

Creative Pulse: A survey on the status and working conditions of artists and CCS professionals in Europe

Survey report



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Foreword

Dr. Heather Kurzbauer

University of Amsterdam Faculty of Law

Advocate for the working conditions of artists and CCS professionals

Creative Pulse: A survey on the status and working conditions of artists and CCS professionals could not have appeared at a more opportune time. The disconnect between the declared high value ascribed to culture and the low level of support given to cultural creators in Europe was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the scourge has passed, creatives from every conceivable sector are still struggling to achieve labour equality and a modicum of social security. The sharp contrast between the positive associations of Europe as an international cultural powerhouse and the dire state-of-the art with regard to cultural workers' employment has set off alarm bells at the highest echelons of European decision making.

With an eye to provide aid and abetment for creatives across the EU, Creative Pulse addresses issues given credence by the principal EU institutions, from the European Parliament's small steps toward a Status for the Artist to the European Council's priorities set forth in its Work Plan for Culture (2023-2026). The survey provides answers to fundamental information needs and fills an information gap: relevant data collection on CCS professionals has been spartan to date. Examining both status and working conditions, Creative Pulse is particularly valuable in that it gives voice to cultural workers and an impressive range of cultural stakeholders. By opening the space of deliberation to include declarations from over 1500 stakeholders across all Member States, the survey shows us that to meet aspirations and answer to basic needs, creatives must stand firmly on centre stage.

While several member states have undertaken national reports concerning the status of CCS workers, notably Ireland, Spain and Belgium, Creative Pulse's cross-border initiative is groundbreaking. Thanks to the quality of the data and accompanying insights, European institutions and Member States will be able to move forward toward solutions to address systemic flaws and promote better employment conditions for an oft-forgotten category of workers. An enhanced recognition for the work that creatives engage in will contribute to a sustainable model for a European cultural community of recognized and respected workers.

As a researcher who has spent years uncovering vulnerabilities in a particular creative sector fraught by crisis, I scrutinized inaccurate employment attributions, shaky fair practice application and discrimination-related employment vulnerabilities (age, gender, race), and problems related to market forces (the glut of creatives-shrinking employment opportunities. The fact that working creatives suffer from inaccurate employment classifications across the Member States greatly exacerbates employment vulnerability. A muddle of employment categories (self-employed; false self-employed; freelance; partially employed) applied to the legal status of creatives more often than not places them in incorrect, yes, vulnerable categories beyond the reach of social security and fair pay.

Creative Pulse foregrounds not only pay differentials and poor working conditions but also brings to the fore other vulnerabilities faced by creatives: insidious forms of discrimination (including gender pay gaps), the trials and tribulations of juggling multiple jobs, and the ever-present disbalance between contracted creatives and freelancers. To my mind, one of the most surprising and distressing findings was that almost half of those queried reported an increase in limitations to their freedom of expression within the last five years; the creative pulse stymied not only by poor employment conditions but alarmingly, the fear of artistic

repression. Creative Pulse emphasizes the need to revitalize and rethink current movements for change aimed at solidifying the position of cultural workers.

A long and whole-hearted round of applause to Creative Pulse for a survey that taps into the strength of the 'makers' to offer powerful information that can and will influence tools to recovery for Europe's cultural workers who still find themselves at the bottom of the employment ladder. Paying lip service to the idea of Europe's cultural 'might' can only be 'right' when cultural workers gain the equality, social protection (including workable pension schemes) they deserve. Sir Herbert Read infamously noted, "*the worth of a civilization is not valued in the terms of its material wealth or military power, but by the quality and achievements of its representative individuals - its philosophers, its poets and its artists.*" It is high time to pass on 'material wealth' to those whose representation is invaluable.

1 Introduction

1.1 Preface

This report is the outcome of a collaboration between Culture Action Europe (CAE) and Panteia that goes back to 2019-2020 when working conditions in the cultural sector emerged as a priority on the EU cultural policy agenda. This partnership is built on the productive complementarity of both organisations: as the major European network of cultural networks and organisations, with over 230 cultural members from 35 countries, CAE advocates for a central role for culture in European policymaking. Panteia is a Dutch research company specialising in applied policy research in the cultural and creative sectors. Teaming up research capacity with the agency of a network has been the strength of this collaboration.

In 2020, Panteia and the European Expert Network on Culture and Audiovisual (EENCA) conducted a study in the context of the Council Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022. As part of the study, expert consultations with cultural and network stakeholders were organised by Culture Action Europe. Following this, in March 2021, CAE published a background analysis of the situation of artists and cultural workers and the post-COVID-19 cultural recovery in the European Union, commissioned by the European Parliament.

In 2023, CAE established the action group on working conditions in the cultural and creative sectors, comprising 30 CAE members and experts. The group's goal was to evaluate the ongoing discussions at the EU level and suggest concrete recommendations for future actions. The discussions within the working group eventually contributed to the European Parliament's joint report on the 'Framework for the social and professional situation of artists and workers in the cultural and creative sectors,' which urges the Commission to propose legislation to improve working conditions in the cultural sector.

This survey represents a strategic step to support our position with solid data and strengthen our advocacy for cultural workers' decent working conditions. It will also help to guide discussions with CAE members at events and in action groups and inform relevant policy conversations in the new EU policy cycle 2024-2029.

We are pleased to witness a strong engagement from the community in this collaborative initiative and look forward to seeing continued participation as Culture Action Europe and Panteia work to make a meaningful impact on policy and practice across Europe.

1.2 Background to the study

The Cultural and Creative Sectors (CCS) play a pivotal role in shaping the identity of the European Union, contributing not only to its artistic vibrancy but also having a significant economic and social impact. However, artists and cultural and creative professions face atypical working patterns and irregular income, which has led to problems such as weak social protection and a lack of decent working conditions that leaves those in the sector vulnerable to abusive subcontracting, bogus self-employment, underpaid or unpaid work and coercive buy-out contracts. New digital technologies, such as generative AI, also create challenges for CCS professionals. Work in the CCS is often characterised by poor working conditions and high cross-border mobility, while at the same time there is no easy portability of their social security entitlements. Gaps between national social systems, national definitions of artists and other rules create unfair conditions.

1.3 Summary of key findings

- Almost half of all the artists and CCS professionals surveyed indicate they experience **poor working conditions**. Visual artists were the most likely to indicate poor working conditions, as well as multidisciplinary artists. Freelance and self-employed artists and CCS professionals were the most likely to report poor working conditions.
- Over two-thirds of surveyed artists and CCS professionals **lack access to sufficient social protection**. Freelance and self-employed artists and CCS professionals indicated that they have the least access to sufficient social protection.
- Almost half of the artists and CCS professionals surveyed indicate that they are involved in **mobility**, which highlights the significance of mobility to the CCS. Artists and CCS professionals who are mobile are less likely to report poor working conditions when compared to those who are non-mobile.
- Over two-thirds of surveyed artists and CCS professionals **worked more than one job**, with a third of these second jobs being outside of the CCS. Working more than one job is most likely in in the performing arts sector.
- The overwhelming majority of artists feel that they are **not remunerated fairly for their work**.
- The **COVID-19 pandemic** had significant effects on artists and CCS professionals, especially affecting freelancers, self-employed and others on atypical contracts. Nearly half of survey respondents indicated that the pandemic had a negative impact on their income. Two-thirds of respondents also indicate that the pandemic had a negative impact on their working conditions.
- **Women are more likely than men to report poor working conditions**, and women were more likely than men to report insufficient access to social protection and lack of fair remuneration.
- The survey data shows that a **lack of uniform definition of artist/cultural worker** across the EU and **atypical working conditions** are important issues that are having a negative impact on working conditions in the sector.
- A third of respondents indicate that they have been either very or somewhat impacted by **limitations to the freedom to express oneself artistically**, with almost half of respondents indicating that they have seen an increase in the limitations to the freedom of expression over the past five years. This was also noted by a third of cultural organisations/institutions/policy makers surveyed.
- Over two-thirds of cultural organisations, institutions and policy makers surveyed believe that **insufficient attention has been given towards the issue of working conditions of artists and CCS professionals**.
- Almost 90% of cultural organisations, institutions and policy makers surveyed indicate the need for **EU legislation to address the working conditions of artists and creative professionals**, with 96% supporting the adoption of a European status for artists and CCS professionals that would aim to improve the social and professional conditions in the CCS, improve access to social protection, and a right to fair remuneration. This is also supported by the vast majority of artists and CCS professionals.
- There is a vast amount of support among survey participants for an **EU Directive on decent working conditions for CCS professionals** and the correct determination of their employment status.

1.4 Methodology

To collect data regarding the working conditions of artists and cultural and creative professionals, a survey was developed that invited artists, cultural and creative professionals, cultural organisations, and national governments to share their experiences regarding working conditions in the sector. Two separate surveys were developed:

- A survey of artists and CCS professionals
- A survey of cultural organisations, institutions, and policy makers

This survey ran from the 20th of December 2023 until the 9th of February 2024.

The survey consisted of a number of closed and open questions, allowing the researchers working on the project to statistically analyse the data set, as well as analyse/review the qualitative responses from participants where this was a possibility.

The survey was shared via the networks of Panteia and Culture Action Europe. To reach out to the target groups to the greatest extent possible, a ‘snowball’ approach was taken, as European and national organisations representing the CCS were invited to distribute the link amongst their members to ensure that as much coverage as possible was obtained. Additionally, The European Commission disseminated the link to the surveys to the OMC expert group working on the topic.

In total **1204 artists and CCS professionals responded to the survey**, with at least one artist from 26 Member States responded. In addition, **293 cultural organisations, institutions and policy makers responded to the survey**. 37 Culture Action Europe members responded to this survey. The table below outlines the number of responses by country.



Table 1 **Number of responses to the survey, by Member State**

Country	<u>Artists and CCS professionals</u>		<u>Cultural organizations, institutions, and policy makers</u>	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of total	Number of respondents	Percentage of total
Austria	59	4.9%	10	3.40%
Belgium	76	6.3%	5	1.70%
Bulgaria	7	0.6%	2	0.70%
Croatia	10	0.8%	2	0.70%
Republic of Cyprus	9	0.7%	1	0.30%
Czech Republic	28	2.3%	5	1.70%
Denmark	32	2.7%	5	1.70%
Estonia	13	1.1%	7	2.40%
Finland	14	1.2%	6	2.00%
France	37	3.1%	8	2.70%
Germany	183	15.2%	17	5.80%
Greece	16	1.3%	4	1.40%
Hungary	14	1.2%	3	1.00%
Ireland	19	1.6%	17	5.80%
Italy	95	7.9%	8	2.70%
Latvia	16	1.3%	5	1.70%
Lithuania	6	0.5%	0	0%
Luxembourg	0	0%	2	0.70%
Malta	5	0.4%	1	0.30%
Netherlands	104	8.6%	10	3.40%
Poland	9	0.7%	2	0.70%
Portugal	84	7.0%	41	14.00%
Romania	19	1.6%	2	0.70%
Slovakia	119	9.9%	31	10.60%
Slovenia	29	2.4%	2	0.70%
Spain	160	13.3%	9	3.10%
Sweden	17	1.4%	10	3.40%
Other	24	2.0%	3	1.00%
Not relevant (e.g., EU-level)	n. a	n. a	75	25.6%
	1204		293	

Source: Panteia, 2024



Regarding the distribution between the various CCS subsectors, the following table outlines the distribution for the two surveys. In many cases, artists/CCS professionals and organisations/institutions/policymakers indicated that they work in/are active in more than one sector (hence the percentages do not total to 100%).

