

Summary of Outcomes

Action Group on Working Conditions in the Cultural and Creative Sectors (Culture Action Europe, 2023)

The pandemic exacerbated the difficult financial situation faced by many artists and cultural creators. According to a report from early 2021, revenues in the cultural and creative sectors plunged by 31,2% in 2020 compared to 2019. It was hit even harder than tourism, which lost 27% of its income. As a result of the pandemic, in the last few years, many professionals have been leaving the sector and institutions altogether. With them, accumulated talent, knowledge, and skills have been permanently lost, and the cultural and creative ecosystem has been profoundly weakened.

Against this backdrop, calls have gained wide support to strengthen the working conditions of artists and cultural workers and, with them, the sector's resilience. The idea, supported by several key decision-makers at the national and European levels, is to tackle this topic in a coordinated and coherent fashion. Culture Action Europe has been at the forefront of these calls from civil society.

Following up on the study done by Panteia and the EENC in 2020 as part of the Council Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022, supported by expert consultations with cultural and network stakeholders organised by Culture Action Europe, in March 2021, Culture Action Europe published a background analysis on the situation of artists and cultural workers and the post-COVID-19 cultural recovery in the European Union, commissioned by the European Parliament. The study provided an overview of key characteristics of artists' and cultural workers' status across Europe, their working conditions, precariousness, and career paths, outlining the justification for specific policy solutions and providing a mapping of key challenges for a European framework for working conditions in the cultural and creative sectors.

The EU can take measures to ensure that its Member States coordinate their economic, social, and employment policies at the EU level, and put in place coherent and complementary policies that can protect artists and cultural workers. In 2017, for example, the proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights reaffirmed the EU's commitment to ensuring better living and working conditions throughout the bloc, as recalled in 2021 by the Porto Social Summit. In the meantime, the EU has been spearheading work on modernising labour legislation, including platform work and minimum wage across the Union. It has also adapted its competition law framework in order to tear down old barriers and allow collective bargaining for self-employed workers, such as artists and creatives.

The European Union enjoys little competence in the field of culture, which is still deemed to be at the core of national sovereignty and preserved by rigorous respect for the principle of subsidiarity that inspires the very foundation of the EU. However, the topic of working conditions in the cultural and creative sectors proves to be a hybrid one, at the crossroads of cultural and social policy. It is a promising testing ground for creative public policy solutions at the EU level, which refute the one-size-fits-all tendency but offer the opportunity for the EU to step up to its game and

upgrade its policies with a view to break down silos and set out shared and coherent rules to safeguard a specific sector.

In the run-up to the preparation of the European Parliament joint report on the “Framework for the social and professional situation of artists and workers in the cultural and creative sectors,” the CAE members part of the Working Group on working conditions in the CCS, representative of the diversity of the network, met four times (25 May, 20 June, 7 July, 8 September 2023) to monitor the progress in the political debate, in light of the contacts with the involved MEPs and political groups, and to propose amendments to improve the text.

Below is a recap of the main profiles highlighted:

- Reaffirm that cultural work is work and, as such, must be fairly remunerated;
- Make sure that all EU Member States adopt a national Status of the Artist;
- Create an obligation at the EU level to do so, by means of a Directive, identifying minimum standards to be transposed in each and every national legislation;
- Identify other profiles of coordination of national legislations that can take a different legal form, e.g. a Decision;
- The definition of artist should stay as open and inclusive as possible, and not strictly ‘professionalised’;
- Call on the European Commission to include a review of national public spending for culture across Member States, as well as of cultural employment/work arrangements, training opportunities and career development paths in culture, in the dataset of the European Semester, the cycle of economic, fiscal, labour and social policy coordination within the EU;
- Call on the Member States to set a minimum spending target of at least 2% of government public expenditure in the cultural and creative sectors, coherent with the contribution of culture to the EU’s GDP;
- Call on the Commission to effectively monitor breaches of artistic freedom as part of the annual rule of law reports;
- The EU-funded projects must pave the way for the inclusion of fair work principles and practices in the CCS, including through the simplification of procedures and by reporting hours of research and application preparation against the funded budget, when granted;
- Concern (expressed by some members) that existing consultation fora representing the social partners, for example in the live performance sector, are not overridden by legislative action and are to keep a central role in upholding fair working conditions in the CCS;
- Need to address all types of functions, roles and capacities within the CCS, ranging from creative input to technical support, as well as project management, including research, curatorial activities, communication, and audience development;
- Note that the CCS shows a very high dependency rate from clients, and are defined by hierarchal relationships and above-average exposure to intimidation and discrimination;
- Call on the Commission and the Member States to propose measures to contrast sexual harassment and other forms of inappropriate behaviour;
- Raise awareness about the fragile mental health linked to the precarious working conditions in the CCS.



The European Parliament report with recommendations to the Commission on an EU framework for the social and professional situation of artists and workers in the cultural and creative sectors is available here: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2023-0304_EN.html.