



the global trade body for independent music publishers

Brussels Music House Annual Event 26 February 2026

Summary Report

Opening and Welcome

IMPF held its first Annual Event at the recently launched Brussels Music House (BMH) on February 26, bringing together voices from across Europe's music ecosystem for a high-level sector-wide conversation in the Belgian capital.

With Europe's music sector being built on creativity, collaboration and interdependence - from songwriters and performers to publishers, labels, live venues and digital platforms - the event explored how these diverse roles and business models form a single, interconnected value chain, and why European funding and policy frameworks must reflect this reality.

Attendees were formally welcomed by Annette Barrett, President of IMPF, emphasising the purpose of BMH as a space for "connection, dialogue, and partnership, where ideas can be exchanged, alliances strengthened and the voice of our sector heard clearly and constructively."

The opening address was delivered by Gilles Pelayo, Head of Unit, Culture (EACEA.B.1) at the European Commission's Education and Culture Executive Agency. Pelayo reflected on the origins and purpose of Brussels Music House, recalling the successful 'soft launch' in July 2025 and returning to the metaphor of the House as a shared structure enabling creativity, belonging, and sustainability.

He described the European music ecosystem as "a very interconnected ecosystem [of] songwriters and composers, publishers, record companies, CMOs, live representatives, and digital services," each with distinct roles but shared foundations.

Pelayo underscored how Creative Europe has become a backbone for strengthening the music ecosystem's cross-border capacity, deliberately designing its culture strand to reinforce cooperation, circulation, and shared professional standards across Europe's diverse markets. He highlighted the central role of European networks and platforms, many of which were present in the room, noting that they "reinforce capacity across borders" and translate EU ambitions into concrete, sector-driven outcomes.

He also pointed to the emergence of structured working groups, singling out Brussels Music House's data working group as an early example of how the sector can collectively address shared challenges through evidence-building and systematic collaboration. This work, he stressed, aligns closely with the Commission's Culture Compass, particularly its proposal for a European cultural data hub, which aims to consolidate reliable, comparable cultural data across member states. In his view, BMH's early achievements demonstrate how independent, sector-led initiatives can complement EU-level frameworks and help build the trust, transparency, and shared responsibility needed for a resilient European music ecosystem. Pelayo concluded by stressing that trust, between sector actors, rightsholders and digital platforms, and between professionals and institutions, must be built "day by day, brick by brick, like a house."

Olga Sismanidi, Project Manager at EACEA, expanded on the operational reality of Creative Europe's support to the music ecosystem, offering a clear, data-driven picture of how EU funding translates into structural impact. She described European networks as "a very special action" designed to strengthen sector-specific competencies and generate long-term effects on the market, emphasising that these are member-based organisations whose influence extends far beyond their

immediate beneficiaries. Sismanidi highlighted that between 2021 and 2028, Creative Europe will have supported 50 music-related projects across networks, platforms, Music Moves Europe, and orchestras—an investment representing €94 million, or 75% of the entire culture budget allocated to music. She stressed the scale of this reach: approximately 2,500 organisations are directly involved in these projects, with an estimated 10,000 organisations benefiting indirectly across Europe. For Sismanidi, this demonstrates not only the breadth of Creative Europe's impact but also the spillover effect that well-designed cultural funding can generate across the entire value chain. Her intervention reinforced the idea that EU support is most effective when it strengthens ecosystems, builds capacity, and enables organisations to act as multipliers within their national and European contexts.

Sabina Tsakova, Deputy Head of Unit for Copyright at DG CONNECT, brought the regulatory dimension sharply into focus, offering a clear view of how EU copyright and digital policy intersect with the realities of the music sector. She recalled the significance of the 2019 DSM Directive, describing it as the most substantial legislative achievement of recent years for authors, performers, and rightsholders, particularly its provisions on content-sharing platforms and fair remuneration. Tsakova explained that the Commission is now entering a crucial phase: the mandatory review of the DSM Directive, supported by an in-depth study already underway, with first results expected by mid-2026. This review, she noted, will examine all relevant rules affecting the music sector, from licensing obligations to transparency requirements. While careful not to pre-empt outcomes, she acknowledged the sector's ongoing challenges and confirmed that the Commission is "aware of the various issues the creative sector is facing" and is actively reflecting on whether additional measures may be needed. Her intervention positioned regulation as a living framework, one that must evolve alongside technological change, market dynamics, and the needs of Europe's cultural and creative communities.

