

A person is seen from behind, walking through a long, narrow tunnel. The walls and floor are illuminated with a strong blue light, creating a hazy, ethereal atmosphere. The person is wearing a dark top and light-colored pants. The tunnel appears to be made of metal or concrete, with visible structural elements.

ELIA Strategic focus

2020-2024

ELIA's Mission



ELIA – the European League of Institutes of the Arts – is a globally connected European network that provides a dynamic platform for exchange and development in higher arts education. It represents over 250 members in 47 countries, comprising some 300,000 students across all art disciplines.

ELIA advocates for higher arts education by empowering and creating new opportunities for its members and facilitating the exchange of good practice. ELIA realises its aims by organising events of various scope (ELIA Biennial Conference, ELIA Academy, ELIA Leadership Symposium, regional seminars, and platform events), forming cross-membership working groups to advance knowledge, participating in research projects, and producing policy papers addressing topical issues. In all of these endeavours, ELIA collaborates with partner networks around the world, bringing together the knowledge and networking capacity of many discipline-specific organisations.

ELIA values openness, inclusivity, and equal opportunity. We strive to offer members a welcoming space that encourages active engagement and knowledge exchange, regardless of how large or small a member institution is. The network is grounded on

democratic values and a transparent and accountable governance structure. Recognising the power of connection and co-operation ('connectional intelligence'), ELIA aims to inspire and enable professionals at every level in the field of higher arts education to improve their practice and create real impact.

ELIA's principal mission is to represent higher arts education across all disciplines and to be an influential voice that advocates and promotes the interests of its members throughout Europe and beyond. In placing emphasis on the value of arts education and artistic research, ELIA is dedicated to enhancing the conditions in which higher arts education can flourish, both nationally and internationally.

*Image Credit:
ELIA Academy, 2019 Stuttgart
Elia Luca Dylan Schmid*

*Cover Image Credit:
Lightosphere (2012), by M. Nef and T. Schmid
Interaction Design, Zurich University of the Arts*

Context and Activities

The objectives of ELIA – defined in our statutes – are actualised every four years in the formulation of a strategic focus. The strategic focus guides ELIA, somewhat like a compass, orienting all we do.

TRANSFORMING LEARNING AND TEACHING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

It is ELIA's prerogative to function as an experience exchange platform, connecting all members integral to teaching and learning schemes, internationalisation strategies, and political and social developments in the higher arts education sector.

PIE (ELIA's Platform for Internationalisation), enables members' international officers to meet and form effective partnerships. ELIA's advocacy activities in the European arena ensure the dissemination of crucial information to its members, and the ELIA Academy (one of three main ELIA events) has established itself as a leading European conference in the field of learning and teaching.

STRENGTHENING RESEARCH, ARTISTIC RESEARCH, AND THE THIRD CYCLE

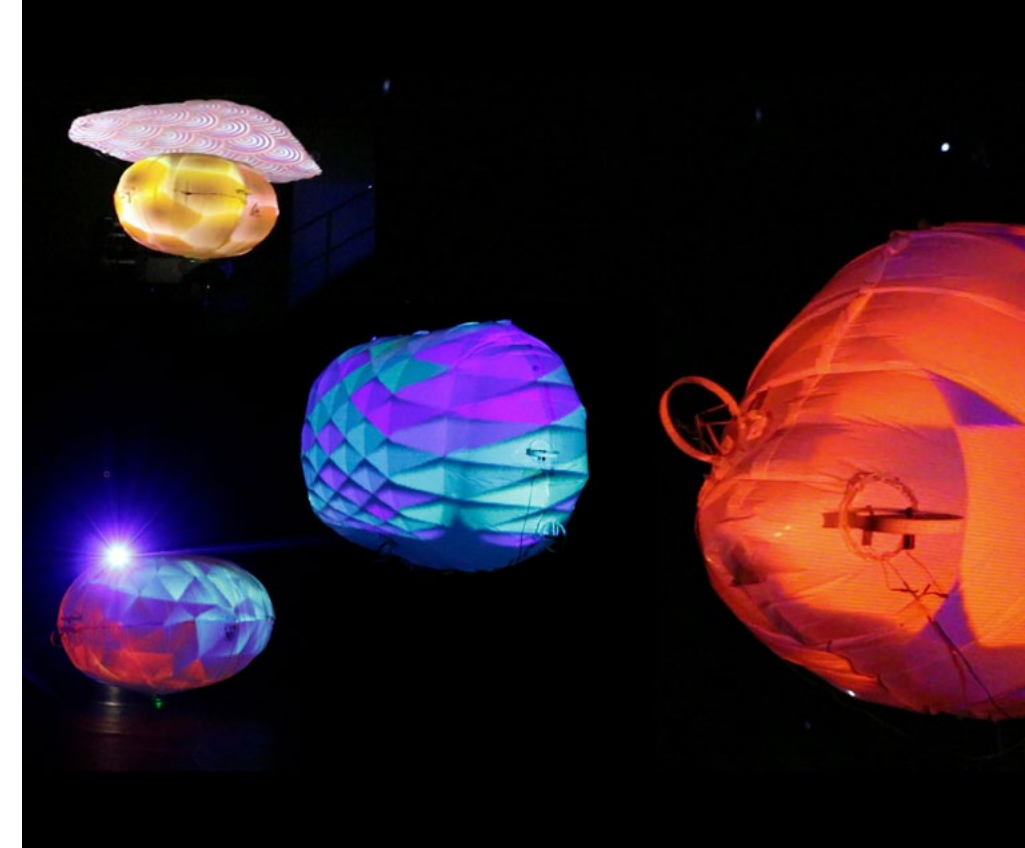
Along with artistic practice, research in the arts and through the arts is increasingly being developed in our institutions. Realising the innovative potential of artistic research, higher arts education institutions face challenges in sustaining research infrastructures and environments, promoting staff development, and establishing firm and sound frameworks for the third cycle (i.e., doctoral education).

