

## Prologue

The Netherlands, as you probably know, is a very flat country. Its people live four metres below sea level. Other people in Europe live at altitudes higher than 2000 metres above sea level on hills and mountains. In the north of Europe, in Finland, there are innumerable lakes. In the South, there are even some sorts of deserts. Europe is very diverse, not only geographically but also culturally. And of course there is a direct link between geographical and cultural diversity in Europe.

Cultural diversity in Europe has led to a large number of different musical traditions. In Europe, many people sing in all kinds of choirs, play their instruments in countless orchestras, bands and music groups. The genres vary from ancient to modern music, in various classical, pop, jazz and world music styles. Over the ages all this music in Europe has been constantly fed by new influences from outside Europe.

Music traditions hardly ever die out. Sometimes they seem to fade but most of the time they morph into a new one or mingle with other music traditions. We are proud that in our periods as Chairmen of the EMC, the project ExTra! Exchange Traditions has come to life and grown into what it is now. Through the expertise of its participants, ExTra! provides insight into the liveliness and power of musical traditions in Europe. ExTra! shows that though diversity in Europe may sometimes be a weakness, in the case of music it is a strength. It is our hope and expectation that gaining an insight into the liveliness of European music traditions will become a tradition in itself!

**Wouter Turkenburg**

*EMC Chairman 2006–2008*

**Timo Klemettinen**

*EMC Chairman since 2008*

