

Towards the EU Artists' Charter: a Sector Blueprint

Public launch



5 October 2026

Read the paper
‘Towards the EU Artists’ Charter:
a Sector Blueprint’
[here](#)

- **Precarious working conditions** in the cultural and creative sectors are recognised at the EU level in many reports, studies, experts groups + in the [European Parliament's 2023 resolution](#): **call for the Directive on decent working conditions**
- But! **Limited EU competence**: many key decisions on working conditions remain with Member States
- The format of a Charter as a compromise: 'to outline fundamental principles, guidance, and commitments for fair working conditions in the sectors, and increase compliance and accountability, particularly by recipients of EU funding for culture'

Process

- Goal: to **inform the development of the European Commission's EU Artists' Charter** announced in the [Culture Compass](#) and expected in Q2 2027
- Culture Action Europe's [Action Group on Working Conditions](#) co-facilitated together with Platform ACCT
- **Four online meetings**: 30 April, 3 June, 9 July, 15 September 2026
- **40 representatives** of cultural networks and organisations from Culture Action Europe's membership

Nature of the Charter

- **The Charter is not a law and cannot create legally binding obligations**
- But it can operate on a voluntary basis: parties may endorse it and commit to certain principles/commitments
- The Blueprint proposes that the Charter be built on the principle of **voluntary endorsement**

Whom does the Charter address?

Artists and workers in the cultural and creative sectors

- Across all cultural and creative sectors and occupations
- Regardless of nationality or place of residence
- At every stage of a professional career
- Regardless of employment status, contractual arrangement or income pattern (including employees, self-employed and solo self-employed persons, freelancers, intermittent and project-based workers, mixed statuses)
- Whether working full-time, part-time, or alongside work in other sectors
- Whether working individually, collectively or through an organisation of any size or legal form
- Working in EU Member States, candidate countries and countries covered by relevant EU funding or cooperation frameworks, including cross-border activities

Who can endorse the Charter?

- 1) national public authorities;
- 2) regional and local public authorities;
- 3) funders;
- 4) organisations, institutions and other entities employing or engaging artists and workers in the cultural and creative sectors;
- 5) sector representative bodies;
- 6) education and training bodies in the cultural and creative sectors;
- 7) artists and workers in the cultural and creative sectors.

Tiered system: entities are differentiated into large, medium-sized, small and micro in accordance with [Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC](#)

Commitments of national public authorities: example

1. Support adequate, stable and sustained public investment in culture, recognising that chronic underfunding is a structural driver of unfair working conditions throughout the sector.
6. Review the coverage of national social protection systems for artists and workers in the cultural and creative sectors across different and mixed employment statuses, identify the gaps and take measures to close them. [...]
13. Simplify and accelerate the issuance of Portable Document A1 for artists and workers in the cultural and creative sectors who undertake cross-border activity [...]
15. Support the full implementation and uptake of the digitalisation of social security coordination systems, including the Electronic Exchange of Social Security Information (EESSI) and the European Social Security Pass (ESSPASS) [...]

FAQ: How to engage national governments?

- The Charter will initially be adopted as a Commission document, but we suggest that the Council (=EU institution representing national governments) also politically endorse it through Council Recommendations
- Precedent with the European Charter for Researchers (first adopted by the [Commission in 2005](#); in 2023, an updated Researchers' Charter was ultimately incorporated into a [Council Recommendation](#))
- [2019 Council Recommendation on access to social protection for workers and the self-employed](#), which Member States have already endorsed

Commitments of funders: example

1. Design funding programmes, co-financing rules, timelines and eligibility criteria in a way that enables recipients to pay workers fairly, comply with applicable labour and social obligations, and organise work under fair, safe and inclusive conditions in practice, including for parents, carers, and people with disabilities.
2. Ensure that funding programmes provide for fair remuneration of all work involved, including research, preparation, creation, rehearsal, production and delivery, alongside professional expenses, insurance and adequate social protection. [...]
4. Design funding programmes that support long-term artistic, cultural and creative practice, research, and experimentation, and help organisations and initiatives in the cultural and creative sectors last beyond a single project cycle, including through core or operating support [...]

Commitments of organisations, institutions and other entities employing or engaging artists and workers in the cultural and creative sectors: example

1. Engage artists and workers in the cultural and creative sectors under clear, written and accessible contracts specifying, where relevant, remuneration, working time or expected workload, preparation and rehearsal time, rights transferred or licensed, duration, permitted uses, territorial scope, cancellation terms, liability, and the respective responsibilities of the parties.
4. Respect applicable law, collective agreements, sectoral scales and standard rates where they exist. [...]
5. Refrain from abusive contractual practices, including unjustified buy-out clauses, blanket transfers of rights, vague future-use clauses, unilateral changes to terms, or provisions that shift disproportionate legal, financial or reputational risk onto the weaker party.

Commitments of artists and workers in the cultural and creative sectors: example

2. Where possible, avoid accepting unpaid or manifestly unfairly paid professional work, and support collective efforts to challenge such practices as a structural problem.
3. Respect contractual commitments and professional standards, and act honestly and transparently towards employers, funders, and other engaging entities.
5. Apply the principles of the Charter in their own professional relationships, including when engaging collaborators, assistants or other artists.
9. Be transparent about the use of artificial intelligence in their work.

