

AEC Institutional and Programme Review Scheme



**AEC Review Visit to the
Conservatorio Superior de Musica "E. Martinez Torner"
Oviedo, Spain
28 – 29 April 2008**



Review Committee:
Mr. Harald Jorgensen (Norwegian Academy of Music)
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Secretary:
Linda Messas (AEC)

ERASMUS THEMATIC NETWORK FOR MUSIC

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Introduction

The visit to the Conservatorio Superior de Musica del Principado de Asturias "E. Martinez Torner" (CONSMUPA) was the first visit undertaken in the framework of the *AEC Institutional and Programme Review Scheme*, a new service offered by the AEC to its member institutions in order to assist them in their quality improvement activities. This scheme is financed by the ERASMUS programme through the *Polifonia* Network.

The international group of experts used the AEC Framework Document *Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Music Education: Characteristics, Criteria and Procedures*, a set of common European standards and procedures for the external review of institutions and programmes in higher music education. Based on the visit and the materials sent to the team beforehand, the present report was produced.

Oviedo is the capital city of the Principality of Asturias, close to the Cantabrian Sea coast and surrounded by a gorgeous landscape composed of mountains, green fields, forests, rivers, sea, rugged cliffs and fertile meadows. Oviedo is a beautiful historic city with a well-developed cultural infrastructure and strong regional traditions. It is regarded as the "small Spanish Vienna" due to its intensive music activity.

The conservatoire, set up in 1923 and situated in an historical building, counts 283 students and 82 teachers. Its academic and artistic achievements have placed the institution at the forefront of higher music education institutions in Spain. During the visit, CONSMUPA was represented by the Director, Alberto Veintimilla Bonet, the secretary, Covadonga de la Riva Llerandi, the Head of studies, Roberto Martínez Vigil-Escalera, and the responsible for relations with the AEC, Cristobal Zamora. The members of the Committee were chair Harald Jorgensen (former director of the Norwegian Academy of Music in Oslo), Cecilia De Almeida Goncalves (Deputy director of the Escola Superior de Música de Lisboa) and Gero Schmidt-Oberländer (Prorektor of the Hochschule für Musik Franz Liszt Weimar). The Secretary was Linda Messas (AEC Project Administrator).

The Committee would like to express its thanks to the conservatoire for the organisation of the visit, for welcoming the Committee in such a friendly and hospitable way, for staying at the disposal of the Committee during the whole visit and for the atmosphere of sincere and fruitful cooperation in which many issues – current situation, problems, strengths and weaknesses - were discussed.

The Committee would like to express its appreciation for the hard work done by the conservatoire in preparation of the AEC visit with the production of its internal evaluation report. This excellent and in-depth analysis of the institution has helped the Committee to get a comprehensive overview of the conservatoire and has been of great help to the reflections and discussions before, during and after the visit.

2008 OVIEDO'S VISIT SCHEDULE

Day 1 – Sunday 27th April

When?	What?	Who?
During the day	Arrival at the Hotel: GRAN HOTEL ESPAÑA Jovellanos, 2. OVIEDO http://www.granhotelespana.com/ Tel. (+34) 985 220 596	Evaluation committee
18:30 – 19:40	Meeting at Hotel	Evaluation committee
19:40	Taxi to the concert (starting at 20:00)	Evaluation committee and Cristobal Zamora
21:45	Dinner at Restaurante La Gran Taberna or back to hotel	Evaluation committee, Cristóbal Zamora, Conservatoire's Director and Vice-Director

Day 2 – Monday 28th April

When?	What?	Who?
08:45	Meeting at Hotel	Evaluation committee and Cristobal Zamora
09.00 - 09.45	Meeting at the conservatoire with the Head of the school and members of academic and support staff	Evaluation committee Director Vice-Director Secretary and Cristobal Zamora and Elena Miguelez
10.00 – 11.00	Meeting with representatives of profession	Evaluation committee Director of Opera Councilman of Culture General Directoress of Culture – Government of Principality of Asturias
11.00 - 11.20	Coffee break	
11.20 – 12.00	Meeting with academic council members	Evaluation committee, Director, Vice-Director, Secretary, Cristobal Zamora and the six academic council members.
12:15 – 13.00	Visit some lessons	Evaluation committee, Elena Miguelez
13.00	Meeting with academic staff members	Evaluation committee, Elena Miguelez, and teachers in the visited lessons.
14:00	Lunch break in Restaurante La Gran Taberna and committee meeting	Lunch: Evaluation committee and Elena Miguelez
16:30	Guided tour including the library	Evaluation committee, Elena Miguelez and Head of Music Librarianship Department
17:30	Meeting with Conservatory's Council	Evaluation committee, Cristobal Zamora, and the representatives of every area of the conservatoire.
18:30	Coffee break	
18:45	Meeting with administrative staff	Evaluation committee, Cristobal Zamora and

		Head of Administrative Staff
21:00	Dinner at Restaurante Latores	Evaluation committee, Inspector of Education, Conservatoire's Director and Cristobal Zamora

Day 3 – Tuesday 29th April

When?	What?	Who?
09:15	Meeting at Hotel	Evaluation committee and Cristobal Zamora
09.30	Meeting with academic members of Music and New Technology and Pedagogic department.	Evaluation committee, Cristobal Zamora and related professors
10:00	Meeting with students council	Evaluation committee, Student council, Cristobal Zamora and Elena Miguelez
11:00	Coffee break	
11:30	Meeting with former students	Evaluation committee Selected graduates and Elena Miguelez
13.00	Visit to Minister of Education - Government of Principality of Asturias	Evaluation committee, Conservatoire's Director and Cristobal Zamora
14:00	Lunch break in Restaurante La Gran Taberna	Evaluation committee
15.30 – 16.30	Committee Meeting (to prepare the feedback)	Evaluation committee
16.30 – 17.15	Feedback of the evaluation Committee	Evaluation committee Director Vice-Director Cristobal Zamora and Elena Miguelez
17:15 – 18:15	Evaluation of the visit/preparation of the report	Evaluation committee
18.30	Concert	Evaluation committee Conservatoire's Director Cristobal Zamora Personalities of the Community Authorities General Public
After	Dinner at La Gran Taberna	Evaluation committee Conservatoire's Director Cristobal Zamora Elena Miguelez

Day 4 – Wednesday 30th April

When?	What?	Who?
During the day	Departure	Evaluation committee

1. Mission and vision

What is the institution's mission, aim or goal?

