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IN.TUNE

Innovative Universities in Music and Arts in Europe

Comparative study of
existing institutional policies
and practices on belonging,
diversity, equity, and
inclusion (D6.12)

Strengthening our engagement with society (WP6)

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Innovative Universities in Music & Arts in Europe – IN.TUNE is the only European University Alliance in the field of music and arts. It brings together eight universities from North, East, South and West Europe, striving to deepen their cooperation to bring about institutional transformation and the enhancement of their quality, performance, attractiveness and international competitiveness. In line with the goals set by the European strategy for universities, underlining the important role of higher education in shaping sustainable, democratic and resilient societies, IN.TUNE members are committed to the development of a joint long-term strategy with a strong artistic dimension for high quality education, research, innovation and service to society, becoming a role model for the wider higher education community across Europe and beyond.

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Executive Summary

IN.TUNE

The European University Alliance [IN.TUNE – Innovative Universities in Music & Arts in Europe](#) brings together eight universities across the continent, committed to the development of a joint long-term strategy for excellence in education, research, innovation and service to society. This strategy is built on a shared perspective on our institutions' roles within society, a joint vision and approach towards deep institutional cooperation, and a shared dedication to the European values of diversity, democracy, social and human rights.

Through the establishment of IN.TUNE, we aim to:

- Build an effective, systemic and sustainable framework for deep institutional cooperation, drawing on our previous and existing collaborations to drive transformational change across our institutions.
- Strengthen, through this deep institutional cooperation, artistic and educational innovation and research, not only within our institutions, but also throughout the higher music education sector and the broader cultural and creative sector industries, providing students and professionals unique with educational opportunities that will improve their ability to access, create and maintain sustainable careers.
- Play an active role in shaping the future of our sector and our societies by addressing contemporary educational, professional, societal, technological and ecological challenges. Together, through the joint creation of forward-looking institutional environments, we will empower students and staff to engage with these challenges through their creative work, both at institutional and transnational level.

Work Package 6: Strengthening our engagement with society

Strengthening our engagement with society (Work Package 6) focuses on developing comprehensive policies to enhance lifelong learning, employability, audience engagement, diversity, and sustainability within the IN.TUNE alliance. It will begin with the creation of an [IN.TUNE Policy on Lifelong Learning](#), which includes an inventory of existing courses offered by alliance partners and the development of new joint courses, with special attention to the use of digital tools like MOOCs to ensure accessibility.

An [IN.TUNE Policy on Employability and Professional Integration](#) will be established through a comparative study of current entrepreneurship and career skills training in partner institutions. This will lead to the development of joint courses and resources that emphasise the

transnational nature of the music profession. The package also aims to increase the use of ERASMUS+ placements by creating a Register of Transnational Work Placements to facilitate students' international career development.

The work package will also develop an **IN.TUNE Policy on Audience Engagement and Cultural Citizenship** through comparative studies and joint training programs, empowering students to engage with diverse societal contexts. Additionally, a comprehensive **IN.TUNE Policy on Diversity & Inclusion** will be formulated, focusing on institutional equity and inclusivity, culminating in a Position Paper outlining shared values and practices.

Finally, an **IN.TUNE Policy on Sustainability** will address environmental, cultural, and social sustainability in both institutional operations and artistic practices, also resulting in a Position Paper and joint training initiatives.

Deliverable summary

The deliverable ***Comparative study of policies on diversity and inclusion (D6.12)*** offers the results of a comparative analysis of policies and practices related to Belonging – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (BDEI) across IN.TUNE partner institutions. It is organised into seven sections. The introductory chapter examines how higher art and music education institutions can transform through the framework of BDEI by critically re-examining their values, structures, and practices. It also sets out the context, methodology, and objectives of the comparative report. Sections 2–5 discuss the challenges of embedding BDEI principles within five key Fields of Action: Access & Entrance Exams, Curricula & Teaching, Organisational Culture, Organisational Structure, and Staff and Students / Training. Further, these sections highlight effective policies and practices that support implementation of BDEI principles, as well as a compilation of resources developed by individual institutions that may serve as guidance for others. The concluding chapter briefly reflects on a core set of issues that weave through all Fields of Action, generating distinct obstacles and requiring sustained attention. It also points the way forward — toward more equitable and inclusive institutional realities where a sense of belonging is not a privilege reserved for some, but a right accessible to everyone.

STUDYING THE ARTS IN EUROPE

Comparative report of existing institutional policies and practices on belonging, diversity, equity, and inclusion (D6.12)

Introduction

In recent years, higher education — especially conservatoires and arts universities — has faced mounting pressure to reconsider its social mandate: whom it serves, how it defines excellence, and what forms of knowledge and artistry it deems worthy of recognition. Although many institutions have begun to scrutinise their relationships to gender, class, race, ethnicity, nationality, and (dis)ability — thereby opening their doors to more diverse publics, forms of cultural representation, and modes of artistic expression— deeply rooted hierarchies of privilege and disadvantage continue to shape who is seen, heard, and acknowledged as legitimately belonging. These hierarchies extend across structural, institutional, interpersonal, and personal (internalised) levels, shaping a wide spectrum of domains — from policy and access requirements to curricula, class-specific habitus cultivated among students, and even the very terms through which artistic excellence is framed. While diversity is a prominent issue in higher education, the reasoning behind diversity policies and what they aim to achieve has faced criticism.

“[C]ritiques have suggested that diversity enters higher education through “marketization”: the term is seen as coming from management and from the imperative to manage diversity or to value diversity as if it were a human resource. Such a managerial focus on diversity, it has been argued, works to individuate difference and to conceal the continuation of systematic inequalities within organizations such as universities.”
(Ahmed, 2006, p. 120)

Today, institutions of arts, music, and culture in Europe navigate a complex socio-political landscape as they strive to make equality a reality on their campuses. On the one hand, initiatives related to diversity, equity, and inclusion have become sites of increasing cultural negotiation and contestation within various European political contexts. While navigating these tensions, conservatoires and universities are grappling with an additional one: transforming into ‘entrepreneurial universities’ (Clark, 1998, cited in Reitsamer & Prokop, 2018, p. 161), where labour-market ideals of efficiency and creativity influence how artistic achievement is measured and valued (see Reitsamer & Prokop, 2018, p. 161).

Within this broader cultural economy, higher music education continues to be shaped by persistent inequalities: women remain underrepresented in positions of authority and prestige (horizontal and vertical segregation), working-class and minority ethnic musicians are marginalized, and gendered stereotypes influence who is perceived as able to 'embody' musical mastery. As Christina Scharff (2015) notes, gender, ethnicity, and class background significantly affect access and success in the field, with classical music education still reflecting middle-class norms and expectations.

To truly diversify higher music education, it is therefore imperative to re-examine the framework of **Belonging – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (BDEI)** as more than a compliance-based approach. BDEI calls for deep cultural and structural transformation and serves as a self-reflective, anti-discriminatory concept. It urges institutions to ask, as Carmen Mörsch (2025/2024, para. 2) puts it:

"What needs to change in our own structures, content, behaviours, and ways of speaking, as well as in the distribution of our resources, so that people from marginalized social groups can enjoy working here and thrive in doing so?"

Conceptually, BDEI requires moving from isolated initiatives to systemic change. It challenges institutions to reconsider not only admissions and hiring practices, but also how they define quality, artistic excellence, and professionalism — concepts historically tied to Eurocentric canons and exclusionary ideals of mastery, often excluding other musical languages, oral traditions, and community-based practices.

Applying a BDEI lens broadens our understanding of artistic value — both in terms of what constitutes it and who determines it — fostering dialogue between tradition and innovation, and between academic hierarchies and lived experience.

Against this backdrop, the work of the Working Group on BDEI takes a critical look at the very specific conditions at music and art universities, precisely because BDEI is a highly sensitive political issue. Critical reflection on potential mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion forms the basis for developing further joint strategies, measures, and policies on how these mechanisms can be broken down and changed in order to make art and music universities more inclusive places in a democratic society.

On Belonging – Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

From the outset of our work, it became clear that the familiar frameworks of diversity, equity, and inclusion, as understood within our institutions and by us, did not fully capture our ultimate aim: nurturing an authentic sense of connection and value of each individual within our institutions and our alliance. This realization prompted us to expand and rename our working

group to reflect this broader aspiration, uniting the guiding concepts and values they represent as well as referring to recent discourses on diversity under the framework of Belonging. By changing our name, we sought to make this commitment visible — not as a matter of image, but as a way to reflect the evolution of our collective identity and to engage with the socio-political debates and realities shaping the international arts and education landscape. Adopting a new name reaffirms our intention to build a more open, participatory community — one that is conscious of the social and educational challenges we face and how prepared we are to address them:

- **Belonging** speaks to shared responsibility and the collaborative effort of institutions and individuals to cultivate communities in which every person feels recognized and valued, fostered through care, trust, and dialogue. In this spirit, we focus on community at multiple scales: those formed within our institutions by students, staff, alumni, and visitors; the one emerging through the cooperation of our institutions; and the broader community that connect our institutions to society at large.
- **Diversity** entails recognizing and representing plurality at all levels — from origins, experiences, and disciplines to cultural expressions and identities (e.g., see Florian, 2017).
- **Equity** ensures conditions so that everyone can participate and thrive (Cuyler 2022; OECD, 2018).
- **Inclusion** builds on the previous two, by removing barriers and cultivating cultures where every voice is genuinely heard and valued (e.g., Florian, 2012, 2017).

Together, these principles don't form a checklist, but constitute a framework for transformation, guiding our shared efforts towards a more cohesive, just, and resilient community — one in which art, culture, and education serve as forces for democracy, creativity, and belonging.

Why This Matters?

"In order for classical music's institutions to diversify and evolve, it's necessary to understand how its value is construed."
(Bull, 2019, p. 20)

Cultural policy defines which values guide culture. It can be a plurality of voices — or the voice of power. It can serve as a force for democracy and freedom of expression — or become a tool for control and exclusion. Everything depends on which values are allowed to steer it.

That is why it is essential that cultural policy supports a free, independent, and diverse cultural life — one that is open to all and gives room to the full spectrum of voices in society. When diversity and independence lead, culture becomes a space where we can question, listen, and

build shared meaning — the sense of understanding that connects people across different experience. But when culture narrows and only a few voices are heard, we lose both trust and belonging; culture becomes an instrument of power rather than a force that strengthens democracy.

A rich cultural landscape requires a diversity of perspectives and voices. Power structures shape our perception of art and quality, and when a homogeneous group defines what counts as good or relevant art, we lose innovation and connection. Working for diversity and equality in the arts does not limit artistic freedom — on the contrary, it expands it by creating the conditions for genuine artistic expression for all. Freedom is both *freedom to* and *freedom from*: freedom to create art under fair conditions, and freedom from discrimination and exclusion. To ensure free and meaningful art, we must dismantle the barriers that restrict some artists and communities and open the stage to more voices. In this spirit, institutions that embody belonging, diversity, equity, and inclusion not only welcome difference — they cultivate it as a source of renewal, resilience, and shared humanity.

On our working procedure and methodology

The set goal that led our work was to ultimately work on a comparative report that will function as a basis for a policy paper on BDEI with its overall guiding question:

What plans/measures/activities does each university have to foster a non-discriminatory studying and working environment and to strive for diversity?



