



MUSIQUE  
Music Quality Enhancement

# Annual Report 2023



MusiQuE - Music Quality Enhancement

The Foundation for Quality Enhancement and Accreditation in Higher Music Education

Brussels, November 2024

## Contents

Contents	3
List of abbreviations	3
About MusiQuE	4
MusiQuE Structure	5
Peer Reviewers Register	7
Review Procedures	9
Finances	11
Internal and External Quality Assurance	12
Communication and external relations	14

## List of abbreviations

**AEC:** Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen

**EAS:** European Association for Music in Schools

**EHEA:** European Higher Education Area and Bologna Process

**EMU:** European Music Schools Union

**ENQA:** European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

**EQAR:** European Quality Assurance Register

**ESG:** Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

**EURASHE:** European Association of Institutions in Higher Education

**Pearle\*:** Live Performance Europe (the Performing Arts Employers' Associations League Europe)

## About MusiQuE

MusiQuE – Music Quality Enhancement is an external evaluation agency dedicated to the continuous improvement of the quality of higher music education across Europe and beyond and, through its accreditation, quality enhancement and advisory services, to assisting higher music education institutions in their own enhancement of quality.

MusiQuE has been created in October 2014 by the following three organisations:

- the Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC)
- the European Music School Union (EMU)
- Pearle\* Live Performance Europe, the European Federation of Music and Live Performance Organisations

From 2020, MusiQuE's structure includes a fourth partner organisation – the European Association for Music in Schools (EAS).

Through such a stakeholders' model, MusiQuE is able to involve in its governing body, as well as in its procedures, not only representatives of higher music education institutions but also stakeholders from the profession and the cultural sector, such as:

- music schools, which employ higher education graduates, but also train students at pre-college level (before they enter professional education, and reach out to society at large, from children to adults);
- national associations of orchestras, ensembles, theatres, festivals and other music organisations and venues.

MusiQuE ensures the involvement of its partner organisations in its internal decision-making processes through the appointment of four members of the MusiQuE Board nominated by its partners.

MusiQuE operates according to the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and is registered on the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR). As such, MusiQuE is a leading player in higher education quality assurance in general, working with the institutions in which its procedures are applied to construct a broadly-supported quality culture tailored to the specific contexts and characteristics of higher music education

## MusiQuE Structure

The structure of MusiQuE comprises four elements:

- The MusiQuE Board (consisting of a minimum of 5 members, including a student)
- The MusiQuE Office, which carries out the work determined by the Board
- A Peer Reviewers Register of experts who form the teams that carry out the reviews commissioned by the Board.
- An Appeals Committee

The [MusiQuE Board](#) is responsible for all decision-making and for commissioning the actions related to the operations of MusiQuE. It is therefore the key entity in MusiQuE's structure. Its composition, roles and responsibilities have a critical bearing on the effective and appropriate functioning of MusiQuE.

Board composition 2023:

- Jacques Moreau, Chair of the Board, Cefedem Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, France
- Momchil Georgiev, Bulgarian Association of Employers in Culture – BAROK (until September 2023)
- Michaela Hahn, University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna (MDW), Austria
- Gerhard Sammer, University of Music Würzburg, Austria
- Orla McDonagh, TU Dublin Conservatoire, Ireland
- Finn Schumacker, Danish Ensembles, Orchestras and Opera institutions (DEOO) (from September 2023)
- Lies Colman, Royal Conservatoire The Hague, The Netherlands
- Ankna Arockiam, PhD Candidate, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, United-Kingdom (Student representative)



In 2023 two meetings took place online (one in July, and one in September 2023) and one on-site in Brussels, Belgium (April 2023).

The MusiQuE Board depends for its effective functioning on the continuous support provided by suitably qualified individuals. The [MusiQuE Office](#) is responsible for the day-to-day running of MusiQuE's operations and review processes, as well as for providing support to the Board and ensuring that the decisions taken by the Board are implemented.

