

# PROJECT CULTURE

**Starting points, steering strategies and effects of a specific project culture inside the 3-years-Network project meNet from the perspective of the coordinator.**



**CONTENT**

Introduction.....	3
Project Idea and EU-Programme.....	4
Project Initiative .....	4
The Grant Programme: Comenius 3 Networks.....	5
Beginning Influences on the Culture in the Network.....	7
Strategies, Working Methods, Behaviour – Further Aspects of Project Culture.....	11
Dealing with the many different languages in the project .....	11
Leaving room to manoeuvre.....	13
Intersecting working groups – well-connected knowledge.....	15
Dealing with unequal workloads .....	15
Clear and careful communication .....	16
Awareness of collective history – plenary meetings .....	16
Coping with Diversity – Some solutions from meNet .....	17
Formulating Quality Criteria (and a Glossary of Terms) Together.....	17
From “Good Practice Models” to “Examples of Practice in Context” .....	18
Learning Outcomes as a Collective Voice for Education Policy .....	20
Is Coping with Diversity the True Project Objective?.....	21
Project Evaluation – Consultation and Monitoring .....	22
The external evaluators’ observation of the project.....	22
The tasks of the project’s internal steering committee.....	24
Process Development and Success .....	26

## INTRODUCTION

meNet pursues the important aim of creating a strong, viable network of music education in Europe that will remain active even after the project has been concluded.

This objective requires a group like meNet to be durable and unified, something that is achieved on the one hand by collective pursuit of project targets and successful completion of products. Besides such “hard” factors there were also numerous “soft” ones that formed the basis of the team spirit found in meNet, developed and enhanced it a special way, helped to maintain the group’s ability to work in difficult project phases and make it probable that the community that has emerged from this undertaking will continue to exist in the future.

The following pages contain a detailed description of and a reflection on some of these soft factors that can also be termed a specific “meNet project culture”. The sources drawn on for this review were many and varied: evaluations, email correspondence, skype call reports, minutes of meetings and of course my numerous personal experiences as project coordinator.

*Isolde Malmberg (project coordinator)*

## PROJECT IDEA AND EU-PROGRAMME

### Project Initiative

In around 2003, the idea for a network project supported by the EU was born within the European Association for Music in Schools, the EAS ([www.easmusic.org](http://www.easmusic.org)). The EAS has been working for many years to establish closer ties between different countries in the field of music education. The aim is to enable countries to learn more from one another so that this knowledge can be used to promote cooperative projects and to secure the position of music education in Europe in the long term (for more information, see the Mission Statement of the EAS) (<http://www.eas-music.org/index.php?id=2&content=200&lang=en>). However, the members of the EAS and the board of directors had previously had little possibility of carrying out the work to the extent required due to a lack of funds.

In 2004, the project concept for meNet was drawn up. Although some of the essential features were formulated within the board of directors of the EAS, the details of the concept and the project proposal were completed at the Institute for Music Pedagogy in Vienna. In December 2004, the Vienna institute organised a preparatory meeting with 32 partner institutions who were interested in taking part in order to ensure a broad consensus on the themes and project objectives from the active partners. In the 2005 round of project proposals, meNet was initially turned down. The body responsible in Brussels felt that the project was too big and too ambitious. The insufficient “diversity” of the partners was also cited as a reason for non-acceptance. The slimmed down and modified 2<sup>nd</sup> project application was subsequently submitted and approved in 2006, and the project was able to start in the autumn of that year.

The project initiative in its modified form – the result of the original ideas of the EAS, the preparatory meeting, the elaboration of a coherent working plan and the necessary reworking of the previous proposal – had as its principal objectives:

- A description of music education in schools in 19 countries
- A description of music teacher training in 19 countries
- One example of good practice from each of the three areas school education, music teacher training and lifelong learning for music teachers
- A data base of all current and concluded Comenius projects in the field of music education on the project website [www.menet.info](http://www.menet.info)
- Formulation of Europe-wide learning outcomes for music teacher training
- Numerous measures for dissemination at institutional, regional, national and international level using a website, product DVD and various publications as the principal media.