We therefore explored **BDEI** through five **Fields of Action** with accompanying **guiding questions**:

1. Access & Entrance

- What are three main challenges regarding questions of access at your university?
- What measures does your university set in place to tackle inequalities in entrance exams and increase a more diverse and inclusive university? (e.g. rethinking assessment methods, trainings, procedures...)

2. Curricula & Teaching

- What are specific difficulties of higher music education institutions in fostering a non-discriminatory studying environment?
- How is diversity reflected in the curriculum?
- What courses do you offer to increase diversity knowledge? Give 2 examples (Concert discipline, Music pedagogy)

3. Organizational Culture

- How are institutional statements aligned with meaningful actions and measures? (connecting to the content in the factsheet "organizational structure")
- How does the university support an inclusive and safe environment for all identities (race, gender, age, disability, LGBTQ+, etc.) and in regards to gender based violence?
- What measures/activities/etc. does your university undertake to foster a culture of belonging?

4. Organizational Structure

- What is the legal basis for your work (government plans, university policies, etc.)?
- What is the political context and structural framework?
- What diversity dimensions (gender, race, class, age, etc.) are being discussed and taken up, which less?

5. Staff & Students

- How would you describe the representation of your staff and students?
- What support is available for marginalized employees and students?
- What measures do you set to increase diversity awareness/knowledge of your staff? What trainings have you implemented?

The method to approach this task was to formulate key questions for each Field of Action to help us collect and sort the information and knowledge we gathered in so called **fact sheets** (approx. 150 pages) and to later critically reflect on similarities and differences in what we referred to as **reflection papers** (another 50 pages). In preparation for each meeting, the working group members researched and compiled the respective fact sheets, which were then discussed during the meetings. These served as a basis for analysis for further elaboration of

differences and similarities. To this end, questions were asked in each field of action about challenges and obstacles as well as strategies and positive measures that are already being implemented. In particular, the collection of knowledge about the different legal and socio-political foundations and conditions (fact sheet on Organizational Structure) was of particular importance here and formed the basis for the explanations in the other fact sheets. The thematic overlap of the fields of action in the fact sheets was then also part of the analysis in the reflection papers. These served to identify the above-mentioned differences and similarities and to reflect on them in relation to the respective universities in order to draw initial conclusions in a next step. The aspect of mutual learning has always been, and continues to be, of central importance to the working group. Therefore, identifying and highlighting existing collective challenges as well as individual activities, and measures was essential, as can be seen in the reflection papers.

This served as the basis for Sanja Grbić, Asst. Prof. at the Department of Psychology at University of Belgrade, who took on the role of our external expert to methodically prepare, analyse and work out those similarities and differences in our findings on policies, plans, measurements, initiatives, projects, developments etc. and that ultimately make up this comparative report. Tamara Pantović, B.A. in Psychology and a Master's student at the Department of Psychology, University of Belgrade, also contributed by conducting the data analysis related to the Organisational Structure and by drafting Section 5 of the deliverable.

The process of gathering information showed clear differences in how members of our working group access knowledge within the university, depending on their role or position. For some access to information was more direct and easier, for others it was more challenging and time-consuming to obtain information in order to complete the fact sheets, requiring navigation through informal networks and complex structures. From a **Belonging, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (BDEI)** perspective, this underlines the importance of fair and transparent access to institutional information, knowledge and communication. Promoting equity means recognising unequal starting points and providing support where barriers exist. Open and inclusive information flows empower individuals, value diverse perspectives, and strengthen collaboration and belonging across the university.

Another important note when reading this report is, **that the knowledge and information presented does not claim to be complete but shows patterns that reinforce historical and structural inequalities (rather than regarded as *individual* problems – whether on an individual or an institutional-individual level) and challenges across the entire IN.TUNE community.** It has also become apparent during analysing the fact sheets and writing this report that the above-mentioned key questions guiding us through the broad and multifaceted topics we had to cover have certainly be interpreted and “answered” differently – making the

comparative character of this report a challenge that we are very much aware of. This challenge was underscored by the notable fact that the institutional integration—and consequently the concrete forms of BDEI management—across IN.TUNE varied greatly in both structure and their scope.

It should furthermore be noted that **the passages quoted throughout the report derive solely from the written materials — namely the fact sheets and reflection papers — used as its sources. Although they are attributed to a particular institution and, as worded in the document, its “representative”, they do not reflect the words of any particular individual or institutional official.** Equally, the listings of member institutions in brackets—often shown after a presented argument, notion, or institutional measure—are based on the information gathered from the fact sheets, as reported by working group members from the respective institutions. These brackets serve as an illustrative structure, highlighting the comparative nature of the report by mapping both overlapping similarities and socially, culturally, and politically informed differences across member institutions. These brackets allow us to identify, examine, and, most importantly, learn from both common and local successes, challenges, and limitations in BDEI initiatives within an international setting.

On a more meta-level, comparative analyses across these Fields of Actions reveal that while most institutions have adopted formal DEI or equality strategies, implementation remains uneven and often dependent on individual leadership. Some, like NMH, Uniarts and mdw, have established dedicated committees and alternative examination procedures. Others, such as CNSMDP and UNMB, have launched outreach and equal-opportunity programmes to attract students from underrepresented regions or socio-economic backgrounds. ESMUC, in turn, is developing its first comprehensive EDI plan, informed by strong student participation and social dialogue.

What emerged across the partnership is a shared awareness that **belonging** — the affective dimension of inclusion — is as critical as structural reform. Institutions are learning that policy frameworks alone cannot guarantee transformation unless they are accompanied by cultural shifts: new languages of leadership, transparency, and care. The emphasis on belonging has therefore encouraged reflection on everyday practices — from the repertoire chosen in entrance exams to how feedback is given in lessons, and how diversity is represented in institutional imagery.

1. Access & Entrance

Addressing **Belonging — Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (BDEI)** in the context of access and entrance exams is crucial to understanding structural inequalities in music education. Entry barriers emerge long before formal examinations — influenced by socio-economic background, family exposure to music, and access to early training. For many young people, especially those from less privileged or non-musical families, the possibility of pursuing a musical career is limited by financial constraints, cultural capital, and social expectations related to class and gender. At the same time, students often encounter curricula shaped by predominantly Eurocentric perspectives, privileging Western classical traditions while offering limited recognition of the breadth of global and contemporary musical practices. Such curricular boundaries leave significant gaps in cultural representation and can constrain which forms of musical talent are seen as legitimate, inadvertently discouraging students whose artistic identities develop outside the established canon. Examining BDEI through this lens allows us to question not only who gains admission, but also who is encouraged and enabled to aspire. Ensuring equitable access to music education is therefore fundamental to fostering diversity, inclusion, and belonging within the field (see Bull, 2019).

1.1. Barriers to higher music education institutions

1.1.1. Roadblocks along the application pathway

Inaccessible admission routes. Many aspiring artists may find that their pathways to higher education are inaccessible or very difficult to access. Limited engagement by higher education institutions with the wider community in general contributes to the majority of students often being drawn from a relatively homogeneous group of privileged and pre-selected candidates.

Unaccommodating application bureaucracy and language demands. As prospective students begin to consider enrolling in international higher education institutions, they may become overwhelmed by complex or unclear instructions regarding the application process within foreign educational systems. This is especially the case for those with learning challenges, disabilities, or additional support needs. If they manage to overcome this issue, **language** can become the next obstacle, as the entrance exam in English is often not available, requiring them to demonstrate proficiency in the local language. These challenges might make the process feel like a test of endurance rather than a bridge to opportunity.

Limited seats, unequal chances. Even if students opt for a more affordable option, such as a publicly funded institution, a large number of candidates competing for limited placements

may hinder their access to higher education. This is particularly true in cases where there is no prioritization of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, given that they are highly unlikely to have the opportunity to apply to private universities.

1.1.2. Gatekeeping entrance exams

Once at the threshold, students meet yet another challenge: the entrance exam itself.

Diversity goals, standardized entrance exams. Upon applying, prospective students, particularly those with disabilities, might be unpleasantly surprised by entrance exams that are standardized or insufficiently adapted to their needs. They may face significant challenges related to readability and accessibility, whether the exams are administered in digital or physical formats. Beyond the format, the content of entrance exams is also highly uniform, leaving little room for diverse artistic expression or non-traditional and non-Western influences (see [Curricula section](#); CNSMDP, ESMUC, UAB).

Ideal artist subject. While institutions often preach openness and equal opportunity, their gates are guarded by unwritten rules about age, socio-economic, racial and/or ethnic background, and “proper” artistic pedigree. For those trained outside the Western classical canon, it can feel like showing up to a language exam with the wrong dictionary—no less musical, just not fluent in the expected dialect (MDW, HdK).

“The “ideal” student is, amongst others, expected to be familiar with the canon of Western art music, and therefore it is important to work on changing and tackling the imagination of who can study at a music university and follow through a career in (classical) music.”
(Reitsamer & Prokop, 2023, p. 31–41; MDW representative)

Non-transparent excellence criteria. Closely connected to the previous two challenges is the question of excellence criteria, which the candidates may find blurry and articulated in an untransparent way. Without clear, inclusive criteria and an ongoing critique of who holds the power to shape the meaning of ‘quality,’ candidates may have to rely on unspoken rules. For those unfamiliar with them, the gates to opportunity stay closed. (MDW; NMH; CNSMDP)

“Institutes ask for excellence and quality, but who decides how to define these when it comes to musical performances, musical styles, and musical stories?”
(HdK representative)

1.1.3. Financial obstacles

Financial barriers are not just a matter of cost — they form a web of obstacles that starts long before students ever enter a classroom. From entrance exams and travel expenses to the high cost of living in cities like Barcelona, the price of access adds up quickly. For international students or non-EU/EEA students, the process becomes even more complex with tuition fees, visas and expensive language tests. Although scholarships and grants do offer some relief, they are often limited in scope and number, leaving many talented students stranded just short of the starting line. (CNSMDP; Uniarts; ESMUC; HdK; UAB)

1. 2. Promising practices & pathways forward

1.2.1. Rethinking the application journey

Reaching out & networking. Prospective candidates may notice efforts to build bridges with conservatories, music school associations (ESMUC), and non-traditional communities like suburban hip-hop networks, along with steps toward more inclusive curricula, exams, and faculty practices. (CNSMDP, NMH)

Pre-entrance programs and digital exercise tools. By turning the entrance exam for music theory into a digital, self-assessing tool, the university allows candidates to see exactly where they stand before ever stepping onto the audition stage. This empowers students to fine-tune their skills or rethink submitting their application without facing surprise failure (HdK, UNBM). Comprehensive *preparatory programs*, individualised mentoring, and mock exams create a safety net that encourages confident participation (ESMUC, UNBM, UAB). Still, the theoretical content leans heavily on Western Classical traditions, leaving some culturally diverse candidates feeling out of tune with the system.

Special places for disadvantaged candidates. Efforts across institutions reveal a growing commitment to levelling the playing field for candidates from marginalised and underrepresented groups. Initiatives such as waived admission fees, providing housing during the admission period, and reserving spots for rural or Roma applicants aim to remove systemic roadblocks. (UNMB, UAB, CNSMDP)

Monitoring access for future measures. In order to examine access to higher arts and music education, MDW, for instance, has begun collecting data—based on the legally required Austria-wide UHStat1 survey and complemented by internal monitoring of entrance examinations—on the sociodemographic composition of applicants and first-year students across different disciplines. This data focuses in particular on the so-called “social dimension” of higher education, that is, how factors such as socio-economic background or class (for example, through drawing data on how many “first-generation students” enter higher

education at MDW) influence access to academic study. These measures aim to draw conclusions about access and admission at the MDW and to inform the development of more targeted measures in the future.