Music in AGORA EU

Moderated by Fabien Miclet, the event's first roundtable brought together representatives from across the value chain: AEPO-ARTIS, ECSA, EMMA, IMPALA and LiveEurope.

The discussion centred on the joint call signed by 23 organisations urging a sector-specific approach to music within the proposed AGORA EU programme.

The roundtable speakers converged around a conviction that the music sector urgently requires a sector-specific strategy within future EU programmes. They described an ecosystem undergoing profound transformation, shaped by streaming-driven business models, algorithmic recommendation systems, increasing market concentration, and intensifying global competition, and argued that such complexity cannot be addressed through generic cultural measures. Several participants highlighted the symbolic and practical implications of the AGORA EU proposal, noting with concern that music is referenced only three times, compared to 14 explicit mentions in Creative Europe, signalling a potential dilution of visibility and priority. This, they stressed, reinforces the need for a structured, recurring dialogue mechanism between the sector and the European Commission to ensure that policy design remains aligned with real-world challenges and opportunities.

The discussion repeatedly returned to the sector's conviction that Europe needs a dedicated Music Observatory, a long-standing request that speakers framed as essential to any credible data strategy. While acknowledging the Commission's broader ambitions for a cultural data hub, participants stressed that music's fast-moving, highly digitalised ecosystem requires granular, sector-specific intelligence, not generic cultural indicators.

Finally, the panel underscored the necessity of predictable, earmarked funding, arguing that without stable and clearly defined financial instruments, the sector cannot plan strategically, measure long-term outcomes, or respond effectively to technological and market shifts. Together, these interventions painted a coherent picture of a sector ready to collaborate, but insistent on the tools and frameworks required to do so meaningfully.

Cultural Data Hub & the Culture Compass

Before opening the second roundtable, moderator Fabien Miclet invited Arnaud Pasquali from DG EAC to frame the discussion on data and the Culture Compass. Their brief exchange set a reflective and pragmatic tone. Discussing how Europe can build a coherent cultural data ecosystem, Pasquali emphasised that the Culture Compass is conceived as a broad, cross-sectoral framework, but that its success depends on the active participation of sectoral actors, precisely the kind of collaboration embodied by the Brussels Music House. He recognised the sector's long-standing call for more structured, reliable, and comparable data, and stressed that the Commission sees the BMH's work as an important testing ground for what a future European cultural data hub could become. Their exchange underscored a shared understanding: that while the Commission can provide direction and infrastructure, the music sector itself must shape the content, priorities, and methodologies that give such a hub meaning. It was a moment that bridged institutional perspective and sectoral expertise.

The second panel explored the Commission's proposal for a European Cultural Data Hub, as outlined in the Culture Compass. Participants included Arnaud Pasquali (DG EAC), Marta Jimenez Pumares (DG EAC), Olga Sismanidi (EACEA), and from the BMH working group EMEE, FAMA, GESAC, IMPF and Iban Garcia del Blanco.

The second roundtable opened with a clear consensus that Europe's future cultural data framework must be rooted in sector-specific research, not broad cultural indicators. Speakers argued that the music ecosystem, defined by fast-moving digital markets, complex rights structures, and highly fragmented value chains, requires analysis at a "cellular level" if policymakers are to understand its realities and design effective interventions. This point was reinforced stressing the need for stability and continuity in data collection, noting that trust can only be built when data is gathered consistently over time rather than through isolated studies. Several speakers highlighted the importance of bridging Creative Europe and Horizon Europe, arguing that meaningful research on music's economic, technological, and societal dimensions can only be achieved when cultural and scientific funding streams work in tandem. FAMA added a national lens, sharing Austria's experience where rigorous economic impact studies directly informed parliamentary action and led to the development of a national music strategy, an example of how robust evidence can translate into political commitment.

