



POLICY STATEMENT

The European Commission's response to the resolution of the European Parliament on the EU framework for the social and professional situation of artists

April 2024

Endorsed by



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We applaud the current Commission for prioritising the improvement of working conditions in the cultural and creative sectors (CCSs). We see a timely opportunity to address this matter comprehensively by developing a new strategic framework for culture and integrating social conditionality thoughtfully into the EU's future funding programmes. To sustain Europe's vibrant and diverse cultural sectors, we advocate for well-informed, bold, and innovative measures.

The issue of working conditions in the cultural and creative sectors (CCSs) has become increasingly important at the European Union level since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. This was caused by the unfolding workforce crisis in CCSs and the exacerbation of long-standing issues in cultural labour, including the lack of social protection, the atypical nature of work, a high rate of self-employment, and more. Despite the various measures adopted by national governments, the situation of the creative workforce remains challenging in Europe and globally¹. Consequently, further decisive and effective policy and legislative initiatives are required.

IETM, along with other key performing arts networks, has been actively advocating for a unified approach by the EU to promote and ensure more sustainable and fair working conditions for artists and cultural professionals. We were among the initiators and key advocates of the so-called European Framework for artists' working conditions. The European Parliament called for the establishment of such a framework through two own-initiative reports by its Members issued in [2020](#) and [2021](#), as well as in the [resolution](#) adopted by the Parliament in November 2023.

The latter called for adopting a legislative directive on decent working conditions in CCSs; enhancing exchange of best practices among Member States; and introducing social conditionality of the EU funding for culture².

Earlier this year, the European Commission sent its [response](#) to the Parliament's resolution. We welcome the current Commission's intention to maintain the issue of working conditions in CCSs as part of its agenda. Particularly, we stress the importance of:

¹ UNESCO, Empowering creativity: implementing the UNESCO 1980 Recommendation Concerning the Status of the Artist; 5th global consultation, 2023, p. 64

² In line with the Parliament's proposal, social conditionality would be 'covering among others, the obligation to remunerate CCS professionals fairly for their work, including time devoted to research, rehearsals, preparation and application retroactively, taking in consideration the specificities of the applicants and the CCS as a whole, as well as paying due attention to not disproportionately increasing administrative burdens'.

1. Reinforcing the social conditionality in the next cycle of Union programmes

The Commission responded that it *'takes into account the elements raised in the report regarding social conditionality, while respecting the legal base of the Creative Europe and the Horizon Europe programmes and in particular the provisions of the Financial Regulation'*. While it is clear there is no room for profound changes in the current programmes in this regard, the Commission emphasised that it *'will consider reinforcing the social conditionality in the next cycle of Union programmes'*.

We greatly appreciate this consideration and fully support linking EU funding programmes for culture to social conditionality. [Perform Europe](#), Creative Europe's flagship project, co-led by IETM along with Circostrada, the European Dance Development Network (EDN), the European Festivals Association (EFA), and Pearle*, has been instrumental in promoting and testing fair work practices through cross-border projects in the performing arts sector. While Perform Europe has showcased many innovative initiatives, it has also underscored the urgent need within the European art sector to establish a common understanding of fair practices, or social conditionality, amidst the complex and diverse landscape of the 40 Creative Europe countries.

Therefore, to effectively implement social conditionality through EU culture funds, it is essential to acknowledge and address the complexity of this issue at early stages.

First of all, the implementation of social conditionality requires a substantial increase in programme budgets, clearly allocated to meeting fairer contract conditions rather than merely increasing the number of funded projects. This must align with the ambition of greening the Creative Europe programme, resonating with the aspirations of many cultural organisations to make their practices and operations more ecologically sustainable. Typically, this involves adopting slower working models, less focus on producing more output, and prioritising the well-being of the workforce. These measures require allocating additional financial resources.

Furthermore, there is a need for clear common definitions and indicators of such notions as fair remuneration and decent working conditions, which could be effectively applied across borders. The European Commission intends *'to map the existing definitions of cultural and creative sector professionals across the Member States with a view to contributing to a common understanding to be reflected in EU policy-making and cultural statistics'*. We urge the Commission to broaden this ambition by fostering a shared understanding of fair working practices within CCSs. This encompasses understanding what artistic and cultural labour entails, and a shared vision on fair practice contract models, equitable pay policies, fee calculation methodologies, and more.