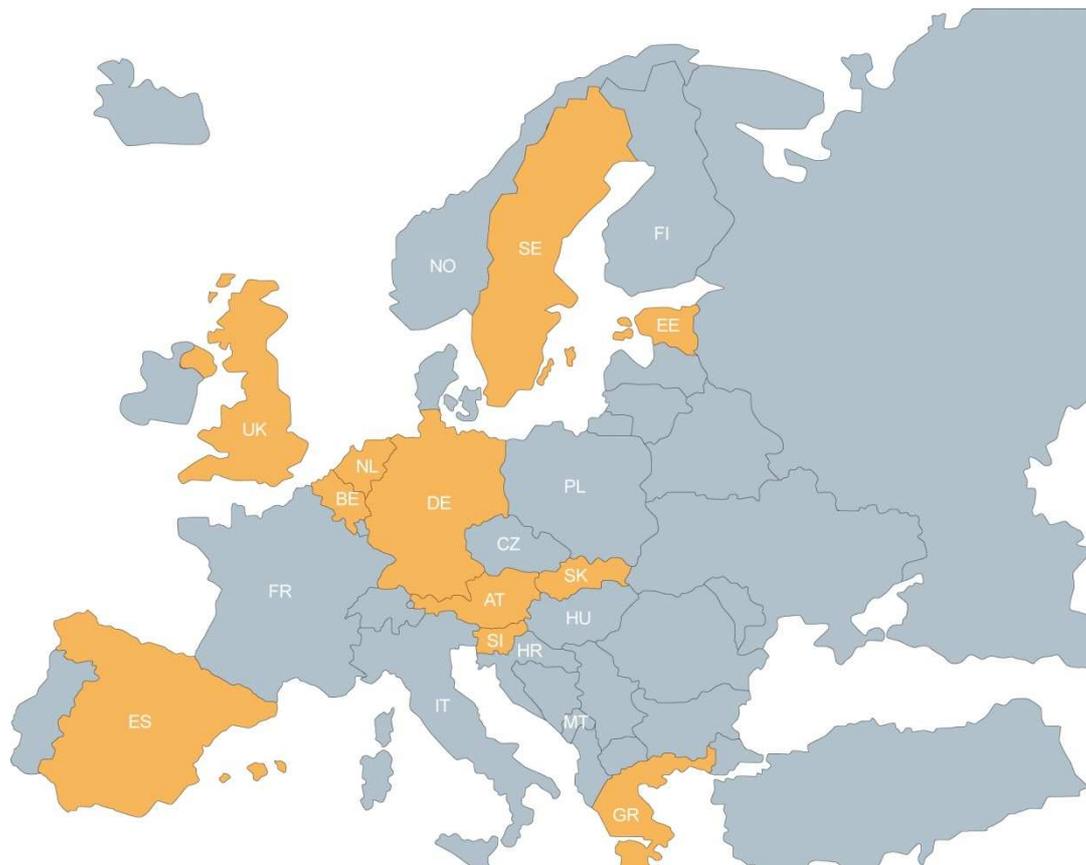
---

## The Grant Programme: Comenius 3 Networks

For this type of project initiative, the EU's COMENIUS 3 Networks programme ([http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc84\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc84_en.htm)) was deemed to be most suitable. COMENIUS networks promote networking between educational institutions and European cooperation. In addition, they support innovation in specific fields that are particularly important for school education in a European context and aim to increase the range of courses available in the particular subject or field that the network is working in.

COMENIUS networks are programmes that provide their active partners with the financial resources to carry out extensive activities. On the other hand, the programme sets stringent conditions for receiving funds in the first place and for subsequently keeping the full amount. There follows a description of some of these conditions and the problems they can cause for the day-to-day implementation of a project:

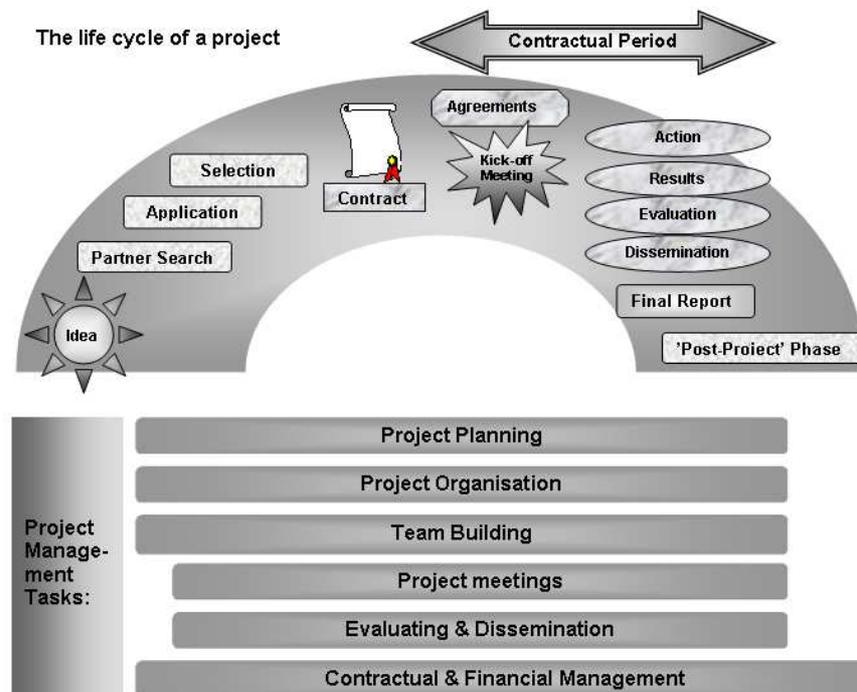
- Strongly intercultural nature: Comenius networks require at least six partner countries. The chances of receiving subsidies increase in proportion to the geographical spread. Our network ranges from northern Sweden to Greece and from Spain to Estonia.



