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ISME NATIONAL AFFILIATES: HOW TO BECOME ONE AND THE BENEFITS OF BECOMING ONE

Introduction from Richard Hallam, inaugural Chair of the ISME National Affiliate Council

We are looking to engage more with ISME members and to increase the number of ISME National Affiliates (INAs) so if you are thinking of starting an INA, here are some ideas to get you going in an excellent article by Regina Murphy (Ireland) and Polyvios Androutsos (Greece).

INAs – ISME National Affiliates. Thinking of starting an INA?

Regina Murphy, Ireland

Polyvios Androutsos, Greece

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Here are some ideas to get you going.

An ISME National Affiliate, or INA for short, is a national organisation that shares ISME's vision for music education and represents ISME at a national level. As well as supporting music education activities within its own country, an INA promotes ISME membership. In this way, an INA serves as a bridge between national and international spheres of discussion, practice and research in music education.

The opportunity to move from local to global thinking lies behind the idea of an INA. Issues can seem local in origin, but may be universal in practice. It comes as no surprise to regular ISME members that many perennial music education challenges are also found in other countries. In recent years ISME has been developing new ways of forging links between various regions and countries, and establishing networks for research and advocacy. If you are thinking about how to build your country's music education profile, then perhaps you might consider starting a national organisation in your country. There are two main approaches: the first is to get behind an existing and well-established music education organisation and seek to promote it towards becoming the national representative. The second approach is to build a new organisation that would serve as an 'umbrella body' for all the existing (and future) music education groups and individuals who are not represented

elsewhere. An umbrella organisation has the advantage of being more inclusive almost by definition. While varying points of view can be maintained among the affiliated groups at a micro level, the larger 'umbrella organisation' can address broader concerns at a macro level. In seeking to promote the status of any organisation at national level, it seems logical to think about starting with a big national campaign, garnering funds, engaging politicians and policy makers, rallying all the scholars, musicians and practitioners you know and launching straight into a big collaboration. In an ideal world, this is easy, and does work!

At a more humble and perhaps realistic level, a simpler route to INA status is to begin with a "What if...?" conversation with two or three colleagues who share a similar vision. From there, let other conversations flow. Social networking sites make all kinds of dialogue possible, but the traditional ways of meeting at events and conferences work remarkably well in setting the tone, the honesty and openness of the journey ahead. Trust is often built in face-to-face situations. Look for the natural opportunities and occasions that arise in your country and that can facilitate such conversations:

- a conference or festival that attracts a broad constituency but with a shared vision;
- an emerging need for new impetus or national campaign to counteract threats to funding, staffing, resources etc;
- a complementary national organisation that is in need of invigoration; and
- a change in government.

If setting up a new society or association, a well-conceived umbrella organisation is least likely to polarise different groups and traditions. A simple, democratic set of procedures (or constitution) needs to be circulated to all those interested. It should address matters such as guiding principles, aims, objectives, duties of officers, frequency and nature of activities, membership, finance, and arrangements for an annual general meeting. The use of wikis or Google docs can be useful in developing and sharing draft documents amongst a wide range of people in the early stages.

Let these drafts be a guide, something that all interested parties can work on and edit until a more formal stage is reached. Flexibility in the early stages through designations such as 'steering group' or 'interim committee' will help maintain a genuine spirit of openness and enable others to join in and be part of the action.

Aim to organise an event for all members at least once a year. Activities can be modest in the first stages and can build on local cultures and traditions. A regular summer school, conference or festival that brings together a wide range of music educators of all ages can provide the perfect launching pad.

Once an organisation has become an ISME group member, it can then apply for INA status. At this stage it's important to 'float' the idea amongst colleagues in the music education community and to contact the ISME office for advice. Calling on the expertise from existing INAs and from your own country's diaspora can generate vital support at this point. Distribute information to influential music educators about the progress and intentions of the organisation to date, and invite their support and participation. Many individuals welcome the opportunity to be advocates for music education through writing letters of

support or promoting the organisation within their own group, institution or community, even if they do not feel in a position to devote time in the immediate future.

You will find more details about the application procedure for becoming an INA on the ISME website (<https://www.isme.org/isme-national-affiliates>). In the meantime, remember that small conversations can lead to big ideas and powerful events. Now is a good time to spread a little ISME conversation in your country!