

ESCOM Regional Development Initiative

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The following text is by Richard Parncutt with support from Renee Timmers and the restricted Executive Council of ESCOM. Comments are welcome.

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ESCOM aims to promote:

- high-quality research in the cognitive sciences of music (as defined on the ESCOM homepage) in all European countries, regions and languages;
- practical applications in areas such as education, performance, medicine, and therapy;
- a European spirit of unity in diversity as well as intercontinental collaboration; and
- the careers of young researchers, who represent the future of our discipline.

To achieve these goals, we will combine the following three strategies:

1. **Regional meetings.** We encourage ESCOM members to organize regional meetings, usually in regional languages (or in more than one language). On this basis, regional societies may also be formed (optional). Regional languages are useful for local interdisciplinary communication (e.g. with practically oriented disciplines such as music education, performance, therapy, or medicine) and for local publicity (media).
2. **Bilingualism.** We promote bilingualism and plurilingualism among young researchers so they can present their research in both their native language and English (if different). Long-term spinoffs include improved international mobility and intercultural competence for individuals, and an enhanced feeling of common identity and belonging for European researchers.
3. **English.** We wish to find and/or promote the best European research in the cognitive sciences of music and have it published in English, either our journal *Musicae Scientiae* (in regular and special issues) or elsewhere. The English language allows journals to approach expert reviewers from all over the world, improving the quality of the final product. If points 1 and 2 increase the amount of relevant European research and hence the rate of submission to the best international journals, those journals can then expect a higher standard from submissions. In this way, we can simultaneously promote the quality and the quantity of published research.

Each European region is unique. The relative importance of the above three points differs across regions as follows:

1. **Regional meetings.** Two European regions, Germany and the UK, currently have regular music psychology meetings in the local language. Our main aim is to promote meetings of this kind in other regions, to improve communication and collaboration between researchers within those regions. Each country or region can develop in its own way. For example, Scandinavian and Baltic researchers may either use English as a lingua franca or plan bilingual or multilingual events.
2. **Bilingualism.** For a successful academic career, young researchers need to be mobile, and it helps to be able to communicate across linguistic and cultural boundaries. The use of

English as a lingua franca for high-quality research gives English speakers an unfair advantage, but they may also experience the disadvantage of being unable to communicate in other languages and access research reports in those languages. Monolingualism is usually more prevalent in larger countries (UK, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Poland). ESCOM addresses this problem by promoting the participation of young researchers in projects that cross national and linguistic borders, allowing them to improve their research and communication skills simultaneously.

3. **English.** We encourage regional societies to develop internal quality control mechanisms to identify the most promising research projects in their region and encourage their best researchers to publish in English in international peer-reviewed journals. Germany and UK are special cases due to the impressive success of their national societies, journals, and low-carbon conferences; they can be an inspiration for other large countries, regions and language groups including France, Spain, Italy and Poland. All European PhD students should ideally have the option of writing their PhD thesis in English and/or as a collection of published papers, in the interest of their future careers; if this option is not available at a given university, ESCOM could attempt to intervene on behalf of a student or group of students.

Given this background, the main criteria for nomination of ESCOM regional representatives are:

1. All ESCOM regional representatives should be paid-up ESCOM members.
2. In countries or regions without a strong local society or conference tradition, the ESCOM representative should have
 - a. good contacts with other researchers in that region;
 - b. good organizational and interpersonal skills; and
 - c. at least one good international peer-reviewed publication in the area of cognitive sciences of music.

Further points about regional meetings:

- ESCOM may support the first conference in a new region e.g. by offering awards for the best presentations in given categories.
- Music psychologists may meet within existing conferences in related areas such as music education or musicology, or organize music-psychological sessions within such conferences.
- ESCOM regional representatives agree to encourage participants at regional meetings to join ESCOM, for example by distributing our flyer to all participants.