Table 2 Number of responses to the surveys, by subsector

	Music	Performing arts	Visual arts	Books and publishing	Arts and crafts	Video games	Audiovisual	Cultural heritage	Architecture and design	Multidisciplinary artist	Transsectorial	Other CCS
No of artists/ CCS profs	349	412	343	159	87	22	219	116	49	198	81	117
% artists/ CCS profs	29%	34%	28%	13%	7%	2%	18%	10%	4%	16%	7%	10%
No of orgs / institutions / Policymakers	113	124	81	47	46	12	99	52	25	n.a	55	28
% of orgs / institutions / Policymakers	39%	42%	28%	16%	16%	4%	34%	18%	9%	n.a	19%	10%

Source: Panteia, 2024

1.5 About the authors

This study has been carried out in collaboration between Panteia and Culture Action Europe.



Panteia

Panteia is one of the largest organisations specialised in policy-applied research in Europe. Panteia's core business is policy research, market research and consultancy for national governments, provincial governments, local councils, the European Commission, national and international organisations, trade associations and the business community in general. Panteia has extensive experience in studies relating to the cultural and creative sectors. Between 2015-2020, Panteia was the coordinator of the European Expert Network on Culture and Audiovisual (EENCA), which was carried out on behalf of the European Commission (DG EAC). During this time, Panteia contributed to a variety of studies relating to all sectors under the scope of this project. Panteia has also carried out relevant cultural studies for other clients such as the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW), the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), and many others.



Culture Action Europe is the major European network of cultural networks, organisations, artists, activists, academics, and policymakers. CAE is the first port of call for informed opinion and debate about arts and cultural policy in the EU. As the only intersectoral network, it brings together all practices in culture, from the performing arts to literature, the visual arts, design, and cross-arts initiatives, to community centres and activist groups.

2 The working conditions of artists and CCS professionals in Europe

This section of the report outlines the key survey findings regarding the working conditions of artists and CCS professionals.

2.1 Characteristics of work in the sector

2.1.1 Types of employment

‘There is a disbalance between full-time paid workers and freelancers, where a freelancer is often compensated at the same ‘hourly rate’ as a full-time worker, even if the hourly rate of a full-time worker is not all of what a full-time worker gets. There is also a disparity between non-financial gains, such as health insurance, free time, work-life balance, remuneration, and other perks that a full-time worker receives. Fulltime workers also are protected by the law, so payments of monthly pay happen on the deadline, while self-employed cultural workers can wait for up to 6 months to get payouts.’

A Slovenian multidisciplinary artist

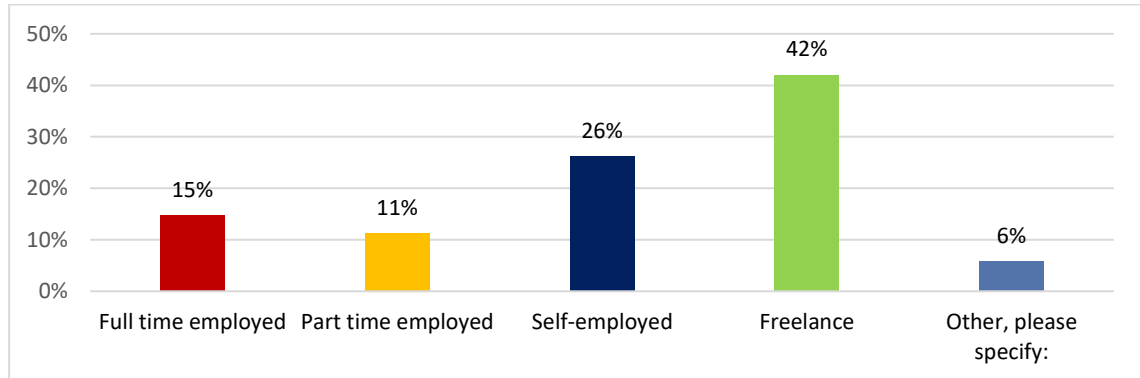
The CCS is characterised by the high proportion of self-employed and freelance workers, as it reflects the autonomous and specialised characteristics inherent in numerous occupations within the industry, such as authors, musicians, painters, sculptors, performing artists and craftspeople. Therefore, artists and cultural and creative professionals frequently engage in a variety of work practices, alternating between different forms of employment, professions, contracts, and employment statuses. Employment contracts in the creative and cultural sector are notably diverse among the Member States, encompassing various forms of work contracts, including **part-time, fixed-term, temporary, or very short intermittent project-based employment**.¹ These forms of employment agreements are particularly challenging, contractual terms rise to disparities within the sector as employment agreements incorporate fixed-fee contracts, buy-out clauses, and practices that tend towards questionable self-employment, leading to a decrease in employers' social security contributions.²

Results from the artists survey show that **42% of respondents work on a freelance basis, with 26% self-employed**. Full time employed make up 15% of the artists and CCS professionals who responded to the survey.

¹ European Parliament (2023) Status of the artist: improve working conditions of artists and cultural workers (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20231023IPR08139/status-of-the-artist-improve-working-conditions-of-artists-and-cultural-workers>).

² European Commission OMC Working group (2023), The Status and Working Conditions of Artists and Cultural and Creative Professionals (<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/01fafa79-1a13-11ee-806b-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>).

Figure 1 Employment type of respondents to the survey or artists and CCS professionals, 2024 (%)



Source: Panteia, 2024

2.1.2

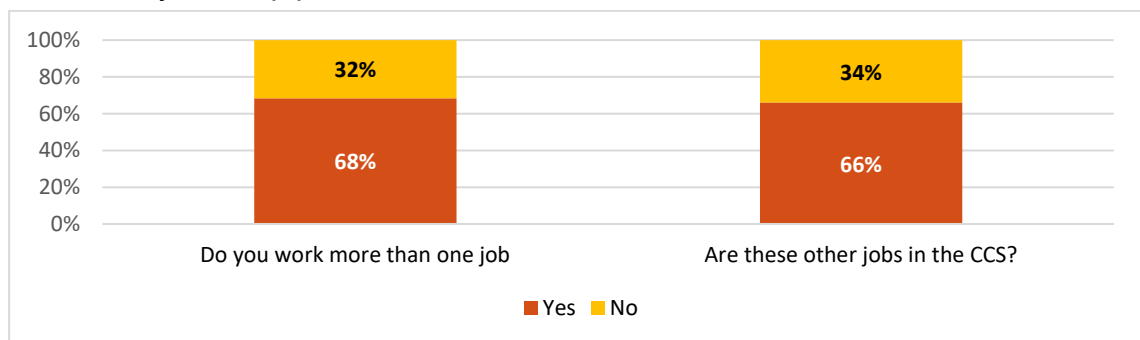
Multiple jobs

‘During the pandemic I had to stop working for almost two years, and it was the time I was finally entering the market. In that time, I had to have multiple jobs outside of the arts and there were no significant bridges to help artists to regain their position on the same market, especially for those who still had to work outside arts to maintain life.’

A German musician

Many artists and cultural and creative professionals have a secondary job in either an arts or non-arts related fields, either motivated by (artistic) interest, or by (financial) necessity. Results from the survey show that **68% of artists and creative professionals surveyed worked more than one job**, with 34% of these second jobs being outside of the CCS.

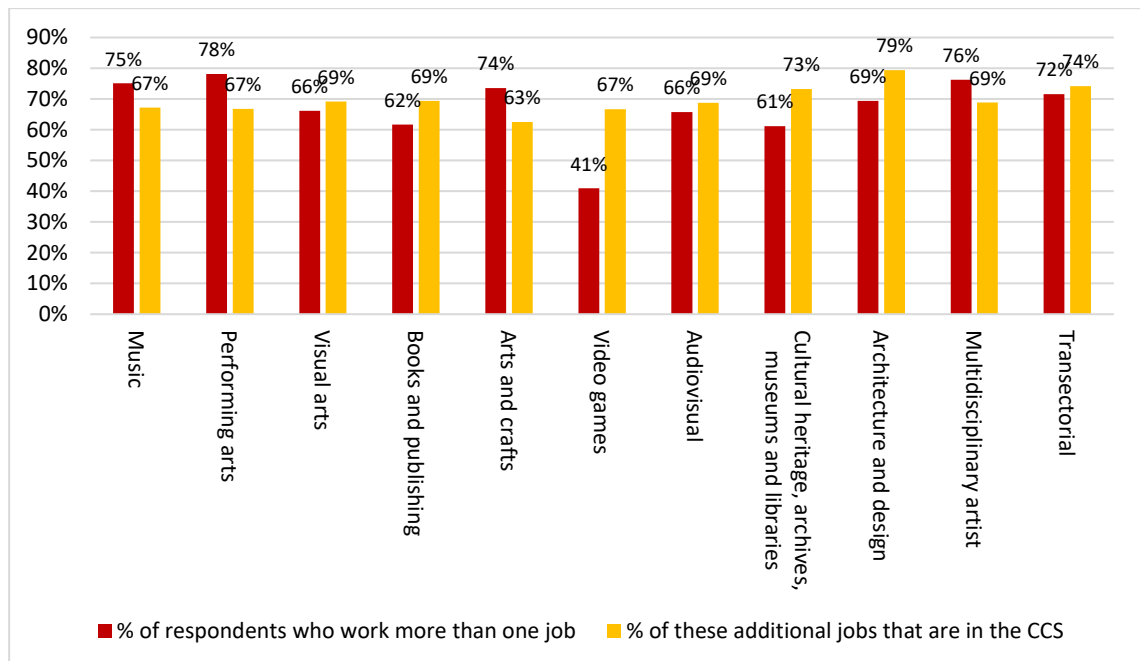
Figure 2 Percentage of artists and CCS professional survey respondents who work more than one job, 2024 (%)



Source: Panteia, 2024

When looking at sector level, differences are limited (apart from video games). **Artists and CCS professionals in the performing arts sector are the most likely to have more than one job**. Respondents in architecture and design are the most likely for second jobs to be in the CCS, with those in the arts and crafts sector the most likely to hold non-CCS sector second jobs.

Figure 3 Percentage of artists and CCS-professional survey respondents who work more than one job, by sub-sector, 2024 (%)



Source: Panteia, 2024

2.1.3 Mobility

'I live in a north Italian border region (South Tyrol) as German speaking minority. Therefore, I work a lot in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland. However, this fact is hindering the accumulation of a pension and is complicating social security a lot.'