Active partner countries in meNet

- “Mixed” partnership: schools, higher education institutes, associations and educational authorities are working together despite the differing conditions prevailing in their institutions and their individual interests.
- Long distances make communication more difficult: the partners only meet twice a year for three-day meetings; the rest of the time they have to communicate using the internet.
- Severe limitations on staff levels and financial resources.
- Shortage of time.
- Strict adherence to the working plan is compulsory, limited flexibility: important issues that only come to light once the project is running can only be dealt with summarily or by putting in unpaid, additional hours.
- Extensive administrative duties, submission of reports: care must be taken that administrative tasks do not require too much energy to the detriment of the project work itself.
- Permanent financial risk for the coordinating institution.
- The elaboration of the project proposal leading to (possible) approval and the period following project conclusion until final approval of the final report entail

tremendous uncertainty and an enormous amount of work: in our round of applications, for example, only four of approximately 80 submitted proposals were accepted. In our case, work on the project took us a total of around five years.



This diagram from the Survival Kit on the management of EU projects shows that the contractual period actually only accounts for part of the “life cycle of a project”.

The task of developing the specific strategies necessary for fulfilling these rigorous conditions and for establishing them one by one in the project was chiefly the responsibility of the coordinating institution. Support for this task came from the team of the steering committee and the external evaluators.

## Beginning Influences on the Culture in the Network

The project initiative, based on ideas put forward by the EAS for dealing with a particular subject area, now came into contact with an EU grant programme that is clearly defined by certain criteria and is in turn derived from general political objectives of the EU. The two concepts did not agree on every point, which meant that the first step was to ascertain how many of the programme’s criteria could be met without lessening the viability or diluting the visions of the initiative. Bringing the initiative in line with the EU programme was one of the greatest challenges of the

planning and application phase. The following aspects of a specific project culture appeared during this initial stage:

### **Security offered by a network (EAS) behind a network (meNet)**

From the very beginning of the project until its conclusion and beyond, meNet was always a network that was supported by – and in turn supported – an existing network: the EAS. For example, meNet was able to consult EAS members for expert advice on particular matters and take advantage of the firmly established EAS congresses to disseminate its results. In addition, the continued existence of meNet following conclusion of the project is guaranteed within the EAS networks. For this reason, the members of meNet always saw themselves as part of a large, attractive, widely connected network that is above all and without any doubt durable.



meNet has an opportunity to disseminate its products at the EAS Congress / ISME<sup>1</sup> Regional Conference 2007\_in Pitea (SE), May 2007

### **Stringent requirements as an obstacle, a means of clarification and a way of achieving EU maturity**

The requirements placed by the exacting programme on the meNet partners naturally had a considerable effect on the way many of them approached their work since they had to learn to balance their actions skilfully between the stipulations and structures

---

<sup>1</sup> As a direct partner of the ISME – the International Society for Music Education – the EAS combines its own congress with the European ISME Regional Conference every other year. This association with the international society enables meNet products to reach a wide audience.

of the EU programme and their own intentions, which to begin with were geared entirely towards the vision they wished to realise.

One noticeable positive aspect was that the programme's requirements helped to clarify and strengthen some of meNet's objectives: for example, we were required to improve the institutional "diversity" of the partnership. Complying with this stipulation, we integrated more education authorities into the partnership and this made it easier later on to gain acceptance of our products from those responsible for education since some of them were already part of our team and had provided ideas that helped to develop them.



First discussions at the "kick-off meeting" in Vienna in December 2006 (Gerhard Sammer, Richard Jones and José Rodriguez Quilez y Garcia in the foreground)

Another instance that led to a positive turn was when meNet partners increasingly cast off the role of merely implementing an EU programme and began, for example, to provide those responsible at the executive agency with feedback on the day-to-day running of the project. The representative responsible for meNet at the Brussels agency visited meNet at the fifth plenary meeting in The Hague. The meNet partners and the representative made extremely constructive use of the opportunity for a discussion among "equals".

The extensive project application prior to the start of the project and the project administration during its implementation proved to be enormous obstacles. Some of the application's requirements, such as the detailed working plan and an exact budget of partners' working days before the project started, later turned out to be useful. On the other hand, a great deal of energy was expended on administrative tasks during project implementation. What is also interesting to note here is the great differences in the partners' attitudes towards the rigid rules: some of them wanted to

expand the plan, as thorough and comprehensive as it already was, by adding ethical principals. This led to highly fruitful and exhaustive work on the wording of a joint Ethical Statement immediately after the project had started. Some partners appreciated the meticulous administration of the project and adopted it for their own ends. Others felt unable to cope with the administration and the narrow contractual constraints. One partner regrettably left the network very early on, citing as one of his reasons the stringent contractual stipulations which he regarded as unreasonable.

