

YMTE Annual Conference 2026

Learning Transition and the Future of Young Musical Talent

Oslo, Norway | 30 September to 2 October 2026

How can Europe strengthen pathways for young musical talents while preserving the diversity and richness of its educational traditions?

The 2026 YMTE Conference brings together leaders, teachers, researchers and European partners to examine what high-quality pre-college music education should mean today. Across three days, participants will explore artistic excellence, student wellbeing, learning outcomes, transitions into Higher Music Education, international mobility and emerging approaches to teaching and learning.

A central part of the programme presents findings from YMTE's Erasmus+ Learning Outcomes project. Delegates will respond to the findings and help formulate a pre-college perspective for YMTE's contribution to the AEC Congress in November. The conference concludes by identifying practical priorities for future YMTE cooperation.

Conference at a glance

Day 1	Purpose quality and success What should pre-college music education enable young musicians to become artistically, personally and socially?
Day 2	Learning outcomes and European cooperation How can pre-college and Higher Music Education build a clearer shared understanding of readiness and progression?
Day 3	Future perspectives and next steps How should music education respond to AI, reflective practice and new forms of European partnership?

Contributors include Finn Schumacker, Magdalena Bork, Piret Hendrikson, Ozgur Mert Esen, Albert Sunyer, Jose Luis Miralles Bono, Afrim Shabani, and other representatives from YMTE member institutions, guests and partner organisations.

Day 1 - Wednesday 30 September

Purpose quality and success

Time	Programme
13:00-14:00	Lunch and arrival Registration, informal arrival and lunch.
14:00-14:45	Opening session Welcome to the conference and an introduction to its themes, objectives and intended outcomes.
14:45-15:30	Purpose Quality and Educational Ecosystems <i>What Are We Really Trying to Achieve?</i> Three short perspectives open a shared conversation about excellence, wellbeing, motivation, resilience and educational responsibility. The contributions are followed by table reflection on what students should know, be able to do and carry with them when they complete pre-college education.
	Contributors Magdalena Bork - Why Do We Educate Young Musical Talents Piret Hendrikson - The Teacher's Perspective Ozgur Mert Esen - Research Development and Student Growth
15:30-16:00	Coffee break
16:00-17:15	Defining Success in Pre-College Music Education <i>Moderator Ozgur Mert Esen</i> Drawing on the preceding discussions, this panel and synthesis session explores different understandings of success. Themes include excellence and wellbeing, learning outcomes and artistic individuality, preparation for conservatoire and preparation for life. The session concludes by identifying principles to carry into Day 2.
17:15	End of conference sessions
19:00	Conference dinner

Day 2 – Thursday 1 October, Morning

From learning outcomes to European cooperation



BUILDING THE BRIDGE FROM BOTH SIDES

This participatory morning presents findings from YMTE's Erasmus+ Learning Outcomes project and explores how learning outcomes can create a clearer shared language between pre-college systems and Higher Music Education. The results will inform project work and YMTE's contribution to the AEC Congress in November.

Time	Programme
09:00-09:30	Morning coffee and networking
09:30-09:45	Why are we here? The relationship between the Erasmus+ project, the YMTE consultation and the forthcoming AEC Congress.
09:45-10:10	What did the project find? An accessible presentation of the study's principal findings and proposed competence areas.
10:10-10:30	EQF and CALOHEX in plain language A concise introduction to the European frameworks that informed the project and how they may be adapted to pre-college music education.
10:30-10:40	Questions and clarification
10:40-10:50	Break
10:50-11:25	Does the study reflect our reality? <i>Group discussion 1</i> Each table records one confirmation, one reservation and one important issue that may be missing from the project findings.
11:25-11:30	Short break
11:30-12:00	What should students be ready for? <i>Group discussion 2</i> Participants consider what HME may reasonably expect, what it should not assume, and what the two sectors should develop together.
12:00-12:10	Break
12:10-12:30	Formulating messages to HME Each group formulates a small number of messages, recommendations or questions for Higher Music Education institutions.
12:30-12:50	Sharing and prioritising The conference identifies the strongest shared messages to take forward.
12:50-13:00	Conclusion and next steps How the conference input will be processed and brought into the Erasmus+ project and AEC Congress discussion.

Day 2 - Thursday 1 October, Afternoon

Supporting students and developing opportunities

Time	Programme
13:00-14:00	Lunch
14:00-14:30	Neuroscience-Informed Teaching <i>Ozgur Mert Esen</i> How can knowledge about learning, motivation and the developing brain inform teaching without reducing musical education to a scientific formula? This session offers practical perspectives on healthy, effective and sustainable musical development.
14:30-15:30	Two Perspectives on Supporting Young Talent Two contributions explore how institutions can create stronger pathways for young musicians, from local educational progression to international cooperation.
	Building European Opportunities for Young Musicians <i>Albert Sunyer</i> Mobility, teacher exchange, Music and Dance for Europe, ErasmusArts and partnership models that can open new opportunities for students and institutions.
	Preparing Students for the Next Step <i>Barratt Due</i> A Barratt Due reflection on specialised upper-secondary music studies, progression and competence expectations before entry into Higher Music Education.
15:30-15:45	Coffee break
15:45-17:00	From Consultation to Action <i>What Should YMTE Do Next?</i> Discussion groups identify challenges and possible initiatives in student development and wellbeing, mobility and international opportunities, transition to Higher Music Education, and YMTE's organisational development and sustainability. Each group proposes opportunities for projects, partnerships or working groups.
17:00	End of conference sessions and Grab a Bite
19:00	Concert with Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra and Young Philharmonic

Day 3 - Friday 2 October

Future perspectives and next steps

Time	Programme
09:00-09:30	Morning coffee and networking
09:30-10:15	Mind the Gap <i>How AI May Change Music Learning Teaching and Creativity? Jose Luis Miralles Bono</i> Artificial intelligence is beginning to influence how music is created, learned and taught. This session focuses on critical awareness and invites participants to consider educational possibilities, limitations and responsibilities beyond the use of individual AI tools. The presentation is followed by an exchange with participants.
10:15-11:00	The Reflective Studio <i>Afrim Shabani</i> How can reflection become a natural part of instrumental and vocal teaching? The session explores the studio as a space in which students learn to understand their choices, assess their development and take increasing responsibility for their learning. The presentation is followed by an exchange with participants.
11:00-12:00	Break and transfer Time to move to the Nobel Peace Center.
12:00-14:00	Concert at the Nobel Peace Center: The YMTE Wind Orchestra of 2026
14:00-15:00	Lunch
15:00-15:30	Future Partnerships Forum An opportunity to learn about emerging collaborations, partnerships, working groups and initiatives within the European pre-college music education community, including the newly established YMTE Development Working Group. Participants will explore ways to contribute to future projects, partnerships and network activities.
15:30-16:15	From Ideas to Action <i>Prioritising YMTE's Next Steps</i> Building on discussions throughout the conference, participants will identify priorities for future YMTE activity and collaboration. Through a structured prioritisation process, the conference will identify initiatives that offer the greatest value for members and the broader European music education community.
16:15-16:30	Conference Commitments and Closing The YMTE Management Board summarises the priorities emerging from the conference and outlines next steps for 2026-2027.