An Italian performing artist

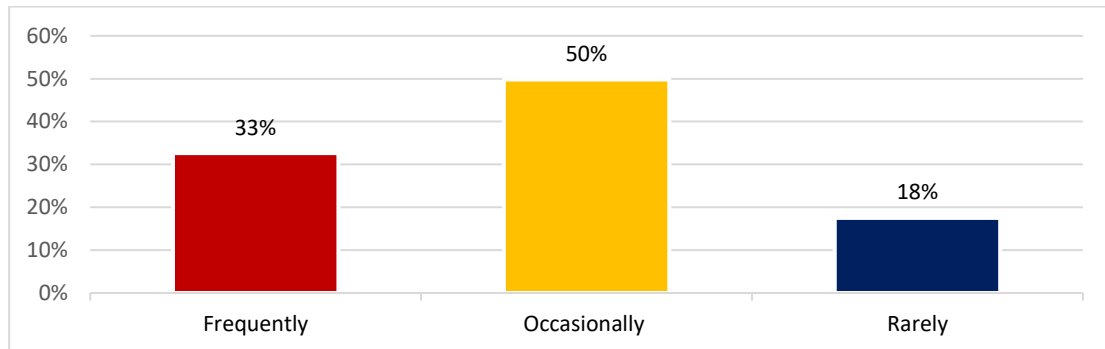
Artistic and creative work involves the collection and assimilation of new impressions, engaging with foreign cultures, with diverse artistic methodologies, and consistently shifting one's own standpoint and perspective. This perpetual movement is integral to artistic endeavours. **Mobility is on the one hand particularly important for the workers within the cultural and creative sectors, as it contributes greatly to career development and in many cases can result in increased income.** Additionally, mobility holds significance in ensuring a continual income for artists, cultural and creative workers, and organizations, particularly in nations where internal markets for the arts are relatively limited.³ The survey confirms that **artists and CCS professionals who are mobile are less likely to report poor working conditions when compared to those who are non-mobile** (42% of mobile artists indicate poor working conditions, whereas 49% of non-mobile artists indicate this). On the other hand, mobility also entails specific challenges and risks connected especially with taxation and social security. Therefore, there is a need for more effective regulation supporting artistic mobility.⁴

³ VoC (2021), Status and Working Conditions of Artists and Cultural and Creative Professionals (<https://voicesofculture.eu/2021/01/25/status-and-working-conditions-of-artists-and-cultural-and-creative-professionals/>).

⁴ Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) & Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) (2023) Report with recommendations to the European Commission on an EU framework for the social and professional situation of artists and workers in the cultural and creative sectors (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2023-0304_EN.html).

48% of artists and CCS professionals surveyed indicated that they are involved in mobility, which highlights the significance of mobility to the CCS. Of these, 33% are frequently mobile, 50% occasionally mobile in their work, with 18% indicating that this is a rare occurrence.

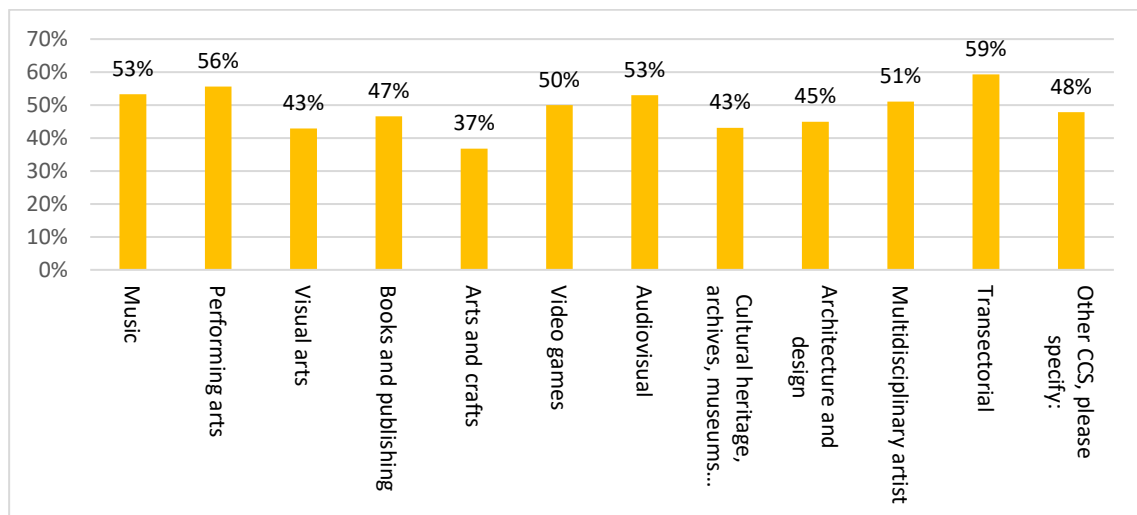
Figure 4 Frequency of mobility of respondents to the survey of artists and CCS professionals who indicate they work cross border, 2024 (%)



Source: Panteia, 2024

When looking by sector, **trans-sectorial artists and CCS professionals are most likely to work cross border**, followed closely by those in performing arts, music, and the audiovisual sectors.

Figure 5 Percentage of artists and CCS professionals who indicate they work cross border, by subsector, 2024 (%)



Source: Panteia, 2024

2.2 Working Conditions

‘I strongly believe that improving the working conditions in the cultural and creative sectors will only have positive impact for the EU-project. These sectors have been proven to have a significant impact on the wellbeing of citizens and communities, and to positively affect the economy. Cultural and creative work fosters critical thinking and intercultural exchange, within the EU as well as outside of the EU, and effectively promotes cohesion and integration.’

A Greek visual artist

Working conditions refers to the working environment and aspects of an employee’s terms and conditions of employment, which in the CCS covers such matters as:

- The definition of an artist or cultural worker.
- The organisation of work and work activities.
- Training, skills, and employability.
- Mobility.
- Access to social security.
- Health, safety, and wellbeing.
- Working time and work life balance.
- Fair remuneration.

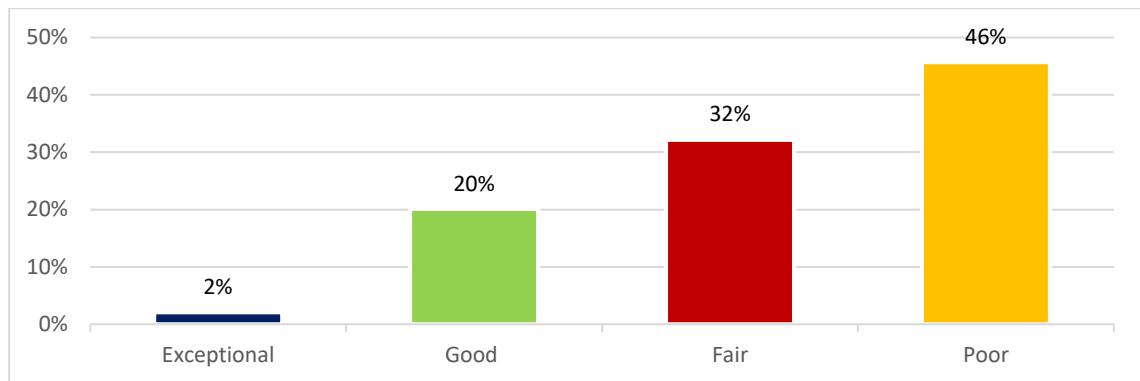
Work within CCS is characterised by precariousness, instability, unpredictable income, weak or no social security coverage, lack of access to unemployment support and other negative working conditions.⁵ Artists and creative professionals are also less likely to be employed full-time than workers in other sectors, which is also an indicator of the potential to experience poor working conditions. The 2023 OMC Working Group report highlighted the need of the EU to start focusing on bettering the working conditions of artists. A considerable number of artists encounter precarious work circumstances and a deficiency of legal frameworks that offers social safeguards and enduring structures for advancing their professional development. Moreover, artists’ working conditions can often be closely tied to their affiliations with cultural institutions, where those connected tend to have better access to resources. **71% of cultural organisations, institutions and policy makers responding to the survey indicate that addressing the working conditions of artists and CCS professionals is a priority for their organisation.**

Several respondents to the survey of artists and CCS professionals note that economic challenges faced by artists often compel them to work for long hours for unsatisfactory compensation, or to take multiple jobs to meet ends. Balancing multiple projects makes it difficult to strike a work-life balance (for example, working overtime, needing to be available 24/7, overlapping projects, and tight deadlines). This contributes towards worsening the working conditions of artists leading to a ‘permanent state of precarity.’

Whilst most of the questions that were addressed to artists and CCS professionals touch upon issues regarding working conditions, a direct question was also asked to respondents as to how they would rate their own working conditions (exceptional / good / fair / poor), based on the criteria listed above. **46% of artists and CCS professionals indicate poor working conditions**, almost half of all respondents. Additionally, **52% of cultural organisations, institutions and policy makers responding to the survey indicate that working conditions for artists and creative professionals in the CCS changed for the worse over the past 3 years.**

⁵ European Parliament (2023) Status of the artist: improve working conditions of artists and cultural workers (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20231023IPR08139/status-of-the-artist-improve-working-conditions-of-artists-and-cultural-workers>).

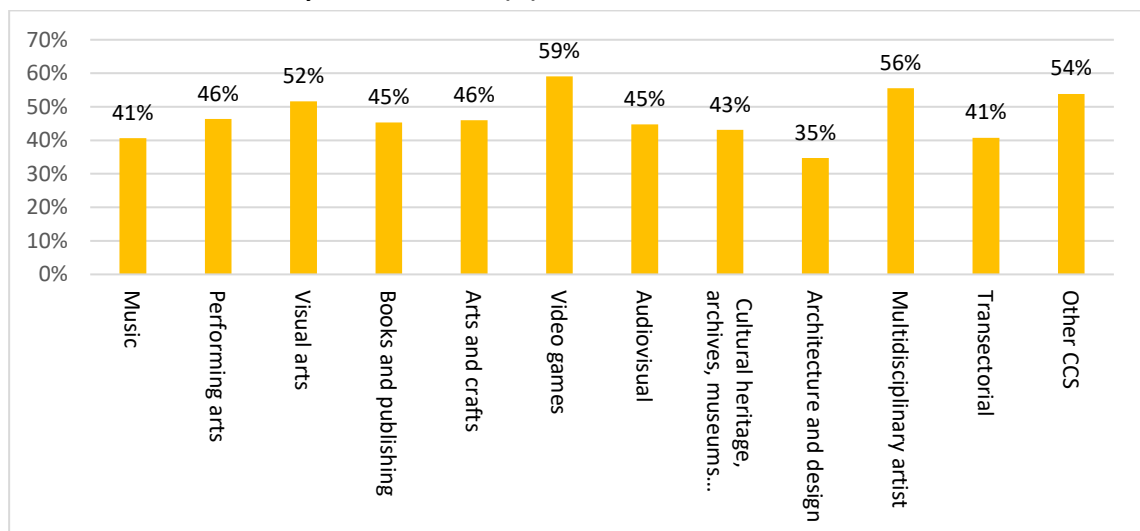
Figure 6 Assessment of working conditions by respondents to the survey of artists and CCS professionals, 2024 (%)



Source: Panteia, 2024

No major differences exist regarding the age profile of respondents and indicating poor working conditions. Artists and CCS professionals who were 35-44 years old and 55-64 were most likely to indicate poor working conditions. At the sub-sectoral level, artists and CCS professionals in the video games sector were most likely to indicate poor working conditions (although it should be considered that a smaller number of respondents represented this sector compared to others). **A majority of surveyed artists and CCS professionals in the visual arts sector indicate poor working conditions**, as well as multidisciplinary artists.