## STRATEGIES, WORKING METHODS, BEHAVIOUR – FURTHER ASPECTS OF PROJECT CULTURE

meNet is a complicated project structure in which an enormous number of different steering strategies were employed. They were used by individuals, by the chairs of the groups, by the steering committee, by the coordinators and not least by the executive agency in Brussels to complete the project and produce high-quality products in a way that was both useful and in accordance with the project plan. Some of the “strategies” that were introduced in this project turned into “behaviour” that may be seen as characteristic of the meNet partners' cooperation. Some of the strategies were pre-planned, while others developed organically as a result of the work as it proceeded. Many of the strategies and attitudes adopted were helpful, although some of them caused problems. Again, the space available here precludes mentioning any more than only a small number of selected strategies and attitudes by way of illustration.

### Dealing with the many different languages in the project

#### The bilingual approach

Unlike many other EU networks, meNet is an entirely bilingual project. Only German and English were used, and had as far as possible equal status. All the meNet products are available in these two languages, too. The original plan to produce all the products in Slovakian as well – since this is the Slavic language spoken by most of the participants from eastern European countries – regrettably had to be abandoned for financial reasons. In detail, the policy of using two languages was implemented as follows: in every plenary discussion, every request to address the auditorium is made in German and English. The internet platform is in two languages. An English-German glossary was compiled featuring the terms that had been the hardest for the project group to agree on. The smaller working groups, however, used only one working language, with one exception, so that they would be in a position to act more quickly. At the beginning of the project the use of two languages was felt to be demanding, as plenums lasted longer, for instance. But as time went on this system began to work very well.



The meNet group – seen here at the kick-off meeting in Vienna in December 2006 – consists of members with ten different mother tongues

In terms of the internal procedures of the project, in other words from the perspective of the individual partners, this bilingual system had widely differing consequences depending on the partners' linguistic ability: nearly all of those who speak both languages well have one of them as their mother tongue, which they use for discussing technical matters. They had a huge advantage in terms of communication. On the other hand, it was they who, as the project neared completion, had the onerous task of proofreading many of the completed texts. In the plenary sessions they heard all the information twice which gave them more opportunity to take in what was being discussed. Some partners speak only German or English as their mother tongue, while others speak one or other of the two as their first or even second foreign language. For these partners it was naturally considerably more difficult to state their arguments confidently and persuasively.

One working group approached the use of two languages in a particularly single-minded way. The team that worked on the meNet learning outcomes in music teacher training always formulated the very subtly differentiated descriptors in both languages at the same time. To give an example of the procedure they followed: a suggestion for a particular wording in one language was immediately followed by an attempt to translate it into the other language. This resulted in questions being raised

regarding the precise ideas and concepts behind the wording in the first language. In the course of a discussion of these questions, a suitable wording in each of the languages emerged.

### Reasons for the dual-language strategy

There were several reasons for deciding to use two project languages:

- A language conveys specific notions that have developed in the culture of the people that speak it. Because the meNet partners always spoke and thought in two language contexts it was easier for them to be aware of these cultural differences.
- From the outset it was possible to cast the partnership's net wider, since the number of experts that could be considered as meNet partners was greater.
- Use of the two languages for the day-to-day project work made it relatively easy to formulate the products in both languages.

### Planned use of other languages in meNet

Insistence on the use of the two languages German and English throughout the project is an important step towards inclusion of different cultures. However, the large number of partners for whom neither German nor English is their native language (eight other mother tongues are represented in the project) are at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to using the meNet products in their countries. For this reason, meNet and the EAS plan to have some of the key documents translated into other project languages within the partnership.

### Leaving room to manoeuvre

Whereas on the one hand the meNet project plan was formulated in as much detail as necessary, it was at the same time kept as accommodating as possible so that the experts would have the opportunity to fine-tune the objectives as the project progressed. In addition to this, it had not been established who would work with whom in the small teams and who would chair them. The project coordinators had opted for this strategy in the hope that it would encourage greater responsibility and active input from the partners from the very beginning. However, at the kick-off meeting it became clear that this procedure would place almost impossible demands on the partners. In particular, expectations were too high at an interpersonal level. Quickly forming working groups with virtual strangers and being able to tell whether these teams would be able to work well together over the next three years seemed an almost impossible task. In some areas, the groups were not formed until the second plenary meeting and it was only then that some of the partners really began to work effectively. From there on in, the project made good progress. When filling in a questionnaire later, one partner expressed his pleasure about this positive turn of

events in the following terms: “Foggy beginning in Vienna, and now here is the products.”



Gerhard Sammer and Monika Oebelsberger in front of a chart that gives some idea of how complex the process of forming the groups was.