1.2.2. Transforming the entrance exam

Countering the standardisation. Candidates may appreciate increased flexibility in entrance exams. Some institutions offer a broad repertoire to reflect diverse artistic strengths (UNMB), along with accommodations for language issues (ESMUC), disability (MDW, ESMUC, UAB, CNSMDP, NMH), and digital access (Uniarts, NMH). Official institutional guidebooks state that candidates with disabilities are entitled to adapted exam formats. To make these commitments effective, clear protocols, transparent communication, and collaboration with support services are essential. Good practices include a checkbox for alternative exam methods (MDW, UNMB) and the digitalisation of entrance exams through video submissions (HdK, NMH), Zoom interviews (Uniarts, NMH), and anonymised assessments (Uniarts).

"A strictly uniform approach may inadvertently discourage some prospective students—particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds or non-traditional learning paths—who may not view the exam structure as responsive to their strengths or prior experiences."
(UAB representative)

Combating the ideal artist subject. If not conforming to the stereotype of an ideal artist, candidates may find reassurance to learn about the bias awareness guide and mandatory anti-bias training for either the entrance exam committees (CNSMDP, NMH) or the recruitment staff in general, aimed at strengthening staff competencies in gender and diversity issues (MDW).

Navigating issues regarding excellence criteria. Some institutions began to emphasise clear evaluation standards, transparent selection procedures, and professional integrity in decision-making. Whether through published criteria (Uniarts, UNMB, NMH), standardised grading scales for theoretical subject exams (UNMB, NMH) or the use of impartial committee members compared to the specialists (HdK, NMH), these practices help demystify what "excellence" means. The option to request feedback or appeal results could further strengthen trust in the system (Uniarts, NMH).

1.2.3. One model of a systemic approach

CNSMDP's "Pact for Artists and Overseas Cultures" represents a structural commitment to improving access to higher education for French overseas territories. Within the Overseas Equal Opportunity Program, through its partnership with the Culture & Diversity Foundation, the institution scouts young marginalised dance talents, guides them through tailored internships,

and supports them all the way to the entrance exam and beyond. It's not just about opening doors; it's about walking candidates through them, covering everything from travel costs to professional integration. Hence, the program is not symbolic—it's operational, with seven internships and three students already admitted in 2024. A similar practice was noted at HdK, which collaborates with the Dutch Caribbean region. Such an approach shows systematic tackling of accessibility issues through intensive collaboration with different regions within IN.TUNE members.

1.3. Access summary: Between vision and reality

"A paradigm shift will be necessary, requiring institutions to 'reach out' rather than simply 'welcome' talent. This means being more attentive to the world around them rather than remaining a sanctuary of knowledge reserved for insiders."
(CNSMDP representative)

A tension emerges between proclaimed values and the lived realities of institutional practice. While equality is championed in discourse, elitism, "tradition," and institutional inertia continue to weigh down meaningful change. Still, glimmers of progress are visible. A range of promising practices, especially around entrance exam preparation and execution, challenge the status quo. But these efforts often arrive too late, helping only those already within reach of opportunity. Crucial gaps remain. **Representation / public image issues** are yet to be addressed. No system tracks who applies versus who gets in. Bias in admissions is rarely examined, and long-term outcomes of equal opportunity programs go unmeasured. Structural barriers—**financial cost** and **exclusionary pathways**—persist largely untouched. These inherent contradictions between values and practice go beyond isolated institutions; they are entrenched in broader systems that reproduce inequality. In this light, access to higher education becomes both a reflection of social injustice and a lever for its repair.

Box 1: Selection of Resources regarding Access & Entrance

CNSMDP's Overseas Equal Opportunity Program:
<https://egalite-cnsmdp.selecteev.io/apply>

MDW's checkbox for alternative exam methods:
<https://www.mdw.ac.at/stdir/abweichende-pruefungsmethode/>

2. Curricula & Teaching

"Curricula are at the heart of diversification at universities."

(MDW representative)

Integrating **Belonging, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (BDEI)** into curricula and teaching is key to ensuring that education reflects and values all voices. Curricula shape who feels represented, whose knowledge is recognised, and who has access to success. However, the negotiations over which knowledge and skills are taught reflect broader struggles for more inclusive higher music education institutions. These discussions are deeply embedded in gendered, classed, and racialised power structures, as well as in notions of excellence, elitism, and Eurocentrism. Hence, embedding BDEI principles into higher education curricula is not a straightforward process. It is, however, a worthwhile one, as it helps create learning environments where every student can see themselves reflected, feel respected, and engage on equal terms. By rethinking content, pedagogy, and assessment through a BDEI lens, institutions can foster a more inclusive, relevant, and socially responsible form of education.

2.1. Current landscape of teaching and learning: what is (un)addressed?

2.1.1. Genre/style gaps in the curriculum

Despite scattered efforts to diversify across institutions, students still encounter curricula that remain tethered mainly to a Eurocentric compass, charting a narrow path through Western classical traditions while largely overlooking the rich terrain of global and contemporary musical expressions. This creates gaps in cultural representation, building invisible fences around talent—excluding students whose artistry flourishes outside the canon's guarded gates.

"Non-Western musical knowledge, collective practices, and marginalised narratives remain largely underrepresented, both in terms of content and methodology."

(ESMUC representative)

2.1.2. Excellence in a box: conventional teaching model

Due to slightly **insufficient pre-service training in inclusive pedagogy or alternative examination methods**, students are predominantly exposed to conventional teaching models. Faculties often rely on personal initiative to support diverse learners, but without institutional guidance or material support, these efforts remain fragmented. At the same time, recruitment and promotion processes tend to privilege artistic and research achievements over pedagogical skill. Inappropriate or discriminatory pedagogical behaviours are sometimes justified as part of a teacher's personal style or intent to "motivate" students, rather than critically assessed for

their impact. This undermines the necessity of institutional commitment to inclusion, diversity, and anti-discrimination as core educational values (CNSMDP, NMH, ESMUC, UAB).

“The teaching model remains predominantly rooted in master-apprentice tradition, emphasising imitation and hierarchical transmission; this may limit students’ creative autonomy.”
(Reid, 1997; UAB representative)

2.1.3. Biases shaping instruction, mentorship, and evaluation

Gender disparities in repertoire selection (the overwhelming dominance of male composers and the consequent exclusion of women and queer artists), and stereotypical role distributions (e.g., overrepresentation of men in jazz and women in pedagogy—see [Staff and Students section](#)) subtly reinforce narrow expectations about who belongs where in the fields of arts and music. Further, given the lack of faculty members from diverse backgrounds, students may not see themselves reflected in leadership positions or artistic recognition, contributing to a feeling of not belonging. These conditions may perpetuate certain biases in teaching based on gender, ethnicity, or genre and limit mentorship opportunities for minority students. In this environment, the artistic evaluation can subtly echo existing hierarchies, masking structural disadvantage as neutral judgment (MDW, NMH, CNSMDP). Finally, as with the entrance exams (see the [Entrance section](#)), the assessment processes of artistic performance may frequently appear subjective to the students, due to the often vague or shifting definitions of “excellence” and to the common apprenticeship-master dependencies (i.e., preferential treatment of specific students).

2.2. Diversifying curriculum: forward-looking initiatives

Introducing diversity knowledge into the curriculum has taken two main forms: (a) courses explicitly addressing issues of diversity and inclusion, and (b) the integration of varied musical styles and repertoires—such as works by female composers—within existing courses. In addition, several other exceptionally fruitful initiatives have emerged.

2.2.1. Strategically advancing diversity competences through curriculum

Some institutions have introduced dedicated courses and defined (gender and) diversity competence as a mandatory learning outcome across study programs (HdK, MDW, relying on Diversity Strategy adopted by the Rectorate in 2019). Further, Uniarts offers courses on decolonising artistic practices (on decolonising the stage, embodiment, and survival strategies), encouraging students to critically examine structures of power, visibility, and exclusion. Other IN.TUNE partners address diversity issues through courses of a broader scope, usually covering psychological and pedagogical themes in music education (UAB, CNSMDP, ESMUC, UNMB,

NMH). However, students may find that BDEI topics are sometimes covered only in elective rather than compulsory courses, and are limited to teaching modules or higher education levels.

Across institutions, there are some measures oriented toward making knowledge of BDEI more available and a part of everyday practice. Along with workshops and trainings around BDEI for both students and staff (see section [5.2.3. Strengthening staff awareness and skills: training and guides](#)), MDW provides a *professorship in gender studies* - academic positions contribute to BDEI by integrating critical knowledge on gender and diversity into the university's curricula and anchoring these topics as central objectives of academic inquiry and artistic practice. This underscores the need for a clearer and more binding integration of such content into the core curriculum.

"Institutions should embed diversity values into core artistic training and assessment rubrics, making diversity literacy a learning outcome for all graduates."
(NMH representative)

2.2.2. Embracing alternative and marginalised styles in music education

Introducing diversity competence into the curriculum can also take the form of *integrating diverse musical traditions* and *expanding repertoire* choices within existing courses (such as repertoire from female composers) within a course (MDW, CNSMDP, HdK, NMH, ESMUC, UNMB, UAB). For instance, CNSMDP students are offered a North Indian improvisation class, HdK features a Caribbean ensemble course, UAB provides regional music electives, and UNMB offers a course on "oriental" musical cultures, showing how localised or global traditions can be brought into mainstream programs. Further, to create visibility for female and/or queer composers and increase diversity, students at NMH must specify the gender of the composers when registering their examination repertoire, demonstrating how canon expansion can serve as both a pedagogical and political act. Curriculum then transforms into a dynamic space for confronting exclusion and cultivating new artistic futures.

"Students are exposed to a wide range of musical cultures and practices beyond the traditional Western canon, choosing from various elective modules that reflect different stylistic and cultural areas. This allows them to explore their own interests, backgrounds, and creative identities."
(UNMB representative)

2.2.3. Exploring diversity through research, dialogue and community practice

Curricular diversification in higher music education does not unfold solely through formal courses — it also finds relevant ground in research initiatives, one-off events, and community engagement. *Artistic and academic research projects* such as *ArtsEqual* and *Voice and Justice*

(Uniarts), *Challenging Musical Canons* (NMH) or *QUART – Quality of Arts* (MDW) serve as incubators for critical reflection, helping institutions interrogate dominant norms and seed long-term transformation. Elsewhere, diversity-related themes emerge through **symposiums, project weeks, or specialised seminars** (UAB, CNSMDP — “Handicap on Stage!”, Uniarts seminars on racism and ableism or MDWs courses on inclusive music education for wind and/or classical ensemble). Another vital avenue is **building bridges beyond the academy**, through collaborations with NGOs, prisons, hospitals, schools in rural areas, or marginalised communities (HdK, Uniarts, NMH, UNMB)—bringing students into diverse musical and social settings. Although sometimes scattered and non-mandatory, when combined with other strategic and structural approaches, these efforts can act as catalysts for embedding diversity further into the institutional fabric.