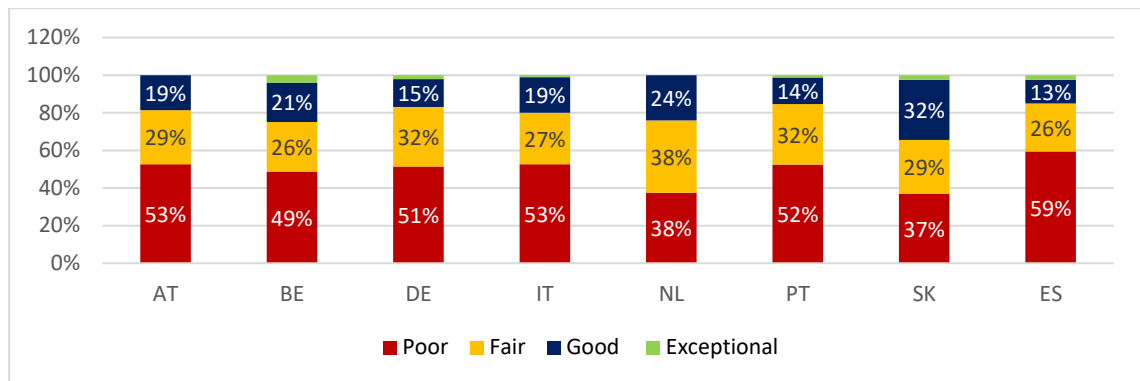
Figure 7 Respondents to the survey of artists and CCS professionals indicating poor working conditions, by subsector, 2024 (%)



Source: Panteia, 2024

When looking at Member State level, some differences can be noted in Member States where at least 50 survey responses were received. Artists and CCS professionals in Spain, Germany and Austria were the most likely to report poor working conditions, with Slovakia reporting the most positive results regarding artists and CCS professionals' perception of working conditions.

Figure 8 Assessment of working conditions by respondents to the survey of artists and CCS professionals, by Member State (*), 2024 (%)

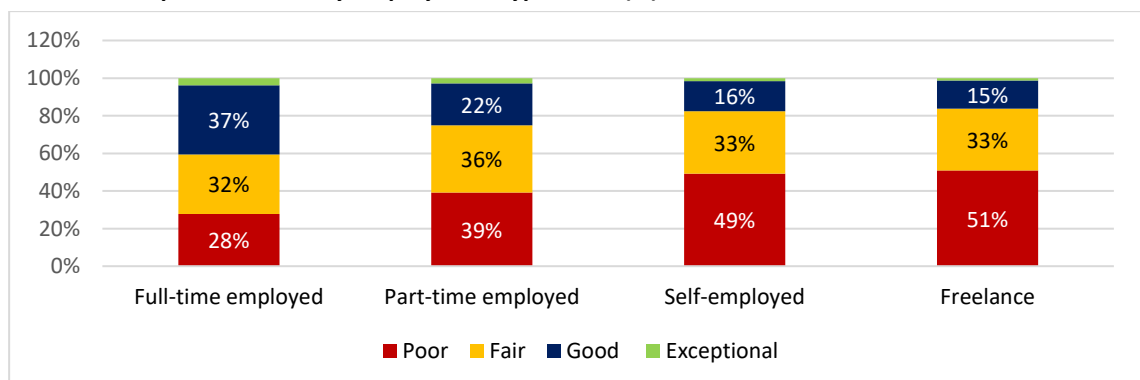


(*) Member States with at least 50 responses from artists/CCS professionals

Source: Panteia, 2024

When looking at employment type, it is clear from the data that **freelance and self-employed artists and CCS professionals were the most likely to report poor working conditions**, with the differences between these employment types generally being small. Full-time employed artists and CCS professionals were the most likely to report good and exceptional working conditions.

Figure 9 Assessment of working conditions by respondents to the survey of artists and CCS professionals, by employment type, 2024 (%)



Source: Panteia, 2024

2.3 Access to social protection

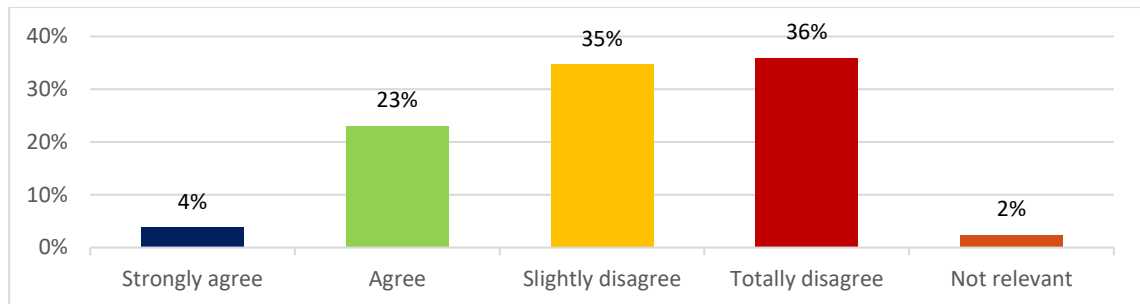
'As a freelance musician with a young family (and as thus working fewer hours than full-time) I feel it's impossible to have adequate social protection and still have something left of my wages.'

A Belgian musician

Access to Social Protection is vital for ensuring well-being and providing security to individuals. It serves as a crucial safety net, offering financial and social support, promoting health, ensuring financial security, social inclusion, and economic stability. It encompasses a series of benefits which are related to the employment contract that are inherit. Such social protection regimes encompasses specific provisions on social security such as health, maternity/paternity leave, unemployment benefits, pension benefits, and

benefits related to holiday leave, family, or other allowances.⁶ **Results from the survey show that artists and CCS professionals lack access to sufficient social protection**, with 71% indicating that they lack sufficient social protection. Only 27% of artists and CCS professionals report having sufficient access to social protection.

Figure 10 Responses by respondents to the survey of artists and CCS professionals to the question ‘Would you say that you have access to sufficient social protection?’, 2024 (%)



Source: Panteia, 2024

According to a report from the European Parliament, some Member States are missing special regulations concerning the workers within CCS sectors, and existing regulations are not suitable to the realities of work within the sectors. As a result, it is significantly limiting their contributory capacity and effective access to social protection including pensions, unemployment benefits, sick leave, care leave etc.⁷ The limited scope of coverage arises from the inadequacy of social protection schemes to effectively address and accommodate distinctive features of work in the CCS. This encompasses various forms of employment, notably self-employment, which present unique challenges that current social protection frameworks may not comprehensively account for or adequately support. Not having a permanent contract has often repercussions on social security protection. As a consequence of not being covered by social security, many artists and CCS professionals have secondary employment either within or outside the arts, driven by either artistic interest or financial necessity.⁸ Participating in social protection schemes as a self-employed individual can prove costly, as these workers bear the financial responsibility for both the employer's and employee's portions of contributions this implies that, even if not legally exempted from social protection schemes, self-employed individual may in reality be inclined to abstain from participation when it is not obligatory due to costs.⁹

When looking at data at the Member State level (from countries where the survey received at least 50 responses from artists and CCS professionals), Belgian artists and CCS professionals were the most likely to agree that they had sufficient access to social protection. However, issues relating to social security coordination were highlighted by a very higher number of respondents to the survey of artists and CCS professionals, indicating a widespread need for better social protection systems for those working in the CCS. Challenges related to fragmented social security systems were identified across respondents from all EU Member States, underscoring the necessity for enhanced coordination and harmonization. Artists and CCS professionals who responded to the survey show a strong consensus for the establishment of a

⁶ European Commission OMC Working group (2023), The Status and Working Conditions of Artists and Cultural and Creative Professionals (<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/01fafa79-1a13-11ee-806b-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>).

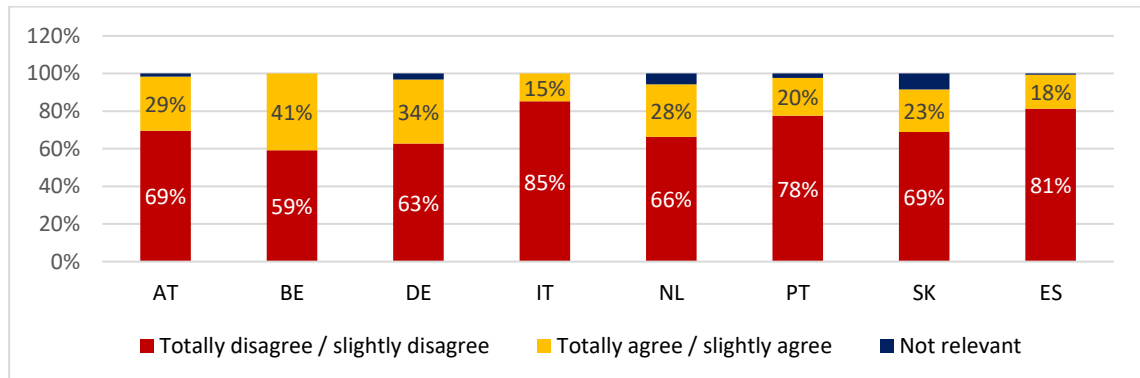
⁷ Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) & Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) (2023) Report with recommendations to the European Commission on an EU framework for the social and professional situation of artists and workers in the cultural and creative sectors (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2023-0304_EN.html).

⁸ European Expert Network on Culture and Audiovisual (EENCA), 'The status and working conditions of artists and cultural and creative professionals', available at: <https://eenc.eu/uploads/eenc-eu/2021/04/21/07b74a1edf6f782478c55bd85899219c.pdf>

⁹ International Labour Organisation, 'Social Protection in the Cultural and Creative Sector Country Practices and Innovations', available at: <https://www.ilo.org/static/english/intserv/working-papers/wp028/index.html#ID0ELTB1>

standardised European social insurance scheme specifically tailored towards artists, based on what is perceived as an inadequacy of the current social security measures for artists, with concerns about the financial burden associated with securing adequate social protection.

Figure 11 Responses by respondents to the survey of artists and CCS professionals to the question ‘Would you say that you have access to sufficient social protection?’, by Member State(*), 2024 (%)

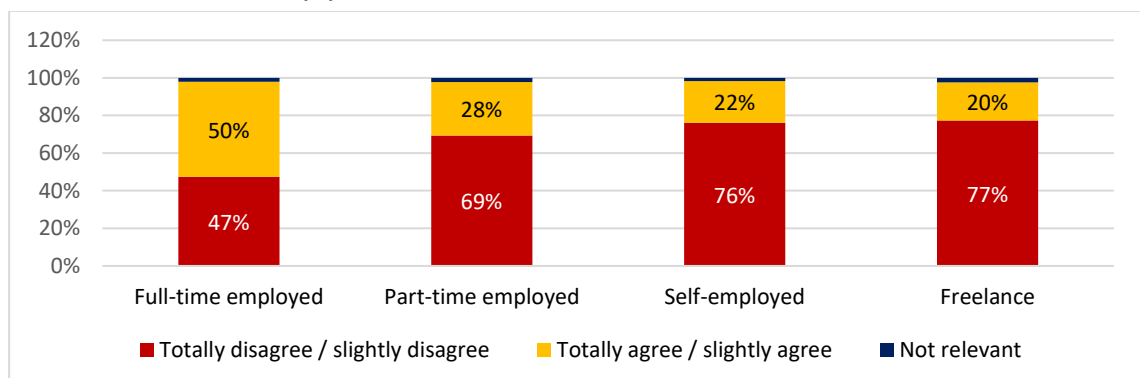


(*) Member States was at least 50 responses from artists/CCS professionals.

