

NOTES ON THE MID-TERM REVIEW HORIZON 2020

The Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC) is the leading voice for Higher Music Education representing most of the Higher Music Education institutions in Europe. Many AEC member institutions also include other fields of higher performing arts education, such as dance and drama. AEC member institutions' activities are focused on artistic and artistic pedagogical education, research on music and art, and - to a growing extent - on practice-based research, such as artistic research. As a result of the Bologna process, the reflection on one's own artistic practice has become a leading paradigm of artistic practice. Moreover, in the context of artistic research, doctoral studies in the arts have gained in importance. (see *Frascati Manual*; *AEC White Paper on Artistic Research*)¹

The following position paper is based on a survey sent to 16 selected AEC member institutions characterized by an above-average research infrastructure and by counting with excellent achievements in the field of humanities and social sciences research as well as in artistic research. It is generally deplored that art-specific research approaches are not adequately mapped by the Horizon 2020 call and requirements. Therefore, only a few of our members submitted project proposals, some of which have been successful. But even representatives of these successful projects share the overall perception on the Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation presented below.

On the design, structure and objectives of the Horizon 2020 programme

- It is acknowledged that the programme is very open in terms of topics envisaged, as openness is one of the explicit key features of Horizon 2020. Openness is particularly in line with the needs of humanities and artistic research because their *raison d'être* is that of freedom.
- Horizon 2020 has a clear structure along the three pillars of Excellent Science, Industrial Leadership and Societal Challenges (even if pillar 2 might not or only marginally be relevant for the issues usually addressed by art related research).
- The programme does not require any co-funding.
- The application formalities are clear and transparent compared to other programmes.
- The two-step application procedure makes sense. However, the percentage of the projects selected after the second stage should be increased: currently there is no reasonable relationship between the time and cost of applying and the benefits.

¹ *Frascati Manual 2015* <http://www.uis.unesco.org/ScienceTechnology/Documents/oecd-frascati-manual.pdf>; *AEC White Paper on Artistic Research* <http://www.aec-music.eu/members/our-members/white-paper-on-artistic-research-key-concepts-for-aec-members/6985>

Horizon 2020 compared to other funding schemes

- In the overall spectrum of funding programmes offered by the EU, Horizon 2020 is the only one that explicitly targets research funding.
- The European Commission has launched the Creative Europe programme to promote art. This makes sense against the background of the special needs of artistic activities as expressly acknowledged by the AEC. The AEC has significantly benefited from the Creative Europe programme and has recently received another network funding for the period 2017-2020. However, there is a gap: art-specific research conducted by our members is not adequately covered by either Creative Europe or Horizon 2020.
- Since the initiation of the Bologna process, Art HEIs have developed structures for knowledge development, exchange and dissemination of artistic knowledge and experience. However, there are still very few funding bodies for research projects in and related to the arts. If the arts, and higher education in the arts, are to be a central aspect of European culture also in the future, it is important to build on what has been done so far by creating possibilities for further expansion. This would mean encouraging careers that include research for prominent artists, and supporting HEIs in their efforts to grow beyond the 3rd cycle.

Critical aspects of the programme

- Horizon 2020 is intended to support research projects proposed also by individuals; but in reality, the projects' dimension required by the application implies a structural capability of great power and size that small HEIs do not have. Thus, small institutions such as Music and Performing Arts HEIs are in a disadvantaged position when striving to meet the application requirements.
- For the reasons mentioned above, artistic research is a relatively young field of research. While practice-based research and artistic research are orientated innovatively towards experimenting new research methods, the Horizon 2020 concept is essentially based on the freezing of traditional research approaches.
- The strengths of humanistic and artistic research lie in their capacity to scholarly or artistically reflect on a given problem and thereby deepen understanding and, especially in the case of artistic research, creatively envision new perspectives etc. In particular, pillar 3 should therefore sufficiently allow the humanities and artistic research to deploy their specific capacities for the social and cultural flourishing of European and global society.
- Strands such as CultCoop focus on democratic values, historical awareness, cultural heritage and religious tolerance, but neglect the intrinsic values of the arts as meaningful in themselves. Even the topic "Contemporary History of Europe in artistic and creative practices" does not allow placing research-through-practice, although this would be obvious and logical with regard to the envisaged context.
- The career paradigm underlying many of the European Research Council (ERC) grants is modelled on actual or supposedly desirable careers in applied sciences, often emphasizing inter-sectoral mobility like working in an industrial enterprise as part of a fellowship. This may be common (and desirable) in the applied sciences, but may not be common, desirable, or viable in the arts and humanities.

- Regarding the ERC part of pillar 1: It has been shown² that the humanities (and artistic research) are financially and structurally disadvantaged within the ERC. Empirically comparing the research capacities of the fields of “Physical Sciences and Engineering”, “Life Sciences”, and “Social Sciences and Humanities” with their relative shares of the ERC budget, Bach-Hönig comes to the conclusion: “While the natural and life scientists enjoy a budget that is, in relative weight, about twice their share of the research capacities, the social scientists’ and humanities’ budget is half of their capacity”³.
- The current panel structure of the ERC is believed to be disadvantageous for the humanities and, a fortiori, artistic research: “Concerning the ERC panel classification system, the extent of disciplinary differentiation at panel level is imbalanced among scientific domains and disciplines as well. More narrowly defined disciplines like sub-branches of physics and chemistry do not have to directly compete with each other, but the more broadly defined disciplines, such as those in panel SH2 relevant for sociology and its neighbour disciplines, do significantly have to do so”.⁴ Therefore, a more balanced ERC panel structure would also be desirable.
- The respondents expressed dissatisfaction with regard to the quality and depth of the evaluation summary reports, which are formulated very generally and thus do not allow conclusions to be drawn concerning improvement measures to be taken for a new application. On several occasions it is reported that the assessments were not relevant to the topic and thus leading to serious doubts about the expert’s suitability due to a lack of subject-specific knowledge and competences.

Recommendations towards the improvement of the programme

- Besides supporting measures aiming solely at economic growth, additional measures should be put in place. AEC recommends that the intrinsic values of art and its development are acknowledged as a field research of its own dignity.
- Other modes of producing knowledge, which in particular arise at smaller institutions, are crucial for the future. AEC recommends that project applications in the field of artistic research benefit from positive discrimination.
- It is desirable to have more flexibility with regard to e.g. the diversity of research approaches, size and duration of projects.
- AEC recommends that the composition of the assessment/evaluation panel is reconsidered. It is important to include experts who have expertise in the field of art and artistic research, understand the logic and nature of the subject and are also familiar with non-traditional research methodologies.

In order to increase the visibility of practice-based research and more in particular of artistic research within the general research discourse and to group it on eye-level with other types of research, the **AEC strongly recommends to expand the established area SSH (Social Sciences & Humanities) to SSHAR (Social Sciences & Humanities & Artistic Research).**

² see Barbara Bach-Hönig (2015). *Europe’s New Scientific Elite: Social Mechanisms of Science in the European Research Area* = Habilitation in Sociology, University of Luxembourg

³ Bach-Hönig 2015: 495

⁴ Ibid.