Office composition in 2023:

- Linda Messas, Director
- Crina Moşneagu, Policy & Review Officer
- Ana Álvarez, Review Officer
- Barbara Kowalczyk, Intern (until April 2023); Administrative & Review Officer (from April 2023)

## Peer Reviewers Register

Peer Reviewers form the teams that carry out the reviews commissioned by the Board of MusiQuE: in line with its subject-specific focus, MusiQuE works with a pool of international experts in relevant musical fields, who are familiar with and well-informed about the specificities of higher music education.

In 2023, the Register included 140 (one hundred and forty) Peer Reviewers: 121 (one hundred and twenty-one) regular Peer Reviewers and 19 (nineteen) student profiles. From the total of Peer Reviewers, there are 70 male (58%) and 51 female (42%). In addition, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands are the most represented countries in the register with 18 Peer Reviewers from the former and 17 from the latter. Followed by Austria, Belgium, Germany and Spain with 7 Peer Reviewers each. The fields of music expertise with the largest number of experts in the Register are: Classical Performance (55 experts), Artistic Research (48 experts), and Music Pedagogy/Music Teacher Training (46 experts). In addition, the Register encompasses a total of 35 languages, with English being the most spoken language (112), followed by German (41) and French (36).

### Peer Reviewers Training Sessions

The 2023 edition of the annual Training Workshop for MusiQuE Peer Reviewers was delivered as an hybrid event. The online session was held on 12th October 2023, and was followed by an on-site workshop on 8th and 9th November 2022. The in person sessions were offered as a pre-Congress workshop as part of the programme of the 2023 AEC Annual Congress hosted by the Royal Conservatoire The Hague, The Netherlands. 36 participants, including representatives from higher music education institutions across Europe and beyond (a higher participation than for the 2022 training which counted 23 participants).

The content of the workshop is revised and improved every year based on the feedback received from trainees and trainers. Overall, the main structure was similar to previous editions:

During the first day of the Training, organised online, participants were introduced to MusiQuE's structure and procedures, and to the roles and responsibilities of a Peer Reviewer, as well as the material to be used for the role-play during the in person session. This year's training included a focus on the Revised MusiQuE standards.



The session in The Hague included a role-play session, where the participants had the opportunity to act both as peer reviewers and representative of a reviewed institution. During this session, the participants were able to familiarise themselves with the different challenges one can experience during a site-visit. In this edition of the role-play, a moment was included for the Review Team to reflect on the meeting with the institution and what was learned from it.



On the third day of the Training, feedback on the role-play was exchanged and the steps following the site-visit, until the completion of the procedure were presented. The Training session also included a World Café, which allowed the participants to take part in discussions in small groups about the challenges and opportunities during a review procedure.

The Training session concluded with a final plenary session with the contribution of Michael Wilder, President of the National Association of Schools of Music in the US (NASM). More information about the training activities offered during the session can be found [here](#).



## Review Procedures

In 2023, a total of nine procedures were conducted, from which six procedures were carried out within the scope of the ESGs<sup>1</sup>. This represents an increase in the number of procedures in comparison to 2022.

### *A. Procedures conducted within the scope of ESG*

#### Programme Accreditation Procedures (3):

- Kurmangazy Kazakh National Conservatory (KKNC), Kazakhstan, 17 – 19 May 2023 [Art Management, Composition, Conducting, Instrumental Performance, Musicology, Vocal art, Traditional musical art]: [Report](#), [Decision](#), [Summary](#)
- Institute Supérieur de Musique de Sousse (ISMS), Tunisia, 6 – 8 November 2023 [Musicology and Sound Engineering]

#### Institutional Accreditation Procedures (1)

- Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre (EAMT), Estonia, 30 October - 2 November 2023: [Report](#), [Decision](#), [Summary](#)

#### Programme Quality Enhancement Reviews (2)

- KASK & Conservatorium Ghent, Belgium, 22 – 24 May 2023 (BA & MA Drama): [Report](#), [Decision](#), [Summary](#)
- Royal Conservatory Antwerp( AP Hogeschool), Antwerp, 8 March 2023 (BA Dance) [Follow-up Report](#), [Follow-up Decision](#)