Source: Panteia, 2024

Freelance and self-employed artists and CCS professionals indicated that they have the least access to sufficient social protection. Half of artists and CCS professionals that are full-time employed have access to sufficient social protection. Some respondents indicated concerns in this regard relating to the nature of their work, as in many cases, limited employment contracts are driving individuals towards self-employment or freelancing, leading to absence of labour stability, and limiting access to social protection. Many freelancers and self-employed artists and CCS professionals who responded to the survey have expressed their struggles in accessing sufficient social security protection due to their low income, leaving them with limited funds and further exacerbating financial strain during periods of unemployment.

Figure 12 Responses by respondents to the survey of artists and CCS professionals to the question ‘Would you say that you have access to sufficient social protection?’, by employment status, 2024 (%)



Source: Panteia, 2024

2.4 Income

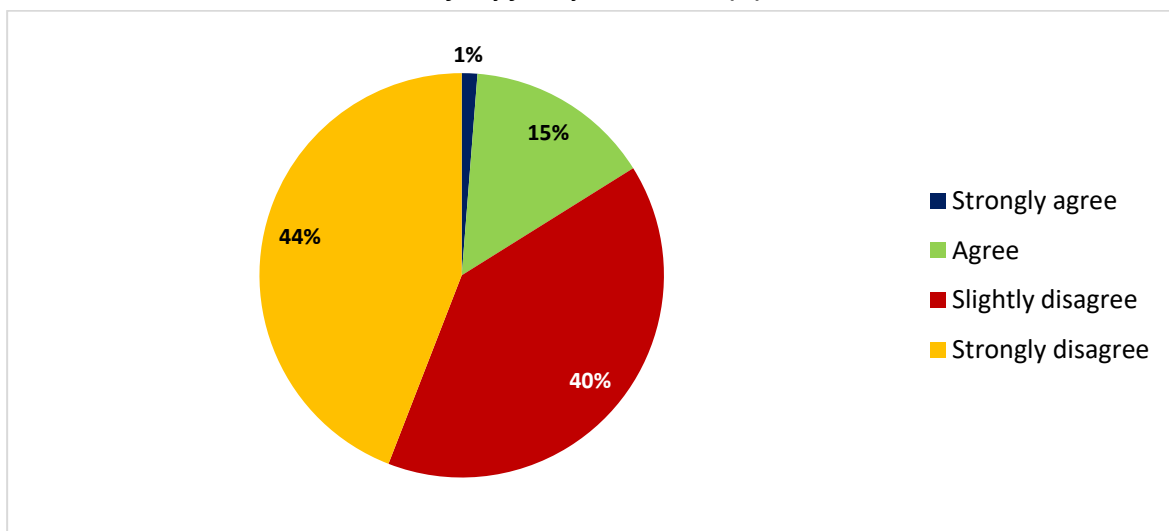
'There is no stability of income. I am self-employed and have to pay social contributions myself from fees that do not amount to minimum salary when spread out over a year. I see no hope for me to apply for mortgage within the next 5 years unless I take on work from outside the creative sector. That is what I am considering on doing, even though my field is highly competitive, and I fear that the hours away from my artistic endeavours will put me at disadvantage against colleagues vying for the same opportunities as me.'

An Irish audiovisual artist/CCS professional

Many artists and cultural and creative professionals struggle financially, and the sector grapples with significant disparities regarding income levels.¹⁰ A considerable proportion of artists earn meagre incomes, with only a small fraction able to sustain themselves solely through creative work. There is a stark contrast between the relatively low earnings of a majority of artists and the limited number who earn substantial incomes from their artistic endeavours. Earning opportunities can be highly unpredictable, which was also exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the cancellation of artistic events. Due to the pandemic, the cultural landscape underwent significant transformation, as the frequency, intensity and overall workload in the CCS resulted in reduced income for many. Non-standard working practices that are evident in the sector contribute towards situations of low income, and the project-to-project nature of work means that for many there will be periods of inactivity, and they therefore receive no income.

Results from the survey show that **the majority of artists feel that they are not remunerated fairly for their work**, with 84% either strongly agreeing or disagreeing with the statement *'I believe I am remunerated fairly for my work'*. Only 16% of survey respondents agree with this statement.

Figure 13 Responses by respondents to the survey of artists and CCS professionals to the question *'I believe I am remunerated fairly for my work'*, 2024 (%)

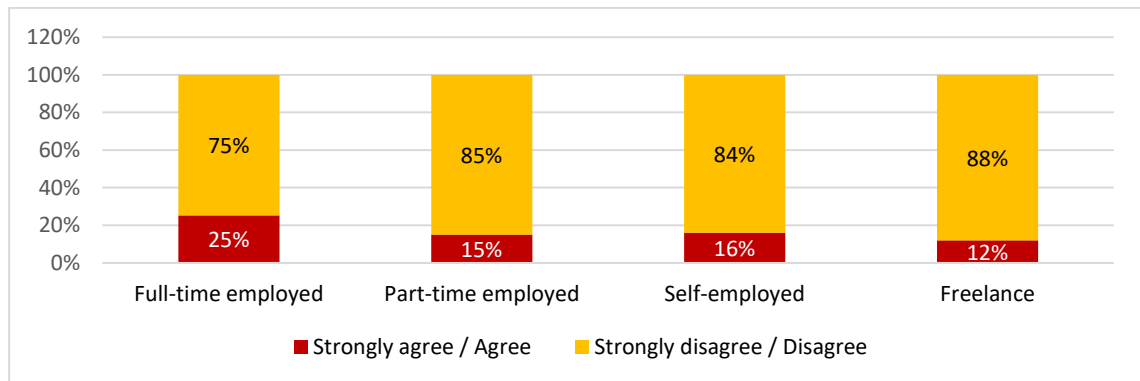


Source: Panteia, 2024

¹⁰ European Expert Network on Culture and Audiovisual (EENCA), 'The status and working conditions of artists and cultural and creative professionals', available at: <https://eenc.eu/uploads/eenc-eu/2021/04/21/07b74a1edf6f782478c55bd85899219c.pdf>

When looking at employment type, the majority of all artists and CCS professionals indicate that they are not fairly remunerated for their work. **Freelance artists were the least likely to indicate that they are fairly remunerated for their work** (on 12% agreeing that they are fairly remunerated).

Figure 14 Responses by respondents to the survey of artists and CCS professionals to the question ‘I believe I am remunerated fairly for my work’, 2024 (%)



Source: Panteia, 2024

Further results from the survey of artists and CCS professionals highlight that their financial stability is increasingly compromised and further exacerbated due to several factors, including, the absence of pay rises, irregular payments, and the restricted access to the market. One German respondent in the performing arts sector noted that there are “*stagnant payments amidst rising living costs, and frustration about being expected to maintain the same workload without a corresponding raise.*”

Respondents also noted the detrimental impact of Inflation on artists and CCS professionals, who expressed concern about inadequate income to be able cover basic needs amid rising costs. The diminishing purchasing power is a significant worry for a number of respondents, with many expected to do the same work without any raise in payment while due to inflation and higher living costs. Similarly, the survey of cultural organisations, institutions, and policy makers also revealed concerns due to rising living costs. The need to artists and CCS professionals to take on multiple jobs to make a living was highlighted as an issue, as it stunts professional development and forces creative workers to look for employment outside of the CCS. One Irish organisation in cultural heritage sector noted that “*for artists, living conditions in Dublin are un-affordable; access to gallery spaces, studios etc. are difficult due to the pressure on space in the capital. Salaries are not streamlined, and they (artists and CCS professionals) may have to have a number of freelance jobs in different arts and cultural organisations in order to make a living that enables them to live and work.*”

2.5 Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on artists and CCS professionals

‘I had very little social security during COVID-19. My economy was based on multiple smaller sources of income, more project based. For example, I was renting out a room in our home for Airbnb from time to time as supplement to pay my rent and expenses, and Covid blocked this option. I had no steady monthly salary to count on, no fixed job to provide me home office safety and almost no places were hiring during Covid. So, it was hard to even find new sources of income, after the ones I lost.’

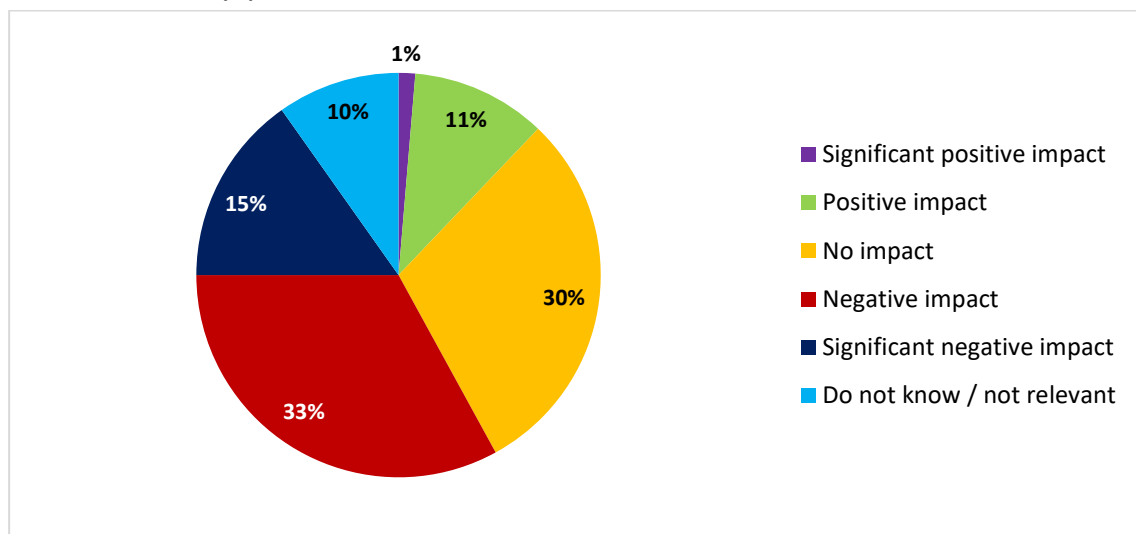
A Danish audiovisual/visual artist

The CCS have been among the sectors most negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The containment measures, adopted to stop the spread of Covid-19 pandemic, had resulted in halting/restriction

of non-essential physical production and distribution; halting/restriction of international mobility and halting/restriction of social life, which set in place a chain reaction, which resulted in severe consequences for CCS.¹¹ For workers within CCS, especially those with non-standard employment, it meant not only loss of income but also significant reduction of business networking opportunities and possibilities to attract new work.¹² This had especially detrimental effects for artists and freelancers within CCS, whose income flow relies heavily on finding new professional opportunities.

