

Stanisław Moniuszko Academy of Music in Gdańsk – aMuz is one of the most important music higher education institution in Poland. In its more than 70-years of history, its overarching goal has been to ensure the highest possible level of education. In recent years, the development of the institution through modernisation and internationalisation has been one of the main priorities in the activities of the Academy. Participation in the Erasmus+ programme in this area is a key value for aMuz and an essential element in this development process.

The mission of the Stanisław Moniuszko Academy of Music in Gdańsk is to educate artists and musicians whose activities will contribute to enriching national and international culture. In parallel, the vision states that aMuz, as a higher education institution (HEI) established in the Pomeranian region (which has long been known as a window to the world in the national and international context) should be constantly open to the broad social, economic and cultural diversity in national and international terms. In the field of education, the strategic objectives related to internationalisation are defined as follows: ensuring that students are in contact with eminent pedagogues from Poland and abroad; creating opportunities for students to present and disseminate their own works at home and abroad; creating opportunities for students from abroad to study in English (currently advanced work is underway to open the first study programme in English at aMuz). In the context of artistic and scientific activities responding to the current needs of the economy of the country and the region, mobility of students and staff is one of the strategic objectives. In terms of cooperation with the environment – building the position of a prestigious academic centre, the following strategic objectives have been defined in the context of internationalisation: the Academy should continue to cooperate with academic centres at home and abroad on a bilateral basis, thus ensuring that students and staff can be exchanged academically within and outside the EU; planning and taking initiatives internationally in the field of cooperation between the Academy and foreign music conservatories will increase the prestige of the institution and increase the recognition of the Academy on the international stage. It is important to conclude agreements that will provide students and staff with various opportunities for academic exchange (including educational, artistic, scientific exchange and workshops).

The aim of aMuz is also to provide a wide, attractive and modern educational offer, tailored to modern global requirements. At the same time, the Academy wants to be an important institution that actively promotes the activities of professional musicians in public space. One of the main assumptions that the aMuz authorities have in mind is its openness to new solutions and diversity in understanding, educating, but also promoting both classical music and genres such as jazz and musical. This openness means also the desire to establish new contacts with foreign institutions of culture and musical art, including higher education institutions. The activities of the Academy are also focused on cooperation with institutions from the Pomeranian region, with local authorities or other higher education institutions in Gdańsk and Pomerania. The Academy of Music in Gdańsk has joined the long-term cooperation project "Study in Pomorskie". The project enables the Academy, together with other leading universities in the region, to exchange

good practices and share knowledge during cyclic meetings. It also provides an opportunity for joint organisation of international initiatives to enhance the region's recognition in an international context.

The specificity of the Academy as an academic artistic centre is crucial. The artist's goal is to reach with his or her art to the widest possible audience. To achieve this the artist must acquire the ability to communicate with the recipient/listener, regardless of the barriers that cultural differences, language or even geographical distance may pose. Whether the artist works as a soloist, a member of an ensemble, a composer, a conductor, a teacher or an orchestral musician, he focuses on cooperation, very often the international one. This means being open to others, getting to know new, diverse methods in terms of performing and transfer of knowledge.

It is a priority for the Academy to meet the best European standards, as well as for its staff to have a real impact on the co-creation of these standards and to be active in the development of integrated transnational teaching activities. The role of the Erasmus+ programme in opening up such opportunities to artists and musical teachers is invaluable.

aMuz, being aware of the importance of caring for the common goods in the functioning of the institution, including caring for the environment, takes steps, among others, towards digitization of systems. The Academy of Music in Gdansk, as a public institution, is also seeking to care for all members of its Community. This implies that access to the educational, as well as training and professional development offer, is equal for all students and employees. Starting with ensuring that everyone concerned has access to information on Erasmus+, including people in socio-economic difficulties or people with disabilities, and supporting those who wish to travel abroad through the Erasmus+ mobility procedure, also meeting the needs of people with less opportunities.