Pillar 1: Fair Pay

1. Fair Remuneration
2. Prohibition of Unpaid Professional Work
3. Collective Bargaining and Representation
4. Transparency in Remuneration and Budgeting

Pillar 2: Fair Share

1. Fair Participation in Value
2. Copyright, Related Rights and Fair Contractual Practices
3. Rights in the Context of Artificial Intelligence and Other Emerging Technologies

Pillar 3: Fair system

8. Social Protection
9. Occupational Health and Safety
10. Combating Undeclared and Hidden Work
11. Fair Taxation
12. Mobility
13. Artistic Freedom
14. Non-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion
15. Artists and Workers with Disability
16. Training, Skills and Career Development

On the one hand, the Charter should not be overly bureaucratic or burdensome, so as not to discourage organisations from endorsing it, particularly smaller ones.

On the other hand, if endorsing parties sign up to the Charter without any accountability, it's unlikely to be effective in practice.

- Accountability depends on the category and size of an endorsing party
- **Endorsement process:** public declaration on the Charter e-portal -> Charter Implementation Statement for large and medium entities; Charter checklist of small and micro -> periodic review
- Periodic review: **large:** independent external evaluation; **medium:** self-assessment or peer review; **small and micro:** self-assessment based on the Charter checklist
- For reference - cost of external evaluation: HR Excellence in Research (Researchers' Charter) is run by DG RTD, €7M over 4 years, so ~€1.75M annually ([contract](#))

Infrastructure around the Charter

- An **e-portal** managed by the Commission with the list of endorsers and their public declarations
- The Commission should develop and provide **templates** and methodologies for the key documents and processes
- The Commission should convene and coordinate an **EU Artists' Charter Forum** to support the implementation, monitoring, and periodic review of the Charter
- The Charter should be **reviewed every five years**
- **Notification mechanism** on the e-portal for raising concerns that could be, where relevant, redirected to national competent authorities

Towards the EU Artists' Charter: a Sector Blueprint



Endorsement system: shared principles, differentiated commitments and accountability

National authorities

better enforcement, cross-border coordination, policy reform

Artists & CCS workers

rights awareness, professional conduct

Sector representative bodies

fair practice tools, advocacy, sectoral monitoring

16 shared principles

Fair Pay

Fair Share

Fair System

Regional & local authorities

local implementation, access to services, territorial support

Funders

funding schemes enabling decent working conditions

Education & training bodies

rights in curricula, career development

Employers & other engaging parties

fair contracts, pay transparency, safe working environments

A differentiated pathway for each endorsing party

- commitments
- endorsement procedures
- accountability mechanisms
- oversight measures

Social conditionality

- a separate chapter applying to beneficiaries of AgoraEU
- access to EU funding linked to compliance with social standards

Social conditionality

- Award of EU funding under AgoraEU is conditional on beneficiaries complying with social standards and ensuring decent working conditions
- Social obligation should be reflected in the AgoraEU legal base + obligations in the Model Grant Agreement, building on existing Article 6
- Selected applicants commit after the award decision and upon signature of the grant arrangement. Beneficiaries report on their progress as part of regular reporting, without requiring separate deliverables
- Verification: EACEA provides risk-based checks as part of their regular monitoring at the moment of signing, at the end of the action, and after any complaint
- Sanctions ladder under the Financial Regulation: warning, corrective plan, payment suspension, reduction, termination, etc.

Final considerations

- Resources for the Charter implementation. **Social conditionality cannot be imposed without matched funding!**
- The Charter **cannot become a punitive** instrument
- The Blueprint's resemblance to an official document is intentional. The idea is to set expectations and show what could be possible if the official Charter matched the urgency of the situation and the sector's ambition
- The Charter Blueprint preserves the **autonomy of social partners** and collective agreements
- Dissemination: **lead by example**
- A **first step**: test the Charter, learn what works and use that experience to support our continued push for legally binding measures

Towards the EU Artists' Charter: a Sector Blueprint



Endorsement system: shared principles, differentiated commitments and accountability

National authorities

better enforcement, cross-border coordination, policy reform

Artists & CCS workers

rights awareness, professional conduct

Sector representative bodies

fair practice tools, advocacy, sectoral monitoring

16 shared principles

Fair Pay

Fair Share

Fair System

Regional & local authorities

local implementation, access to services, territorial support

Funders

funding schemes enabling decent working conditions

Education & training bodies

rights in curricula, career development

Employers & other engaging parties

fair contracts, pay transparency, safe working environments

A differentiated pathway for each endorsing party

- commitments
- endorsement procedures
- accountability mechanisms
- oversight measures

Social conditionality

- a separate chapter applying to beneficiaries of AgoraEU
- access to EU funding linked to compliance with social standards

FAQ: Frequently Asked Questions



These responses are based on the approach proposed in Culture Action Europe's Sector Blueprint for the EU Artists' Charter and reflect our vision of how the Charter could work in practice. They should not be understood as pre-empting the European Commission's official position or the final design of the Charter.