This situation from the early stages exemplifies the strategy chosen of allowing the partners the greatest possible independence within the project and thereby enabling them to see it as “their project”. The consequences that have emerged as the project unfolded have been mixed: among the positive results of this strategy are the fact that, with one exception, all the partners have remained in the project; that many of the ideas that appeared during implementation (Glossary of Terms, increased number of examples of “Examples of Practice in Context”) have been adopted and put into practice; that the partners have held a tremendous number of presentations; that the meetings were held in an atmosphere of great cordiality and conviviality; and that nearly all the partners attended every meeting. Where this strategy of allowing the partners latitude and independence led to problems was in the difficulty some of them had accepting the responsibility concomitant with this degree of independence and in a level of responsibility and work output that fluctuated too much in the project.

## Intersecting working groups – well-connected knowledge

A strategy that proved to have both beneficial and unfavourable consequences for the progress of the project is that of overlapping membership of working groups. This meant that some partners were placed in two or more working groups. On the one hand, this made it possible for every group to be fully informed about the activities of the others. On the other, it meant that those who were members of more than one group were under greater pressure at the plenary meetings. These partners had the problem that they were unable to spare the time necessary for the important face-to-face discussions at the meetings, opportunities for which were rare enough as it was, because they had to divide their time among their other working groups.

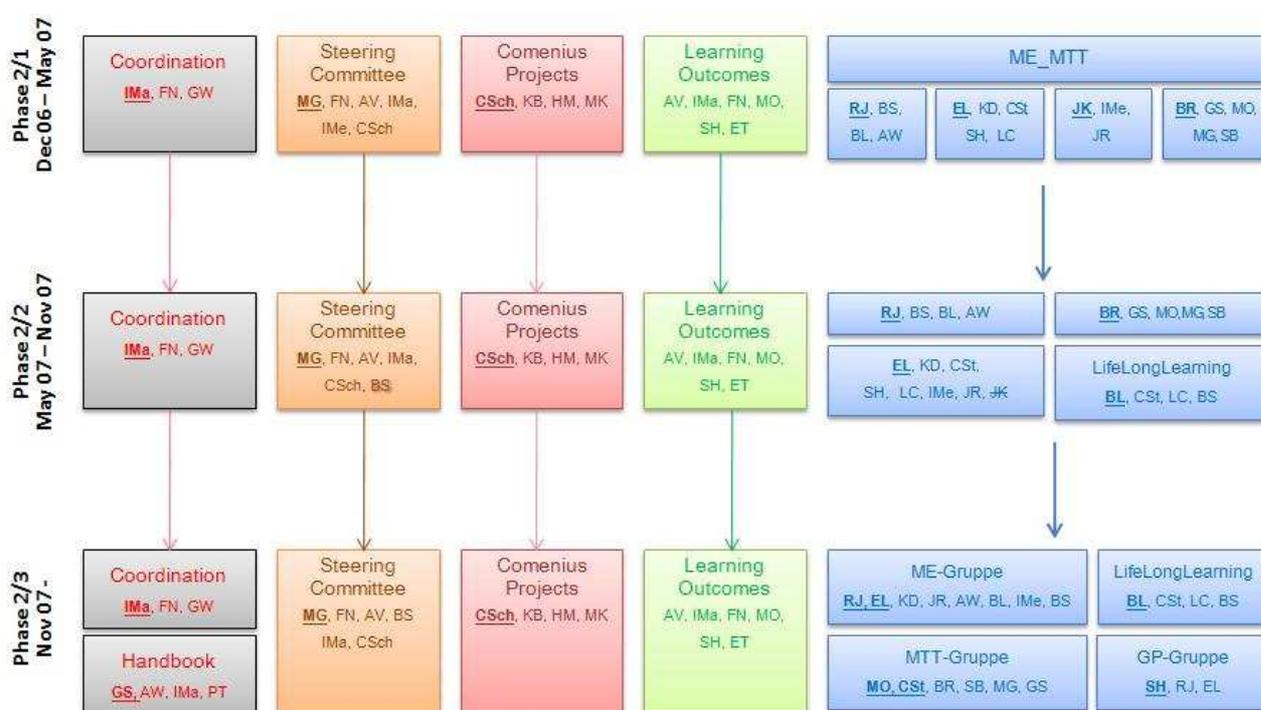


Diagram showing the group structure and changes in Phase 2 of the project (December 2006 - November 2007)

## Dealing with unequal workloads

In meNet, some partners unexpectedly found themselves faced with a heavy workload. There were widely differing reasons for this, among them the previously described different requirements and possibilities of people and partner institutions, the creation of additional products and the fact that some partners suffered from the occasional unreliability of the members of their small teams and had to do their work for them. In such cases it was not possible to adequately compensate for this increased workload of certain individuals in the group as a whole. It was also difficult

to reallocate any significant sums for personnel costs once the project was running. In Ljubljana the meNet partners agreed that any additional working days that the partners had genuinely put in should be entered on the timesheets to ensure that the hours they had really worked were not “invisible”. Even when this problem was brought up at meetings it by and large remained a taboo subject and proved difficult to solve.