CONSMUPA's management team is required to draft each year a formal document detailing the mission of the institution for the coming year, based on a structure imposed by law. In the extract provided in English to the Committee, several goals are mentioned: the management team aims at making CONSMUPA the "main music benchmark in the region", at developing a stronger profile "based on music creation" (in the field of composition but also performance according to the management team), at "increasing the quality in the teaching community", at "improving school performance of students in all subjects", etc.

The Committee was not able to identify a clearly expressed mission, neither a clear distinction between aims and operational objectives. Thus, in order to prepare for the implementation of the new law of education and for the Higher Council for Artistic Education which will be set up in Spain, CONSMUPA is encouraged to continue the ongoing process of defining and fine-tuning its mission as a higher education institution serving the local, regional, national and international community within the field of music. Choices should be made and priorities set among all the aims and objectives mentioned, and the mission and aims should be linked to operational and more concrete objectives, in order to express clearly what CONSMUPA's core mission is and how it can be reached.

What are the goals of its educational programmes?

The conservatoire has presently only one cycle of 4 years, with programmes for accordion, singing, composition, string/bow instruments, guitar, organ, percussion, piano, saxophone, woodwind instruments and brass instruments. There is no general statement of a common goal for these programmes. However, the conservatoire follows the national guidelines where the following statement is important: "Education leading to a Certificate of Higher Music Education shall provide practical, theoretical and methodological training by going in-depth in the subjects included in the specialty chosen by the student, so as to ensure highly skilled music professionals in the fields pertaining to creation, performance, research and teaching." For each program, the PPDs and the AEC learning outcomes are used, see section 2.1.

What is the correspondence between the institution's mission and its educational programmes?

As no specific mission seems to be defined for the institution, and as there is no general statement of a common goal for the educational programmes, such a correspondence is difficult to observe. However, the management team seems aware of the need for coherence in the whole structure and is planning to develop new programmes such as music pedagogy, in line with the institution's aim of "increasing the quality in the teaching community" or music production and management, in line with the objective of "designing the kind of teaching that empowers future professionals to enter an increasingly competitive, specialised and universalised labour market".

Does the institution have a long-term strategic vision?

As planning and budget are discussed on an annual base with the regional government, CONSMUPA must work annually and no accurate planning is possible in the long-term. In addition, the conservatoire is waiting for measures implementing the Organic Act of 2006 to the higher artistic education sector: these measures will entail very important changes regarding the status of the conservatoire, and therefore do also hinder long-term planning at this moment.

Despite these circumstances, the Committee did have the impression that the staff and the management team have a long-term vision. Although no timeframe can be defined, the introduction of programmes in music pedagogy, music production and management, and music conducting is planned in the future, as well as the development of a postgraduate course in music therapy. The Committee also takes note of the very positive attitude of the management team, which mentioned as a positive aspect of this situation the fact that there is more time available to discuss the new plans and to make them take a good shape before being implemented.

2. Educational processes

2.1 Curriculum

How does the curriculum address the institutional mission and the goals of its educational programmes?

The Conservatoire is responding to the basic ideas of the Bologna Declaration and Process as much as possible given its current status of secondary level institution. The choice of optional courses (connected to the main speciality) and free choice courses (of all kinds) has been widened. As of today, the individual study programmes consist of a mixture of compulsory and optional courses, but some students indicated an excessive amount of subjects in the first two years. Individual instrumental courses take place 1.5 hours per week and CONSMUPA was one of the first conservatoires in Spain to introduce a large amount of ensemble and orchestra playing in the curricula: it has set up an orchestra, a chamber orchestra, a symphonic band, a wind band and more than 60 different groups of chamber music. The conservatoire management is now planning to develop new programmes in the fields of music production and management, music conducting, music pedagogy, music sciences and technologies for music.

The Committee had the impression that the curriculum addresses well the different aims of CONSMUPA. Thus, the institution has invested in an electro acoustic laboratory in order to develop the new technology department and contribute to the aim of building an institutional identity specialised in music creation and contemporary music performance. The Committee would like to underline, as was indicated during the different conversations, that the organisation of the curriculum and the quality of the teaching have very much improved and that the conservatoire now attracts students from all over the country (in 2006, 152 students come from outside Asturias whereas 121 come from the region). In the process of further implementing Bologna principles, for example with a further development of the curricula and the introduction of ECTS, two handbooks recently developed by the AEC could be of assistance for the institution: *Curriculum Design and Development in Higher Music Education*¹ and *Implementation and Use of Credit Points in Higher Music Education*².

Is the curriculum based on the 3-cycle structure promoted by the Bologna process?

Since the 1990 Organic Law, artistic education is divided into three levels, elementary, intermediate and higher level, which is at the moment developed in one cycle lasting 4 years for all instrumental learning. Administratively, higher artistic education belongs to secondary education, although the value of the final degree is equivalent to a BA degree. However, the new Organic Law of Education (LOE - 2006) considers higher artistic education as a third category (neither secondary education nor university level) and establishes that this non-university sector shall have three cycles. This law should be implemented in a few years.

All this is still very new, and the Committee takes note of the strong involvement of CONSMUPA's director in the discussions on this issue. Being member of the Higher Council of Artistic Education created in June 2007 in order to define the basic curricula and the legislation implementing the LOE, he will indeed keep up to date regarding all national developments and might be able to influence some decisions in the interest of higher music education. The Committee strongly supports CONSMUPA's view that higher music institutions should be considered as providing the same level of education as universities, but should

¹ This handbook can be found at <http://www.bologna-and-music.org/curriculum>.

² This handbook can be found at <http://www.bologna-and-music.org/creditpoints>.

have a specific status different from the university one, which would take into account the specific needs of music education. The AEC would like to express its readiness to assist CONSMUPA in strengthening its position in the debate, for example by providing the conservatoire with examples from other countries in Europe where music academies benefit from such a distinct university-level status.

Is there a connection/progression between the various cycles?

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, higher artistic education consists of only one cycle. This issue is therefore not relevant according to CONSMUPA's situation.