FAQ: How can I sign the Charter?

Right now, you cannot sign the Charter. What we have developed is not the official EU Artists' Charter, it is a Sector Blueprint — our proposal for what the Charter could look like and how it could work in practice.

We suggest waiting until around mid-2027, when the European Commission is expected to publish the official EU Artists' Charter, and then looking at the final text and the endorsement procedure that the Commission puts in place.

Once that happens, we strongly encourage organisations to follow the process, endorse the Charter where possible, and lead by example.

FAQ: How does the Blueprint relate to the work of social partners?

Our Blueprint fully respects the autonomy of social partners and existing collective agreements.

Article 3(3) explicitly says that the principles and commitments of the Charter are to be implemented in accordance with applicable Union and national law, collective agreements, and the competences and mandates of the endorsing parties.

It also makes clear that ‘endorsement of this Charter does not override applicable collective agreements or authorise unilateral changes to their terms.

FAQ: Will the Charter change existing rules?

No. The Charter is not legally binding, so it does not change existing legislation, contractual obligations or collective agreements.

Its role is different. Article 3(3) says that the Charter can encourage additional protections, including on matters or for people an agreement does not cover.

The Charter complements existing legal frameworks and collective bargaining systems. It may also serve as a reference for legislation, public policy, procurement, funding conditions, model contracts, sector codes and collective bargaining.

The Charter model is voluntary. Organisations endorse the Charter and commit themselves to working towards its principles. The idea is therefore not to create another layer of regulation, but to establish a common benchmark for what decent working conditions in the cultural and creative sectors should look like.

FAQ: Will I have to complete a lot of paperwork?



The idea is precisely to make the process as simple as possible. We suggest digitalising the endorsement and reporting process, for example through an e-portal.

For micro organisations, which make up the overwhelming majority of the cultural sector, the process could be based on a simple checklist. You would tick the boxes for the commitments you already meet and, where something is not currently possible, briefly explain why.

Larger organisations could provide fuller Charter implementation reports, but there are few large organisations in the cultural sector, and they normally have more administrative capacity.

Most importantly, the reporting should function as a form of self-assessment rather than inspection. Periodically, you look at what you are already doing well, where there may still be gaps, and what you could improve. One of the main purposes of the Charter is to gradually change organisational culture by providing a benchmark and practical recommendations.

When social conditionality is linked to EU funding, our proposal is also to integrate it into existing reporting procedures rather than creating a parallel reporting system.

FAQ: What happens if someone does not follow their commitments?

Since the Charter would be voluntary and not legally binding, not fulfilling a commitment would not automatically lead to a fine or another legal sanction.

If an organisation cannot meet a particular commitment, it should be able to explain why and show what it could do to improve. The point is not to punish organisations, but to create a process through which they regularly look at their practices and work towards better standards.

But If an organisation repeatedly disregards the principles of the Charter and makes no effort to address problems, there should be a possibility to revoke its endorsement.

There is also a separate question when the recipient of AgoraEU funding does not comply. In that case, the EU Financial Regulation provides a ladder of proportionate measures for breaches of funding obligations: suspension of payments, a proportionate reduction of the grant, termination of the grant agreement and, where relevant, recovery of amounts already paid.

The recipient should have the right to be heard, to submit remedial information, and to appeal against any decision (Article 29(4)).

FAQ: I am a self-employed creative professional. Will I actually feel any difference?



The Charter will not change your situation overnight. For an individual professional, the Charter could make a difference mainly through the organisations you work with. If venues, festivals, cultural institutions, funders and other organisations endorse the Charter, they would be encouraged to follow common standards on issues such as fair remuneration, contracts, working conditions, transparency, professional development and respect for social rights.

The change should be reflected in the conditions under which organisations engage with you.

The Charter can also help by establishing a common reference point. If you are negotiating a contract or discussing working conditions, you can point to an agreed European benchmark and say: these are the standards that organisations in our sector are expected to work towards.

It is still a voluntary instrument, so we should not pretend that it will solve every problem immediately. But if enough organisations, funders and public authorities use it consistently, it can gradually raise expectations and make better working practices standard across the sector.

FAQ: How to engage national governments?

The Charter is the Commission's initiative, but we also want to build Member State ownership around it. For example, the European Charter for Researchers was first [adopted by the Commission](#) in 2005, and was later incorporated into a [Council Recommendation in 2023](#). We would like to explore a similar (but, hopefully, faster) pathway for the EU Artists' Charter.

We can also build on the [2019 Council Recommendation on access to social protection for workers and the self-employed](#), which Member States have already endorsed. It gives us a strong basis for framing the Artists Charter as a sector-specific continuation of existing commitments.

Another option would be for the EU to encourage partner countries to endorse the Charter when concluding cultural cooperation agreements. Creative Europe offers a precedent. Associated countries' participation in the MEDIA strand requires aligning national law with the Audiovisual Media Services Directive. The Charter is different because it would not be legally binding, but this model could still provide inspiration.