2.2.4. An example of a stylistically individualized approach

At NMH, both the Bachelor (FRIBA) and Master (FRIMA) programs enable students to create personalised study paths that embrace a broad range of musical styles, including those historically underrepresented, while fostering diverse specialisations. This flexibility encourages artistic exploration that challenges conventional norms and encourages reflective, innovative musicianship. Complementary to this evolution was NMH’s Centre for Excellence in Music Performance Education (CEMPE, 2014—2023), which cultivated a collaborative, student-driven learning culture grounded in diversity and curiosity. Finally, the recently launched Cultural Diversity in Music Education program specifically supports musicians from minority backgrounds in preserving and sharing their cultural heritage within educational settings. Such initiatives show how an institution can act as an incubator for stylistically inclusive music education.

2.3. Curricula summary: Disrupting the grip of tradition

“Across the IN.TUNE partners, the same structural challenges emerge:

Entrenched Eurocentrism, fairly rigid pedagogical traditions, and competitive environments rooted in selective admissions. Efforts towards diversification face institutional inertia, scepticism, or pushback from those invested in maintaining traditional artistic standards.”

(NMH representative)

Attempts at greater curricular diversity often crash against the walls of institutional tradition where “heritage” or “tradition” is rigidly guarded, instead of being approached as a productive opportunity for critical self-reflection and long-term structural transformation. This hesitancy towards change is reinforced by pedagogical models grounded in conservatism and by institutional cultures less receptive of alternative artistic paradigms. The result is a fragmented cross-institutional landscape: while individual faculty members everywhere demonstrate

initiative, diversity predominantly remains inconsistently embedded in curricula, leaving individual efforts ephemeral. Together, the entrenchment in tradition and the absence of sustained structural mechanisms form a mutually reinforcing dynamic that hinders the development of a more inclusive educational setting. Even in institutions that have taken commendable strides, there is no systematic mapping of repertoire diversity, nor is there an assessment of how new modules affect inclusivity. Therefore, the next step for higher music education institutions is to strengthen academy-wide approaches to critical diversity literacy and inclusive practices, supported by transparent data collection and staff training. This could involve flexible, context-sensitive engagement with diverse repertoires. What holds promise is a dual approach: top-down mandates introducing required courses in diversity competence, paired with bottom-up initiatives—experimental artistic research, embodied learning, and real engagement with plural communities. Such immersive experiences have the power to rewire both the minds and bodies of emerging professionals.

Box 2: Selection of Resources regarding Curricula & Teaching

CNSMDP' symposium Handicap on stage!
<https://www.conservatoiredeparis.fr/fr/saison-20232024/colloque-handicap-en-scene>
HdK's course Proactive Diversity
MDW's ALIISA – All in. International Inclusive Society in the Arts (2023-2023):
<https://www.mdw.ac.at/imp/aliisa-projekt/>
MDW's elective courses on Gender and diversity: <https://www.mdw.ac.at/ggd/lv/>
NMH' Centre for Excellence in Music Performance Education (2014–2023):
<https://nmh.no/en/research/centres/ceppe>
NMH' conversations on diversity, equality and the academy's future identity held under CEMPE:
<https://student.nmh.no/en/news/conversations-diversity-equality-identity?utm>
NMH' program Cultural diversity in music education:
<https://nmh.no/en/studies/continuing-studies/cultural-diversity-in-music-education>
NMH's artistic research projects Challenging musical canons: Evoking diversity in practice and theory:
<https://nmh.no/en/research/projects/challenging-musical-canons>
NMH's Bachelor's and Master program with individual concentration:

Uniarts, The Global Music programme:
<https://www.uniarts.fi/en/study-programmes/global-music-bachelor-and-master/>
Uniarts' course Decolonizing Embodiment:
<https://opinto-opas.uniarts.fi/fi/opintojakso/T-XY271/11797>
Uniarts' course Decolonizing the stage:
<https://opinto-opas.uniarts.fi/en/course/AY-T59/21472>
Uniarts' course The Survival Handbook: Decolonizing Strategies from inside the White Box:
<https://opinto-opas.uniarts.fi/fi/opintojakso/K-KM28-S20E/9436>
Uniarts' project A Classroom of One's Own:
<https://www.uniarts.fi/en/projects/a-classroom-of-ones-own/>
Uniarts' project ArtsEqual (2015–2020):
<https://www.artsequal.fi/home>
Uniarts' project Diversity of Music Heritage in Finland:
<https://www.uniarts.fi/en/projects/diversity-of-music-heritage-in-finland/>
Uniarts' project Health, Wellbeing and Disability Narratives in the Arts (2022–2024), offering a course on Critical Disability Studies:
<https://www.uniarts.fi/en/projects/health-wellbeing-and-disability-narratives-in-the-arts/>
Uniarts' project Voice and Justice – Music as a Facilitator of Diversity:

<https://nmh.no/en/studies/undergraduate/frib-a?utm>

<https://nmh.no/en/studies/graduate/frima?utm>

– NMH's project: Balanseprosjektet – Kjønnssbalanse, mangfold og inkludering
<https://nmh.no/forskning/prosjekter/balanseprosjektet>

<https://www.uniarts.fi/en/projects/voice-and-justice-music-as-a-facilitator-of-diversity/>

UNMB course: Ethics and Academic Integrity:

<https://www.unmb.ro/oferta-educationala/master-facultatea-de-interpretare-muzicala/stilistica-interpretativa-instrumente-cu-claviatura/>

3. Organisational culture

Exploring **Belonging, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (BDEI)** within organisational culture is crucial to understanding how values, behaviours, and structures shape everyday experiences. Embedding BDEI principles helps create environments where all members feel respected, empowered, and able to contribute equally — fostering trust, collaboration, and a genuine sense of belonging.

3.1. Ongoing challenges – what work lies ahead?

Even in spaces designed to welcome all, shadows of bias and exclusion linger, continuing to shape the cultural space of higher education institutions.

3.1.1. Representation shortfalls

"Lack of diversity among faculty members can make it difficult for certain students to feel recognised and legitimised within the institution."
(ESMUC representative)

When prospective students explore the online presence of these institutions, students may notice a lack of inclusive imagery and limited multilingual content. An image emerges of elitist, highly selective institutions with narrow ideas about what constitutes acceptable artistic expression and who fits the conventional definition of a recognised artist (CNSMDP; NMH; UAB). Even after successfully enrolling on the study programs, the scarcity of diverse role models within institutions leaves many students from marginalised backgrounds navigating unfamiliar cultural codes largely on their own. This absence creates feelings of alienation and limits mentorship opportunities, diminishing the visibility of viable career paths. Without a more representative faculty encompassing a range of origins, experiences, and identities, students struggle to see themselves reflected in positions of authority and artistic recognition, leaving potential talent undernourished (NMH, ESMUC, UAB, HdK). Listening to staff and students might be one effective way to recognise hidden structural problems which prevent equity (Uniarts).

3.1.2. Traditional and competitive culture

"High standards and competitiveness can lead to significant suffering."
(CNSMDP representative)

Students entering music institutions often find themselves in a highly competitive environment that prizes perfectionism, mastery, and "excellence" grounded in "traditional", that is Eurocentric, class-specific, and gendered, criteria. This culture generates intense pressure, which can lead to burnout, anxiety, and mental health struggles, particularly among vulnerable

students. For some institutions (i.e. those located in Northern Europe), the *Nordic Equality Paradox* further complicates matters: strong cultural narratives of (presumably already achieved) equality may mask persistent structural inequities, contributing to a denial or to a sense of complacency rather than proactive support. Although existing mental health services function well (see [Organisational Structure section](#)), they are unable to address the root causes of stress and exclusion.

3.1.3. Still limited preventive activities

"Cases of sexual harassment and gender-based violence are tackled primarily from a remedial perspective. This raises the question of preventive work on these issues."
(MDW representative)

Mechanisms for reporting harassment and discrimination are firmly established and formally regulated in most institutions. Preventive initiatives, however, often remain less developed, with awareness-raising and early-stage education appearing sporadically rather than systematically embedded across the institution. Students may therefore encounter systems that function efficiently once problems arise, yet still operate within a broader landscape more oriented toward compliance and documentation than toward a fully realised proactive culture of equity and belonging.

3.1.4. Underreporting issues

Within some institutions, rigid pedagogical methods and deeply ingrained hierarchies define the student–teacher relationship within the context of the master-apprenticeship model, while career advancement often depends on the very individuals who hold evaluative power. In smaller academic communities, where personal and professional ties extend beyond the institution—into orchestras, ensembles, and shared artistic networks—reputations circulate quickly, amplifying students' sense of vulnerability. Subtle but pervasive forms of discrimination, such as casual sexist jokes or stereotypical remarks, are often normalised or dismissed, which may lead to a general sense of unease among peers, as scientists and scholars have shown (see Bull, Scharff) (UNMB). Against this backdrop, where concealed racism lingers and no regular monitoring of harassment, microaggressions, or discrimination exists, both students and staff may hesitate to activate formal reporting mechanisms (MDW, NMH, ESMUC, UNMB, HdK, CNSMDP).

3.2. Cultivating diversity: practices nurturing a culture of belonging

"There is a lot of awareness and a sense of responsibility."
(Uniarts representative)

Despite ongoing challenges across institutions, there is a strong aspiration to foster a culture of openness, respect, and mutual support as the backbone of daily academic and artistic life, even where some practices remain informal or localised within departments. The institutional climate aims to encourage respectful interaction. Therefore, students and staff often encounter communities that are making efforts to balance rooted tradition with the freedom to explore individuality.

3.2.1. Showcasing role models: public image reimagined

"Representation matters. The Academy's website and other public-facing platforms should reflect diversity in both visuals and content, signaling that this is a space where everyone can belong."
(NMH representative)

Devotion to making historically underrepresented voices and identities visible within their academic and artistic communities is visible. Initiatives such as a virtual platform for women's histories and the Holz-Blech-Schlag project promoting women* composers (MDW), as well as Visibility Bank showcasing stories and career paths of diverse role models (NMH), transform recognition into a tangible practice. UNMB has promoted the careers of Roma students by producing interviews and short promotional podcasts, while at Uniarts, projects like Voice and Justice – Music as a Facilitator of Diversity (2025–2027) give students an opportunity to work in multicultural environments. IN.TUNE partners are, thus, beginning to reshape the stories they tell about who belongs, and who thrives, within their walls.

3.2.2. Institutional onboarding – a guided welcome

"A start-up week is a welcoming week for all first years. Considerable effort is put into making the students feel welcome, seen, and safe."
(HdK representative)

Structured practices aim to welcome new members and cultivate a sense of belonging from the very start. The welcome to the university, first-year briefing on rights, responsibilities (UNMB) and responsible interaction (Uniarts, UNMB), start-up weeks for students with workshops, meetings, dinners, and discussions (HdK), as well as Buddy and onboarding programs for new staff and international students with regard to gender-sensitivity and transcultural competence (MDW), lay the foundation for a supportive academic environment.

