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White Paper Arts Education Monitoring System (AEMS) Draft for Consultation

draft for



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Culture

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White Paper “Arts Education Monitoring System”

The Arts Education Monitoring System (AEMS) project aims to structure the domain of arts and cultural education¹ for the purpose of monitoring the development in the sector. Hereby the project consists of two phases. Phase one applied a policy analysis approach to compare the different definitions, programmes and the political importance of the sector in the partners’ countries. Because of the lack of data for the sector, two surveys were developed and addressed to cultural educators and cultural institutions. The aim was to create and field test a tool that can be used for more comprehensive future data collection and monitoring of the sectors' development, based on human resources as key quality indicators.

The AEMS project was accompanied by an intense discussion within the policy analysis group and beyond on how to develop a common assessment of the professional status of arts and cultural educators in Europe. A review of existing data formed the core of the project with the aim to develop indicators and benchmarks that facilitate monitoring and evidence-building to inform policy and practice across the different administrative and institutional levels in Europe.

This White Paper tries to articulate more clearly some of the key points in order to trigger discussion beyond the official project end and the narrow circle of researchers and practitioners in the field.

Basic points

Arts education is an open field and thus hard to define. The institutions in the field are highly diverse in their scope, methods, traditions and target groups. As the project shows, this diversity is played out within the different countries and follows specific political conjunctures and trends (i.e. in England, where arts education was removed from school curricula in the 1970ies and replaced by the promise of out-of school education provision by cultural institutions).

With the exception of higher arts education and training for young artistic talents, the field is characterised all over Europe by its marginality. The history of arts education is thus a history of having to legitimize the right to exist. This of course must not ignore the fact that totalitarian regimes have used arts education for their propaganda purposes. Also, we should take into account that in the former communist countries, there had been a broad infrastructure for arts and cultural education that for most parts did not survive the transformation of the political systems.

Arts education has been for a long time supported by the middle classes who wanted to be represented by the cultural institutions. Arts (and cultural) education was thus the necessary prerequisite to build up cultural capital. The cultivated citizen as the user of the cultural offers defined the mandatory social norms for those who lacked the prerequisites to actively participate in culture.

¹ We will refer to "arts education" in the following text as the internationally used term (see UNESCO documents), taking into account the national differences in terminology, although a broader concept of "cultural education" would at times be more appropriate to discuss the field. However, for the specific professionals in the sector, we agreed to refer to them as "cultural educators" in respect to the varieties of occupations that exist.

As social environments are pluralising and cultural offers diversifying, this kind of bourgeois cultural hegemony is relativized. Cultural institutions can no longer rely on their traditional audiences but instead have to make an effort to maintain them or develop new audiences.

This is necessary in order to fill the existing capacities. Additionally, this interest in the audience is generated by a political interest in legitimizing the maintenance of public cultural offers as accessible for “all” – and not only for the privileged few.

At the same time, cultural institutions have tried their best to become more attractive to potential users by applying new marketing techniques, improving the quality of information available and by introducing innovative forms of communication within the institutions themselves.

This was driven by the increasing need to show that they were using public funding efficiently by demonstrating their increasing appeal to, and hence increasing size of, their audiences. In times of budget austerity, these measures are ever more important to their efforts to protect their positions of the public financial privilege.

As a consequence of these strategies, a new profession emerged: “cultural mediators” or “cultural educators”. These professionals and their working conditions are at the centre of our project.

The findings of the project, together with our specific expertise and insights into the national contexts in which we operate, show that despite the importance of these mediators to the justifications being deployed by cultural institutions, the pay and working conditions are surprisingly poor. Professionals working in the field of arts education have to deal with insecurity and precariousness. Pay is low and employment usually consists of a series of freelance or temporary contracts. There are of course occasional stable and permanently employed positions available, but most of these professionals seem to work in unstable conditions

This poses a range of questions on how exceptional, how typical and how comparable the sector is when reflected against a general transition of labour towards more flexible, temporary, individualized, needs-oriented and thus more unstable working conditions.

In the context of this White Paper, we can refer to a range of discussions and related documents arguing for the need of this new profession connecting education, arts and culture. We will not repeat all the findings and recommendations in these documents but instead focus on the availability of data and evidence.

The most important documents are

- ▶ Road Map for Arts Education – results of the first UNESCO World Conference on Arts Education in Lisbon (2006)
- ▶ Seoul Agenda: Goals for the Development on Arts Education – results of the second UNESCO World Conference on Arts Education in Seoul (2010)
- ▶ Report of the Working Group on Developing Synergies with Education, especially Arts Education – European Agenda for Culture (2010)
- ▶ Report on Policies and Good Practices in the Public Arts and in Cultural Institutions to Promote Better Access to and Wider Participation in Culture – Working Group within the Open Coordination Method of the EU Council of Ministers (2012)

Whereas these documents cover a range of approaches in formal and informal education settings, the AEMS project specifically focused on cultural institutions and their role as providers of education. The fragility of the sector is reflected in the paucity of available data as a consequence of which transnational comparisons are not feasible. We lack the very basis for developing robust benchmarking criteria.