ELIA helps members strengthen this topic with its Working Group and Artistic Research Platform, continuously advocating for its member institutions as research institutions, co-operating with other networks, and producing relevant and effective policy papers and case studies.

ADVANCING CAREERS IN THE ARTS WITH SOCIETAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT

The future careers of alumni of universities and academies of the arts are characterised by hybridity. Making a living from the arts includes the full-time artist, but increasingly also includes careers built on artistic competencies which are put into practice in all sectors of society and the economy.

ELIA is dedicated to forming a new narrative around the arts, reconceptualising artistic competence, and creating an argumentative link between decision-makers, arts students/ alumni, and the labour market. ELIA advocates the shift from STEM to STEAM, underscoring the relevance of the arts as core education. With its Working Group and Sustainable Careers Platform, ELIA establishes new efforts around this topic, including conducting research, creating surveys, and sharing experience and knowledge.



FRAMING DIGITALISATION AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES FOR THE ARTS

As with other sectors, arts and higher arts education institutions are affected by the development of new technologies: artificial intelligence, digitalisation in all aspects of professional life, and the web-based pedagogical and dissemination platforms that are continually being introduced.

We need to close the gap that continues to exist between the experimental approaches which are common across the arts and the focus on technology-centred solutions that continue to characterise both public policy and innovation management in tackling societal challenges.

ELIA plays the role of information broker, enabling the sharing of knowledge around adapting to, utilising, and exploiting new technologies in arts education, and in helping our members prepare artists for working in a rapidly advancing technological world.

EXCELLENCE THROUGH DIVERSITIES: EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND INCLUSIVITY

ELIA rejects racism and systemic discrimination on the basis of gender, sexuality, religion, race, class, ethnicity, age, and ability – to name some categories – both of which are unfortunately still prevalent in our societies, and thus also influence our education institutions. Visible effects of this are the relative homogeneity of the student populations in our arts schools, the oftentimes conservative hiring strategies for our faculties, a lack of diversity in senior management positions, and the glass ceiling that still effectively exists within higher arts education institutions in 2020.

ELIA raises awareness within the sector and beyond regarding the complex and intersectional aspects of anti-discrimination. ELIA aims to show itself as an example of best practice, taking on an outreach function to other networks as well. ELIA organises events on this topic and webinars for specific professional groups at universities, and has created a peer-learning platform.

STRENGTHENING HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

As ELIA increases student participation in our events and governance, it also recognises the huge pressures students face today and the need for more supportive structures in arts education. International studies show that student health issues have increased over the past few years, and ELIA members have reported to us that the amount of time and energy both leadership and staff spend on managing health issues amongst their student body and the teaching staff is also increasing rapidly.

ELIA is placing this topic on its agenda in the coming years to enable joint learning, understanding, and sharing of best practice amongst our membership.

*Image Credit:
NeuNow 2014, Glasgow
Aljoša Rebolj*



RAISING A VOICE FOR DEMOCRACY AND PARTICIPATORY FUTURES

Art's freedom to express, challenge, and remake the status quo is being threatened in many parts of the world and must be defended. In many European countries, universities are affected by nationalist populism, especially universities in the arts.

As a connector, ELIA's role is to champion the freedom of art and research, and the crucial role higher arts education institutions must take on in ensuring the continuance of democracies both within and beyond Europe. ELIA connects and supports open dialogue between university leaders in countries not governed by democracies as well as those in more democratic regions, helping them to share strategies for achieving freedom of art and speech and to stay critical at all times.

ENSURING LIFE-LONG ARTS EDUCATION FOR ALL

The value of arts education for human development and health is documented in countless studies; yet arts education for children in schools as well as adult arts education within a life-long learning context is being cut substantially across many European countries. Inclusive practices demand that we reconsider not only who can access education opportunities in the arts, but how and at what stages in their life, so that as many barriers as possible are removed.

ELIA acts as a strong advocate for maintaining arts education within the curricula of primary and secondary schools. The ELIA Working Group Arts Education, in connection with other networks, will produce a policy paper during this next phase, which forms the basis of long-term advocacy in this respect.



**ACHIEVING ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY
AND THE GREEN SHIFT**

The 2005 World Summit on Social Development highlights economic viability, social equity, and environmental protection as the three pillars that have served as a common ground for sustainability standards and certification systems in recent years. Currently, the environmental challenge overshadows the other sustainability challenges, as a changed climate is irreversible and represents a serious global threat for future generations.

The best way universities can create momentum for sustainable ecological development is through collaboration and the sharing of good practice on environmental sustainability in arts education and research. ELIA will address this challenge through its own practice (organising green events) and programming, and by promoting the sharing of best practice.

**MANAGING CHANGING PARADIGMS
POST-COVID-19**

Without doubt, the global crisis in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic will affect every dimension of our living together in the coming years. As with other institutions, those involved in higher arts education will face changing paradigms across a number of topics: internationalisation (travel restrictions), priorities in health policy, economic and political values and practices, communication, and the art world itself.

Considering such sweeping changes at a time (May 2020) when most higher arts education institutions worldwide are closed and/or operating online, a situation which will remain for weeks or months to come, we can only stipulate that ELIA is committed to addressing these paradigmatic shifts and helping its members to adapt for the future.

