

**ECSA's conference on "Authors' Rights and Music Streaming in the Age of AI"  
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*Maison européenne des Auteurs et des Compositeurs (MEDAA)*

Opening keynote by Helienne Lindvall, President of the European Composer and Songwriter Alliance (ECSA)

Good afternoon to every one of you, whether you're here in this room or joining us online.

It is a pleasure to welcome you all here today and I want to thank MEDAA, *la Maison européenne des Auteurs et des Compositeurs*, for hosting today's ECSA conference on "Authors' Rights and Music Streaming in the Age of AI".

I am Helienne Lindvall, songwriter and the President of ECSA, the European Composer and Songwriter Alliance. ECSA represents 57 professional music authors' associations and more than 30,000 composers across 29 European countries.

I am honoured to be here today with fellow composers, songwriters, policymakers, and representatives from Europe's cultural and creative sectors.

I am particularly grateful to welcome Henna Virkkunen, the Executive Vice-President for Technological Sovereignty, Security, and Democracy at the European Commission. Ms. Virkkunen – thank you again for joining us. We are all looking forward to hearing your opening remarks in just a moment.

I also want to thank three Members of the European Parliament for their participation: Emma Rafowicz, co-rapporteur on the Agora EU programme, Axel Voss, rapporteur on the recent report on copyright and generative AI, and Helder Sousa Silva, who will draft the forthcoming report on the Cultural and creative sectors in the age of AI.

We would also like to express our deepest gratitude to all the speakers who will contribute their time and expertise today. And remember that this conference would not be possible without the support of the Creative Europe programme.

So, Authors' Rights and Music Streaming in the Age of AI?

Let me first take a step back to 2016. Ten years ago, the European Commission President, Jean-Claude Juncker, called artists and creators "Europe's crown jewels". He said their works should be protected and they should be paid fairly.

Three years later, the EU adopted the Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market.

We applauded it, for enshrining appropriate and proportionate remuneration, for increasing transparency in contracts, and for strengthening author's rights on content-sharing platforms.

Seven years on, where do we stand?

Well, the truth is that the principle of appropriate and proportionate remuneration is still too often circumvented in practice, in particular through buyout practices, but also when it comes to other online exploitation, such as streaming.

And then came generative AI.

Adopted at a time when generative AI was barely existing, the Directive does not mention AI anywhere. But it does include text and data mining exceptions, designed to help universities and researchers, discover new trends and gaining new knowledge. Supposedly with minimal harm to authors and other rightholders.

The reality? When not simply ignoring EU rules, global AI companies have exploited those exceptions far beyond their intended purpose. They've scraped and used all our works without consent, without transparency, and without remuneration. The harm to music authors isn't minimal—it's maximal. AI-generated content now imitates and substitutes us.

Some say "You could have opted out." But here's the truth: AI companies scraped everything – looting the entire history of musical works – before we had a fair chance to opt out and even know how to opt out.

To quote Baroness Beeban Kidron, the director of *Bridget Jones The Edge of Reason*: "Should shopkeepers have to opt out of shoplifters? Should victims of violence have to opt out of attacks? Should those who use the internet for banking have to opt out of fraud? I struggle to think of another situation where someone protected by law must proactively wrap it around themselves on an individual basis."

And for a songwriter like me—working with co-writers, different CMOs, publishers, and labels—opting out is practically impossible. And even if it was possible, we would be naive to believe it would be respected. How would we even know if it were, when there is no transparency?

The AI Act's implementation hasn't helped. Its transparency rules are weak. Trade secrets protect massive theft. Imagine a fast-food manufacturer who had stolen all the ingredients that went into their products, refusing to reveal what the ingredients are or where they came from, calling it a "trade secret". Then demanding it should be up to the farmers to prove it was their produce that was stolen. That's what we're dealing with.

Coca Cola may have a secret recipe, but it still has to display what went into each bottle, and pay its suppliers.

It shouldn't be up to creators to prove AI companies used our works. They should be required to get our consent and to be transparent. Or we should presume — correctly — that they already scraped the entire web.

Yes, a few licensing deals have been signed in the past year — between a couple of major labels and AI companies, usually after litigation, and mostly in the US. But we know next to nothing about the details of those deal – or whether composers and songwriters will benefit in any way, despite it being our works that have been stolen and exploited.