#### Critical Friend Review (1):

- Royal Conservatoire The Hague, University of the Arts The Hague, The Netherlands, 5 - 8 June 2023 [Bachelor of Music]: within the framework of a Critical Friend Review leading to programme accreditation (2021-2026). [NVAO Assessment Report](#), [NVAO accreditation Decision](#), [MusiQuE Report](#), [MusiQuE accreditation Decision](#), [Summary](#). [Critical Friend Report](#)

The following Critical Friend Visits were carried out in 2023:

- Classical Music Department (12-14 April 2023)

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<sup>1</sup> MusiQuE distinguishes between procedures within the scope of (and therefore in compliance with) ESG and those outside the scope of the ESG due to their specific nature (e.g. focusing on educational levels other than higher education or on a particular area of interest only, or consultative visits).

***B. Procedures conducted outside the scope of the ESGs:***

Evaluation of Research Activities (1)

- University of the Arts (HdK), The Hague, The Netherlands, 12 – 14 December 2023  
[Evaluation conducted within research unit at HdK]: [Report](#)

Project Evaluation (1)

- [ARTEMIS](#), Commissioned by the Association of European Conservatoires (AEC), Belgium (2022-2024)

The review reports for the various procedures have been published in the '[Reports](#)' section of the website.

## Finances

2023 has seen an increase in the total income received by MusiQuE since 2022. There has been a gradual increase in the income received from review procedure since 2021, despite a minor decrease in 2022 due to the planning of the related site-visits, while the income generated from the MusiQuE Training almost doubled in comparison to 2022.

As in previous years, the income was mainly composed of fees from MusiQuE review procedures.

On the other hand, the total expenditure of 2023 was significantly higher than in 2022 and 2021 due to an increase in the staff and to additional operational costs resulting from a larger number of review procedures planned in 2023 and activities such as the revision of the MusiQuE Standards.

The profit and loss statement shows a positive result of €4,487.00. As in 2021, €10,000 have been dedicated to a provision to cover the costs of the MusiQuE external review to renew the EQAR application in 2024-25.

The amount of staff costs indicated corresponds to 40% of the total staff costs paid by AEC for the staff serviced to MusiQuE. MusiQuE also covered the overhead costs covering the daily operation of the Office (calculated on the basis of 7% of MusiQuE direct costs)<sup>2</sup>.

Income (in EUR)	2023	2022
Direct income from Reviews	106,569	70,232
Reimbursement of Review Costs by Institutions	75,512	53,529
Income from the Training for Peer reviewers	4,380	2,500
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>186,461</b>	<b>126,261</b>
Expenditures (in EUR)		
Review Costs (Expenses & Reviewers' fees)	79,281	53,690
MusiQuE operational costs	26,692	19,429
MusiQuE Staff costs	55,395	47,093
<b>Total Costs (in EUR)</b>	<b>161,369</b>	<b>120,212</b>
Overhead costs (=7% of total costs)	10,605	2,930
Provision for costs of external review of MusiQuE for EQAR application	10,000	0.00
<b>Total expenditure (in EUR)</b>	<b>181,974</b>	<b>123,141</b>
<b>Result (in EUR)</b>	<b>4,487</b>	<b>3,120</b>

<sup>2</sup> Based on the agreement between the three founding partners of MusiQuE, AEC, EMU and Pearle\* to offer their financial support to MusiQuE in order to guarantee its financial viability in its first years of operation (without compromising its independence), staff costs of the MusiQuE Office in Brussels are covered by AEC, and increasingly reimbursed by MusiQuE.

## Internal and External Quality Assurance

MusiQuE developed a robust internal quality assurance system, which provides the MusiQuE Board and MusiQuE's external stakeholders with relevant feedback on the organisation's fitness for purpose.

