

Press release

A Sustainable Future for Music Authors: Insights from ECSA's 2025 Creators Conference

25 March 2025, Brussels, Belgium

Today, the European Composer and Songwriter Alliance (ECSA) held the seventh edition of its Creators Conference under the patronage of the European Parliament. Hosted by Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) Bogdan Andrzej Zdrojewski (EPP – Poland) and Emma Rafowicz (S&D – France) at the European Parliament in Brussels, ECSA's flagship event brought together music creators, EU policy makers and stakeholders across the cultural and creative sectors to discuss the challenges affecting music creators' livelihoods and shape the future of the music sector.

The conference opened with a welcoming speech from MEP Bogdan Andrzej Zdrojewski, who stated: "This Creators Conference provides a unique opportunity to listen to the challenges faced by music creators when it comes to AI, music streaming and contracts. If we want to make concrete steps to improve the working conditions of artists and creators, it is essential to foster a democratic debate about their needs and ensure that the recommendations of the European Parliament lead to concrete actions by the European Commission".

MEP Emma Rafowicz further underlined the challenges facing authors for the use of their works by AI companies, stating: "One of the crucial issues the European Parliament must tackle is AI and its impact on authors' rights. We must guarantee that the three principles of transparency, consent, and fair remuneration for creators are at the heart of the upcoming AI strategy for the cultural and creative industries."

Following this, Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport Glenn Micallef delivered a video keynote in which he stressed the importance of implementing the AI Act in a fair manner and ensuring that the voice of music creators is heard across all policy initiatives related to copyright, generative AI and streaming.

The first panel was dedicated to **copyright and generative AI, providing an overview of the main challenges posed by AI training to music authors, creators and others rightsholders** in the context of the current EU legal framework. Dominick Luquer (Secretary General of the International Federation of Actors) presented the key concerns for authors, performers and creative workers, and discussed the ongoing Code of Practice consultation and current template summary presented by the AI Office. Prof. Alexandra Bensamoun (*Université Paris-Saclay*) elaborated on her report on the implementation of the AI Act, and Dr. Julia Niebler-Kaiser (Deputy General Counsel of GEMA) introduced the legal action taken by GEMA against Suno and OpenAI for using copyright protected works without a license. The panel also explored potential alternative licensing and remuneration strategies for music creators and other rightsholders. Moderator Helienne Lindvall (Songwriter and ECSA President) emphasised the need for decisive action, stating: "We need to uphold authors' rights and provide legal certainty by making sure the AI Act is implemented in a way that allows authors and other rightsholders to fully exercise their rights".

Former MEP Ibán García del Banco underlined the urgent need to build a fairer streaming ecosystem and a sustainable future for music creators by acting on the recommendations of the European Parliament's report on "Cultural diversity and the conditions for authors in the European music streaming market".

Following this, Aafke Romeijn (Songwriter and ECSA Board member) moderated a panel addressing **the challenges faced by composers and songwriters in the current music streaming market** with panellists Ferid Lakhdar (Composer, Vice President of ZAiKs), Chris Cooke (Co-founder and Main Director of Complete Music Update) and Tobias Stenkjær

(Songwriter, Chair of Danish Popular Auteurs and Chair of ECSA's Music Streaming Working Group). As pointed out by Tobias Stenkjær: "The European Commission should build a dialogue between all music stakeholders to work on concrete measures such as the improvement of authors' identification on streaming services, transparency of algorithms and playlists, and the combat of fraud."

The last panel of the conference, moderated by Anselm Kreuzer (Composer, ECSA Board Member) was **dedicated to harmful contractual practices facing audiovisual composers**, in particular the detrimental effect of buyout contracts and "pseudo-publishing" practices. He introduced ECSA's recently published report on contractual practices and stated: "We need policy solutions as well as a common understanding in the audiovisual industry to ensure that composers are not deprived from a long-term remuneration in proportion to the use of their works." Panellist Emmanuelle Du Chalard (Head of Copyright Unit, DG CNECT, European Commission) presented the European Commission's learnings through its study on contracts¹, which will be published soon. Adriana Moscoso del Prado, General Director of GESAC, emphasised the collective management organisations' role in tackling buyouts and other unfair contractual practices, and said: "Buyout clauses form a fundamental problem for authors' rights. We look forward to work together with European policy makers to promote fairness and ensure fair and proportionate remuneration for creators". Additionally, she referred to last month's letter to Executive Vice-President Virkkunen and Commissioner Micallef, signed by 41 MEPs, including Bogdan Andrzej Zdrojewski and Emma Rafowicz. The letter, which highlighted the need to ensure fairness and protect Europe's creative strength and cultural diversity, called to address the long-standing power imbalance between creators and global platforms and the need for legislative action against buyouts imposed by VOD platforms.

In her concluding remarks, Helienne Lindvall reaffirmed ECSA's commitment to advocate for sustainable industry practices, and emphasised the vital role of EU policymakers in championing the needs and priorities of music authors, while supporting the growth and sustainability of the whole music sector.

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The European Composer and Songwriter Alliance (ECSA) represents over 30,000 professional composers and songwriters in 28 European countries. With 59 member organisations across Europe, the Alliance speaks for the interests of music creators of art and classical music (contemporary), film and audiovisual music, as well as popular music.

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¹ The study aims at examining contractual practices used in the creative sectors to transfer copyright and related rights from authors, performers and producers to contractual counterparts exploiting these rights.