### Clear and careful communication

meNet is a complex project in which the conditions for communication are difficult. In many contexts, such as email correspondence, pre-printed forms and the planning of meetings, care must be taken to ensure that the partners get into the habit of choosing their words very carefully in every communication. In this way it was increasingly possible to avoid incorrect information and misunderstandings that would otherwise have spread very rapidly throughout the network. An indication of the very respectful and polite behaviour and atmosphere in the project is the fact that in awkward situations the partners often first asked whether they had understood everything correctly before proceeding to a discussion of differing opinions.

### Awareness of collective history – plenary meetings

In groups, one factor that helps to create a distinctive identity is narrative elements from the history that the members have experienced together. Examples of such narrative elements are photos, accounts, anecdotes and similar memories that form a record of this history. Moments of reflection and evaluations can also play a narrative role. The plenary meeting in Ljubljana (April 2008) was begun with a brief PowerPoint presentation – meNet-the-story-so-far, a humorous account of the story of the project up to that point. The plenary meetings are the most important landmarks when it comes to the development of a collective history. The host partners organised them in a spirit of exceptional cordiality and with enormous attention to detail.

## COPING WITH DIVERSITY – SOME SOLUTIONS FROM MENET

Every job in meNet required the project partners to adopt a suitable approach to the diversity that prevailed in the project at many levels.

In meNet we find, for example

- different institutions,
- different languages,
- different levels of proficiency in the working languages German and English,
- different nationalities and regions,
- different cultures,
- different definitions and concepts in the field of music education,
- different sets of reasons for joining the project,
- different needs and expectations,
- different personalities,
- different working and management styles, and
- different types of previous experience of project work.

The following paragraphs describe three examples of how the meNet group found its own constructive ways of coping with the diversity in the project. It is interesting to note that in none of these instances was it possible to find a “simple” solution that would satisfy the requirements of the prevailing diversity: the solution to the problem lay either on another level or the task had to be modified so that the group could achieve a result that was satisfactory to all because it was reached in consensus and was therefore in keeping with the overall objective.

### Formulating Quality Criteria (and a Glossary of Terms) Together

In terms of the specific topics to be covered it was helpful for the meNet group to work on a common set of quality criteria for the most important products relatively soon after the overall group had been split into working groups, i.e. at the second plenary meeting. Criteria were elaborated for the following four key products:

- case studies in context,
- presentations,
- publications and
- descriptions of the structure of music education in the various countries on the website.

The discussions and process of elaboration showed for the first time that the number of criteria that *all* the representatives of the various countries and institutions can agree on is actually very small. On the one hand, this consensus seemed so small as

---

to be almost disheartening, indicating, as it seemed to, that this project was not going to get very far. On the other hand, the intense debate on and scrutiny of the quality criteria proved truly invigorating. In the course of the general discussion it had become clear that it would be necessary to explain certain terms if we still intended to uncover similarities and differences in music education in the various countries using the two project languages German and English. This was the start of the compilation of the Glossary of Terms relating to music education. A glossary had not been part of the project plan; it came about as an additional product to meet a need that had arisen for the group.



The meNet group formulating common quality criteria for meNet products at the plenary meeting in Pitea (SE), May 2007

## From “Good Practice Models” to “Examples of Practice in Context”

The meNet partners had agreed in the project plan that three good practice models should be elaborated from each of the three areas “Music at school”, “Music teacher training” and “Lifelong learning for music teachers”. At that stage, no decision had yet been made regarding which countries these models should come from. As the process unfolded, the partners got to know each other as representatives of markedly differing systems of music education.

It was not long before reservations were voiced in the group about having to describe such models as “good/gut”. At the meeting in Pitea there was intense debate about whether the terms “good”, “best” or even – with an eye to the future – “next practice” should be used. For the time being, agreement was reached on “good practice models/*Modelle guter Praxis*” and efforts were then made in a second step to agree on joint, cross-national Criteria. At the penultimate plenary meeting, at which the products for the website were completed, the group took what has been its last important step to date and vigorously advocated replacing the term “good practice models” with the term “Examples of Practice in context”. This apt description succeeds in both avoiding the awkward judgment and in making it quite clear that these examples must always be seen in their regional context. More details on this can be found in the Introduction to the section of the website on Examples of Practice in context.



The meNet group at the 4<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting in Ljubljana (SI), April 2008

Moreover, when writing the descriptions of the situations in the different countries and considering how and whether comparisons may be drawn between systems that had evolved so differently in the various countries and that each had their validity in their own context, the group deemed it impossible to select only a few models from a limited number of countries as “good practice models”. This would quickly lead to the impression that these few models were intended to represent all of Europe – and this was a misunderstanding that the meNet group did not want to risk. In the end, the group decided to change the project plan: a considerably higher number of case studies than provided for in the project proposal were recorded on a voluntary basis in order to go at least some way to giving a true reflection of the exciting diversity found in the various countries. In addition, it was decided to make the process open-ended: this means that even after termination of the project, the search for and

documentation of such models will continue in the meNet group. A concept paper has already been written for this.