### Results of feedback questionnaires and improvements to MusiQuE review procedures

Feedback from institutions reviewed, and from members of Review Teams is considered annually by the Board of MusiQuE which then decides on necessary actions to improve systems and processes, or to fine-tune the Standards during the revision process undertaken periodically. The Board of MusiQuE warmly thanks all the Peer Reviewers and institutions for helping MusiQuE work towards constant improvement, by filling in the feedback questionnaires provided at the end of each procedure.

The feedback has been very positive in 2023. Most Peer Reviewers and institutions acknowledged the fluent communicative process between them, including all the support documentation provided by MusiQuE to institutions and Peer Reviewers, and the composition of the Review Team, communication within the team, general atmosphere, support from the MusiQuE office and engaged institutions. Some Peer Reviewers stated that, having participated in several reviews over the years, they see a gradual positive improvement, making the whole process quite effective and rigorous in terms of standards and policies, which is very efficient for the institution and the review team. Some suggestions for improvements were also made concerning the workload for institutions going through a Critical Friend Review undertaken in the framework of an accreditation procedure. A review team noted challenges in working with two sets of standards during a collaborative procedure with a national agency. Reviewers recommended adjusting the site-visit schedule in some contexts to allow for a more in-depth review and suggested recruiting additional experts from higher education in the performing arts.

With respect to the MusiQuE Training for Peer Reviewers, participants' feedback remarked good balance between theory, input and hands-on activities. Participants indicated that their expectations about the content and structure of the Training had been met. The opportunity to discuss quality assurance with other colleagues from the sector was highlighted as one of the most important reasons to take part in the Training Workshop. The main strengths of the training were the role-play sessions, the group discussions, knowledge exchange, in-depth approach, an open atmosphere as well as practical advice on site-visits from the more experienced participants.

### Revision of the MusiQuE Standards

It is part of MusiQuE's internal quality policy to regularly review and adjust its standards and procedures based on external surveys conducted among its stakeholders, recommendations collected from the MusiQuE Board during online and in person meetings, and the Office's own experience gained through mapping exercises in various procedures conducted jointly with other agencies.

As part of the long-term process of the Revision of the Standards, in January 2023 the new sets of Standards for Institutional and Programme Reviews was officially published after several rounds of feedback from 2020 to 2022 that involved the MusiQuE Board and stakeholders. In addition, the annexes to the Handbook for Critical Friends Reviews were also adapted to reflect the changes in the Standards on 2023. Moreover, in December of 2023, a Working Group (WG) was formed to revise the current Standards for Pre-College Education and for Classroom Music

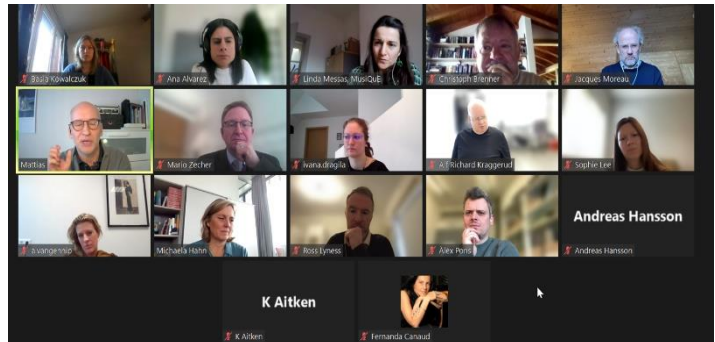


Education Teacher Education Programmes. The WG noted that the current standards for Pre-College Education heavily rely on MusiQuE's Standards for Institutional Reviews, while those for Classroom Music Education Teacher Education Programmes heavily rely on MusiQuE's Standards for Programme Reviews. Therefore, the WG was split into two teams to work on each of the set of Standards.

## Communication and external relations

In 2023 MusiQuE continued to implement the actions planned during the revision of its communication strategy in 2019/2020.

In February, MusiQuE delivered a webinar on quality assurance in pre-college music education in collaboration with the Young Music Talents of Europe (YMTE) Network to discussed the benefits and challenges of quality enhancement reviews at pre-college level. 17 participants took part in this webinar.