The discussion around the Cultural Data Hub deepened as Pasquali and Pumares expanded on the Commission's intentions and the practical realities behind the Culture Compass proposal. Pasquali emphasised that the Hub is conceived not as a single monolithic database but designed to connect existing initiatives rather than replace them. He stressed that the Commission does not intend to "build a new Observatory" but rather to create interoperability, comparability, and shared standards across member states and sectors, an approach that requires strong sectoral partners like the Brussels Music House to define what meaningful music data should look like. Both speakers encouraged the music community to co-shape the architecture, indicators, and governance models of the Cultural Data Hub.

Iban García del Blanco, speaking from his perspective as a former MEP and long-standing advocate for cultural rights, highlighted that the European Parliament has consistently defended strong protections for authors and performers, particularly during the negotiations of the DSM Directive, and that the challenges raised by the sector today demonstrate why that work remains unfinished. García del Blanco emphasised that Europe must not shy away from regulating powerful digital actors when cultural diversity, fair remuneration, and democratic values are at stake. He also stressed the importance of structured dialogue with the sector, noting that initiatives like the Brussels Music House provide precisely the kind of informed, cross-value-chain perspective that policymakers need. His remarks conveyed both solidarity and urgency: the EU has the tools to act, he argued, but must be willing to use them decisively to ensure that Europe's cultural ecosystem remains fair, diverse, and sustainable.

Together, these contributions underscored a shared ambition: to build a European data ecosystem capable of capturing the true complexity, value, and potential of the music sector.

Special Address – Commissioner Glenn Micallef

The event concluded with an unscripted and strikingly candid closing address from Commissioner Glenn Micallef, who chose to set aside prepared remarks in favour of speaking directly to the room. He began by reflecting on the emotional and cultural centrality of music, describing it as a form of expression that mirrors the “pulse” of society - its anxieties, its aspirations, and its collective imagination. For the Commissioner, music is not merely an economic sector but a cultural infrastructure, one that shapes identity, fosters belonging, and carries Europe’s linguistic and regional diversity into the future.

He then turned to what he described as the defining challenge of the decade: artificial intelligence. AI, he argued, is not a distant horizon but a present force reshaping creation, distribution, and remuneration. He acknowledged the sector’s concerns around transparency, training data, and the protection of rights, affirming that creators must remain at the centre of Europe’s digital transformation. Licensing frameworks, enforceable transparency obligations, and fair remuneration mechanisms, he said, are not optional, they are essential to safeguarding Europe’s cultural sovereignty. He also warned of the risks posed by market concentration, noting that the dominance of a few global actors threatens not only economic fairness but also the visibility of smaller languages, local repertoires, and independent voices.

Despite these challenges, Micallef’s message was ultimately one of commitment and optimism. He emphasised that the European Commission is doubling down on culture, even in a constrained budgetary environment, and that programmes such as Creative Europe and the forthcoming EU AGORA reflect a political choice to invest in Europe’s creative fabric. He encouraged the sector to remain vocal, organised, and ambitious, stressing that policymaking is most effective when it is informed by those who live the realities of the field. The Commissioner closed by reaffirming that supporting culture is not a luxury but a democratic imperative - an investment in the well-being, cohesion, and imagination of Europe’s citizens.

Closing remarks

On behalf of the Board of Directors, Ger Hatton thanked the Commissioner for joining the event, for his commitment to culture, and for his remarks that gave hope to the music sector. She also particularly noted the appreciation of the Board for the presence and intervention of Gilles Pelayo and his support for BMH, along with that of his colleague Olga Sismanidi. She thanked the speakers and the partners of BMH represented at the event, noting that BMH is an inclusive space for all. She concluded with a personal thanks to Nicole Schulze for having developed the germ of an idea of BMH to the reality that it is today, and to Annette Barrett who, as President of IMPF, has been a constant supporter of the notion and concept of Brussels Music House.

The event concluded with a networking reception, offering participants the opportunity to continue discussions informally and strengthen cross-sector relationships.

About IMPF

IMPF is the global trade body exclusively representing independent music publishers, advocating for 300+ companies worldwide. Our members account for 26% of global market share and our mission is to help stimulate a more favourable business environment for music publishers and the songwriters and composers they represent. www.impforum.org



IMPF is the global trade and advocacy body for independent music publishers. IMPF helps to stimulate a more favourable business environment in different territories and jurisdictions for artistic, cultural, and commercial diversity for its music publisher members and the songwriters and composers they represent. www.impforum.org