Small study groups, close student–teacher interactions, and mentoring that extend beyond formal instruction (UAB, UNMB) further strengthen this environment. (MDW, NMH, Uniarts, HdK, UAB, UNMB, CNSMDP)

3.2.3. Respecting diversity in discourse and practices

Deliberate efforts are underway to acknowledge and respect diversity in its many forms, from gender and age to health, language, religion, social and cultural background. Practices already in place include gender-sensitive publications and the possibility for trans* students to request their preferred name (ESMUC, HdK) and gender-inclusive language guidelines (such as the form with the underscore or asterisk) applied in official documents and communications (MDW, CNSMDP). Further, accommodations for students with disabilities (Uniarts, CNSMDP) and a safe environment that respects all religious backgrounds, adapting activities when needed to accommodate specific practices (UNMB). Other initiatives, such as revising institutional documents for inclusivity (HdK, UAB, Uniarts) and drawing up a unified personnel policy to be adapted to all phases of life (NMH), are in development, signalling to students and staff that respect is actively promoted within institutions (MDW, NMH, HdK, UNMB, UAB – see [Organisational Structure section](#)).

3.2.4. Inclusive spaces

Institutions are increasingly shaping their physical environments to reflect values of transparency, accountability, and inclusion. Measures such as transparent doors in classrooms and offices (HdK, ESMUC), gender-neutral restrooms and dressing rooms (ESMUC, Uniarts), and the diverse naming of spaces (CNSMDP) make inclusion tangible for students and staff. Another such example is an Experimental Creation Laboratory, offering students from all faculties the opportunity to pursue any ideas and forms of creative expression (UNMB). The architecture itself, both practical and symbolic, reinforces a sense of safety and belonging. (CNSMDP, HdK, ESMUC, UNMB)

3.2.5. Diversity-related events, networks, and student initiatives

Inclusion and belonging-focused events. Across institutions, a wide range of regular and one-off events address diversity, awareness, and visibility (MDW, HdK, NMH, CNSMDP, ESMUC, UAB, Uniarts). These include **dedicated diversity and belonging days**—such as UAB’s Day of Violence and Abuse Prevention, MDW’s Health Day and Diversity Day, and HdK’s Wellbeing Wednesdays, as well as **activities embedded in broader initiatives**, like HdK’s Start-up Week with workshops on well-being and inclusion, or ESMUC’s Purple Points during student festivities, and the first Catalan trans* choir led by an alumnus. Further notable examples include NMH’s Conversations on Diversity, Equality, and Identity series and på Skrå queer

festival, MDW's master class for women composers or yearly events in connection with the feminist International Women's Day, UNMB's Abuse and Prejudice in the Musical and Artistic Field conferences, followed by counselling sessions, and HdK's Feminine Wall, a student-led activity where students shared experiences of gender-based violence. These events celebrate diversity but also guide participants in recognising, preventing, and reporting misconduct. *Collaborative artistic and research projects*, such as chamber ensembles, classes, and performances, further nurture inclusion and belonging (UAB, UNMB).

"The culture of belonging within the institution is mainly promoted by staff and student associations, which organize collective events to bring all communities together."
(CNSMDP)

Committees, platforms and networks. MDW hosts several networks that bring together students and staff and create spaces for dialogue and collaboration. Among them are *Queer_mdw*, which holds monthly informal gatherings; *Neuro-Jours-Fixes*, a network supporting neurodivergent students in realizing their potential through expert input, open discussions, and peer exchange; or *Gender_mdw*, an internal committee and network format that operates across institutes and organizational units and serves as a source of inspiration and knowledge for gender- and diversity-related content and discourse. Each institute, therefore, nominates a gender representative who is a member of *Gender_mdw*.

Formal and informal student participation. In several institutions, students take an active part in formal university and faculty bodies, ensuring their voices are heard in decision-making processes regarding the institutional development (UNMB, NMH, UAB, ESMUC, HdK, CNSMDP). At Uniarts, NMH and HdK, students are part of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion working group. In some cases, student parliaments also carry a specific mandate to enhance diversity and inclusion measures—for example, at UAB, where the Faculty's Student Parliament includes representatives of students with disabilities and minority backgrounds. Elsewhere, the initiative emerges from student-led organisations — such as ESMUC's feminist collective and students' union, and HdK's konconnect, a group of students organising jam sessions and meetups. Across institutions (e.g. UAB), there seem to be clear signs of students' growing desire for more meaningful participation in shaping diversity-related policies and practices.

3.3. Organisational culture summary: turning obstacles into progress

"How can institutions move beyond compliance and committees to embed inclusion into everyday practices, rituals and spaces?"
(NMH representative)

Institutions are increasingly taking a proactive stance against discrimination and working to cultivate a genuine culture of belonging. These efforts are anchored in binding agreements,

policies, and strategic action plans at multiple levels (see [Organisational Structure section](#)). Attention to social safety, reporting systems, and awareness-raising is growing. The wide array of good practices allows institutions to learn from one another in nurturing environments where everyone can feel included. Yet, obstacles remain. **Competitive pressures** can strain mental health, and **everyday microaggressions** often slip under the radar. They are also partly rooted in the very nature of the institutions, which prioritize selection and the retention of top talent. Further, in these **small communities**, a single teacher can shape a student's or colleague's entire career trajectory, making personal relationships both a lifeline and a bottleneck (discouraging formal reporting). Hidden discrimination persists, and **diverse role models** remain too often **invisible**, echoing broader cultural trends. Privilege, though often unseen, shapes who is noticed and supported — influencing artists' opportunities more than talent itself. Translating policy into the lived experience of belonging thus remains an uphill task. Devotion to implementing multi-layered remedies, including uncovering unconscious biases and fostering shared ownership among students and staff, has the potential to further diversify the cultural landscape of artistic institutions, empowering artists not only to thrive within them but to act as vital agents of change and dialogue in society.

Box 3: Selection of Resources regarding Organisational Culture

HdK: <https://www.koncon.nl/en/practice-health-well-being-at-the-royal-conservatoire>

HdK: <https://www.koncon.nl/en/practice-health-well-being-at-the-royal-conservatoire/diversity-and-inclusion>

MDW's cross-institutional project "Holz-Blech-Schlag" to promote the visibility of female composers: <https://www.mdw.ac.at/ggd/hbs/>

MDW's platform gender_mdw: <https://www.genderplattform.at/plattform-gender-mdw/?lang=en>

MDW's platform queer_mdw: <https://www.mdw.ac.at/queer-mdw/>

MDW's virtual platform "spiel|mach|t|raum" to make women* histories visible: <https://www.mdw.ac.at/spielmachtraum/>

NMH's participation in the Balance Hub to feature diverse role models in academia, provide seminars on gender balance and diversity, and provide promotion courses and mentorships: <https://balancehub.nifu.no/tiltaksprosjektene/>

Uniarts' Guide on wellbeing: where do you draw the line? Healthy boundaries in interactions: <https://student.uniarts.fi/guides/guide-on-wellbeing-where-do-you-draw-the-line-healthy-boundaries-ininteractions/#:~:text=Individual%20support%20and%20guidelines%20in%20cases%20of%20inappropriate%20treatment>

Uniarts' project "Voice and Justice – Music as a Facilitator of Diversity": <https://www.uniarts.fi/en/projects/voice-and-justice-music-as-a-facilitator-of-diversity/>

4. Organisational structure

Legal and policy frameworks play a key role in shaping how organisations structure their approaches to **Belonging, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (BDEI)**. They define the standards, responsibilities, and expectations that guide institutional practices. Yet, their implementation depends on organisational culture, leadership commitment, and broader social and political contexts — factors that determine whether BDEI principles truly foster inclusive environments and a genuine sense of belonging.

4.1. Legal and policy frameworks

All participating institutions base their BDEI efforts on national legislation and ministerial mandates, followed by research projects (UniArts, NMH) and action-oriented policies and policy papers. These frameworks often include provisions for anti-discrimination, diversity and gender equality.

4.1.1. Breadth of the legal basis

Several institutions benefit from the broad and robust legislative base. For example, The Austrian University Act of 2002 serves as a central basis for MDW's policies, strategic initiatives and guidelines with its binding nature enforced through performance agreements with the Federal Ministry of Education of Austria. The same goes for the Constitution of Romania (UNMB), Norway (NMH) and France's (CNSMDP) legislative base, as well as Finland (UniArts). However, this breadth offered an interesting observation by UAB representatives regarding their own legislative base:

"It provides a wide range of possibilities and prohibits discrimination across multiple dimensions, yet it often lacks clearly defined mechanisms to ensure that these differences are genuinely recognised and respected."
(UAB representative)

4.1.2. BDEI agendas

Most IN.TUNE partners have taken a step further, developing or currently implementing dedicated belonging, diversity, equity and inclusion strategies, plans, or declarations (NMH, Uniarts, mdw, ESMUC, UNMB, UAB – gender-focused). Such could be Diversity strategy (mdw) or diversity-oriented action plans (CNSMDP), policies and (action) plans concerning gender equality (mdw, UNMB, NMH) or other forms of discrimination, Codes of conduct and affirmative actions which operate alongside ethical codes or charters (CNSMDP, UNMB, Uniarts, HdK). Reflecting a continuous commitment to improvement, Uniarts updated its

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion plan in 2025; the new plan (2025–2028) places particular emphasis on raising awareness of ableism and promoting anti-racism.

Additionally, examples such as UNMB's strong focus on minority groups (e.g., Roma students and students from rural and/or socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds) highlight effective *targeted support measures*. Other institutions, such as mdw, view these as a source of inspiration for exploring similar measures in the future themselves. Another notable practice is the existence of *external evaluation frameworks* that integrate diversity into institutional quality assurance and audit systems, linking inclusion to state-recognized performance indicators (CNSMDP).

4.2. Institutional structures

"Most institutions have adopted equality laws, anti-discrimination charters, and ministerial mandates, yet the presence of permanent, empowered structures—committees, coordinators, reporting units, and dedicated departments—often determines whether progress is sustained or fragmented."
(NMH representative)

Various structures (departments, committees, working groups, appointing officers, student representatives) have been established throughout institutions to ensure the implementation of BDEI commitments. These structures act as bridges between high-level institutional strategies and everyday academic life: they collect and analyse data, address systemic imbalances, organise lectures and training, and improve accessibility both online and on campus.

4.2.1. Administrating and monitoring implementation

Many institutions seek to formalise their work on diversity, demonstrating a proactive commitment to strengthening the sense of belonging among students and staff. These efforts vary across departments: some are centralised or formally integrated into institutional structures, while others take the form of officially recognised committees or semi-/informal (self-)advocacy groups and bottom-up organisations emerging from within the staff and student bodies.

Establishment of centralised and visible offices. A good example of a dedicated and permanent department is MDW's Administrative Department for Equity, Gender, and Diversity (EGD) at MDW, staffed by paid experts. Established under section 19(2)(7) of the Austrian Universities Act of 2002 (UG), EGD reports to the Office of the Vice Rector for Organisational Development and Diversity. The EGD's budget is allocated annually, with additional funding

provided for specific, topic-oriented projects aimed at enhancing gender and diversity knowledge and competence at all levels of the university, especially among staff and students.

BDEI Groups. These groups often involve staff, students, and management. Their functions can include governing gender composition, addressing discrimination and safety systematically, and developing inclusive practices across all hierarchical levels of the university. Several institutions have separate BDEI working groups (Uniarts: *Accessibility Working Group*, HdK: *Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Working Group – GROW*, CNSMDP: *Disability Working Group*), whereby MDW's *Working group on equal opportunities* represents an institutionalised department model, being a legally anchored collegial body of the university. Some working groups may be theme-specific, such as those focusing solely on gender (NMH).