## Learning Outcomes as a Collective Voice for Education Policy

### Point of departure

Apart from the network activities of the meNet partner institutions, the motivation for which is chiefly intrinsic, there was also one necessity that was brought into the project from outside: within the current Bologna Process and with an eye to the Lisbon Strategy, standards / learning outcomes for a variety of different fields are being developed in various European working groups. The initiative “Tuning Educational Structures in Europe” (<http://tuning.unideusto.org/tuningeu/>) gathers these activities on its website. When the project started, the only learning outcomes for professional music education that existed for the field of music were those formulated by the AEC ([www.aecinfo.org](http://www.aecinfo.org)). It was therefore only logical that meNet should set itself the task of formulating Learning Outcomes for the training of music teachers in Europe and take advantage of the opportunity to ensure that the wordings are and remain relevant within this uniquely wide-ranging network

### Intensive discussions about the possibilities of standardisation

It was the emergence and existence of Europe-wide learning outcomes for music teacher training that set the discussion in meNet on standardisation and dealing with diversity in an appropriate way in motion. The debate was intense within the meNet group, in replies from associated partners, at the various meetings and events at which the wording of the outcomes was discussed, and at presentations of the meNet learning outcomes at the end of the project.

### Differing reactions from the target groups

Reaction to the presentation of the learning outcomes differed enormously, as the following examples show:

- At a presentation at a university in Germany there was great interest in knowing who “was behind the learning outcomes”, which institutions from which countries were in overall charge and how the working groups had been formed. The participants were worried that they might soon be overwhelmed by regulations throughout the EU that conflicted with the culture of their own institutions and regions.
- Conversely, there was a call at the same presentation urging the use of such learning outcomes in order to achieve harmonised standards in European education.
- One trainer of teachers from Kosovo reacted with relief and hope, and expects her efforts for reform in her own country to be strengthened and

---

supported by the presentation of the meNet learning outcomes. A colleague from Spain expressed similar expectations.

- A group of teacher trainers from Austria greeted the proposed learning outcomes with great caution at a symposium: the group wanted to use the learning outcomes as a stimulus but felt that they were too ambitious for some forms of professional training.

### **The meNet group's suggestion on how to deal with the learning outcomes**

These and many other widely differing reactions from the target groups led the meNet group to make several recommendations regarding the benefits and use of the meNet learning outcomes in music teacher training that are in keeping with the project culture of a special approach to diversity that emerged within meNet.

### **Is Coping with Diversity the True Project Objective?**

Diversity and differences are in some way an inherent part of Comenius networks. Appreciating this diversity as a positive resource, knowing how to deal with it and allowing the conflicts it creates sufficient space form an ideal that is extremely difficult to fulfil. Furthermore, dealing tactfully with the discussions that arise can sometimes impede the effective progress of the project as it is laid down in the schedule. In meNet this occasionally created the impression that progress was extremely slow. In an email, one project participant asked the radical question of whether fulfilling project plans was not of secondary importance behind the project's true objective which was the closer ties between the countries, institutions and people that were being forged "behind" all these activities.

*"I often think it's a pity that we have so little time for pursuing our project objectives and for discussing specific topics because we are constantly struggling to be able to work with each other at all. But then I sometimes think that it is precisely here that we are creating something new, in the struggle to work together the countries and institutions get to know each other and will be in a position to cooperate AFTER this project. And that is perhaps the true objective that the EU is pursuing behind the official working plan: these closer ties in Europe that are forged by a collective endeavour. In that case, the products are in fact secondary."*

## PROJECT EVALUATION – CONSULTATION AND MONITORING

Besides the project coordinators, it was chiefly the two teams of external evaluators and the project's own steering committee who oversaw the project development. Both groups had the dual role of monitors and consultants in the project.

### The external evaluators' observation of the project

A team of two external evaluators monitored the process by means of questionnaires and interviews. The results are summarised in the comprehensive Report on the Interim Evaluation and a Report on the Final Evaluation. The two evaluators also offered the team of coordinators advice in particular instances on matters relating to process supervision and internal evaluation. Below is a list of some of the results of the project survey:

#### What motivated the partners to join

- The partners appreciate the chance to exchange ideas and experiences in the field of music education.
- They are convinced that the products will be useful for many people in Europe.
- The partners are generally satisfied with the project's progress.
- There is a large degree of satisfaction in the working groups.
- For many partners, participation in meNet is a good opportunity for professional advancement (improved language proficiency, leadership, working, publishing and presenting at international level etc.) which in many cases also results in enhancing their status in their own institution.
- Potential areas for cooperation, friendships and specific plans have resulted during the project period that will continue to exist after meNet.

