

All CCS and Cross-sectoral All Europe
Countries Austria Belgium Cyprus Czechia Denmark Finland Germany Greece Lithuania Malta Poland Spain
Sweden Working Conditions Cross- Sectoral Policies and Governance

New Report Shows Progress on Access to Social Protection for Artists

CREATIVESUNITE

Co-funded by
the European Union

Artists may get a supplementary €1623 pension in Finland, a €1038 Creative Downtime Payment in Lithuania or nothing at all in Greece. Cultural and social-affairs officials from 21 member-states worked together at the Commission's initiative in a workshop that should happen more than once, says CreativeFLIP's Expert Joost Heinsius, who was there. Read on.

The workshop happened once and should happen again in three years.

There is a "wide variation across the Member States regarding approaches to ensure an effective and adequate coverage of social protection for artists and cultural workers" reads the new report, following the European Commission's 'Mutual learning on inclusive social protection for artists and creative workers', with the participation of 21 member-states and CCS representatives.

CU talked with CreativeFLIP's Expert Joost Heinsius*, who participated in the workshop and presented the This is how we

work-tool from CreativesUnite, which was received as "very useful".

J.H.: "It is the first time that the two different departments for employment and culture, the Commission's DG Empl and DG EAC respectively, united forces to co-organise something like a workshop on social security for artists and this is important. The same holds true at national level, as the participants from 21 countries who worked together in the workshop for one and a half days, were also representing ministries from both the cultural and the social affairs. It is a step forward that all these people are now informed and on the same page".

CU: What could be the one takeaway from the workshop?

J.H.: "If there is one key takeaway, is that the workshop happened once but should not stop here. Its valuable outcomes will be tested during the next few years and the European Commission should re-organise it in three years to ensure moving forward".

The workshop served as part of the Commission's 13-points response (February 2024) to the legislative initiative brought by European Parliament's EMPL and CULT Committees for an EU framework for the social and professional situation of artists and workers in the cultural and creative sectors (November 2023).

CU: Could artists and cultural workers in the EU have expectations for a "Directive on decent working conditions" for CCS professionals, as it was described in the resolution of the European Parliament?

J.H.: "The Commission at this point does not aim for such a framework. They could have an open directive such as the Minimum Wage Directive but they don't want to make an exception for the CCS as a sector.

After all, the EU does not have real competence on social security and member states would not allow that. The Minimum Wage Directive is already questioned in courts as not balanced and even though it is designed as an open directive, which means that the countries themselves are to decide how much the minimum wage will be. For example, Denmark considers the Minimum Wage Directive as out of the EU competence. Sweden, Italy and Denmark don't have a minimum wage.

Apart from that, as portrayed in the report, member-states' different backgrounds, histories and systems, make it almost impossible to have a unified framework".

From no CCS-specific provisions to an artist's pension of EUR 1623 per month

According to the report, about 7.8 million CCS professionals in the EU, almost 4% of the total workforce, experience fragmented careers, irregular income patterns, and hybrid employment status. "More than 70% of CCS professionals disagreed with the statement that they have sufficient access to social protection", reads the report.

J.H.: "Currently there are three different approaches of countries towards CCS professionals' access to social protection. Firstly, there are countries with a general insurance system, who do not want a special system for artists. Secondly, there are cases where the general system is adapted to CCS. Thirdly, there are countries with more specific provisions for social protection for CCS, however sometimes only for groups of artists and not for all cultural workers".

Austria and Germany have extensive CCS protection schemes, while there are countries with no CCS-specific provisions at all (as the workshop was a work in progress, not all countries are included in the following table - click on image to enlarge).

Table 1: Classification of a selection of national systems regarding social protection for CCS professionals in the EU

Category	Main characteristics	Example EU Member States
General insurance systems	No specific provisions for CCS professionals	CY, CZ, DK, EL, MT, SE
General systems with adaptations for CCS professionals	Specific adaptations for CCS professionals within the general systems and special schemes within the general system	BG, HR, EE, FR, HU, IE, IT, LV, LU, NL, PT, RO, SK, SI
Special social protection schemes for CCS professionals	Extensive protection schemes for CCS professionals recognizing the nature of the work in the sector and the artist's status	AT, DE

Source: Own elaboration based on Galián et al. 2021; Muszyński, 2025.

The perfect system does not exist. It's more about putting pressure on governments to improve.

J. H.: "The fact that 21 of 27 member-states were there, participating in the workshop, is a big step already. There is no perfect system yet. Sometimes a system works well or partially well. It's more about putting pressure on different governments to improve than to look for the ideal situation that does not exist".

Best-practices highlighted in the report include the following (not included in table above):

- Artists in Finland have access to a maximum amount of EUR 1623 per month as a full artist's pension. Pension award criteria include peer reviews on the artistic merits of applicants and their financial situation.

- Lithuanian artists may be granted EUR 1038 per month for a maximum of three months, as a Creative Downtime Payment, when "due to objective circumstances beyond their control, they temporarily lack the conditions necessary for artistic creation and the dissemination of their work".

- In Spain, self-employed artists with annual earnings of less than EUR 3000 are considered of low income and as such, eligible to reduced contributions.

- Germany's Artists' Social Insurance Fund is financed by 50% through a state subsidy and entities using/distributing art, such as publishers, press agencies, theatres or radio and television stations.

- In Belgium, a 'Certificate of Working in the Arts', provides entitlement to the funding and social protection schemes, such as art worker allowances, a special copyright tax scheme, and an adjusted pension plan.

- In Poland, a state-funded subsidy for social and health insurance contributions, aims to bring art professionals up to the level of the minimum wage.

Co-funded by
the European Union