The next sections refer to specific stakeholders and their potential role and contribution in advancing the evidences for the sector as a necessary basis for the development of quality and sustainability.

Policy-makers: national level

As we lack a systematic plan for cultural development (and thus objective data), the form and scale of arts education is subject to political trends. It would be preferable if we developed multi-annual, data-based programmes that allow the sector to implement its new tasks in a solid and sustainable way.

In comparing European approaches, we find protectionist as well as market-driven approaches to the implementation of arts education. These frameworks create different preconditions for the cooperation of different players (administration & policy, economy and civil society).

In addition, the present financial crisis appears to be leading to a withdrawal of public cultural policy authorities from the field of arts education provision. This does not only result in a decrease in funding, but also limits the extent to which they are prepared to show leadership. At the same time, there are new interest groups emerging from civil society, such as private foundations and businesses who want to influence the development of arts education. In these circumstances the sector – its institutions and professionals – need to assert themselves in the political power game, expressing their own interests and aims. For these reasons it is essential that the sector collects sound data and creates effective frameworks for its analysis.

Recommendations to policy-makers and decision makers

- Explore and harness the knowledge and expertise of the institutions in cultural education to formulate and advocate for more effective policies
- Stimulate exchange between research and practice to ensure the relevance of data
- Encourage national and European/international discourse on data collection, analysis and evidence-based strategy development
- Enter into dialogue with new players (e.g. foundations) and where possible encourage synergies and negotiate a common approach
- Offer incentives to increase institutional capacity-building and development (e.g. following the example of peer consultancy in Germany²)

² In order to optimize the education work of cultural institutions, the Federal Commissioner for Culture and the Media has initiated a pilot phase of an on-site consultancy in 2011. In the pilot phase, eleven cultural institutions are supported in optimizing their education work by consulting teams (consisting of 2 experts in a specific field of cultural education). <http://www.educult.at/en/forschung/evaluierung-der-vor-ort-beratungsteams/>

- ▶ Develop criteria to measure the impact of public funding that are not only based on quantitative analysis but also take qualitative effects into account
- ▶ Intensify public discourse on arts education. The development of robust and sound data (e.g. on the effects of arts education) can support public awareness-raising and generating public support.
- ▶ Develop and review criteria for funding decisions on the basis of sensitiveness for the dimension of working conditions in the sector

Cultural institutions

Although there are significant differences amongst institutions and between the countries analysed, arts education professionals are frequently working on the margins of their institutions. Often arts education projects and initiatives are required to fund themselves, generating their own income from public or private sources. This funding is usually project based and can be insufficient to meet the real costs. As a result, cultural educators make do with a series of poorly paid temporary contracts. This gives the impression that arts education is a useful development tool rather than an integral part of the institution with a substantial role to play in institutional strategic development. It also means that the knowledge and competences of these professionals are not effectively used in designing the programmes they are then required to deliver.

However, some cultural institutions across Europe have initiated major programmes in the field of education and seen this as a key component in their broader mission and development strategies. At least for some, this cannot be realized without a professionalization of their staff and the working conditions. This follows the logic of cultural management: educators are confronted with the audiences, thus representing the institution. Favourable working conditions (permanent contracts, proper insurance, participation in strategic decisions and support in their career planning and professional development) will lead to quality development in the delivery, thus make the institution more attractive to audiences and funders and strengthen its position on an increasingly competitive market.

Recommendations to cultural institutions

- ▶ Integrate cultural educators into the planning and strategic development of cultural institutions
- ▶ Invest a proportion of their core budget in education so that the work becomes sustainable
- ▶ Offer contracts to their education staff with the same level of protection, pay and benefits as those enjoyed by other professionals working in the same institutions and which recognise the high level of skills and qualifications required
- ▶ Implement quality management schemes for recognising the importance of working conditions for the staff to ensure qualitative outputs of the institutions
- ▶ Create new incentives for the advancement of working conditions (e.g. fair-pay certificates, evaluation of working conditions for grant awards)

Cultural educators

Clearly the majority of cultural educators are strongly motivated and derive considerable enjoyment from their work. However, like in other artistic and cultural professions, low pay and unstable conditions undermine the potential for individual self-development.

As a result, the employment conditions of cultural educators frequently result in self-exploitation, at times followed by frustration, burn-out and depression. This makes it very difficult to find time and space to share information and experiences along national, institutional and thematic boundaries.

The evidence collected through the AEMS field tests confirms this – despite the fact that those who answered the survey were, by definition the better-established ones. Half of the respondents are not satisfied with their contracts and only 54% say that they can earn their living through arts education.

Meanwhile the conferences, meetings and networks that are established in an attempt to create a 'community of practice' are often limited to the presentation of 'good practice'. There are few opportunities to share and understand data and even fewer to consider the development of strategies which could reinforce the role of arts education in decision-making. This results in practitioners having insufficient understanding of the system and professional context with which they operate. As a consequence, they are not able to represent themselves and their work effectively.