II

The Erasmus+ programme has been the cornerstone of all international activities since 1999 when the Academy joined the Programme. aMuz as a member of AEC (Association Européenne des Conservatoires), effectively collaborates with universities within the association and has been cooperating with the most important music HEIs in Europe for many years. The cooperation with partner countries, also beyond the EU, is seen as bringing important benefits and prospects for international activities. It is also important to extend cooperation not only to further higher education institutions, but also to partners such as businesses, local and regional authorities, etc. In the perspective of 2021-2027 the Stanisław Moniuszko Academy of Music in Gdańsk undertakes to further modernize the institution and achieve the objectives of the European Education Area set out in the Communication "Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture" published before the EU Leaders' meeting in Gothenburg on 17 November 2017. By accepting the principles of the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education, the Academy has undertaken to pursue these objectives by participating in the following activities: Key Action 1 "Learning mobility": higher education student and staff mobility. As so far, the Academy plans to implement all four types of mobility (under KA103): student mobility

for studies, student/recent graduate mobility for traineeships, staff mobility for teaching and staff mobility for training. It is planned to increase the number of mobilities while maintaining their quality, especially traineeships in musical institutions across Europe, which will increase the chances of graduates to enter the labour market and specialist training of staff to improve teaching skills, which will improve the quality of education at home institution. In the new type of mobility — blended mobility, the Academy sees a great opportunity to increase interest in the Programme among students, as well as for a more flexible and interdisciplinary implementation of artistic projects (including chamber, orchestral, choral groupings of teachers and students), which are the basis of education at the music academies. It seems that the flexibility offered by the new type of mobility will provide an excellent opportunity for students to benefit from a wider and more tailor-made Erasmus+. In addition to more than twenty years of cooperation with the countries of the Programme, since 2016 the Academy has been cooperating with partner countries and renowned non-EU conservatories. Up till now, projects have been implemented with partners from Serbia, Russia, Georgia and Israel. Further cooperation with partner countries is planned in the coming years. The Stanisław Moniuszko Academy of Music in Gdańsk also plans to participate in Key Action 2 "Cooperation among organizations and institutions": Partnerships for cooperation and exchange of practices. In 2020, aMuz became a partner in applications for strategic partnerships for the first time. Hoping for the first invaluable experience in this type of cooperation, it is planned to continue its commitment to partnerships for cooperation and exchange of practices in the coming years.

Participation in activities under KA1 and KA2 will be based on high-quality of staff and student mobility and cooperation with universities and other strategic partners such as companies, regional authorities, etc. Therefore, mobility and cooperation constitute one of the key elements of the institutional strategy. To this end, aMuz undertakes to: develop cooperation with partners from other countries as part of a clear internationalization strategy; promote and support the mobility of students and staff, in particular support those with fewer opportunities; ensure visibility of the results achieved by students and staff involved in individual mobility or cooperation projects with strategic partners by widely disseminating project results; continue efforts to develop internationalization through continuous monitoring of activities and implementation of new solutions and good practices.

The Academy has taken a number of actions to digitize processes related to the Erasmus+. One of them is joining by aMuz (as the first artistic university in Poland) to the EASY Dreamapply portal (dedicated to artistic HEIs), which enables fully electronic exchange of documents, efficient application management and makes the application process easier for students and institutions. Following the digitization requirements, the Academy intends to actively use the technical competence centre Erasmus Without Paper Network and the solutions and tools it offers to manage projects under the Programme more effectively through digital technologies.

Many units of aMuz are involved in the implementation of Erasmus+ projects. Regular meetings are held between the representatives of the Academy authorities and the Erasmus+ Coordinator for active and sustainable planning and organization of the Programme activities in all faculties. The International Relations Office (IRO) is responsible for organizational and formal issues and undertakes extensive efforts to

create a transparent system and clear rules on mobility, equal access and non-discrimination. The IRO actively promotes Erasmus+ programme, encouraging its use and ensuring that all students and employees have equal access to the Programme offer, as well as providing current information via the Academy website or social media. The International Relations Office also works closely with other aMuz units such as the Artistic Promotion Office and the Career Office, which particularly support promotion and dissemination activities of the Erasmus+.

In 2018, the process of rebranding of aMuz began. As the first stage of this transformation, a new system of visual identification was introduced. The whole academic community was included in the project: authorities, teachers, employees, students and graduates. In October 2018, a new logo and a new website of the Academy was launched, which presents aMuz in a clear and coherent way in a local and international context. Rebranding fits in with the Academy goals to become an increasingly attractive, recognizable and modern institution. The identification of the Academy of Music was built on the basis of the most important values of the Academy: diversity, openness, dialogue, quality, tradition/achievements and practicality. Since 2020, work on the next stage of rebranding in the areas of communication, culture and cooperation has been underway.