The loss of income opportunities was the most visible result of the pandemic-related measures for the CCS, which affected especially freelancers, self-employed and other atypical workers. This can be seen from the multiple responses to the survey. For those types of workers, the loss of income was exacerbated by the weak or absent social protection in most EU Member States. Results from the survey show that for **48% of survey respondents, the pandemic had a negative impact on their income.** Furthermore, respondents to the survey of artists and CCS professionals indicated that the pandemic weakened networking structures with the sector, as closures cut work ties, and delayed relationship rebuilding as borders reopened slowly across the EU. Overall, the collective input of respondents showcased that the loss of networking resulted in a decline in momentum and missed opportunities for those working in the sector.

Figure 15 Responses of respondents to the survey of artists and CCS-professionals as to whether their income has been positively or negatively impacted since the COVID-19 pandemic, 2024 (%)



Source: Panteia, 2024

The working conditions of artists and CCS professionals were also heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, as shown by the responses of the respondents to the survey. **66% of artists and CCS professionals indicated that the pandemic had a negative impact on their working conditions.**

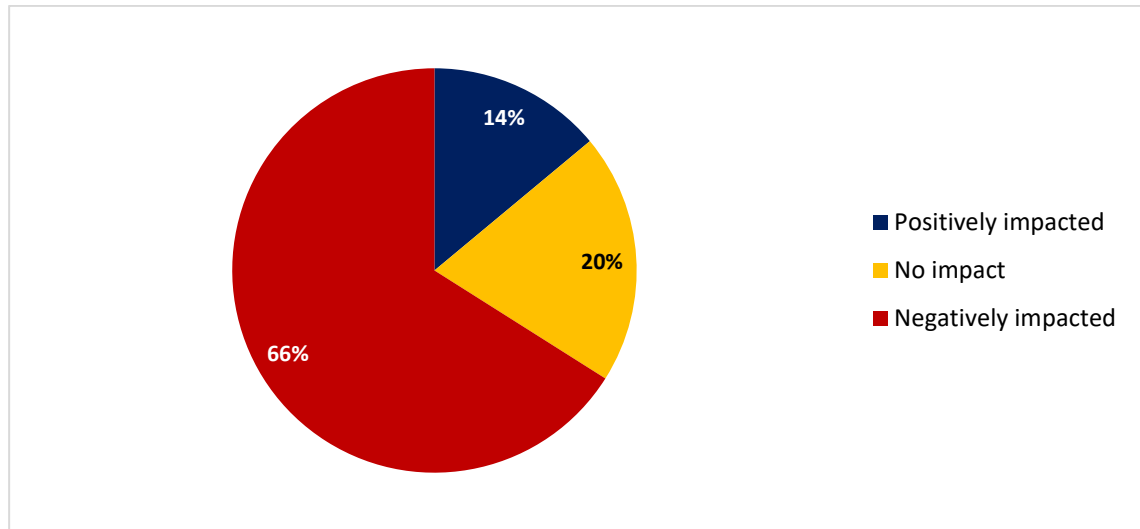
The survey of artists and CCS professionals indicated a dichotomy in the economic landscape: with either a scarcity of job opportunities or, in instances where employment was secured, individuals faced overwhelming workloads and considerable pressure from the risks assumed by organisations. Many

¹¹ CULT Committee (2021), Cultural and creative sectors in post COVID-19 Europe ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/IPOL_STU\(2021\)652242](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/IPOL_STU(2021)652242)).

¹² Olena Khlystova, Yelena Kalyuzhnova & Maksim Belitski (2022) The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the creative industries: A literature review and future research agenda (https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0148296321007141?casa_token=y3Qk_sHx6e8AAAAA:InomlExtGAziGniUajS62eIlq2xklqvZ5BJjSPKiD41DCusT5bSFU0wmU7PGArbFfBELfPto9g).

respondents stated that they lost their jobs or were made redundant during the pandemic and could not find work or were not re-hired following the crisis.

Figure 16 Responses of respondents to the survey of artists and CCS-professionals as to whether their working conditions has been positively or negatively impacted since the COVID-19 pandemic, 2024 (%)



Source: Panteia, 2024

Additionally, many of the surveyed cultural organisations, institutions and policy makers also indicated that the working conditions in the CCSs worsened due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They pointed out that next to the significant loss of income, the pandemic resulted in a loss in business opportunities and permanent damage to business networks in the CCS. Unfortunately, the situation did not improve fully in all Member States after the containment measures were removed. Respondents indicated that many artists and organisations in the sector struggled after the emergency funds were stopped.

A significant portion of respondents from the ‘artists and CCSs professionals’ survey **observed the significant disruption of cultural engagement caused by the COVID-10 physical restrictions**. This disruption has led to a decline in audience participation and has contributed to the gradual disappearance of the artist market. Artistic organisations and institutions noted that people continue to be less eager to participate in cultural activities and that the audience numbers still have not reached the levels prior to pandemic. This increases uncertainties within the sector and causes great difficulties when it comes to planning cultural events. One respondent representing a Slovakian cultural organisation noted that *“there is a slight change in the habits of our visitors, we have not sold out our flagship event and also a lot of tickets are being sold on the last days before the event which makes some of the planning riskier and we are not able to adequately reduce costs if fewer people come.”* From an artist’s perspective, one respondent in the music sector from the Netherlands noted that *“the classical music sector in which I work was not thriving before COVID-19, but after COVID-19 it has become much worse. There are significantly fewer public visitors to concerts, and therefore it is harder to make a case for what I am doing.”*

Despite all the above-mentioned detrimental effects that the COVID-19 pandemic had on the CCS, the respondents to the survey also identified some positive changes. For example, the halting of non-essential economic and social life resulted in many cultural sub-sectors looking to reach audiences in an alternative

manner. Thanks to the adoption of various digital solutions, artists and CCS professionals were able to support continued access to culture and compensate at least for a part of the lost income.¹³

The COVID-19 pandemic also served as an opportunity for innovation and exploration of novel approaches to producing and sharing artistic work, and necessitated the adoption of new working methods, such as remote and hybrid working thereby creating new opportunities. Some respondents to the survey of the artists and CCS professionals noted that it improved flexibility and had a positive impact on time and resource management. Furthermore, many respondents mentioned it prompted shifts to digital artmaking and the exploration of alternative activities, showcasing a diverse range of opportunities within the artistic community. One respondent working in the visual arts sector in Germany noted that *‘even though there were not so many exhibitions possible because of Covid, people have turned more to online sales. This is a great opportunity for visual artists, and I personally have benefited from that.’*

2.6 Gender aspects

‘Concerns regarding my profession are poor payment, lots of unpaid labour, unpredictability of income and workload, a high gender pay gap and an inability to take up career opportunities that require traveling due to my childcare situation’.

A German visual artist

Gender equality stands as a fundamental value within the European Union, holding particular importance for fostering diversity within the CCS. Despite the centrality of this principle, gender gaps within the CCS echo those in other economic sectors. While the nature of gender inequalities varies across sub-sectors and EU Member States, women encounter similar hurdles on their career paths. Remarkably, although constituting over half of the CCS workforce, women remain under-represented in leadership and decision-making roles. They grapple with unequal compensation, restricted access to creation and production resources, and their work is frequently marginalized, undervalued, and insufficiently recognized. Another notable gender gap within the CCS revolves around care work, whereby women continue to bear the brunt of unpaid care duties, amplifying challenges in balancing paid employment with private life. This imbalance perpetuates obstacles for women in the sector, and the pervasiveness of gender stereotypes further exacerbates these challenges, impacting women from an early age and shaping societal perceptions about their abilities and characteristics.

The survey of artists and CCS professionals also collected data in relation to gender differences within the CCS. The nature of the sector to give way to gendered trends in employment, with men tending to be more prevalent in more prestigious, decision making, and creative leadership positions, whilst also more likely to be in charge of more commercially important or famous cultural institutions.¹⁴ **Women are more likely than men to report poor working conditions**, with 48% of survey respondents indicating this, compared to 42% of male respondents.

A distinct **gender pay gap exists** in the cultural and creative sectors, linked often to less access to higher or more senior positions within the sector, as well as difficulties for women artists to exhibit or perform in renowned cultural institutions (galleries, theatres, and opera stages etc.).¹⁵ **88% of women artists and CCS professionals indicated that they were unfairly remunerated for their efforts**, which was the case for 76%

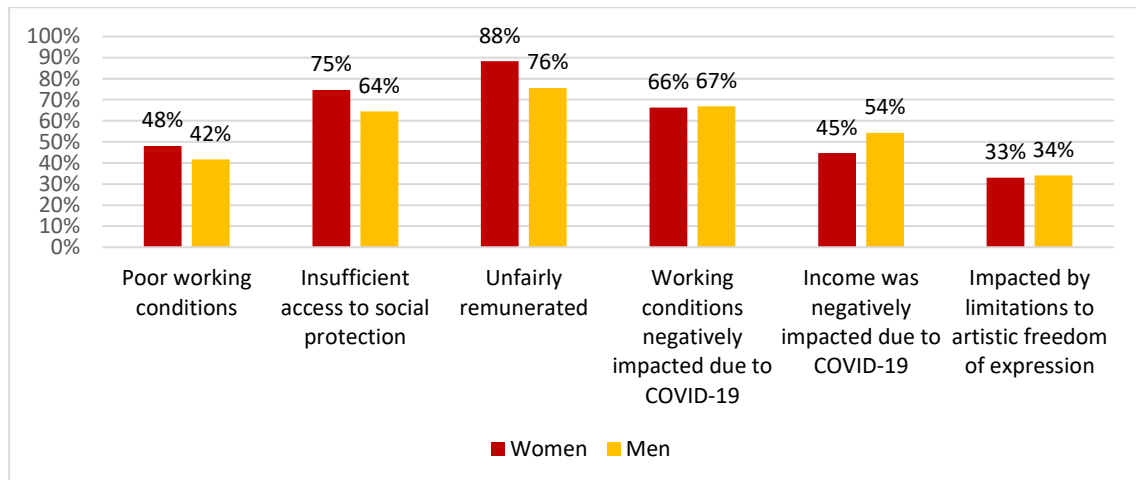
¹³ CULT Committee (2021), Cultural and creative sectors in post COVID-19 Europe ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/IPOL_STU\(2021\)652242](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/IPOL_STU(2021)652242)).

¹⁴ European Expert Network on Culture and Audiovisual (EENCA), ‘The status and working conditions of artists and cultural and creative professionals’, available at: <https://eenc.eu/uploads/eenc-eu/2021/04/21/07b74a1edf6f782478c55bd85899219c.pdf>

¹⁵ European Expert Network on Culture and Audiovisual (EENCA), ‘Gender gaps in the Cultural and Creative Sectors’, available at: <https://eenc.eu/uploads/eenc-eu/2021/04/21/b6493a69b83ef105fc878aa6b00ad5f2.pdf>

of men. **Women are also more likely to report insufficient access to social protection when compared to men** (75% and 64%, respectively).

Figure 17 Gender differences in relation to responses of artists and CCS professionals on several questions regarding working conditions, 2024 (%)



Source: Panteia, 2024

The survey shows also that **men working in the CCS were slightly more likely than women to suffer adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic**, regarding its negative impact on working conditions and income. There are minimal differences between the likelihood of being impacted by limitations to artistic freedom based on gender.