Does the curriculum take into account the various aspects of the 'Polifonia/Dublin Descriptors' (PDDs) and/or the AEC learning outcomes?

The various aspects of the PDDs and the AEC learning outcomes are closely utilized and used in the formulation of goals for each of the programmes. The curriculum for each programme is described in detail, addressing learning describes in competences, content, resources and educational materials, and evaluation procedure. The description is informative and gives a clear impression of what is important.

2.2 Delivery

How is the institution utilizing different forms of teaching in the delivery of the curriculum?

The Committee found no evidence of an institutional strategy in that matter, but could observe some examples of different forms of teaching when visiting lessons, such as a tuba lesson held in the form of group teaching or when discussing with the teachers of the New Technology department, who indicated using technology in teaching as much as possible. The committee supports the importance of the one-to-one lessons; however, it would also encourage the institution to explore a wide variety of teaching approaches. CONSMUPA might wish to consider inviting guest professors who are using different teaching methods in order to inspire its teachers and to show them examples of good practice in this matter.

Are the teaching and learning processes based on the competence-based approach promoted by the PDDs?

As mentioned above, the documents presented to the Committee show an awareness of the competence-based approach in the conception of programmes, i.e. at the management level. However, many teachers were not aware of this approach, and the institution is encouraged to improve the communication on the descriptors and the competence-based approach to teachers.

Are the students offered opportunities to present their creative work?

The Committee received detailed information on this matter and takes note of the important number of concerts organised by the conservatoire for the students: in the academic year 2006-2007, 117 concerts have been held (mostly by students) in the form of auditions, extraordinary concerts, chamber music concerts, performances of symphonic groups, etc. These events usually take place not only in the two halls of the conservatoire, but also outside the school in cultural centres or in the public library, which often results in a broader audience than for concerts inside the conservatoire, mostly attended by families, teachers and students. However, the hard competition between the different cultural organisations in Oviedo was mentioned.

Are there formal arrangements for students to receive regular counselling?

No formal student counselling is in place. In the framework of CONSMUPA's 'Tutorial Plan', some professors are responsible for the professional and academic orientation of students, with, among others, the tasks to orientate and advise the student(s) they are in charge of in relation to the professional opportunities and the various possible academic paths. These tutors are also responsible for informing the other members of the pedagogic team about the requests and concerns of the student(s) they follow. All students' personal problems can also be raised by student representatives during sessions of the School Council or directly with the Director, whose availability and accessibility were highlighted several times.

It seems that the Secondary Education regulations do not provide for formal student counselling to be set up. It would however be advisable that a confidential personal counselling is provided to students, e.g. by having an agreement with the local health centre or with the university clinic.

Does research have a role within each cycle?

For each speciality, students must write a final degree research paper. The objectives and the process regarding this paper are described in detail and communicated to the students. This scheme is very interesting and the publication of the best papers in the journal of the conservatoire is a relevant initiative.

2.3 International perspectives

Does the institution have an international strategy?

The institution has clear international ambitions and recognises the necessity to open the institution to the world. CONSMUPA's leadership has decided to focus on international relations within Europe with the help of the ERASMUS project. The conservatoire was granted the ERASMUS University Charter (EUC) in 2005 and has therefore recently started the organization of teacher and student exchanges with the creation of an Office for International Relations. CONSMUPA intends to increase the number of incoming and outgoing students and teachers over the next years. In addition, CONSMUPA has started in 2006 a project in collaboration with several American universities with the objective to also open its doors to countries outside Europe.

Regarding the tools necessary to support this strategy, it is important to mention the active role CONSMUPA plays in AEC, for example by appointing a representative to the AEC Council meeting, by sending staff members to AEC meetings and conferences, and by hosting the AEC Annual Congress in 2004. In addition, those involved in international relations at the CONSMUPA are encouraged to attend national and international events related to international mobility and collaboration agreements. Furthermore, CONSMUPA has translated and further developed its website in English and has planned to develop a promotional DVD of the conservatory and a CD recording with instrumental ensembles of the conservatory for its international promotion.

The Committee takes note of the recent but strong involvement of CONSMUPA at international level and would like to encourage the institution to continue with its hard work on the promotion of international mobility within the school. The Committee could see that the information about ERASMUS programme and its modalities were well-communicated to students but had the feeling that teachers were less informed about opportunities for

themselves. In addition, CONSMUPA is encouraged to work further on the attractiveness of the whole institution, and could develop courses in English, not only for instrumental teaching, but also for other subjects, so that more international students can be recruited.

Is the institution participating in partnerships that provide international perspectives?

As mentioned above, the institution has recently started to develop contacts with other institutions in Europe in the framework of the ERASMUS project. In spite of its short period of existence, the Office for International Relations has already managed to establish partnerships with 20 institutions in Europe (in Romania, in the UK, in Italy, Iceland, The Netherlands, France, Finland, Slovenia, Belgium and Germany).

To what extent do the curriculum and the educational processes offer international perspectives?

International perspectives are now being offered for students willing to spend a certain time period abroad within the ERASMUS programme. However, students remaining in the conservatoire also benefit from the presence of some foreign students in the institution (6 at the moment) and of foreign teachers (11 coming from the USA, Russia, Ukraine, Poland and Ecuador). In addition, foreign professors are regularly invited to the conservatoire for master-classes or conferences.

2.4 Learning assessment

What are the main methods for assessment and how do these methods support teaching and learning?

The assessment methods for the main subject are clearly described in the report written for the AEC, which contains information on the procedures and tools for the final degree examination of the first cycle of clarinet studies. A list of broad assessment criteria, such as the demonstration of technical control of the instrument, or the artistic and musical communication skills has been established; in addition, for each broad criterion, a list of indicators attached to a maximum amount of points has been designed in order to enable a precise assessment of students. The management team indicated the existence of concrete printed syllabi for every subject describing the whole functioning of the subject, including the assessment of practical and/or theoretical aspects. At the beginning of each academic year, the relevant syllabi are read to the students by the teachers and are made available upon request at CONSMUPA's Secretariat.