III

The lasting and long-term impact of the participation of the Academy of Music in Gdańsk in the Erasmus+ programme is indisputable and visible both from the perspective of the mobility participants themselves, from the perspective of the Academy as a whole and the environment outside the Academy. Through participation in the Programme, aMuz actively pursues the goals of internationalisation, which further contributes to building its position as an important musical HEI in Poland and Europe.

For students, mobility for studies and mobility for traineeships are a unique opportunity to gain invaluable experience and improve professional skills in practice. The Programme enables them to acquire competences from many areas – not only substantive, but also soft, social or cultural. Among other things, students have the opportunity to deepen their language skills (also through language support offered both before and during mobility) and interpersonal in an intercultural environment, and to develop broadly understood collaborative skills, which increases their chances of being more competitive on the labour market in the music industry.

The staff mobility, additionally allows capacity building at both individual and institutional levels. Pedagogues participating in the Programme have the opportunity to improve their teaching and substantive skills, on the one hand sharing their expertise with students and pedagogues from abroad, and on the other hand drawing on musical traditions and new educational solutions in other regions of the world. The Academy encourages staff to take advantage of the Erasmus+ programme's offer to gain extensive experience and to learn about contemporary trends and teaching methods that exist in the international artistic and academic environment, which they can implement in their teaching practice, which translates directly into improving the quality of education at aMuz.

Contact with artists from other cultural circles, with different perceptions of art, is one of the most creative didactic methods. Therefore, every year the Academy invites more and more foreign pedagogues to conduct masterclasses and lectures for students. Such meetings with eminent specialists from renowned European centres directly influence more effective and comprehensive education of young adepts of the musical arts and realise the idea of home internationalisation. They also often result in valuable contacts being gained by students and staff in international artistic circles, contributing to their further professional development and strengthening relations at the institutional level. Establishing partnerships with HEIs in the European Union and beyond is a milestone towards broadening horizons in looking at the needs and expectations of contemporary audience. Every year, the scale of international cooperation areas increases. The involvement of the Gdańsk Academy in cooperation projects under KA107 and the planned implementation of KA2 projects is the realisation of the strategic objectives of the Academy in the field of internationalisation. aMuz plans to make the most of the world's achievements, while sharing its own achievements and experience. From the Academy's perspective, extending foreign cooperation under Erasmus+ strengthens its position at local, regional and international level. Increasing the potential of the only musical university in Pomerania also affects the international recognition of the city of Gdańsk and the whole region.

The International Relations Office offers students and staff support both at the planning stage and at the next stages of mobility. The Erasmus+ Coordinator regularly informs students and staff about the opportunities to travel abroad under the Programme, highlighting their value in further professional development. It is good practice to invite students and staff – former mobility participants who perfectly promote the Programme among colleagues and students, thus becoming Erasmus+ ambassadors.

From Academy's perspective, direct contact is the most effective channel of communication in a relatively small and close-up community that the Academy of Music is. Other activities aimed not only at wide dissemination and promotion, but also for the integration of Erasmus+ participants, include artistic events, organized by aMuz within the Academy and in concert halls in Gdańsk and Pomerania, in which students and teachers from Poland and abroad take part. The idea of individual approach to each participant, matching each mobility with the expectations and capabilities of the participant and institutions, is also a very important aspect. The results of these actions reflect a noticeable increase in mobilities (both outgoing and incoming), which strengthens the long-term impact of Erasmus+ on the Academy.

An important objective in the context of future actions is to systematically increase mobilities, including extensive implementation of blended mobility, maintaining their quality through proper organisation, monitoring activities before, during and after mobility, and systematically implementing improvements. The expansion of international activities under the Erasmus+ programme focuses on acquiring further partners under the KA107 and increasing involvement in KA2 projects. The priority for implementing projects under the Programme is to ensure their sustainability and long-term impact on participants and the Academy, which will be achieved through properly planned and implemented dissemination of project results.