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A Blueprint For A Fairer Deal For Europe's Cultural Workers

Culture Action Europe has produced a draft setting out what an ambitious EU Artists' Charter on working conditions in the CCS could look like. The text essentially invites the European Commission to develop an ambitious charter in light of the sector's urgent precarity. The Commission is expected to present the Artists' Charter in the second quarter of 2027.

The idea behind the paper, [Towards the EU Artists' Charter: A Sector Blueprint](#) by CAE has a short official history. A [discussion paper](#) in September 2025, developed with the Creative FLIP project, first floated a charter on working conditions in the cultural sector. The Commission then adopted its [Culture Compass for Europe](#) on 12 November 2025, committing to propose an Artists' Charter in consultation with social partners and stakeholders. The charter is expected to set out principles, guidance and commitments for fair working conditions and to strengthen compliance, particularly among recipients of EU cultural funding.

CAE's Action Group on Working Conditions, co-facilitated with Platform ACCT (the Dutch platform on working conditions in the CCS), produced the draft after four online meetings between April and September 2026 involving 40 representatives of cultural organisations and European networks.

The blueprint applies to artists and cultural workers regardless of employment status: salaried employees, freelancers, the self-employed, intermittent and project-based workers, and those who combine several of these. It does not seek to replace

national labour law, collective agreements, social dialogue or existing enforcement bodies. The EU's competence over working conditions is limited, and social protection and taxation remain largely national.

3F's: fair pay, fair share, fair system

Everything rests on three principles.

- Fair pay covers remuneration that reflects preparation and rehearsal time, a bar on unpaid professional work, collective bargaining rights and pay transparency. Workers on permanent, fixed-term, temporary, part-time, remote, trainee and self-employed contracts should enjoy equal conditions.
- Fair share covers a stake in the value a work generates, including copyright and rights in the age of artificial intelligence. That includes consent before a voice or likeness is simulated and a right not to use AI.
- Fair system covers social protection against illness, old age, workplace accidents and job loss, health and safety, taxation that reflects actual labour situations, mobility, artistic freedom, non-discrimination and training.

The charter is expected to remain non-binding. Instead of creating new legal obligations, the draft relies on endorsement by seven types of actors: national and regional public authorities, funders, employers, sector representative bodies, education institutions, and artists and workers themselves. Each group would take on commitments suited to its role and capacity. Accountability is deliberately light: small organisations would complete a checklist; larger ones would file implementation statements. A public online portal would list who has signed up.

Voluntary for most, binding for EU money

The exception is EU funding. Under the draft's "social conditionality", recipients of money from the proposed AgoraEU programme (the successor to the current Creative Europe programme) would have to budget for fair pay, avoid relying on unpaid work, and engage people under declared, correctly classified arrangements. Breaches could trigger a warning, suspension of payments, a reduced EU contribution or termination of the grant. CAE notes that this mechanism would only work if written into AgoraEU's legal base, which is still

under negotiation, and then into individual grant agreements.

CAE frames its blueprint as an essential first step toward something stronger — eventually, many in the sector hope for an EU directive on decent working conditions in the cultural sector. For now the calculation is that soft law can acquire hard edges through the Commission's own funding rules and through broad political endorsement.

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