There seems to be an interaction between the learning assessment and the teaching of main instruments, as the criteria mentioned in the examinations rules seem to reflect the various aspects of the teaching provided and to assess the competences gained by the students. In addition, the weekly individual lessons were mentioned as a way to regularly assess students' learning attitude and academic progress. As the Committee was not able to attend an examination, it is not in a position to comment on the way examinations take place in practice.

What kind of grading system is being used in examinations and assessments?

The institution is using a grading system based on the following marks:

0 - 4:	(<i>Suspensio</i>)	Fail
5 - 6:	(<i>Aprobado</i>)	Pass
7 - 8:	(<i>Notable</i>)	Honour

9:	<i>(Sobresaliente)</i>	Excellent
10:	<i>(Matrícula de Honor)</i>	Excellent with Honours

The Committee did not find evidence of any statistics on the grade distribution in general and across departments. In order to achieve a greater consistency in grading across the institution, it may be advisable to look into this matter.

3. Student qualifications

3.1 Entrance qualifications

In what ways do the entrance requirements assess the artistic, technical, academic and mental capacities of the applicants to accomplish the various aspects of the study programme within the expected timeframes?

The requirements for those who want to enter CONSMUPA are comprehensively described. The system seems quite elaborate and a broad range of capacities is tested as students have to perform, make an oral presentation, undertake a counterpoint-harmony work, sight read and make an analysis of a counterpoint invention. In addition, the Conservatoire might wish to consider the introduction of an aural test in the procedure.

This system is selective and has become more competitive in the last years, as there are in general more applicants than places available. Thus, in 2007, out of 145 applicants, 118 passed the exam and 69 obtained a place. For some instruments, however, there are more places available than candidates, which sometimes forces the school, even if the jury has the last word, to accept all applicants, which affects the general level of students in that particular discipline. Most of the teachers the Committee met were satisfied with the level of entering students but indicated a disparity of level according to the music school where the student comes from. In order to address these problems, the Committee would like to emphasize the need to improve contacts between CONSMUPA and the music schools of Asturias and to set up a formal cooperation with these schools. Such cooperation would enable CONSMUPA to express clearly its needs in terms of future students and to help the music schools to implement curricula fitting with its requirements. CONSMUPA would then also be in a position to advertise for its programmes and attract more applicants, as well as to discover young talents at an earlier stage.

3.2 Employability

Are graduates successful in finding work in today's highly competitive music life?

There was little statistical evidence presented to the Committee to show the extent to which CONSMUPA's graduates succeed in securing work which is satisfactory to them. However, conversations with the management team and with former students indicated that students do not encounter problems in finding a job, as Spain has "experienced a boom regarding music learning centres" in the last 17 years. Thus, in Asturias, 35 music schools have opened and 2 symphony orchestras have been created during this period. Although there is no regular position of soloist at the opera of Oviedo, several students of the CONSMUPA sing in the opera choir; the Director of the Opera indicated a notable improvement in their level over the last 5 years, which means an increased competitiveness of CONSMUPA's students on the job market. As far as teaching is concerned, if students find jobs easily, former students however shared their difficulties when starting to work with children or with higher education students, as no pedagogic courses are offered at the moment at CONSMUPA.

The Committee takes note of the current Spanish situation – an expanding music employment market, which tends to be rare in Europe - but would like to underline two issues: first, such a situation might change in the future and the institution is encouraged not only to meet the needs of the employment market but also to explore new arenas for music presentation and sharing. Secondly, in order to improve the overall level of music education in Asturias, as many conservatoire students become teachers in music schools in the region, there is a strong need for setting up a pedagogic section at CONSMUPA. The leadership team has

identified this need and its plans aiming at developing such a section are highly supported by the Committee.

How do graduates contribute to the enhancement of cultural life locally, nationally and internationally?

Most of the graduates are active locally, mostly as music teachers. It seems that graduates are also active in the region as orchestra players, soloists and music researchers, but no specific data was available on the destination of graduates from the CONSMUPA. Some former students indicated having worked in different schools in Spain and the self-evaluation report prepared by the institution mentions that some graduates work in foreign institutions or perform abroad. The Committee had the opportunity to attend an excellent concert on the first evening performed by a former clarinet student active at the international level.

Such concert proved that the school manages to maintain contacts with the alumni, but the Conservatoire might wish to consider setting up a formal alumni system at CONSMUPA. Although the members of the management team seemed well informed about the destination of CONSMUPA's former students and although the graduates met seemed to be regularly in contact with their former teacher, such a system would provide the institution with clear data on the situation of all former students, would create a network of contacts for current students and would enable the school to collect the impression of foreign students on the training received as well as their suggestions to improve it. The AEC publication *Today's Student: Tomorrow's Alumnus – Cultivating Good Alumni Relationships in Conservatoires*³ could be helpful in this process.

How diverse is the spectrum of music-related arenas in which graduates find themselves immediately after graduation and later?

As mentioned above, graduates are mostly active as teachers or orchestra players. The City Council recently offered employment to CONSMUPA's graduates. Thus, the spectrum of music-related arenas in which graduates find themselves is rather limited. Indeed, as Asturias has not yet reached the situation of other countries in Europe where job opportunities for musicians have decreased, no need has been felt yet to explore new arenas of the music profession, and the local and national employment markets work well at the moment with rather traditional professions.

³ This publication can be found at www.polifonia-tn.org/alumni.

4. Teaching staff

4.1 Artistic and scholarly qualifications

Are members of teaching staff productive as artists and/or scholars at a high level?

The Committee does not have a clear picture of this aspect at CONSMUPA, as no specific information was provided by the institution. Most of the teachers the Committee met indicated being productive as artists. However, the difficulty to have artistic activities outside the conservatoire was emphasised in numerous discussions, and linked with the lack of time left to the teachers for their own career: in the secondary education system, of which CONSMUPA is part, teachers are required to work 37,5 hours per week for the conservatoire, out of which 25 hours must be spent in the institution: 18 hours a week are dedicated to teaching and the rest to administrative tasks. Thus, teachers are asked to prepare the material for workshops in repairing and maintaining instruments, to prepare the material for elective subjects, to work in the office of international relations, etc. In addition, teachers must log their activities in timesheets every day so that the time spent weekly in the institution can be checked.