The majority of the respondents to the AEMS survey were female. The impression that women far outnumber men in this sector is reinforced by other evidence. For instance, the AEMS project partner, ZfKf, conducted a large scale survey to establish the situation of German performing arts professionals (4.047 respondents)³. This suggested that 72% of professionals in performing arts education (dance, theatre, music) were female. In comparison, the share of females in the cultural sector generally in Germany is only 40%⁴.

The standing of cultural educators as professionals is highly dependent on public perception. Evidence on the "use and effects" of arts education is vital to generate understanding among professionals working in other sectors (formal education, social and health care, ...) as a first step towards cooperation.

³ Keuchel, Susanne (2010): Die empirische Studie zum Report Darstellende Künste. Wirtschaftliche, soziale und arbeitsrechtliche Lage der Theater- und Tanzschaffenden in Deutschland, in: Fonds Darstellende Künste (Ed.): Report Darstellende Künste. Wirtschaftliche, soziale und arbeitsrechtliche Lage der Theater- und Tanzschaffenden in Deutschland, Berlin: Klartext Verlag.

⁴ Statistisches Bundesamt (Ed.): Mikrozensus. Bevölkerung und Erwerbstätigkeit. Beruf, Ausbildung und Arbeitsbedingungen der Erwerbstätigen in Deutschland 2010, Wiesbaden 2011, p. 28. Available online: <http://www.destatis.de/jetspeed/portal/cms/Sites/destatis/Internet/DE/Content/Publikationen/Fachveroeffentlichung/en/Arbeitsmarkt/Erwerbstaetige/BerufArbeitsbedingungErwerbstaetigen2010412107004,property=file.pdf> (accessed: March 8, 2012).

Recommendations for Cultural Educators

- Reinforce the professionalism of cultural educators by defining the necessary qualifications
- Improve the content of discussions within networks, conferences and meeting so that cultural educators develop the necessary understanding of the context in which they operate
- Improve the network and establish interest groups for cultural educators cross art sectors for strengthening political power
- Establish clear positions on specific needs of cultural educators in different institutional setting
- Improve the subject-specific opportunities for training and professional development. This addresses higher arts education institutions and their curricula (often reflecting the marginal status of arts education in institutions). As they are also (artistic) research institutions, they also have a role to play in improving the data on arts education
- Commission qualitative research to assess why women so far outnumber men in cultural education (examine e.g. gender policies, career structures, diversity management)

European level

The basic principles of future European cultural policy are sustainability and participation. Both aspects are dependent on effective arts education.

The prerequisite for effective arts education is a profound discussion about the aims of arts education and how these aims can be achieved. For this we need a sound database both on the national and on the European level. As it does not exist at the moment, it is hard to assess development and improvement.

Existing data collection systems for national and European cultural statistics have not proved useful for an analysis of the field of arts education as clear definitions and standards for the profession are either lacking or comprised in larger categories.

As the European Commission has proclaimed a focus on “audience development” and thus a shift from artistic production towards reception of arts and culture in the next programme “Creative Europe”, more and profound data is needed on the (potential) users in order to argue why particular policy measures are needed. As the professional field of arts education is a central force in audience development, data from this sector can be used to inform the provision and improve the quality of offers.

Arts education is already part of the European discourse e.g. in the OMC-process. We argue for a continuation of this discourse on the European level, with a special effort to include also the professionals in the sector and empower a European dialogue also on the level of practice. This is necessary, as the AEMS results give hints that only few practitioners (15% of the survey respondents) have worked elsewhere in Europe. Compared to the effort to foster the mobility of artists, this highlights that there is much potential to encourage also the mobility of cultural educators.

Recommendations for European level

- ▶ Integrate resources for comparative research and data collection in the European funding programmes for culture
- ▶ Recognise arts education as important element in European cultural policy issues in the context of 'intercultural dialogue', 'cultural diplomacy' or 'access to culture'
- ▶ Continue and strengthen the exchange of experts and researchers (e.g. through the European Expert Network on Culture (EENC), the ACEnet of administrators, or the discourse enabled through the Open Method of Coordination (OMC))
- ▶ Create opportunities for exchange, mobility and debate among cultural educators in Europe
- ▶ Reflect the existing differences and inequalities of infrastructures for arts education within Europe and foster knowledge exchange and capacity building

Next steps

The results of the AEMS show that we need to work towards a sustainable monitoring on the European level to enhance data collection and analysis as a basis for quality development.

AEMS has developed an initial framework for the collection of evidence in this field, which should be further tested and could be inspire subsequent efforts, by Eurostat, the Compendium on Cultural Policies and Trends and other data collection and comparison systems. This could enable a systematic integration of indicators on arts education provision.

The policy group members are willing to consult in this process through their expertise and thus to support a strategic planning on the EU-level to develop agreed transnational benchmarks.