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Labour Research Reveals Vulnerable Workforce in CCS across the EU

The European Labour Authority has uncovered hidden quantitative and qualitative figures about the continent's cultural and creative sectors. Spanning six sub-sectors, including music, performing arts & visual arts, it paints a landscape of precariousness and informal economic activity.

CCS are characterised by project-based financing, fragmented value chains, high levels of self-employment and non-standard forms of work. Precarious working conditions and low levels of collective representation make it one of the least organised forms of work, in contrast to its social value as seen during the pandemic. This is the first and main conclusion of a study published by the European Labour Authority on the working conditions of artists and creative workers in the EU.

The study titled "[Employment characteristics and undeclared work in the cultural and creative sectors](#)" paints a stark picture of systemic failure, as in many cases cultural workers appear to be left without basic protections such as health insurance and pension benefits. In addition, digital platforms and cross-border mobility complicate their professional environment, with many artists operating in legal and financial grey areas.

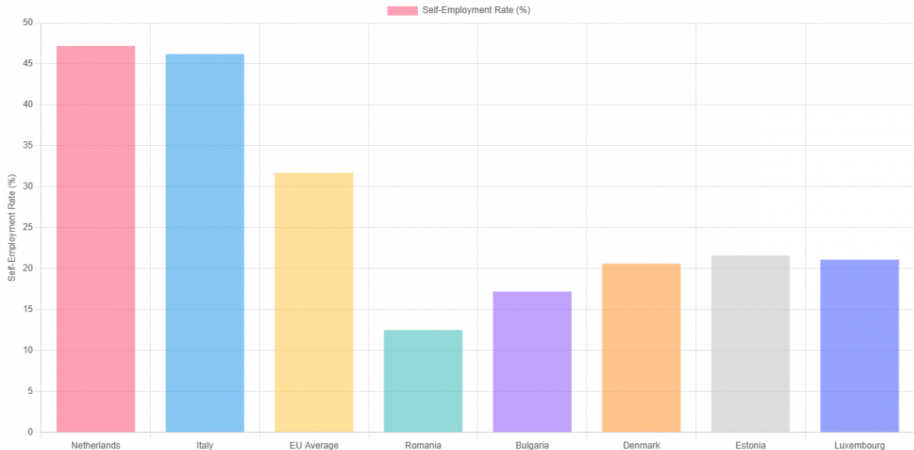
The study used a multi-method approach to investigate undeclared work in Europe's cultural and creative sectors, combining desk research with semi-structured interviews with stakeholders in the EU cultural sector. It also included in-depth case studies in five countries: Belgium (Flanders), France, Germany, Latvia, and Portugal.

Overall, the cultural sector in the EU employs around 7.7 million

people, representing 3.8% of total employment. However, only 76.5% work full-time, compared to an EU average of 81.5% in the wider economy, with particularly low rates in the Netherlands, Austria, and Germany. In addition, almost a third of CCS workers are self-employed, compared to only 13.8% in other sectors of the economy. Artists face particularly difficult circumstances, with only 73.3% having a permanent job, according to Eurostat.

Cultural Employment Statistics in EU

Self-Employment Rates in Cultural and Creative Sectors (2022)