The Committee was surprised to see such a system in place and had the impression that it discourages many teachers from being actively involved in artistic or scholarly activities outside the conservatoire. Such a system also prevents the institution from hiring in the long-term professionals working in various music organisations (such as orchestras). The Committee would like to underline the importance of reaching a balance between teachers' activities inside and outside the conservatoire. This overall scheme is a consequence of CONSMUPA's status of secondary school. However, concerts or other artistic/scholarly activities of teachers could be considered by the relevant instances as part of their preparation for the classes, so that this time could be included in the regular 25 hours and teachers would have to be active as artists or scholars in the framework of their work at the institution and not in addition to it.

Is there an institutional policy and practice to support and enhance the teaching staff's artistic and scholarly production?

Several conversations with the management and with teachers indicated that the institution strives to support the teaching staff's artistic and scholarly production but is limited by the lack of flexibility due to the situation mentioned above. Nevertheless, teachers indicated that CONSMUPA always accepts their projects when they find a way to finance them, and sometimes even contributes financially to these projects.

The Committee was surprised by the limited support CONSMUPA is able to offer to its teachers and would like to insist on the need for a reform at the government level in order to allow for a much more flexible system. In the rest of Europe, the part of teachers' work dedicated to their artistic and scholarly production is much higher and sometimes fixed by contract. Thus, in certain countries these activities occupy a teacher for approximately 30% of his/her working time. In order to enable CONSMUPA to be comparable or even competitive with other music academies in Europe, more time and attention needs to be granted to teachers' artistic and scholarly production; teachers are one of the links existing between the conservatoire and the profession and their work outside the conservatoire can have numerous positive effects for the conservatoire itself.

4.2 Qualifications as educators

How does the institution ensure that all members of the teaching staff have appropriate qualifications as educators?

Teachers are recruited and employed by the Department of Human Resources of the Regional Ministry of Education according to national law. The selection process is comprehensively described in the self-evaluation report of the institution.

The system in force for the recruitment of new staff seems satisfying for the institution as the latter can make recommendations regarding any additional staff needed and is responsible for the choice of the candidates: teachers of the conservatoire are members of the jury assessing the pedagogical competences and the general skills of the candidates. Several conversations with students and former students indicated the very good level of instrumental teachers, many of them having been active artistically (in orchestras, as soloists, etc) before becoming teachers in the CONSMUPA, and therefore attracting students from all over Spain.

Are policies and strategies in place for continuous professional development of teaching staff?

The Finance Department of the Public Administration offers CONSMUPA's teachers an "economical complement". This permanent training, organised by an external body, the Centre of teachers and resources, consists of 100 hours of training every 6 years, covering all the issues considered as helpful for the teachers, according to the requests made by each department of CONSMUPA. Teachers have an incentive to attend these training sessions in the form of a certain increase in their salary. In addition, CONSMUPA is regularly inviting famous professors and scholars from other institutions to give master classes and conferences, which both students and teachers attend. Teachers themselves give sometimes also master classes abroad, but this still depends very much on the personal contacts each teacher has. Few financial resources are available for such activities and a rather important amount of time is needed by the administration to answer teachers' requests. Therefore, teachers' expectations towards the implementation of the ERASMUS programme (which has just started 2 years ago) are very high in terms of teacher mobility.

The Committee takes note of the regular training sessions organised for CONSMUPA's teachers and of the various events and activities organised at the CONSMUPA enabling teachers to meet colleagues from foreign institutions, to discuss and exchange ideas with them. However, the Conservatoire might wish to consider setting up an institutional strategy for the continuous professional development of the teaching staff: teachers should be provided with a higher amount of training sessions and some courses in teaching and learning in higher education could be provided to new teachers and, on a voluntary basis, to all teachers interested in further developing their skills as educators. The support to teachers' mobility provided by the ERASMUS programme will also contribute in the next years to strengthen this aspect.

4.3 Size and composition of the teaching staff body

Is the number of teaching staff adequate to cover the teaching volume within a frame of acceptable quality?

The Committee did not receive any detailed information on the student/teacher ratio, but the current situation seems to satisfy all members of the institution. Former students indicated an increase in the quality of CONSMUPA's teaching and current students underlined several times the high quality of the training received at CONSMUPA.

Does the teaching staff cover all areas and disciplines included in the study programme?

The Committee had the impression that all areas included in the study programme were covered by the teaching staff. Indeed, CONSMUPA is able to rapidly react to needs expressed by the students or to current demands by hiring part-time teachers on the base of a 3-year contract, for example when a specific programme or course is added in CONSMUPA's offer, which requires a teacher specialised on a specific issue.

Does the composition of the teaching staff allow flexible adaptation to new professional requirements?

The average age of the teachers is approximately 45, with about 30 teachers under 40 and about 24 teachers over 50. This seems to be a rather balanced distribution, and the management team is trying to "get the best out of each person" according to its age: younger staff will be asked to undertake activities dealing with technology, whereas older staff will for example be able to contribute to the magazine of the institution. As indicated above, it seems that the institution is given a certain flexibility regarding the adaptation to new professional requirements, with the possible use of part-time teachers.

Regarding the age of teachers, the Committee would like to underline the importance of taking into account this aspect as a key element for the planning and the formulation of new competences. The Conservatoire might also wish to consider addressing the gender issue, although the difficulty of such a task must be acknowledged, at least as far as permanent teachers are concerned, given that they are recruited out of a list resulting from a national competition. Regarding the issue of flexibility, the Committee would like to insist on the lack of flexibility granted to the institution when the above mentioned 3-year-contract comes to an end: it cannot be renewed, and only a permanent contract can be proposed to the teacher concerned. The responsible authorities might therefore wish to consider giving CONSMUPA more freedom to compose its teaching staff in order to obtain a higher degree of relevance and flexibility.

5. Facilities, resources and support

5.1 Facilities

Are the building facilities (teaching and practice studios, classrooms, concert venues, etc.) adequate to support curriculum requirements?