Licensing shouldn't only be available to those with the muscle to sue. In Europe, where we claim to cherish our artists and cultural diversity, survival of the fittest cannot be the answer.

AI companies have ingested ALL the music available online. It makes no sense that only the most powerful get a license and get paid, when they only supplied a fraction of the ingredients.

And let me be clear: we are not against AI. It can be a helpful tool in our workflow as creators. We are simply against unlicensed AI.

Generative AI companies must act ethically. They must work **with** us—not profit from our work without consent and at our expense. That's the only way to rebuild trust between creators and AI companies.

Currently, the AI landscape is like the Wild West, and AI startups that want to act ethically cannot compete when there is a shop next door selling stolen goods.

Let's be honest, the current framework is misinterpreted and applied far beyond its original purpose. It has created a high level of uncertainty that only benefits global generative AI companies to the detriment of creators.

We cannot wait for courts to decide policy. We cannot rely on opaque deals between big corporations where the money rarely trickles down to creators. This isn't the time for sticking plasters on a wooden leg.

It's time for policymakers to be bold.

The good news: not only the Pope but also many EU Member States and the European Parliament are showing the way.

The recent Voss report on Copyright and Generative AI recognizes that AI systems rely massively on protected works—exploited without authorization or compensation.

It recommends:

- Full transparency for AI training, including a rebuttable presumption of use for any AI service operating in the EU
- A new legislative initiative to clarify licensing rules and establish a functioning market

We fully support this. We need a framework that:

1. Enables fair remuneration for creators
2. Ensures EU copyright law applies to all services operating in the EU.
3. Addresses the substitution and dilution of human creation by AI output
4. Ensures collective management can deliver appropriate and proportionate remuneration to all creators—big and small

The Parliament has also insisted that digital platforms must act against AI fraud and manipulation. And it is not the first time – the European Parliament's report on music streaming, adopted in 2024, already did so, with many other recommendations to improve the identification of creators on music streaming platforms and ensure more transparency in algorithms and recommendation systems, as well as when it comes to AI generated music.

For composers and songwriters, streaming fraud through AI is a critical issue. In April, Deezer reported that 75,000 fully AI-generated tracks are uploaded daily to the platform – that's 44% of all uploads.

In March, a man in the US pleaded guilty to defrauding streaming platforms with AI-generated tracks, generating millions in royalties. Fraudsters impersonate real artists, upload fake songs to their profiles, and steal their royalties.

This isn't just an economic issue. It's ethical – it's a massive violation of moral rights and personal data. And it threatens citizens' trust in the authenticity of digital content.

That's one of the many reasons why we welcome MEPs Rafowicz and Kuhnke's draft report on AgoraEU, which rightly prioritizes human creativity over AI-generated works. We also warmly welcome this proposal for a dedicated music strand that can address the concrete challenges and structural imbalances impacting the sector, such as increasing market concentration, artistic freedom, fair remuneration and the growing dominance of digital service providers. Today, 26 organisations from across the European music sector published a statement to support this draft report and encourage all MEPs to give the music sector the support it deserves.

Now, let me conclude: Our plea today is simple:

The promise made to Europe's crown jewels in 2016 remains unfulfilled:

The exceptions designed to help researchers and generate information now fuel billion-dollar companies that exploit us. The transparency we were promised is hidden behind trade secrets. The licensing market that should exist is reserved for those who can afford the most expensive lawyers in the US.

This must change.

We call on European policymakers to act with courage. With the European Parliament, we call for an additional legal framework, one that can finally uphold the key principles of transparency, consent and remuneration and encourage a well-functioning licensing market.

This is not about adding more regulation. This is to rebalance a framework that is fundamentally flawed, far from its intended purpose and Europe's most fundamental values.

Europe must decide: will it stand with its creators, or stand by while our works are taken without consent?

Let us become once again Europe's crown jewels. Please. Let's make this true.

Thank you.

And it is now my pleasure to invite Henna Virkkunen, Executive Vice-President for Tech Sovereignty, Security, and Democracy at the European Commission, to join the stage for her opening remarks.