Bringing MusiQuE's activities (and the higher music education sector in general) to the attention of a wider audience is MusiQuE's continuous mission. In this regard, MusiQuE's services, and approach to quality and quality assurance were presented on a few occasions in 2023, to events and conferences relevant to the sector in Europe and abroad:

20 - 21 April: MusiQuE introduced the Critical Friend Review during the ENQA Members' Forum: *QA in the EHEA: linking policy and practice* in Tbilisi, Georgia as an example practice of quality enhancement-led approach to quality assurance.

A [poster](#) was prepared for this occasion, which has been since then used to introduce institutions and agencies to MusiQuE's Critical Friends Review.

**TOWARDS CONTINUOUS AND CONTENT-DRIVEN QUALITY ENHANCEMENT: MUSIQUÉ'S CRITICAL FRIEND REVIEW**

**Why a Critical Friend Review?**

A Critical Friend Review has the following objectives, in addition to those pertaining to the regular quality enhancement review:

- to increase the relevance of quality enhancement processes for students and teachers, aiming at their greater involvement in QA
- to better connect IQA and IQA and integrate these within the institution's quality culture
- to promote a content-driven approach to quality enhancement while ensuring disciplinary diversity

**Who is a Critical Friend?**

A Critical Friend is a highly specialised professional peer whose visit focuses entirely on:

- a specific study programme, group of programmes, discipline, department or faculty
- cross-departmental or transversal areas such as governance, quality assurance, research...

Regular Critical Friend visits are organised within a period of six or seven years. A regular panel visit may be planned after the last Critical Friend visit.

Critical Friend Visit

Institution prepares the CF visit by collecting pre-existing documentation

→

During the visit, the CF meets representatives in formal and informal settings

→

The CF produces a report\* with recommendations, to which the institution gives brief responses

→

Internal stakeholders discuss the CF findings

→

Head develops an action plan


\*Areas of inquiry, based on the MusiQuE Standards for Programme review

- Goals, design and delivery of study programmes
- Teaching and learning environment
- Quality culture
- Public interaction

Example of CF review cycle calendar based on cross-departmental areas:

CALENDAR OF CRITICAL FRIENDS' VISITS PER ACADEMIC YEAR	1	2	3	4	5	6
Critical Friends (CFs)						
CF1 – Collaborative Music Making (ensembles)						
CF2 – Core Studies Requirements (theory and musicianship skills)						
CF3 – Professional Integration & Career Development						
CF4 – Research						
CF5 – Governance and operations						
Online meeting of all Critical Friends						
Site-visit by Review Panel						

Example of discipline-focused CF review: visited departments each year within a period of 6 years



Benefits for Institutions

- The Critical Friend allows for a more in-depth and consistent review process
- This procedure promotes a positive and vibrant QA dynamic in the department
- This procedure provides a quality enhancement-led approach, based on qualified recommendations
- Both educational quality and artistic standards are taken into account
- This procedure enables a more organic and continuous self-evaluation process

10 -11 May: Ankna Arockiam, student representative of the MusiQuE Board, attended the Pearle\* conference in Oslo, where she gave an [update on MusiQuE's latest activities](#) at the European Orchestra Forum and promoted Pearle's cooperation with MusiQuE.



25 August: the Chair of the MusiQuE Board, Jacques Moreau, attended the Princess Galyani Vadhana Institute of Music Symposium, in Bangkok titled 'Accessibility, Sustainability and the Woman', where he delved into the [concept of Quality as operationalised by MusiQuE](#).

20 October: [MusiQuE representatives held a presentation during the International Conference 'Problems of Higher Education in Bulgaria and Europe'](#) organised by the National Academy of Music Prof. Pancho Vladigeroy in Sofia, Bulgaria. The presentation focused on the concept of Quality Assurance in Conservatoires, outlining its principles and showcasing tangible results and on the importance of internationalisation.



10 November: MusiQuE organised [two sessions on quality culture in The Hague](#) during the AEC Annual Congress. The presentations focused on the crucial aspects of quality assurance and allowed the participants to engage in meaningful discussions, and connect with professionals from the global music education community.