CONSMUPA is situated in a well-maintained historical building which encompasses several classrooms, a conference room and an auditorium, and which is undergoing enlargement works so that new classrooms for music computing, new studio booths and a new auditorium for chamber music will be available. The different groups met by the Committee expressed their satisfaction concerning the current facilities and shared their expectation about the new facilities, which will soon be available. However, important problems related to the facilities were mentioned during conversations with members of the staff and students:

- 1) First of all, the premises are too limited with regard to practice rooms for students.
- 2) In addition, the building is shared by CONSMUPA and the Conservatory for Intermediate level (12-18 year-old-students), and can only be used by CONSMUPA from morning until early afternoon. As a consequence, the availability of rooms is highly problematic: teachers cannot postpone their classes to organise projects, performances or other artistic activities because of the lack of available rooms out of the hours planned at the beginning of the term; in addition, CONSMUPA's willingness to increase the number of concerts organised at the conservatoire is hindered by the necessity to share the concert hall with the other institution.
- 3) CONSMUPA does not seem to be in the position to open the building to students on weekends or holidays, due to the difficulty to finance such an extension of opening hours. Students consider this issue as crucial and indicated several times their willingness to solve this problem, especially given that, according to them, conservatoires in other regions of Spain are open on weekends. The Committee would like to encourage flexibility on the part of those who are in the position to influence such practical things as opening hours. As an example, the Committee would like to mention the situation of some institutions in Europe, which are able to open on weekends thanks to various systems involving students, in order to avoid giving additional work to the staff members⁴.

Are the instruments (pianos, organs, percussion, etc.) of a number and standard adequate to support curriculum requirements?

The Committee was not provided with detailed information on the instruments but the instruments seem adequate to support curriculum requirements. No dissatisfaction was expressed concerning the number and/or the quality of the instruments, and the policy in force at CONSMUPA consists in a regular acquisition of new instruments, which enables a regular renewal of the stock of instruments, and indicates a forward-looking attitude of the management.

Are the computing and other technological facilities adequate to support curriculum requirements?

⁴ Since the AEC visit, CONSMUPA has developed a system through which the conservatoire opens during the weekends for students who want to come and practice.

The computing and technological facilities seem to be adequate as well. The undergoing enlargement of the building will provide the institution with a new classroom for music computing and 5 new studio booths. Teachers of the New Technology department also indicated the high quality of the laboratory in musical acoustics.

Are the library, associated equipment (listening facilities, etc.) and the services adequate to support curriculum requirements?

Although the librarian and his assistant obviously look very well after the library, the latter is not adequate to support curriculum requirements. First of all, the room did not seem to be a silent place suitable for reading and concentration, as the entrance door was widely open, as the radio was on, and as a meeting was taking place in the adjoining conference room, which is only separated from the library by a curtain. In addition, although the librarian is working on the enlargement of the collection of scores (in the framework of the available budget, priority has been given to scores rather than CDs and books, as the latter are available at the university), teachers and students indicated a lack of scores, especially for the instruments newly taught at CONSMUPA.

The Committee takes note of the hard work and strong commitment of the librarian, especially given that he is in fact a teacher working for the library in the framework of the administrative tasks each teacher is assigned out of his/her teaching time, in respect of the law (refer to section 4.1). The Committee would like to underline the importance of providing students with a silent place to work, as well as the strong necessity of extending the collection of the library in terms of books, CDs, music sheets, and DVDs, as wished by the librarian.

5.2 Financial resources

How is the educational programme tailored, so that it can provide high quality requirements within the financial resources available?

A natural balance between the curriculum and the available resources arises from the fact that the number of students entering CONSMUPA is limited. The number of places available for each student is indeed calculated in function of the number of instruments and of the financial resources available for each of them. These resources are distributed so that each student will receive a high quality education. However, the Conservatoire might wish to consider exploring the use other sources of incomes such as sponsoring as a way to support specific activities or projects undertaken by the institution outside the regular activities.

Is there a long-term financial plan?

CONSMUPA is financed at 5% by its own resources obtained through the renting of rooms and through productions, and at 95% by the principality of Asturias, which provides CONSMUPA with a budget for the current expenses and which pays directly all salaries. The budget of the institution is decided annually, which does not allow for a long-term planning. Furthermore, as the institution is waiting for a regulation implementing the LOE, which should change completely its status, it is not in a position to make plans in the long-term.

5.3 Support staff

Is the technical and administrative staff adequate to support the teaching, learning and artistic activities?

It is mentioned in the self-evaluation report of the institution that the chief government employee and its three administrative assistants who are in charge of CONSMUPA's administration "have all the tools and means necessary to carry out their tasks". In addition, the administration staff members shared their satisfaction to have their work controlled at the government level, as this reduces their responsibility and ensures them that the work is correctly accomplished. However, as mentioned previously, many administrative tasks are completed by teachers in accordance with the legal requirements of the secondary education system. This does not seem to harm teaching and learning activities, as teachers are for example requested to investigate into specific repertoires, to organise additional remedial teaching classes for students, to be active in music event management and prepare auditions; but this seems to hinder the artistic activities, especially those of teachers as it reduces considerably the time they can spend for their own development.

Are policies and strategies in place for continuous professional development of technical and administrative staff?

The Committee did not received detailed information on that matter but could consider the close control of the support staff's work by the government as a sort of training for this category of staff. However, teachers which are assigned administrative tasks are often self-taught.

5.4 Organisation and decision-making processes

To what extent do the following support the curriculum, and the teaching and learning processes:

- *the organisational structure of the institution*
- *the organisational structure of the study programmes*
- *decision-making processes on institutional management*
- *decision-making on curricular affairs?*

The main governing body is the School Council, chaired by the director and composed of 4 representatives of teachers, 4 representatives of students, 1 representative of the administrative staff, 3 representatives of the management, all elected by the group of persons they represent, and 1 representative of the city Council. This School Council approves the General Annual Plan, has the final word on every issue, and is also considered as very important by the students, who can use it as a platform to expose their problems and try to find solutions. The representatives of students in the School Council are members of the Student Council, and therefore in contact with the students' delegates of each department, which facilitates the transmission of information from students to the School council. In the same way, the Pedagogical Committee, composed of all Heads of departments, is in charge of the communication between the director and the professors and is systematically consulted by the director for each decision to be taken concerning academic matters. Before the beginning of a new academic year, the annual project written by the management team is presented during a meeting of the School Council. All the representatives are asked to give their opinion and to make suggestions, and the project must be approved by each of them to be absolutely accepted.