Finally, to effectively implement social conditionality and elevate it beyond voluntary application, an efficient monitoring system is essential. An effective implementation can also be stimulated through raising awareness about the importance and urgency of fair treatment for cultural workers - across all sectors of the creative ecosystem and at every level of policymaking.

Therefore, the groundwork for transitioning the EU's funding programmes for culture towards social conditionality should start promptly, well in advance of the onset of negotiations for the new Multiannual Financial Framework. These preparatory activities may encompass research initiatives, pilot projects within the EU to assess fair remuneration and innovative social conditionality models, pan-European sectoral dialogues, and awareness-raising initiatives like conferences and workshops. Leveraging existing cross-border initiatives aimed at promoting fair practices in transnational contexts, such as Perform Europe, alongside some Creative Europe platforms and projects, can offer valuable insights and guidance during this preparatory phase.

2. Undertaking an inclusive process of shaping the new strategic framework for culture

In its response document, the European Commission stressed: *'regarding the invitation by the European Parliament to update the New European Agenda for Culture and include the improvement of cultural and creative sector living and working conditions as a priority area, the Commission will review how priorities outlined in this Agenda would need to be updated, in line with the Council Resolution on the EU Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026 and following up on the European Court of recommendations in its Special Report No 8/20203 . The Commission will consider the working conditions of artists and cultural and creative sector professionals as part of such review.'*

We support the Commission's intention to incorporate the issue of working conditions in CCSs into the development of the new strategic framework for culture. As far back as 2021, we [advocated](#) for a much-needed shift away from solely emphasising the potential spill-overs culture can offer for society and the economy, towards crafting sustainable, fair, and inclusive strategies for enhancing the cultural and creative ecosystem itself.

Additionally, we urge the Commission to ensure that the design of the new strategic framework for culture is as open and inclusive as possible, involving extensive consultation with a diverse array of cultural sector stakeholders who represent the interests of CCSs at the EU level. This approach aligns with the Commission's recognition of the value of cultural networks (point 9 of the response document), which we enthusiastically support.

We appreciate the European Commission's commitment to addressing working conditions in the cultural and creative sectors (CCSs). This presents a timely opportunity to develop a new strategic framework for culture, integrating social conditionality into future EU funding programmes. As international networks representing a large and vibrant European sector - the performing arts, we are eager to share our expertise, experience, and visions on how the EU can lead the inclusive and fair transformation of cultural and creative sectors.

IETM – International network for contemporary performing arts is one of the oldest and largest international cultural networks, representing the voice of over 500 performing arts organisations and individual professionals working in the contemporary performing arts worldwide. Their mission is to advocate the value of the arts and culture and empower performing arts professionals through access to international connections, knowledge and a dynamic forum for exchange. They also work to stimulate the quality, development and context of the contemporary performing arts, in all their diversity.

Circostrada is the European Network for Contemporary Circus and Outdoor Arts. It was created in 2003 and comprises over 155 members from more than 45 countries. Its core mission is to further the development, empowerment, and recognition of these fields at European and international level. Circostrada supports contemporary circus and outdoor arts professionals by implementing a wide range of capacity-building initiatives, encouraging professional exchange, gathering information and resources, as well as fostering continuous training, innovation and knowledge sharing.

European Dance Development Network – EDN, established as a legal association of dancehouses in 2009, is a network of dance development organisations based in Europe working towards a sustainable, progressive and equitable dance sector. In 2024, EDN counts 52 member organisations in 28 European countries. It advocates for better working conditions in contemporary dance, raises awareness about the relevance of dance for societies, and co-creates occasions for sharing and exchange by organising workshops, meetings and trainings designed by and for dance sector professionals.

The European Festivals Association (EFA) is a community dedicated to the arts, the artists and the audiences. EFA's main role is to connect festival makers to inform, inspire and enrich the festival landscape in Europe and beyond. In this perspective, EFA is a festivals' service and a knowledge and training provider, developing a WE-story of people and organisations, bridging the distance between festivals and all kinds of stakeholders around festival making.