Ethics Committees. An institutional structure characteristic for UNMB is the University Ethics Committee which “oversees adherence to ethical and deontological standards, investigates violations, supports policy development, and promotes academic integrity through actions” (Reports of the University Ethics Committee, 2016-2024).

Equality and Non-Discrimination Committee. These committees monitor the implementation of equality plans, analyse the situation through student feedback and workplace surveys, and make proposals to university management – thus reflecting proactive equality efforts. (NMH: *Committee for Diversity and Equality and Learning Environment Committee*; UAB: *University Commission for the Protection Against Abuse in the Educational and Work Process*; CNSMDP and Uniarts: *Equality and Diversity Committee*).

Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies. This UAB's centre performs tasks related to supporting students from underrepresented groups, including information and advisory services, monitoring student needs, and coordinating support activities.

UAB's Student parliament declaratively serves the function of aligning institutional strategy with student activism and of actively using student feedback mechanisms to improve institutional climate. Uniarts has shown to apply the same principle in institutional climate assessment (the University of the Arts Student Union).

4.2.2. Available resources and services

A wide range of services is available to both students and staff across institutions, some of which are offered free of charge or at reduced rates, particularly for students.

Accessibility aid. Across institutions, the physical spaces are increasingly adapted and designed to be accessible for everyone (UNMB, ESMUC, Uniarts, HdK's Amare building). Further, students and staff can rely on a network of dedicated services: tailored

accommodations for students with disabilities or temporary challenges (NMH, CNSMDP, UNMB, Uniarts), specialized coordinators who guide students and employees with physical or neurological impairments through study and work environments (MDW, ESMUC), and committees ensuring that learning and working conditions meet the highest standards of equity (NMH, MDW, Uniarts). Although some institutions report their spaces inaccessible for people with disabilities (UAB), others show great concern for these issues and thorough practice. For instance, the Senate Working Group on Accessibility, the Accessible_MDW team and the Students Accessibility Coordinator jointly discuss and provide information on accessible teaching, and alternative examination methods.

Financial and housing aid. Several institutions provide targeted scholarships and financial support to students from disadvantaged backgrounds, covering both general living costs and specific study-related expenses, such as instruments, laptops, competitions, or study trips (NMH, MDW, UNMB, CNSMDP, Uniarts). UNMB extends this support further, offering scholarships for medical needs, orphans, single-parent families, and maternity-related expenses. A few institutions also make student life more accessible by providing affordable housing and meals in dormitories, with eligibility often based on income or disability status (CNSMDP, UNMB, UAB). Additional support may include fee exemptions for tuition, dormitory accommodation, transportation, instrument rental (UNMB, UAB, CNSMDP), or priority access to student camps (UNMB), although criteria vary and are not always tied to disadvantage (CNSMDP).

Medical aid. Several institutions provide students with access to a comprehensive system of care – physiotherapists, dentists, nurses, physicians, and nutritionists (MDW, NMH, CNSMDP, Uniarts) collaborate to support students' physical and mental well-being. Others extend this commitment to their staff through Occupational Risk Prevention programs (ESMUC), designed especially to support those in more vulnerable positions. Among these initiatives are annual individual health assessments – comprehensive check-ups, including hearing tests for teaching staff serving as early warning systems that help detect and address potential health issues before they grow into larger concerns.

Psychosocial aid. In several institutions, mental health is formally treated as an integral part of learning and working (NMH, CNSMDP, HdK, ESMUC, MDW, UNMB, Uniarts). Confidential counselling and psychosocial support help students navigate both academic pressures and personal conflicts (MDW, NMH, Uniarts, UNMB, HdK, CNSMDP). Several services also provide staff with access to counselling and supportive listening (Uniarts). Specialized care ranges from LGBTQ+-friendly and spiritual support (NMH, Uniarts), to assistance with integration and personal challenges, as well as targeted sessions addressing abuse and prejudice in the arts, followed by individual or group counselling (UNMB).

Educational aid. Often in coordination with psychosocial services, students are also supported by a web of personal guidance designed to help them grow academically (HdK, Uniarts, UAB, UNMB). Regular coaching provided by personal tutors ensures that each student can turn to someone for academic support, personal reflection, or individual study arrangements in cases of cognitive, physical and mental health difficulties, as well as long-term illness (HdK, Uniarts, CNSMDP). Exchange students receive dedicated mentorship and inclusion-oriented support from specialized staff who help them navigate both the academic system and cultural adaptation (UAB). In parallel, remedial consultation programs led by doctoral students facilitate learning recovery and inclusion, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds or with limited access to prior educational resources (UNMB: PerformArt Project).

"Adaptations have been proposed in the monitoring and follow-up of classes to ensure that specific health conditions do not interfere with academic performance. These adjustments aim to support students' well-being and provide equal learning opportunities."

(ESMUC representative)

Legal aid. At NMH, students are not left to navigate legal matters alone. The students have access to an independent Student Ombud—an independent and confidential guide who advises students on their rights, helps them understand procedures and assists with complaints, without representing either the student or the institution. Beyond this general support, NMH also provides specialised legal aid for women, offering assistance in cases of gender-based discrimination and harassment. The insights gained from these experiences are shared with the wider community, allowing NMH to transform individual stories into broader social impact. MDW's Working Group on Equal Opportunities provides legal advice and support on discrimination and harassment issues to all university members and bodies. At Uniarts, students can get legal aid through the Uniarts Legal Counsel.

4.2.3. Reporting mechanisms

IN.TUNE partners have established clear reporting mechanisms for addressing cases of discrimination and misconduct. Depending on the institutional structure and national legal frameworks governing such mechanisms, these cases are handled either by general ethics or disciplinary committees (UAB, UNMB) or by specialised units such as *Anti-Harassment and Whistleblowing Reporting Structures* (NMH: *Whistleblowing System (Si ifra!)* within the *Committee for Diversity and Equality*; mdw: *Working Group on Equal Opportunities*; CNSMDP: *Inappropriate treatment report unit*; *Equality and Diversity Committees* at NMH, Uniarts and HdK). These units are designed to handle reports of violence, discrimination, moral or sexual harassment, and sexist behaviour, systematically addressing such incidents. Nearly all participating institutions have established or regulated such units in some form.

Some institutions provide support through (a group of) individuals who serve as initial points of contact for students and staff. For concerns related to social safety, harassment, or discrimination, there are *deans and confidential advisors* (UNMB), and in need of advice and support on equality and diversity matters, there are *equality and diversity coordinators* (Uniarts). Additionally, Uniarts provides a *student union's harassment contact persons* who act as an informal support mechanism, offering advice to students in taking matters of inappropriate treatment forward to staff.

4.3. Challenges and gaps in implementation

Although many structures are in place to ensure the quality and consistency of BDEI practices, several challenges related to implementation have been recognised.

4.3.1. Financial insecurity

The above-noted UAB representative's concern is valid across all universities: there is *fragmented implementation* of agreed-upon measures. Even though the legal basis appears broad and robust for acting upon concrete measures in all participating universities, problems such as *funding insecurities* make implementation difficult.

"Many DEI initiatives depend on external grants or temporary projects."
(ESMUC representative)

Lack of systematic funding and policies affects inter-region collaboration and development of accessibility measures, as noted by HdK representatives:

"[...] this currently depends too much on the enthusiasm of individual staff members, as there is no formal policy in place."
(HdK representative)

4.3.2. Narrow gender framing

Among the implemented BDEI measures and structures, the category of *gender seems to be prioritised* and often considered only in binary terms. Only a few universities (e.g. ESMUC) openly and formally acknowledge *other gender identities* in the context of data collection and the subsequent analysis of institutional composition, even though national legislative documents prohibit any form of discrimination on this basis. Also, *gender equality* is often addressed and tackled as pertaining predominantly or exclusively to women's advancement, supported by many active codes and policies. But still,

"Women and non-binary individuals remain underrepresented in senior academic and leadership roles."
(CNSMDP representative)

4.3.3. Monitoring and data gaps

IN.TUNE members point to the question of underrepresentation of other diversity categories such as nationality, race, class, disability, etc., which stems – among other things – from *gaps in data*. When collecting data on different social categories or groups of people, two problems appear relevant: one is conceptual and arises from the confounded usage of terms of (inter-)nationality and race; the other lies in limited availability of existing data due to data protection and confidentiality, as well as the fact that findings from these efforts are often not widely or transparently disseminated within the institution.

Determining the effectiveness of existing BDEI measures on institutional cultures also poses a challenge, since many of them are recent. This, along with a *lack of concise and accessible documents*, makes international implementation and insight difficult.

4.4. Organisational structure summary: challenges as opportunities

“The next phase involves moving from compliance-based structures to an empowered, data-driven, and visibly coordinated system—one that integrates diversity goals into every level of governance, from board policies to department action plans.”
(NMH representative)

Let us break down this quote - how do we get to the “next phase”? First of all, evidently all IN.TUNE members operate under national legislations which prohibit discrimination on any basis. As shown above, legal and policy frameworks provide a vital basis for establishing and institutionalising BDEI initiatives and measures. However, implementation of these structures is often fragmented due to a set of problems: some are material (e.g. funding insecurities and lack of accessibility), some are conceptual (e.g. the difficulty of addressing topics such as race or racism), while some are related to depoliticised and entrepreneurial understandings of diversity.

Yet, the institutions have begun to tackle these issues. Desirable course of development includes, for instance: 1) a *mandatory BDEI competence* in hiring and evaluation processes, 2) an *intra-institutional growth* which would mean moving from fragmented to integrated implementation in the broadest sense and 3) *inter-institutional cooperation* through comprehensive comparative frameworks for measuring BDEI advancement and facilitating cooperation between IN.TUNE members.

Box 4: Selection of Resources regarding Organisational Structure

CNSMDP’s *Equality Roadmap*, 2020-2022:
<https://www.culture.gouv.fr/thematiques/egalite>

MDW’s *Jump-start scholarship*:
<https://www.mdw.ac.at/172/>

[-et-diversite/documentation/Feuille-de-route-Egalite-2020-2022](#)

CNSMDP's Health team
https://www.conservatoiredeparis.fr/sites/default/files/Ecole/CNSMDP_Pole-sante-intervenants.pdf

CNSMDP's *Pact for artists and overseas culture*, 2022:
<https://www.culture.gouv.fr/fr/thematiques/culture-et-territoires/politique-en-faveur-des-outre-mer>

ESMUC's *Anti-Harrasment Protocol*, 2018:
<https://www.esmuc.cat/escola/portal-de-transparencia/igualtat-i-diversitat/protocol-antiassetjament/>

ESMUC's *Higher artistic education law*, 2024: [Ley 1/2024, de 7 de junio, por la que se regulan las enseñanzas artísticas superiores y se establece la organización y equivalencias de las enseñanzas artísticas profesionales.](#)

HdK Code of Conduct for International Student in Higher Education
<https://www.internationalstudy.nl/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Code-of-Conduct-HE-2024.pdf>

HdK Code of Conduct of Social Safety
<https://denhaagkabk.sharepoint.com/sites/SafeStudyandworkEnvironment/SitePages/Code-of-Conduct-and-Code-of-Integrity.aspx>

MDW's *Accessibility Coordinator (staff/students)*:
<https://www.mdw.ac.at/820/>

[MDW's Diversity Strategy \(2019\)](#)