#### Partners' difficulties

The evaluators found that the partners encountered a wide range of difficulties and problems with their work on the project which also differed greatly from person to person. Consequently, the following problems apply only to certain partners.

Some of the partners found it difficult to work in a foreign language and many complained that time was too short, especially if they received virtually no support from their home institution. Some partners suffered from repeatedly having to encourage less active team members or from the slow progress made in their group due, for example, to the differing holiday periods in the various countries. One of the working groups was very large and it was a long time before it could be split; as a result it had great difficulty reaching the stage at which it could work effectively. Some

partners would have preferred to spend more time at the beginning on a clear allocation of tasks rather than on “getting acquainted” and “forming the working groups”.

### Helpful steering strategies

From the point of view of the evaluators the following steering strategies<sup>2</sup> proved particularly helpful for the coordinators and the steering committee:

- Continuous observation of the overall process and the working process in each of the working groups, reflection on these processes and reacting to situations arising;
- Making it clear to the chairs that they have the important role of maintaining unity within the working groups;
- The subject of communication should be placed on the agenda of the plenary meetings and the groups should develop their own modalities to ensure that their work proceeds satisfactorily thanks to successful and reliable communication;
- Increasing the awareness of some partners of the importance of commitment and productivity.

---

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Summary of the Report on the interim evaluation



## Evaluation: Zwischenbericht

Frühling 2008

### >> Zusammenfassung der 7 Hauptergebnisse

- **Projekt hat gute Fortschritte gemacht und soliden Status erreicht**
- **Allgemein gute Stimmung und Zufriedenheit**
- **Meetings werden als sehr wichtig für den Prozess eingeschätzt und stellen Meilensteine dar** (Viele Erwartungen betreffend Ljubljana)
- **Mehrere PartnerInnen berichten über generell hohen Grad an Arbeitsbelastung**
- **Vernetzung und Produktvalorisierung mit externen und assoziierten Partnern haben begonnen**

### Herausforderungen

- **Wie viel Mitwirkung kann ich/können wir einbringen?**
- **Wie kann die Zusammenarbeit in den Arbeitsgruppen gut gestaltet werden?**

Daten: 4 Befragungen im Projektzeitraum

### Externe Evaluation

>> Erfahrungen systematisch für die Prozessoptimierung nutzbar machen

>> Beratung der Projekt-KoordinatorInnen

>> Erfolge sichtbar machen



Angelika PETROVIC  
Evaluation und  
Bildungsforschung



Wilfried HACKL  
Institut EDUCON

The evaluators regularly sent posters containing key information to the partners. These posters were displayed during the meetings and served as potential incentives for future work. The above poster was produced for the fourth plenary meeting in Ljubljana, April 2008.

## The tasks of the project's internal steering committee

The steering committee, a team consisting of sometimes five, sometimes six project participants from different countries, supported and supervised the partners' regular fulfilment of the tasks allocated to them, the quality of the work and the results, the cooperation between the groups and the meNet finances. It also played a leading role in the formulation of the Ethical Statement and ensured that the project partners complied with it (in areas such as data protection and copyright agreements, for instance).



The steering committee (Adri de Vugt, Franz Niermann, Isolde Malmberg, Marina Gall and Barbara Sicherl-Kafol) at the meeting at the ISME Congress in Bologna 2008 (<http://www.isme.org/2008>)

---

## PROCESS DEVELOPMENT AND SUCCESS

Quote from the final evaluation report of the two external evaluators<sup>3</sup>:

*“In the course of its three-year duration, the project ‘meNet - Music Education Network’ succeeded in achieving all its declared aims to the extent originally planned. The concurrent evaluation showed that all the interim objectives were by and large achieved within the planned schedule. From the partners' feedback in the surveys conducted during the project and in the final survey it can be concluded that this is largely due to successful overall coordination, which is of particular importance for a project of this size and when two working languages are used. A further remarkable aspect is the development and distribution of a large number of products and documents, full versions of which are available on the website [www.menet.info](http://www.menet.info) and have been, and are being, placed at the disposal of experts by means of extensive dissemination work.*

*Particular emphasis must also be placed on the clearly and provably sustainable and networked nature of the project, as shown for instance by the close links between the meNet project and the EAS on a personal and structural level. In this context the recommendations of the "Interim Evaluation of the Comenius Networks" of 2004 were followed to a large extent, also by actively involving national education authorities.*

*The final survey of the project partners reveals a high level of satisfaction with the way the project was conducted and with the results and products that emerged from it. In particular the great willingness to continue using and developing the products and the partners' positive attitude towards continuation of the network clearly indicate that overall the respondents felt that the project was an extremely positive experience that will have long-term effects.”*

---

<sup>3</sup> Angelika Petrovic and Wilfried Hackl (2009)