2.7 Artistic Freedom

‘Due to the polarisation of opinions and lack of (in all directions) open minded discussions, there is a fear of speaking out.’

An Austrian musician and performing artist.

Artistic freedom allows artists to freely express themselves, while at the same time enabling audiences to experience diverse cultural perspectives and challenge their own beliefs. As such, art plays a crucial role in vibrant democracies, helping to shape communities and foster a sense of belonging.¹⁶ In a European context, cultural integration and artistic freedom are crucial for societal well-being. The significance of culture for promotion of shared values and identity is underscored by various treaties and communications within the European Union. Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (“ECHR”) protects the freedom of expression, and specifically the freedom to “hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers.”. This convention does not specifically address cultural rights; however, it can be interpreted to include those by way of the other articles of the ECHR. Article 10 of the ECHR is included in EU law by way of Article 11 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (“CFREU”) (European Parliament, 2000). Furthermore, the Treaty on the European Union (“TEU”) lists the fundamental values of the EU in article 2, which includes “respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.”, as well as a way for the EU to determine whether there is a clear risk of a serious

¹⁶ Freemuse (2020) Security, creativity, tolerance and their co-existence: the new European Agenda on freedom of artistic expression. (<https://freemuse.org/media/ndreymmf/security-creativity-tolerance-and-their-co-existence-2.pdf>)

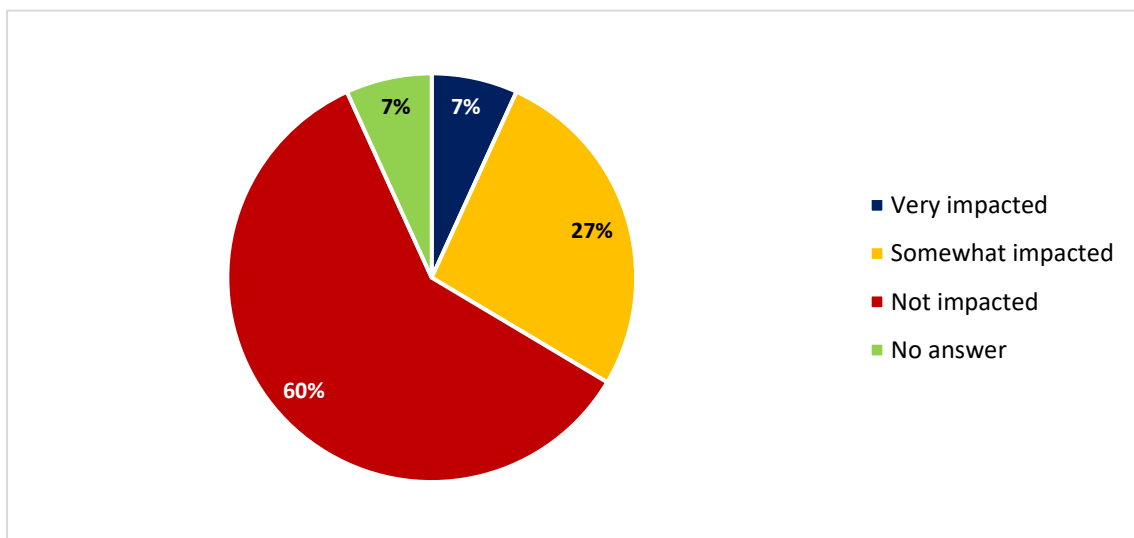
breach of the aforementioned fundamental values, which, in turn, is laid down in article 7 of the TEU (European Union, 2012). Article 7 has been triggered against Poland in 2017, and again in 2018 against Hungary.¹⁷

There is a **discrepancy between the legal obligation to protect artistic freedom, and its practical implementation**. There are reported instances of EU governments limiting artistic freedom of expression by way of anti-terrorism laws, specifically targeting musicians and artists expressing dissenting political views. There are also cases where artists have been censored, or have faced legal action, for allegedly offending religious sentiments or national symbols.

Furthermore, there have been reports of governments influencing cultural institutions to promote specific nationalistic or government-endorsed messages, restricting diverse viewpoints and expression. The interference in cultural programming limits access to varied artistic expressions. Additionally, there's documentation of restrictions imposed on artworks featuring LGBTI themes or created by LGBTI artists in certain countries.¹⁸

Results from the survey of artists and creative professionals shows that **34% of respondents indicate that they have been either very or somewhat impacted by limitations to the freedom to express oneself artistically**. Whilst the majority of respondents indicate this has not impacted them, this is still a significant percentage.

Figure 18 Responses of respondents to the survey of artists and CCS professionals as to whether they have been impacted by limitations to the freedom to express oneself artistically, 2024 (%)



Source: Panteia, 2024

What is also of great concern is that from the survey data collected, limitations **to artistic freedom of expression are on the rise, with 46% of artists and CCS professionals indicating that they have seen an increase in this over the past five years**. Whilst 54% of respondents indicate that limitations to artistic freedom have decreased or there has been no change, 46% is an alarming statistic. Respondents noted that

¹⁷ Freemuse (2020) Security, creativity, tolerance and their co-existence: the new European Agenda on freedom of artistic expression. (<https://freemuse.org/media/ndreymmf/security-creativity-tolerance-and-their-co-existence-2.pdf>)

¹⁸ Christophe Geiger (2021) 'Fair Use' through Fundamental Rights: When Freedom of Artistic Expression allows Creative Appropriations and Opens up Statutory Copyright Limitations, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/Delivery.cfm/SSRN_ID3726130_code2634299.pdf?abstractid=3725013&mirid=1&type=2

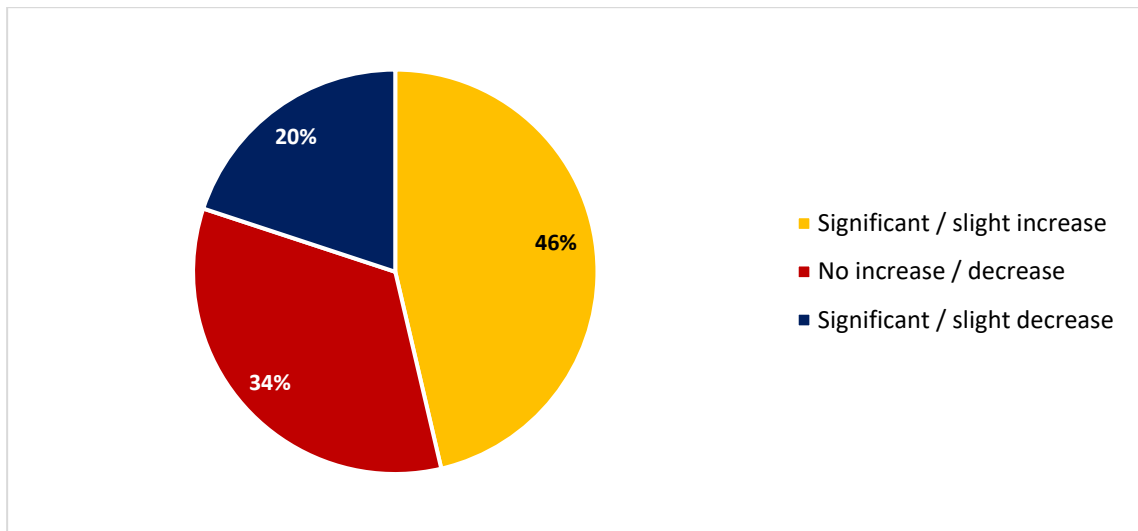
divisions within society are contributing heavily to this change, with an increase in xenophobia and racism, differing opinions and viewpoints regarding recent armed conflicts, as well political polarisation and authoritarian government policies also affecting freedom of artistic expression across Europe. Those limitations because of shifting political landscapes are seen particularly within the responses to the survey of artists and CCS professionals, whereby several noted that public funding often depends on political alignment, and diverse political opinions can result in diminished visibility in promotion, or censorship of some artistic products. In general, with the rise of polarisation, political correctness and right-wing parties taking over Europe, artists, and CCS professionals believe it is harder to speak their mind openly without any repercussions.

Some respondents also noted the role of social media on this issue, with it being difficult to address complex issues and questions without simplistic attacks from the extreme reaches of "left" and the "right" equally. There is no longer a safe space where complex and difficult ideas can be explored through creativity without getting caught up in massive and damaging social media attacks.

In addition to artists and CCS professionals, **35% of cultural organisations, institutions and policy makers indicated that there has been an increase in limitations to the freedom of artistic expression**, and 31% have seen a decrease. Similarly, to the responses of artists and CCS professionals, the surveyed cultural organisations, institutions, and policy makers point out that the freedom of artistic expression is endangered in the current world especially due to the rise of far-right governments and their influence over public debate. They also emphasize that the increased polarisation of society limits what artists can say through their art, especially regarding current important affairs. As was stated by the artists' support centre from Germany: *"Artistic freedom of expression must be more effectively protected. In Germany, we see artists losing jobs and opportunities when they speak out against the Israeli government. This action is immediately equated with antisemitic actions."*

The artistic freedom of expression is also limited in an indirect way through financing. Respondents to the survey of cultural organisations, institutions, and policy makers from EU Member States such as Austria, Slovakia, Greece, France, Germany, Portugal, and others, indicated that dependence on governmental and EU funding often compels artists to self-censor their work. This pressure has led to artists tailoring projects to align with mainstream topics and form to secure grants and funding. A German artist from the visual arts sector elaborated on this issue, stating: *"Freedom of expression happens mostly in one's own thoughts. Being rejected from official institutions over and over changes my perception of what I can do as an artist. So, I switch more and more from painting to interactive projects. This is not a decrease in 'artistic freedom' per se, but it is forced by the outside, instead from one's own artistic self."* Highlighting the cultural and social constraints faced by artists, one respondent to the artists survey mentioned that *'funding and prizes seem more attainable through the use of certain topics, ideologies, or modes of expression' underscoring the threat to artistic freedom, potentially leading to negative social impact and hindering job opportunities.'*

Figure 19 Responses of respondents to the survey of artists and CCS professionals as to whether limitations to artistic freedom of expression increased or decreased in the last 5 years, 2024 (%)