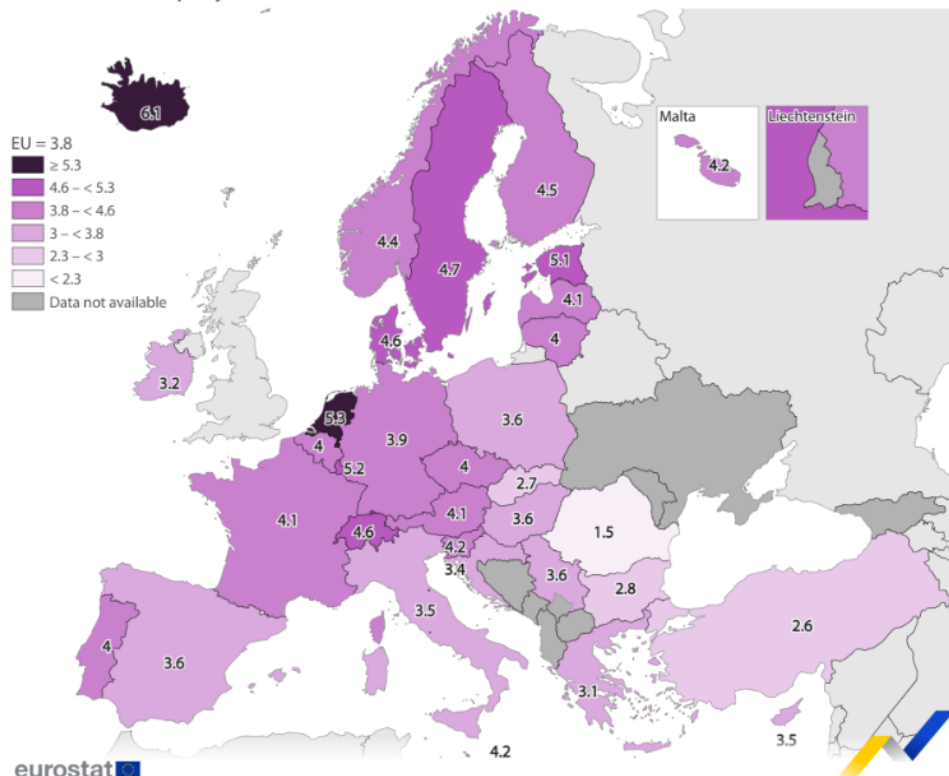


ELA, estimates that there should be around 1.2 million cultural enterprises in the EU in 2020, accounting for 5.2% of businesses within the non-financial business economy. There are significant regional disparities, with higher employment in the sector in western and northern Member States than in eastern and southern ones. Germany and France, together with the Netherlands, Spain and Italy, were home to 62.6% of all artists and writers in the EU.

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Cultural employment, 2023

(% of total employment)



The most recent statistics available show that 1.7 million artists and writers were active in the EU, accounting for 22% of

employment in the sector. 'Artists and writers' is measured by Eurostat by means of selecting two specific cultural occupations e.g. authors, journalists, and linguists and creative and performing artists. About 46% of artists are self-employed, which is significantly higher than the proportion of self-employed in all sectors of the CCS (31,7%) and in the total employment (13,8%).

Employment in the CCS is also characterised by higher participation rates of women and younger people, and higher levels of education than in the general economy. But there is also considerable diversity between the different sub-sectors (e.g. literature, music, visual arts, performing arts, audiovisual and cultural heritage); Performers and artists for example, face particularly complex challenges when working across EU borders. Issues such as double taxation, misclassification of workers and inconsistent national regulations create additional barriers. Non-EU nationals working without proper permits add another layer of complexity to this already nuanced employment ecosystem.



42%

Screenwriters with Second Job



34%

Directors with Second Job



55.1%

Directors with No Production in 5 Years



49.4%

Screenwriters with No Production in 5 Years



80-90%

Temporary Contract Workers



30%

Self-Employed in Cultural Sectors



A pivotal workshop in Brussels in May 2024 brought together labour inspectorates, social partners, and EU institutions to identify the root causes of undeclared work, develop prevention strategies and create comprehensive policy recommendations. In the September report, the ELA focuses on establishing a standardised framework across Member States.

The approach focuses on facilitating an ongoing dialogue between national enforcement authorities to create consistent definitions and job classifications within the cultural industries — a long-standing problem in the EU. By developing a robust data collection mechanism, experts aim to enable comparative analysis between different countries and cultural sub-sectors.

That should include a particular focus on identifying and documenting current patterns of undeclared work in emerging creative sectors such as video games, sports and the emerging digital creative industries. The proposed strategy also targets less visible forms of undeclared work, including cultural activities organised by casual employers and transactions facilitated by digital platforms.

The rise of digital platforms has further complicated the employment landscape. Professionals increasingly rely on crowdfunding and online platforms, often operating in legal grey areas that circumvent traditional tax and labour regulations.

ELA believes that these recommendations could significantly improve working conditions for artists and creative professionals by developing targeted prevention strategies and creating more transparent employment mechanisms. However, experts acknowledge that successful implementation will require sustained cooperation between government agencies, cultural institutions and creative professionals across the European Union.

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