The organisation and decision-making processes in place rely on the involvement of teachers, students and administrative staff, and seem to work well and satisfy all persons concerned. The Committee had the impression that the organisational structure was considered as adequate to support the curriculum and the teaching and learning processes. The institution could consider including in the School Council representatives of the profession as they could act as consultant and external adviser for the CONSMUPA.

Is there a long-term strategy for the improvement of the organisational decision-making structures?

As there is a strong feeling of satisfaction among all stakeholders, no need is felt to change the organisational structure.

5.5 Internal quality assurance system

To what extent are effective quality assurance and enhancement systems in place for the continuous improvement of the curriculum and the learning environment?

Before each academic year, a general annual programme is produced by CONSMUPA detailing its general objectives for the year in terms of academic activities, organisation and use of physical resources. At the end of the academic year, the institution is asked to produce another report for the Inspector of Education in order to enable the latter to check if the objectives announced by the institution have been achieved. If this is not the case, justifications must be provided.

Thus, if there is no formal external quality assurance process in place, the system which applies to CONSMUPA as a secondary level institution contains many features of such a system. The report produced at the end of the academic year covers all issues usually addressed in a self-evaluation report and the Committee was pleased to read in the document written for the AEC that the management considers such a report as a key tool to identify problems and establish new targets for the following academic year. The management team seems indeed very eager to assess the current functioning of the school in order to improve it, for example when an external organisation was hired to control and assess the way entrance examinations were held for the 2006-2007 academic year, and the Committee would like to encourage the management to continue with its work on this issue and to remain very open to external advice.

How are staff, students and former students involved in the quality assurance process?

Formally, all stakeholders are involved in the quality assurance process, as these issues are discussed during the meetings of the School Council, and as all must approve the general annual programme produced by the management. However, the Conservatoire might wish to consider developing a system to monitor and enhance quality, which could be based on a number of determined quality goals to be achieved. In addition, the management team is encouraged to base the evaluation of the institution on the feedback received from teachers, students and even foreign students. Questionnaires could be handed out these stakeholders in order to enable them to raise any problem encountered and to suggest improvements. The AEC handbook *Internal quality assurance in Higher Music Education*⁵ is a short guide for conservatoires wanting to develop a system for internal quality assurance and could form a useful tool for the Faculty.

⁵ This handbook can be found at www.bologna-and-music.org/internalqa.

To what extent:

- *are such reviews used to improve the educational programme?*
- *is this process continuously analysed and reviewed?*

As mentioned above, the management team makes an effective use of the self-evaluation report produced, given that the objectives of the next academic year are based on this review, with the overall objective to improve the quality of the education offered by CONSMUPA. As such reviews are realised on an annual base and initiated by the government, the institution is continuously evaluated, but without any influence on the way this assessment is done. There is therefore a need to set up an internal quality assurance process initiated by the institution itself and based on several sources of information. Such a system would then be analysed and reviewed regularly in order to improve the use made of the information collected.

6. Public interaction

6.1 Influence on development

Is the institution involved in the public discourse on cultural and musical policies or other relevant issues?

CONSMUPA students and teachers offer didactic concerts taking place in primary and secondary schools, as a way to promote culture and music in the eyes of youngsters. In addition, CONSMUPA participates in the public debate on cultural and music policies through the organisation of several conferences, the publication of the magazine *Resonancias* defining and presenting CONSMUPA's philosophy and work, as well as through documents published by the teachers. Meetings involving representatives of the City Council, the profession and the conservatoire management take place regularly with the aim to improve the cultural life of the city and CONSMUPA's is seen by the City Council, which fully supports its policy, as a symbol of high quality musical education.

However, it seems that the educational role of the conservatoire in the city is seen as more important than its cultural role and that the institution's projection is greater on the situation inside the school than on the society at large. The director seemed aware of this matter and appeared to the Committee as willing to change the situation by trying to increase the involvement of the conservatoire in the discussions related to culture and musical policy at the regional level, and therefore to increase CONSMUPA's influence on the public discourse on culture and musical policies.

To what extent does the institution initiate and involve itself in projects challenging existing musical policies and practices?

The Committee had the impression that the members of the institution are looking for projects challenging existing policies and practices, as shown by the nature of the excellent concert held on 27 April. However, no evidence of cutting-edge projects was provided to the Committee and no information was given by the institution on this issue.

6.2 Interaction with the profession

How does the institution communicate and interact with various sectors of the music profession in order to keep in touch with their needs?

As indicated above, regular meetings take place involving the conservatoire and representatives of the profession. An agreement was signed between CONSMUPA and the opera in 2007 enabling students to attend rehearsals, meetings and performances, and the representative of the opera expressed his willingness to deepen this partnership. Indeed, CONSMUPA is considered as the backbone of the opera, as the opera choir is composed of conservatoire students and as the conservatoire is often getting involved in activities organised by the opera for children. CONSMUPA is also communicating and interacting with the youth orchestras of the city of Oviedo, and of the Principality of Asturias, which offer opportunities for students to obtain professional practice, as about 95% of the players are students from the conservatoire. However, no cooperation with the two professional orchestras was mentioned.

The Conservatoire might wish to consider sustaining and enhancing its interaction with the well established musical institutions and, in the perspective of an international development, to implement some more formal cooperation and partnerships, for example in relation to

teaching and performing. As indicated previously, CONSMUPA's interaction with the profession would be enhanced if the conservatoire would be granted more flexibility when dealing with the teaching staff, as prominent artists in Spain would be able to teach at the conservatoire. This would generate a good flow of information to the benefit of students. The Conservatoire might also wish to consider exploring all possible ways of developing the music production and management studies, which have been planned for the near future, as it would be very useful for all students to have at one point of their studies some introduction and information on the ways the profession works in Spain and more generally in the European Union. Finally, the institution could consider establishing contacts with the middle school system in order to enable students interested in pedagogy to practice and gain experience in music education as part of their study.

How does the institution participate in the exploration of new professional possibilities for musicians?

The Committee found no evidence of a participation of the institution in the exploration of new professional possibilities for musicians. Indeed, as traditional professions are still recruiting, no need has yet been felt for such an exploration. In order to prepare this necessary exploration of new professional possibilities for the graduates of the conservatoire, CONSMUPA could consider including in its networks of partners for dialogue and collaboration musical groups which reflect and represent less well-established musical scenes. This would also provide students with a broader range of practice opportunities, which, in the Committee's view, is of paramount importance for performers as well as music educators and others.