MDW's *Gender Equality Plan*, 2024:
[https://www.mdw.ac.at/upload/MDWeb/ggd/downloads/gender equality plan mdw final.pdf](https://www.mdw.ac.at/upload/MDWeb/ggd/downloads/gender%20equality%20plan%20mdw%20final.pdf)

MDW's *Guideline of the Rectorate on dealing with sexual discrimination and violence at the*

NMH's *Diversity Declaration*, 2023:
<https://student.nmh.no/en/student-life/diversity-equality>

NMH's *Student Ombud*:
<https://www.uio.no/english/about/organisation/studentombud/index.html>

UNMB's *Charter*, 2025:
<https://www.unmb.ro/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Carta-UNMB-2025.pdf>

UniArts' *Equality and Non-discrimination Plan*, 2024:
<https://www.uniarts.fi/en/general-info/equality-and-non-discrimination/>

Uniarts' *Student Union's Harassment Contact Persons*:
<https://taiyo.fi/en/ylioppilaskunta/yhteystiedot/#:~:text=Harassment-%2ccontact%2c-persons%0aJohannes%20Haahti>

UAB's *Law on the Protection of the Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities*, 2002/2003/2009/2013/2018:
[https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon o zastiti prava i sloboda nacionalnih manjina.html](https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon%20o%20zastiti%20prava%20i%20sloboda%20nacionalnih%20manjina.html)

Uniarts' *Individual study arrangements and accessibility*:
<https://student.uniarts.fi/general-info/individual-study-arrangements-and-accessibility/>

UNMB's *Code of Conduct for the Prevention and Sanctioning of Antisemitic Incidents*, 2022:
<https://www.unmb.ro/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Cod-conducta-pentru-preventia-si-sanctionarea-incidentelor-antisemite.pdf>

UNMB's *Code of Ethics and University Deontology*, 2025: <https://www.unmb.ro/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Carta-UNMB-2025.pdf>

UNMB's *Gender Equality Plan*, 2024:
<https://www.unmb.ro/wp->

mdw University of Music and Performing Arts
Vienna (2023):
https://www.mdw.ac.at/upload/MDWeb/pm/downloads/guideline_sexualdiscrimination.pdf

[content/uploads/2025/04/Plan-privind-asigurarea-egalitatii-de-gen-in-UNMB.pdf](#)

5. Staff and Students / Training

Higher education in music and the arts constitutes a globally intertwined network in which institutions rely on a pronounced culture of internationalisation (Saner, Vögele, & Vessely, 2016, p. 416). “The degree of internationalisation of a university, often measured by the number of foreign students and lecturers, has become a key criterion for its assessment in recent decades” (ibid., translated by WG6), fostering a misleading conflation of diversity with internationality. While our institutions may appear “diverse” in terms of having international staff and student bodies—often reinforcing a “progressive” image and a self-conception of “multiculturality”—a closer look reveals a different picture: they remain predominantly white and middle-class.

5.1. The portrait of our society: Staff and student representation and the challenges ahead

Across institutions, international staff and students, who sometimes comprise a significant portion of the student body, constitute the main axis of “diversity”, while representation of other social groups remains minimal or undocumented.

“Ethnic, racial, and cultural minorities remain significantly underrepresented among students, faculty, and leadership.”
(NMH representative)

5.1.1. Issues in the composition of staff and students

Composition of students. While overall gender parity may appear achieved across institutions, specific fields—especially jazz and sound production, as well as creative and leadership-oriented artistic disciplines, like conducting and composition—continue to echo **male dominance** (MDW, CNSMDP, HdK, NMH). In contrast, women are overrepresented in music pedagogy and music therapy, traditionally seen as more “nurturing” and, thus, as a “feminine” field. Instrumental stereotypes also persist: women on harps and flutes, men on brass, drums, tuba, and trombone (MDW, HdK, CNSMDP). Sparse data on the enrolment of **students with disabilities** reveal their low participation (UAB, UNMB). **Students from working-class or marginalized ethnic backgrounds** remain starkly underrepresented, as pathways into elite music and arts education often presuppose early access to costly training and networks of cultural privilege (MDW, HdK, NMH, ESMUC, Uniarts, CNSMDP). Even where gender balance exists, the student body still reflects a narrow social spectrum, shaped by class and early exposure rather than open opportunity (Uniarts). Free pre-university music education and the enrolment of underprivileged and ethnic minority groups (like self-disclosed Roma students) remain rare exceptions (UAB, UNMB). For many, therefore, entry into higher music education

is less a beginning than the culmination of long-standing inequalities composed far before the first audition.

"It is common that people apply several times and spend years trying to get in. Many go to different kinds of preparatory art schools or lessons since childhood. So, the admitted students are likely to be from privileged families."
(Uniarts representative)

Composition of staff. Gender equality still moves along a narrow, binary track — a statistic that often counts only men and women, leaving genders beyond the conventional gender binary invisible. What begins as a roughly equal distribution at entry-level positions gradually shifts at higher ranks, where **men become concentrated in senior and full-time positions**, while the proportion of women steadily declines (NMH, MDW, CNSMDP, ESMUC), with rare exceptions (UNMB). This imbalance is further exacerbated by patterns of part-time employment and on-leave arrangements, which disproportionately affect women. As with students, there is a **clear pattern of gender segregation across disciplines** (e.g., more men in composition, more women in music pedagogy) that reflects deeper cultural norms that link authority, creativity, and leadership with masculinity, and care or teaching with femininity. Meanwhile, **ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity** among staff remains strikingly **sparse**, even more so than among students, with **little to no visibility of those with disabilities** (NMH). These data paint a portrait of institutions that mirror society's broader areas of neglect rather than transcending them.

"Within the binary gender equality framework, the classical leaky pipeline persists among university staff."
(MDW representative)

5.1.2. Data gaps

"The term diversity encompasses a wide range of realities, including disability, cultural and linguistic diversity, and giftedness. Institutions often lack the tools and resources to address this complexity in a coherent and sustained way."
(ESMUC representative)

Across universities, data on ethnicity, class, and gender diversity often stops at the surface, confined to binary or national categories that blur the realities of structural exclusion. This presents challenges for equality and diversity work and for its institutionalisation and legitimisation within higher education, where data-based, that is, scientifically grounded, fact-

based information gathered through both qualitative and quantitative methods, on how different social categories shape the lived realities of individuals and groups is essential.

Gender beyond binary categories. Most institutions focus on binary gender statistics, with limited data and support for non-binary, trans, and non-cisgender individuals (MDW, NMH, ESMUC, CNSMDP, UAB). In institutions that permit additional gender categories, self-reported data indicate only a marginal number of such students and staff (HdK, ESMUC).

Ethnicity, race, and class. Statistical data on ethnicity, race, and class are largely absent, as the collection of such information is neither public nor standardised across Alliance institutions. For example, at UNMB, these data are requested by the Ministry of Education primarily for statistical purposes and for allocating specific benefits (such as reserved places, scholarships, or financial aid). By contrast, Uniarts, as a public university governed by Finnish law, cannot collect or process data on race, ethnicity, or class without a clear legal basis and appropriate data-protection mechanisms. Consequently, cultural or ethnic “diversity” is often reduced to broad administrative categories such as nationality, citizenship, or “international students/staff”, limiting insight into the complex realities of structural, cultural, and interpersonal discrimination in predominantly white and culturally elitist academic environments. However, even if possible, quantifying representation, namely, counting members of underrepresented or marginalised groups, may not necessarily be advisable, particularly without proper framing, consent, or responsible handling.

Disability. Few institutions reported data on staff and students with disability (UAB, UNMB). Such data rely on voluntary self-reporting, hence potentially underestimating the number of actors with needs for additional support. Elsewhere, regulations prohibit gathering health-related data (e.g., Uniarts). Further, other data regarding underprivileged groups is nearly non-existent. For instance, only one institution reported (low) number of students from the child protection system (UNMB). This raises important questions about how to identify the nuanced needs of diverse student and staff populations and how to monitor progress in implementing BDEI principles.

“Measuring belonging: Beyond gender data, how can institutions gather and publish information on ethnicity, disability and LGBTQ+ representation to strengthen accountability and track progress?”
(NMH representative)

5.1.3. Lack of affirmative recruiting/admission practices and financial support

Students. Supported by national regulations, only a minority of institutions provide a quota for students from marginalised and sensitive groups (UAB, UNMB). Aside from these “preferential measures,” financial support systems (e.g., scholarships for students in need, fee exemptions, and housing and transportation support) have yet to be introduced or made widely available in the majority of IN.TUNE partner institutions (MDW, ESMUC).

“The skills required to pass entrance exams must largely be acquired outside the general education system, often in specialised settings. These environments are not universally accessible and frequently lack inclusive structures, creating barriers for students from diverse social and cultural backgrounds.”
(ESMUC representative)

Staff. In a few countries where national regulations mandate recruitment and integration of a certain percentage of professionals with disabilities, higher music education institutions do not meet the mandated quota (UAB, mdw, CNSMDP, HdK: “Participation Law”). Recruitment often operates through informal networks, which hampers efforts to establish gender balance in hiring practices. While staff turnover does offer notable opportunities for (some) institutional renewal, persistent gatekeeping continues to influence admissions and career progression.

5.1.4. Linguistic and administrative barriers

With some exceptions (see [subsection 5.2.2.](#)), instruction and administration are predominantly conducted in national languages, creating a steep learning curve for those not fluent in them (UNMB, UAB). Efforts to introduce English-taught courses promise greater openness but also place new demands on staff, who must first reach high levels of language proficiency before such inclusivity can take root (UNMB). At the same time, crucial information about academic and support services often circulates through informal channels rather than transparent systems, leaving newcomers—especially first-generation students, international students, and those from minority backgrounds—to navigate the maze of institutional life largely on their own. Consequently, many students struggle to identify the services they are entitled to and the formal procedures required to make use of them (UAB).

5.2. Strategic actions to advance staff and student diversity and belonging

A variety of targeted initiatives, support services for students and staff, and training and guidelines for personnel are implemented to diversify incoming talent and facilitate the advancement of underprivileged groups in higher music-level institutions.

5.2.1. Affirmative recruitment and advancement measures

Students. A minority of institutions have implemented targeted initiatives to support underrepresented or vulnerable student groups. At UNMB, the quota system reserves tuition-free, state-funded places for students with disabilities, those from the social protection system, rural areas, and the Roma community. UAB applies similar affirmative measures, additionally including migrants, asylum seekers, and members of the Serbian national minority from neighbouring countries. NMH has established a working group focused on inclusive recruitment and admission reform. Uniarts has a new initiative called the Global Music Scholarship for students coming from outside the EU/EEA.

Staff. Aside from legal frameworks like disability employment quotas (UAB, HdK, CNSMDP), several institutions have introduced targeted measures to enhance staff diversity. These include international recruitment (HdK, Uniarts), inclusive job postings and balanced recruitment committees (ESMUC), and an accessible application portal with training for inclusive hiring (MDW, starting 2027). Efforts extend beyond hiring, supporting career-long inclusivity through a mandatory 50% women's quota on university committees (MDW), mentoring, talent programs, and coaching to advance underrepresented staff (MDW, NMH, CNSMDP, HdK, Uniarts). Employees can benefit from NMH's promotion courses and mentorship initiatives, primarily for women, offering concrete paths for growth. MDW stands out with its broad range of interventions, including the *Reach Higher, Reach Beyond* program, providing guidance and networking for women, intersex, and non-binary researchers and artists.

