

For immediate release

European Music Council Press Release

European Forum on Music and EMC Annual Meeting
15 – 18 April 2010, Vienna Austria
Musical Diversity - Looking back, Looking forward

The European Forum on Music held in cooperation by the European Music Council (EMC), the Austrian Music Council and the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna, from 15 – 18 April 2010 in Vienna, was an event that will surely linger in the participants' minds for a long time to come. There was, of course, the plume of volcanic ash that was making its way across Europe, closing most of the continent's airspace and hampering travel plans, but for the people who made it to Vienna (and most people did as the conference started just before the travel chaos began), the discussions, connections, ideas and conclusions that came about in Vienna's University of Music and Performing Arts will be remembered and have repercussions for much longer.

As people queued to register for the three day conference, they could peruse the photo exhibition that had been set up especially by mica – music austria, entitled '15 Years of Austrian Music: 1994 - 2009', and that would form part of the theme of the forum, itself entitled 'Musical Diversity: Looking back, Looking forward'. The delegates, who came from nearly 30 countries across Europe and beyond were encouraged to reflect on how musical diversity had developed (or not) over the past decade in their own countries, and how they and their organisations could help shape the future.

In his welcome, Timo Klemettinen, the chairman of the EMC, urged delegates to question their role as NGOs when it comes to 'developing culturally democratic and open societies with real respect towards different cultures.' The opening keynote speech, from Simron Jit Singh of the Institute of Social Ecology in Austria, was a very enlightening presentation on how work and economy has an impact on culture, with particular reference to the communities of South East Asia who were affected by the tsunami in 2004. He commented on how the inhabitants of the region had much less time to enjoy and develop their culture since the disaster because of new ways in which the markets and economy were being run to suit a more 'Western' model. Eva Nowotny (President of the Austrian UNESCO Commission) and Yvonne Gimpel (Austrian National UNESCO Commission) then discussed how perspectives of cultural diversity had changed through the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, and how they would continue to do so over the coming years.

These presentations allowed debate and discussion to develop over the rest of the conference. In terms of musical diversity in Europe's urban areas and cities, there was a presentation from Ursula Hemetek (International Council for Tradition Music, Vienna), who showed what influence Turkish migrants, in particular have had on Viennese musical life, and the different situations in which music making has flourished and where it still has some way to go. Katrien Laporte and Wim Wabbes (UNESCO City of Music Ghent), gave a vibrant introduction to the city of Ghent and why it has been singled out by UNESCO as worthy enough to be included in its Creative Cities Network. Peko Baxant (City of Vienna) showed how Vienna has progressed in terms of musical diversity and that whilst it is very proud of its rich musical heritage, it is also trying to look to the future and foster its burgeoning contemporary scene.

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Unfortunately, Madis Kolk (European Capital of Culture: Tallinn 2011), was unable to join the panel because of the, by now widespread, travel problems, but a short speech was read out on his behalf by Silja Fischer (Secretary General, International Music Council), which stated how Tallinn intends to share the benefits that will come with being Capital of Culture 2011 with all its inhabitants, and promote long standing and sustainable projects that will reach people far beyond 2011. Whereas musical diversity seems to be an important factor for the promotion of cities, the participants also requested that musical diversity should have more relevance when it comes to formulating cultural policies and designing funding opportunities.

Parallel interactive sessions discussed the past, present and future of 'Musical Diversity and Education' and 'Musical Diversity in the Digital Environment'. The invited experts on Education, Michael Wimmer (educult), Rineke Smilde (Professor of Lifelong Learning in Music & the Arts – Prince Claus and Royal conservatoires, the Netherlands) and Franz Niermann (European Association for Music in Schools) all agreed with the delegates attending that music education varied quite widely across Europe, and that whilst some countries seem to have 'got it right' or are heading in the right direction, others need much more pushing and persuasion to give music education the recognition it deserves as a key part of a person's holistic education. The discussions that followed between the delegates expanded on this, giving examples from their own countries about the present situation and what it planned for the future. The other session, with Patrick Rackow of the European Composers and Songwriter Alliance and Graham Dixon of BBC Radio 3, chaired by Stef Coninx (International Association of Music Information Centres) showed the dichotomy that we face when talking about cultural diversity in a digital environment: in line with the five musical rights of the International Music Council (IMC), the combination of the right to access culture and the right of artists to receive a fair remuneration, might cause conflicting interests in the digital context.

The following morning, Harald Huber (Austrian Music Council) and Lisa Leitich (University of Music and Performing Arts, Vienna), gave a very detailed insight into the Austria's present Musical Diversity, also detailing some plans for the future, and how Austria intends to redress the balance between different musical forms.

The panel discussion on the EU 2020 Strategy saw some changes. Representatives from both the EU Commission and the EU Parliament were unable to beat the volcanic ash, as by now almost all of Europe's airspace was closed. Ivor Davies (Culture Action Europe) chaired the session with Yvonne Gimpel (Austrian Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture), who took the cancellations in their stride, with Mr Davies ensuring a lively debate, collecting examples of national advocacy activities that could serve as models for other NGOs that were represented at the forum.

Before the closing sessions of the conference, some member organisations of the EMC were given the chance to give an introduction to particular projects that they had been undertaking over the past year to the audience and the presentations from Franz Patay (International Music and Media Centre); Ariane Hannus (German Music Council); Franz Niermann and Isolde Malmberg (European Association for Music in Schools); Frank Stahmer (European Composers' Forum); Gábor Móczár (Europa Cantat); Edgar Garcia and Hélène Pons (Chroma/Zebroch) and Lenka Dohnalová (Czech Music Council), really demonstrated music diversity in action.

Alongside the forum, the EMC Annual Meeting took place and elections for the EMC Board 2010 – 2012 were held. The new board consists of Timo Klemettinen (Finland), Christian Höppner (Germany), Stef Coninx (Belgium) – all of whom will reprise their roles as chairman, vice-chairman and treasurer respectively – Erling Aksdal (Norway), Helena Maffli-Nissinen (Switzerland/Finland), Frank Stahmer (Austria) and Kaie Tanner (Estonia), as well as a co-opted member of Claire Goddard (United Kingdom/Germany), who is the chairperson of the EMC's Working Group Youth.

Apart from the discussions and presentations, the Austrian Music Council and the University of Music and Performing Arts, Vienna, gave delegates the opportunity to experience Vienna's musical diversity first hand with performances from the university's students, a concert of new Viennese music at the legendary Porgy and Bess Jazz Club and a stunning performance by the Wiener Symphoniker at the world famous Musikverein.

In their extremely observant and concise summaries of the conference, Sonja Greiner (Europa Cantat) and Peter Rantasa (International Music Council) urged delegates to really take time to think about what they had heard and discussed over the past couple of days, and ensure that the conclusions and concrete recommendations that they had come to be acted upon in their respective organisations and countries. With many people now stranded in Vienna, it was the perfect time to reflect and really 'take some time to think'.

For more information on the European Music Council (EMC) and its activities, please visit www.emc-imc.org