth is currently coordinating *EMC*'s participation as co-leader in the *Creative Europe* co-funded project *GreenBeat Nexus*, which is part of the *Music Moves Europe* initiative, and she has been surving on the Scientific Advisory Board of the *TEAM project*. In addition to her work for the *EMC*, she serves as chairperson at the association supporting the Circus-school "Don Mehloni".

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## Finn Schumacker

*European Association of Music Academies*

Finn Schumacker is Executive Director of the *European Association of Music Academies* (*AEC*), the leading voice for Higher Music Education in Europe and beyond, consisting of more than 300 member institutions in 55 countries. His work focuses on strengthening the sector through collaboration, quality enhancement, mobility, career development, digital transformation, DEI, sustainability and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Born in Copenhagen, Denmark, Finn studied tuba at the Royal Danish Academy of Music. He was principal tubist with the Bavarian State Orchestra at the Munich Opera, working with leading singers and conductors including Wolfgang Sawallisch, Carlos Kleiber and Zubin Mehta. Since 1995, he has held senior leadership roles in Scandinavian cultural institutions, including General Manager of the Odense Symphony Orchestra and Rector of the Royal Academy of Music Aarhus, alongside extensive board experience in the cultural sector.

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European Association for Music in Schools

European Perspectives on Music Education 17

Isolde Malmberg, Thade Buchborn, Lauren Steinmetz (Eds.)

# Future-making, Mobility and Networking in Europe

## Impulses for Music Education in School, Teacher Education and Professional Development

Future-making, Mobility and Networking in Europe: Impulses for Music Education in School, Teacher Education and Professional Development will present perspectives and perceptions of music education today connected to our TEAM project theme: sustainability, democratic education and digital music making in music education; students' mobility; internships abroad; learning outcomes for music teacher education in Europe; mapping music teacher education and music education in schools; and European networking in music education.

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