Is there a long-term strategy for the improvement of the links with the profession?

An informal interaction with some sectors of the profession is certainly in place, but there are no regular and permanent contacts at the moment, except with the opera of Oviedo. The Committee would therefore like to underline the importance of improving these contacts in the future, as explained above.

6.3 Information to potential students

Is the actual course programme consistent with the information given to the public on what the institution offers in terms of educational programmes?

The Spanish version of the Website (<http://www.consmupa.es>) contains a broad range of information on the academy, its organisation and its cultural activities. In addition, a list of obligatory courses per study programme including the annual amount of lectures per year is available, as well as a list of all electives proposed at CONSMUPA and at the University. The English version of the website presents a rather big amount of information as well but only shows a list of existing study programmes, with no information on courses or electives. CONSMUPA is also publishing a flyer in English containing basic information on the conservatoire and referring to the website.

The Conservatoire might wish to consider developing additional tools besides the website and the flyer in order to improve the consistency between the information given to the public seems and the actual curriculum:

- A booklet in Spanish and English could be provided about entrance requirements, containing updated information on admission procedures and requirements.
- A study guide in Spanish and English could be created, which would list all study programmes, including information such as course codes, names of teachers, the

number of ECTS credits and contact time, as well as learning outcomes for the different courses and programmes. These details could also be found on CONSMUPA website in addition to the information currently available.

- For exchange students, CONSMUPA could consider publishing a 'Guide for Exchange Students' in English, which could include cultural and historical information about Oviedo, information about CONSMUPA and practical advice.

7. Standards Summary

This summary contains two sections; firstly a list of items which stand out as being very strong relative to the AEC criteria, secondly an outline of some of the areas in which there seems to be potential for further development.

Strong points

- **Atmosphere and leadership:** CONSMUPA is a dynamic institution led by a fresh and dedicated leadership team with an emerging vision for the future. There is a positive and stimulating atmosphere between students and teacher, as well as a very strong willingness, shared by the whole institution, to develop and improve. Improvements have been made already over the last years.
- **Teaching staff:** CONSMUPA's teachers are very dedicated and committed to the development of their students at artistic and personal level.
- **Decision-making processes:** the structure in place allows for the involvement all stakeholders, including students, for a good distribution of work and for a good flow of information in both directions.
- **Students' opportunities to perform in public:** participation in the numerous concerts organised by CONSMUPA during each academic year provides students with experience in concert practice, not only as soloists but also as members of the various ensembles and orchestras created by the institution.
- **Involvement in public discourse on cultural and musical policy:** much effort is put in order to maintain the institution at the forefront of the cultural and musical scene in the city and the region, through the organisation of concerts and the publication of CONSMUPA's magazine. In addition, the leadership team is active at the regional level, at the national level (through the director, member of the Higher Education Council) and at the European level (through its representative at the AEC) in order to increase the influence of the institution at all levels and to position it as a key institution in the decision regarding cultural and musical policy.
- **Future pedagogic section:** the plan to establish a pedagogical section in CONSMUPA is totally appropriate for the institution, as teaching should become one of the main activities of the graduates in the next future.
- **Curriculum and study programmes:** even if it is too early to assess their impact, important and necessary changes have been implemented in the curriculum and in study programmes during the last years in order to implement Bologna principles.
- **International involvement:** a very hard work has started in order to open CONSMUPA to other countries and to promote international cooperation.

Potential for development

- **Status:** in order to enable CONSMUPA to develop further and become comparable to and competitive with other music academies in Europe, its status in the framework of the new situation of the education sector - established by the Organic Law of Education of 2006 - needs to be defined in more details soon, and in a way which will benefit the institution. Higher music institutions should be considered as providing the

same level of education as universities, but should have a specific status different from the university one, which would take into account the specific needs of music education. The current situation of Spanish conservatoires is at a severe disadvantage compared to the rest of Europe, where music education is fully recognised at higher education level in practically all European countries. Such a situation proves to have a very negative impact on the conservatoire's teaching staff given the difficulty with the recruitment of professionals active on the artistic scene and given the lack of flexibility the conservatoire is able to provide for teachers' artistic and/or scholarly production. Such a practice is also strongly divergent from the situation in other European countries and the competent authorities are strongly encouraged to undertake the steps necessary to improve the situation of Spanish conservatoires within Europe.

- **Mission:** the institution is encouraged to better define its core mission and to set priorities among the different objectives to be achieved.
- **Facilities:** CONSMUPA's regular activities are obviously hindered by the obligation to share the building. The access to practice rooms and the availability of rooms are reduced, with a negative impact on the activity of teachers outside the institution because of the impossibility to postpone lessons. In addition, it is essential for the success of students to open the conservatoire during weekends and holidays⁶. Furthermore, students should be provided with an adequate library: working conditions for the students should be improved by the provision of a silent place suitable for concentration and an extension of the collection of the library must be undertaken.
- **Contacts with music schools:** the institution is encouraged to develop formal partnerships with music schools: first, as teaching in music schools represents the main occupation of CONSMUPA's graduates, the cooperation could include the opportunity for CONSMUPA's students to make work placements in these schools; second, the conservatoire could consider cooperating with the music schools in order to secure the quality of the applicants by implementing a marketing strategy to attract good students and influencing the curriculum at music schools, and also in order to pick out talents and bring them closer to CONSMUPA.
- **Links with the profession:** the institution is encouraged to develop formal partnerships with the professional organisations in the city and the region, in order to provide students with work placements, but also in order to keep up to date with the latest developments in the music profession. CONSMUPA could consider developing an alumni system for this purpose as well as for developing a network of contacts for the students who graduate each year.
- **Internal quality assurance system:** CONSMUPA is subject to an evaluation system set up by the regional government, which is very close to a quality assurance system. However, the institution is encouraged to develop the internal aspect of such a system as a tool for quality enhancement. Information could be drawn from students, former students, teachers and representatives of the profession and analysed in a critical way for the internal use of CONSMUPA.

⁶ Since the AEC visit, CONSMUPA has developed a system through which the conservatoire opens during the weekends for students who want to come and practice.