



Association Européenne des  
Conservatoires, Académies de  
Musique et Musikhochschulen



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**CSMV**  
CONSERVATORIO SUPERIOR  
DE MÚSICA DE VIGO

Brussels, 17<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Dear colleagues,

The AEC has great pleasure in inviting you to the next edition of

**The AEC Annual Meeting for International Relations Coordinators in  
European Institutions for Higher Music Education (IRCs meeting)**

which will take place online and at the

**Conservatorio Superior de Música de Vigo, Spain, from 24 to 26 September 2020**

**What for and for whom?**

The Annual Meeting for IRCs is meant for administrative and/or teaching staff members in conservatoires who deal with international relations and European programmes (such as ERASMUS+). The meeting is open also to students interested in the international dimension of their learning. During the meetings, relevant topics in the field of mobility and international cooperation are discussed in plenary sessions, workshops, discussion fora and parallel sessions. The meeting is also a unique platform for networking at European level: participants have the opportunity to develop relations with fellow IRCs, meet project partners and potential partner institutions and show projects and activities that have been developed within their home institution.

**Ready to Change?  
Digitisation, crisis management and green thinking for a  
sustainable future**

**IRCs' Annual Meeting 2020 Teaser**

The Annual Meeting for International Relations Coordinators (IRCs) 2020 will take place for the first time in a hybrid form - meaning both online and in presence - at the Conservatorio Superior de Música de Vigo, Spain, from 24 to 26 September. The big umbrella topic of this meeting will be the sustainability of internationalisation and mobility and will of course include sessions and discussions addressing the world pandemic crisis that impacted considerably our professional and personal lives in the recent months.

The sustainability of international collaborations is on the table more than ever, owing to the global epidemic preventing social interactions and international trips. However, this is only one of the numerous unexpected and concerning issues on a long list that has become self-evident only in recent times and that has been influencing the shaping of the new Erasmus programme 2021-27. The way we carry on and understand our international activities has undoubtedly changed. The digital revolution

certainly plays a paramount role in this discourse, first and foremost, thanks to the possibility of exchanging data, information and experiences remotely, but not only.

The impact of international activities - with a considerable amount of necessary travel questioned by many institutions even before the Covid crisis - needs to be taken into consideration when shaping future collaborations, as well as all the uncertainty related to travel during the ongoing and forecasted pandemics. Is the travelling indeed unavoidable? How could international relations be promoted in an increasingly digital world lacking in face-to-face communication? All these questions will be discussed in-depth during the Annual Meeting 2020.

Once we think about the environmental crisis, one could raise the question about the environmental impact of internationalisation of higher music education and the possibility to mitigate the negative consequences of our international activities. Voices have been raised, saying that even the day-to-day running of international offices could set a good example and change the mindset of people shaping the sustainable future. During the IRCs' Meeting 2020 in Vigo, [Jeanine Gregersen](#) will give an inspirational and insightful speech about the concept of sustainability of higher music education, following the commitment of the IRCs community to an holistic sustainable approach to their activities expressed in the [IRC's Manifesto 2020](#) and accompanying [video](#) that all participants of the event are warmly encouraged to get familiar with before the event.

The Erasmus programme is also following this path. The green aspect of the new edition of the programme has been already announced, and in Vigo we will hopefully have a video contribution from the EU Commission speaking about it<sup>1</sup>. However, not only Erasmus is going greener, it also wants to become more technological and more accessible or, to be precise, more sustainable for the planet and for the people. The "Erasmus Goes Digital" motto has been repeated by the European Commission over the last month in an almost scaring way ("if you are not digital yet, you are already too late!"), and it refers to the progressive digitisation of Erasmus procedures (with the introduction and the progressive obligation to use official digital documents to manage mobilities, such as the Inter-institutional Agreement Online, the Online Learning Agreement, the digital nomination, etc.) but also to the recognition of a blended mobility as a form of a recognized mobility. Therefore, distance learning technologies such as LoLa, that has been experimented by the Erasmus Strategic Partnership Project SWING, are likely to become the protagonist of the next generation of international collaborations. The SMS working group 5 on Learning and Teaching will present in Vigo the outcomes of the SWING experimentation. Along with the SMS working group 6 on Digitisation, the discussion about the current and future possibilities that technology can offer to music education will be opened without forgetting the downsides of technologies, mostly associated with the techno pollution, or the scepticism about the positive impact of substituting trips with technologies on our environment. On this topic, and following the success of last year speaker Peter Majanen who gave a speech on the Future of Internationalisation, this year a representative from [HUMLAB](#), Umea University, Sweden, will speak about the possibilities that artificial intelligence could open up to our sector.

Technologies applied to internationalisation could also help to overcome traditional socioeconomic barriers to mobility. It is not a secret that, despite the Erasmus grants, not every student can afford a semester or more abroad. The financial barrier leads to criticism of the Erasmus as an elitist programme<sup>2</sup>, yet technologies could help to address this problem, as it is not anymore necessary to travel and move in order to follow courses of international professors or to play with fellow students abroad. The benefits that students can get from digital interactions, the inclusiveness of higher music education and the accessibility of education for disadvantaged groups of the population (minorities, refugees etc.)

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<sup>1</sup> There has been an obligation for all higher education institution to mention their green policy when applying to the ECHE (Erasmus Charter for Higher Education), the document needed to take part into Erasmus actions

<sup>2</sup> The AEC has participated to the [EUF](#)'s campaign [#Erasmus500](#) to advocate about a 500 euro monthly grant to Erasmus music student

will be also raised up during the Annual Meeting with a presentation of projects promoting interactions between different cultures through music.

Finally, before the Vigo Meeting two seminars aimed at discussions on the mental health of international students and the crisis management will be organised:

**The first pre-conference seminar on *The Well Being of International Students*** will be held completely online by [Clara Barbera](#), representative of the SMS working group 2 on Identity, Diversity and Inclusiveness. It will be devoted to the issues of depression, social anxiety and self-esteem concerns that students are facing today. Participants will have the opportunity to discuss possible ways to address the mentioned problems and feasible strategies to support the mental health of international students.

**The second pre-conference seminar on *Crisis Management*** will be held in Vigo by the IRCs' working group and chaired by [Christofer Fredriksson](#). It will shed some light on the possible ways to address the crisis stemming from the coronavirus epidemic, and the consequential use of digital tools and online teaching methods in higher music education. Best practices and examples, as well as challenges institutions had to face will be shared during the in-depth discussions, while various mobility solutions and the management of emergencies in general will be at the core of this seminar.

We expect that the seminars and the conference sessions offered within the 2020 IRCs Annual Meeting framework will provide food for thought for all of us, thus helping everybody not just to understand various sides of the higher music education sphere and internationalisation related problems, but also to elaborate strategies for mitigating the negative outcomes of the crisis and discovering the new ways for making the experience of students and professors more enriching and “global”.

#### **Practical information and procedures to attend the meeting**

Further information, such as the programme of the meeting, information on travel, accommodation and participant fee payment, as well as the links to the online registration can be found at [www.aec-music.eu/irc2020](http://www.aec-music.eu/irc2020).

We are very much looking forward to seeing you in Vigo or online in September!

Kind regards,

**The AEC Office Team and the IRCs working Group**