5.2.2. Language courses and cultural integration

Some IN.TUNE partners offer language courses to support international students, including Norwegian (NMH), Finnish (Uniarts), Dutch (HdK), German (MDW), French (CNSMDP), and Catalan or Spanish (ESMUC), with options ranging from weekly classes to intensive courses at the start of the academic year. Cultural integration is also fostered through activities linked to these courses. While HdK and NMH supports inclusive communication by also using English in administration and instruction, Uniarts, in addition to Finnish and English, regularly uses Swedish as well. Uniarts further provides translation when needed, thus promoting the use of

multiple languages, ensuring that everyone can participate in university activities without having to give up their mother tongue.

5.2.3. Strengthening staff awareness and skills: training and guides

Institutions are increasingly investing in training and guidance to strengthen staff awareness, teaching practices, and competencies related to BDEI.

Pedagogical and assessment training. Some institutions stand out for their training programs aimed at developing pedagogical competencies (NMH, HdK), with HdK's mandatory course *The Artist as Teacher* serving as a particularly strong example. Continuously updated, it addresses both general teaching skills, such as teacher–student relationships, and EDI topics, including unconscious bias. Additional initiatives, such as training on cognitive bias in assessment (CNSMDP, HdK), bias-awareness guides (NMH), and workshops on recognising and reducing bias in staff recruitment (MDW), attest to continued efforts toward fairness. In MDW, the application procedure and application management (for staff) are currently being revised, including a training measure on anti-bias and establishing gender and diversity competence as a recruitment criterion.

"Trainings for teachers on topics such as stereotypes, bias, or students with mental health issues contribute to awareness and are therefore highly important."
(HdK representative)

Disability and accessibility training. Only a few institutions have established ongoing initiatives to strengthen accessibility skills and resources, such as a digital course on accessible web content (Uniarts' Accessibility Working Group). UNMB's project "Sound Windows to the World" (2024) focuses on developing adaptive educational tools (such as Braille materials), teaching methods for visually impaired students, and workshops for these students, while fostering connections with specialized schools and associations supporting people with disabilities. More commonly, institutions organize one-off events, such as programs on inclusion (UNMB), training on assistive technologies for visually impaired individuals and accessible textbook design (UAB), and workshop on neurodevelopmental disorders (CNSMDP).

Mental health-related training. Apart from dedicated psychosocial services offered by several institutions, efforts to develop staff competencies related to students' mental health remain confined to occasional one-off initiatives. These include the conference Detecting Psychological Distress in Young People (CNSMDP), a forum on prejudice and abuse in the academic music environment followed by individual counselling sessions (UNMB), and a

student-organized public discussion, held in cooperation with faculty, addressing the mental health impact of faculty blockades and advocating for greater sensitivity to such issues within the academic community (UAB).

Gender-related training. While some IN.TUNE partners have institutionalised mandatory training on gender and sexual identity (ESMUC, for both students and staff) or on preventing gender based and sexual violence (CNSMDP, for new students and teachers), others offer elective initiatives. These include MDW's workshop on respectful interaction with trans*, intersex, and non-binary individuals, and NMH's participation in a seminar series on gender balance and diversity in academia. MDW also provides a valuable tool in the form of *Fair in Words and Images*—guidelines for gender-inclusive language that outline the use of symbols such as the underscore or asterisk. These principles are now widely embedded across institutional communication.

Anti-discrimination training. Mandatory or at least regular training on BDEI topics and anti-discrimination in general is initiated in several institutions (ESMUC, Uniarts, CNSMDP, MDW, HdK). For instance, Uniarts recently offered sessions on equality, identity, (anti)racism, ableism, non-violent communication, and psychological safety in multicultural settings. In 2024, CNSMDP introduced mandatory online training on 'The fundamentals of secularism' for teachers and administrative staff. MDW developed *Tricky Moments*, a digital tool that helps educators navigate diversity-sensitive teaching by addressing structural inequalities and power dynamics through practical guidance and empowerment strategies. MDW is also working to integrate gender and diversity competencies as formal requirements across studies, research, teaching, and administration, while others focus on occasional trainings and conferences (UAB, UNMB).

5.3. Staff and students summary: confronting structural impediments

"Much work remains across the whole alliance to build a more equitable, informed, and detailed basis for addressing exclusion and discrimination."

(MDW representative)

Structural composition of higher music education is profoundly skewed toward members of privileged social groups, reflecting long-standing systemic injustices. Then, tokenism becomes a tangible risk: a number of members representing disadvantaged communities may be appointed to institutional bodies, but merely as symbolic presences, without genuine influence — thus unwittingly reinforcing the very system they were meant to transform. In the collision between broad social inequities and institutions seeking, at least within their own walls, to confront them, both critical realisations and good practices begin to crystallise. One such

insight is naming and defining race and class as central lenses through which institutional structures are understood, and recognising gender equality as a goal that embraces identities beyond the binary. Another revolves around the question of quantifying representation, which can be both necessary and problematic — aiding in identifying inequalities and tracking the progress, but also risking reducing complex identities to categories or reinforcing otherness if interpreted without sufficient context or care. In response to these challenges, this document favours a qualitative and reflective approach that examines systemic and individual (often unconscious) biases, strengthens mandatory diversity competence development, and centres the lived experiences of underrepresented groups to improve institutional resources and services. Coupled with proactive recruitment and mentorship, such measures may hold promise to turn temporary gestures into lasting commitments, thus shifting diversity from performance to practice.

Box 5: Selection of Resources regarding Staff and Students / Training

ESMUC's training on non-discrimination:
<https://www.esmuc.cat/escola/portal-de-transparencia/igualtat-i-diversitat/>

HdK's course mandatory for new teachers "The Artist as Teacher":
<https://www.koncon.nl/practice-health-well-being-at-the-royal-conservatoire/practice-health-well-being-in-the-curriculum#content>

MDW's mandatory guidelines for gender inclusive language "Fair in word and images":
<https://www.mdw.ac.at/upload/MDWeb/ggd/downloads/FairinWortundBild-Prospekt-finale-web-2017-05-04-01-01.pdf>

MDW's mentoring program for artists "Reach higher, reach beyond":
<https://www.mdw.ac.at/ggd/reachhigher-reachbeyond-kunst/>

MDW's mentoring program for teachers "Reach higher, reach beyond":
<https://www.mdw.ac.at/ggd/reachhigher-reachbeyond/>

MDW's Webtool Tricky moments:
<https://mdw.ac.at/tricky-moments/en/startpage/>

NMH's program "Pedagogical competence and merit processes": <https://ansatt.nmh.no/mitt-arbeidsforhold/velferd>

Uniarts' course on creating accessible content:
<https://uniartsfi.sharepoint.com/sites/artsi-ohjeet-tyoarkeen/SitePages/en/Saavutettavat-verkkopalvelut.aspx>

Uniarts' program "Studies in university pedagogy":
<https://uniartsfi.sharepoint.com/sites/artsi-ohjeet-tyoarkeen/SitePages/en/Taidealojen-yliopistopedagoginen-koulutus.aspx>

Uniarts' trainings on pedagogical competences:
<https://uniartsfi.sharepoint.com/sites/artsi-ohjeet-tyoarkeen/SitePages/en/tuki-opettajan-kehittymiseen.aspx>

UNMB's quota system: <https://www.unmb.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Repartizarea-locurilor-finantate-de-la-buget-pentru-anul-univ.2024-2025-romani-UE-SEE-CE.pdf>

Global Music department:
<https://www.uniarts.fi/en/units/global-music-department/>

Charting the way forward: reclaiming heritage through inclusion

“Several institutions state that their curriculum conveys high quality, prestige, and excellence. The question is: for which target groups, performance practices and musical styles does this specifically apply?”
(HdK representative)

Facing diverse political, economic, and cultural legacies as well as current social trends, IN.TUNE partners exhibit uneven development across the five Fields of Action. Some have undertaken broader transformations — revising curricula and pedagogical practices, implementing comprehensive BDEI agendas, creating dedicated institutional bodies, and offering tailored services and resources to address diverse needs. Certain institutions place special emphasis on the visibility of traditionally excluded groups, as well as on research and artistic projects grounded in BDEI values and on cultivating a culture of belonging. As BDEI must be seen as a continuous work in progress, the knowledge gained from the different gatherings of this report opens the door to mutual learning and cross-institutional inspiration.

While institutions differ in their strengths, they are united by common challenges. These often mirror broader societal tendencies—ranging from overt or covert racism and xenophobia, to patriarchy, to systemic inequities in wealth distribution that place barriers long before the gates of higher education, as well as uncertain financial resources for education in general, and for BDEI initiatives in particular. This is especially pronounced when university functioning is subordinated to a neoliberal market logic, reducing the value of higher education institutions to measurable outputs of excellence, while devaluing other essential principles such as solidarity and inclusivity. By actively promoting BDEI values and practices, higher education institutions, in this sense, seek to swim against the current—challenging structural barriers and contributing to the rectification of wider societal injustices.

However, these broader societal trends and structural barriers—within which institutions and artists must struggle to survive in a competitive market—interact synergistically with challenges that are specific to higher music and arts education. These relate to the traditional nature of the institutions themselves and the fear of losing prestige. They also include an extremely competitive culture in which everyone is pitted against one another, undermining the mental health of staff and students, as well as the particular hierarchical dynamics of close-knit communities that discourage speaking out against injustice, abuse, or discrimination, even when formal mechanisms for doing so exist.

In this context, a clear tension emerges between embracing BDEI values on one hand and preserving prestige and excellence on the other, accompanied by a pronounced worry that increasing diversity might undermine (“universal”) criteria of excellence. This ambivalence

produces a core set of issues that weave through multiple domains of practice, taking on distinct forms in each Field of Action—vague standards in entrance examinations, gaps and biases in curricula and teaching, representation shortfalls, striking homogeneity among staff and students, and gaps in data. This tension, and the fear that greater diversity threatens excellence, is, at least in part, illusory, often masking a deeper barrier: the anxiety of losing power held by a currently privileged elite. Rather than becoming an impasse, however, this ambivalence can push institutions to grapple with a pressing question: *do they aim simply to expand the canon and clarify excellence criteria, helping more talented students meet them, or to challenge the canon itself—reconsidering the notion of the ideal artist and fundamentally redefining what excellence means?*

"We must critically interrogate the institutionally valorised concept of "talent"—and, by extension, the very idea of "excellence" itself in cultural production within the arts and music."
(MDW representative)

Achieving such a fundamental transformation requires broadening the cultural frameworks that underpin higher music education. The central position of Western classical music or applying values, assessment and methods rooted in western classical music to other contexts continues to marginalize other musical traditions and forms of knowledge, narrowing the artistic horizon and failing to mirror the genre diversity that characterizes contemporary musical life. A truly inclusive curriculum must therefore integrate a wider range of musical practices, enabling institutions to reflect the pluralism of today's societies and to prepare artists to engage meaningfully within them.

This question invites institutions to reflect on where they wish to set boundaries for the concept and understanding of "diversity" they aim to implement. How they answer this question in practice will shape the strategies they need to develop to advance BDEI values and practices. The efforts undertaken so far, critically examined and discussed throughout this report, demonstrate a clear commitment to these goals and offer a promising foundation for further embedding belonging, diversity, equity, and inclusion into institutional life.

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