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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

TEACHER EDUCATION ACADEMY FOR MUSIC

Future-Making, Mobility and Networking in Europe

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Impulses for Music Education in School, Teacher Education and Professional Development
European Perspectives on Music Education 17
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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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