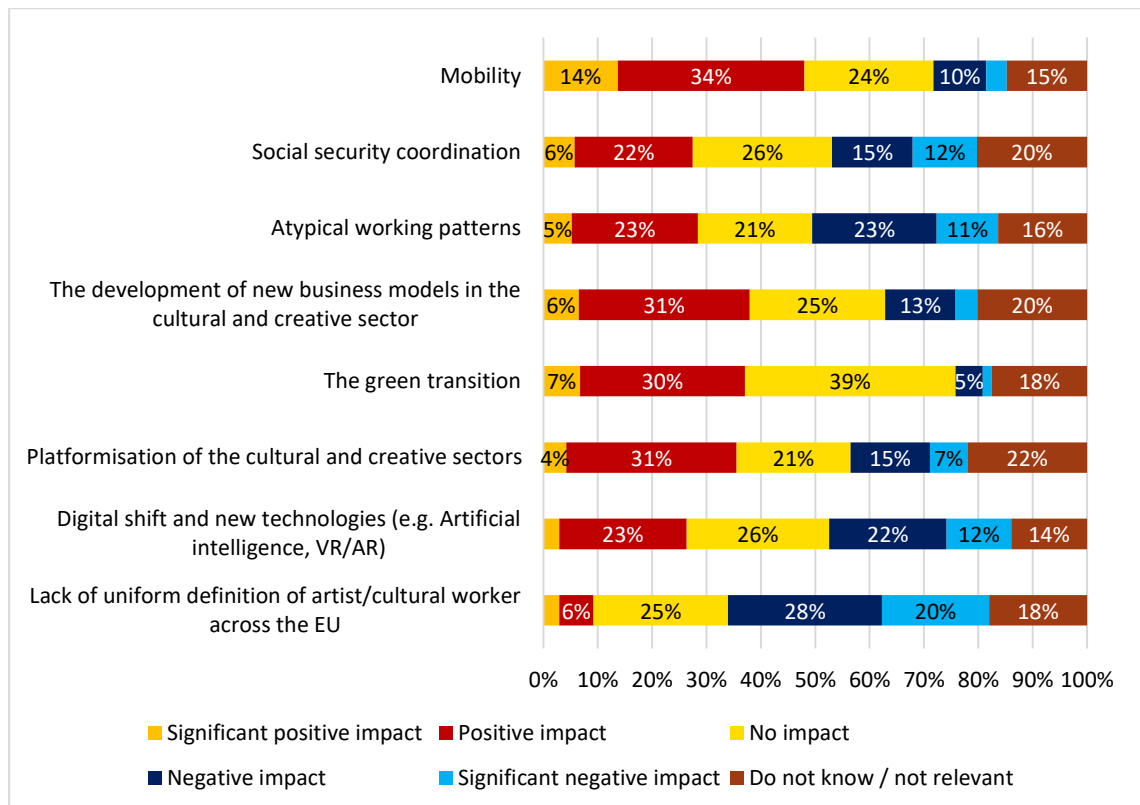
Source: Panteia, 2024

Within the EU, diverse types of expression (media/academic/artistic) enjoy different levels of protection. Respondents also provided their thoughts on this topic in the context of the survey. In general, **it was noted from several respondents that generally freedom of expression should not be a government and state concern, and must always be guaranteed, regardless of changes in government and across borders**. The media industry is considered by many to be a problem, as expression depends on who and what owns it. There are calls for a strengthening of the legal protection of freedom of expression and actions taken at the EU level against political interference in culture. The surveyed cultural organisations, institutions and policy makers indicated that artistic freedom should be monitored in the same close way that media freedom and that differentiating between the free types of expression goes against core EU values.

2.8 Trends influencing working conditions in the CCS.

The survey also looked to address the various trends that are potentially influencing the working conditions of artists and CCS professionals. The following figure presents an overview of the data collected in relation to these identified trends.

Figure 20 Responses of respondents to the survey of artists and CCS professionals regarding the impact of a selection of key trends impacting working conditions in the CCS, 2024 (%)



Source: Panteia, 2024

The survey data shows that a **lack of uniform definition of artist/cultural worker across the EU is a prominent issue**, with 48% of artists and CCS professionals reporting that this is having a negative impact on working conditions. A lack of uniform definition exacerbates challenges relating to the already unpredictable employment patterns of artists and CCS professionals and leads to weakened social protection. Artists and CCS professionals who responded to the survey stressed the need for a clear and inclusive definition of the artist's status, recognising qualifications and expanding the definition to encompass professionals across various creative fields. Establishing a legal framework, defining, both artistic and non-artistic roles, to protect labour rights is essential for addressing recognition gaps and ensuring their credibility of the profession. As stated by one respondent to the survey of artists and CCS professionals, it is necessary to *'acknowledge an artist's work as a profession which contributes to a society and as well to its economic system.'*

34% of respondents indicated that atypical working patterns are having a negative impact on working conditions. Whilst not unique to artists and creative professionals, these forms of employment are highly prevalent in the CCS. As mentioned in section 2.1, artists and CCS professionals are frequently involved in cross-border mobility, which is often a vital component of careers in the sector, although it can be unpredictable and is often dependent on the type of projects and opportunities that are available to an artist or CCS professional. **Mobility is seen as having the biggest positive impact on working conditions (48% of respondents indicating a positive impact)**, which is despite challenges that have noted in previous studies regarding cross border access to social security, taxation, and visa issues, amongst others.

The **rise of digital platforms in the CCS** along with the move to embrace **new technologies (such as AI and VR/AR)** have introduced both opportunities and challenges for artists. Data from the survey of artists and CCS professionals shows that **35% see the platformisation of the CCS having a positive impact on working**

conditions, and **26% see the digital shift and use of new technologies as having a positive impact on working conditions**. The emergence and transition to digital environments have allowed the rise of online platforms which can be seen from a positive and negative perspective. The digitalisation and platformisation of the CCS has facilitated an increase in visibility and accessibility for creators, fostering global connections, and has reduced production costs, subsequently lowering barriers for artists and creators.¹⁹ Despite eliminating barriers, artists remain wary about the practical implication. These digital spaces can contribute to a competitive market, where artists often grapple with issues of fair compensation, copyright protection, and the commodification of their work. This also leads to creators encountering difficulties in receiving fair and reasonable compensation for their work.

There appears to be a **prevalent concern amongst artists and CCS professionals who responded to the survey regarding the use of AI**, particularly, the unauthorized utilization of their work for AI training purposes. Several respondents remarked that the misuse of AI as a cost-cutting measure leads to the offering of lower rates, rather than utilising it as a tool to enhance creative work. One respondent from the books and publishing sector (active in literary translation) highlighted *“the widespread tendency to incorporate AI and technologies with the only goal being saving money and making a profit while disrupting the translators’ working conditions and rates, which are already poor.”* Lastly, a concern for respondents is the potential job displacement of human labour by AI. Several respondents highlighted the urgent need to establish laws regulating the ethical use of AI, to address these concerns. Several cultural organisations, institutions and policy makers who responded to the survey point out that despite some positive impacts of digitalisation in CCS, the development of streaming platforms does not result in increased earnings for artists whose work is presented there, and the use of AI causes many legal uncertainties when it comes to IP rights.

New business models in the CCS are seen as having a positive impact on working conditions for 37% of respondents. A demand for greater flexibility and a competitive economic environment has led to the emergence of new business models. In many cases, these new models favour classifying workers as self-employed instead of salaried employees.²⁰

Despite **climate change** posing an existential threat to Europe and there being considerable efforts through the adoption of green policies for a transformative green transition, towards sustainability and environmental friendliness in the CCS, the discussion on this matter was limited in the feedback received from the survey of artists and CCS professionals. As observed from the survey, a **57% of respondents answered that the green transition did not have an impact on the sector, or they did not know it had an impact**. One respondent argued that certain topics, including those related to the Green Deal, appeared to impose constraints on freedom of expression. Another respondent noted that the issue of climate change negatively affects the CCS sector, as the focus on green transition tends to obscure the struggles of artists (such as addressing working conditions in the sector). However, beyond these individual perspectives, environmental concerns or impacts in the industry arising from it did not seem to be a prominent consideration among the artists who were surveyed.

¹⁹ VoC (2021), Status and Working Conditions of Artists and Cultural and Creative Professionals (<https://voicesofculture.eu/2021/01/25/status-and-working-conditions-of-artists-and-cultural-and-creative-professionals/>).

²⁰ European Expert Network on Culture and Audiovisual (EENCA), ‘The status and working conditions of artists and cultural and creative professionals’ (<https://eenc.eu/uploads/eenc-eu/2021/04/21/07b74a1edf6f782478c55bd85899219c.pdf>)

3 Towards a framework to improve the working conditions of artists and CCS professionals

This section of the report looks at the current state of play regarding a future European status of the artist and outlines the key survey findings regarding the views of stakeholders and preferable approaches.

3.1 Relevant policy context

‘The status of the artist and the right to have access to what these changes hopefully will bring (social security and fair pay) should be granted to all artists working in EU, regardless of their nationality, state of citizenship and country of origin.’

An Austrian musician

In September 2020, the European Parliament (EP) discussed the issue of recovery of the cultural sector of the European Union, adopting a resolution calling for a common vision for EU institutions and Member States on including the cultural sectors in the recovery of the European economy following the Covid-19 pandemic.²¹ It emphasized culture as an important part of the economy, and a sector that was particularly affected by the COVID-19 crisis and containment measures, estimating that the sector faced up to 80% loss of its turnover in the second quarter of 2020. The characteristics of the CCS, including irregular income, self-employment, prevalence of small structures and atypical forms of employment, potentiate the negative impact of this loss on individual workers, although most if not all these problems were faced by the sector prior to the pandemic, with it only highlighting the structural issues within the sector.

The following year, the European Parliament adopted another resolution concerning the situation of artists, calling for the European Commission (EC) to establish **a common framework for artists working conditions and minimum standards across EU**.²² The common protection should also cover freelancers and self-employed, who should be allowed to participate in collective bargaining. The EP emphasised that differences in regulation of status of artists between Member States are hindering the cross-border artistic collaboration and are limiting the mobility of artist and cultural workers. Therefore, Member States should work toward mutual recognition of artistic qualifications and diplomas, to remove all barriers to cross-border movement of artists, including softening visa regulations, as well as revising the taxation and social security administrative procedures. The EP also called for actions to protect freedom of expression and artistic freedom, urging the EC to penalise Member States which unlawfully limit and fail to uphold those freedoms.

²¹ European Parliament (2020) European Parliament resolution of 17 September 2020 on the cultural recovery of Europe (2020/2708(RSP)) (<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/5e874f0a-1b42-11ec-b4fe-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>).

²² European Parliament (2021) MEPs call for minimum social standards for artists and cultural workers (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20211014IPR14924/meps-call-for-minimum-social-standards-for-artists-and-cultural-workers>).

On 20 October 2023, a draft legislative initiative on improving living and working conditions of artists and cultural workers was adopted, which highlighted the precarious working conditions and uncertain legal status of the artists within the European Union.²³ On 25 October 2023, the Committee on Culture and Education together with Committee on Employment and Social Affairs adopted a Report with recommendations to the European Commission on an EU framework for the social and professional situation of artists and workers in the CCS. The initiator of the report are MEPs Domènec Ruiz Devesa (S&D, Spain) and Antonius Manders (EPP, The Netherlands). The European Parliament urged the Commission to create an EU Framework in the cultural to improve social and working conditions, using both legislative and non-legislative tools.²⁴

This was quickly followed on 14 November 2023 by a European added value assessment on a **‘EU framework for the social and professional situation of artists and workers in the cultural and creative sectors’**, which was published by the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS).²⁵ This report emphasised the difficult situation faced by workers within the CCS, emphasizing the popularity of atypical employment and high mobility within the sector. It indicates that the current EU framework focuses primarily on artists with standard form of employment and that the social protection of self-employed is excluded from EU-level regulations. This results in impairing of the access to the unemployment benefits, pensions, occupational accidents and sickness benefits and other benefits to the workers in CCS, especially when they work within cross-border situations. Based on those regulatory gaps concerning especially access to social protection, tackling bogus self-employment, and supporting cross-border mobility, there is a need for coordinated approach at both EU and the national level. Four policy options were presented (which are not necessarily excluding themselves and could be adopted in a complimentary way):

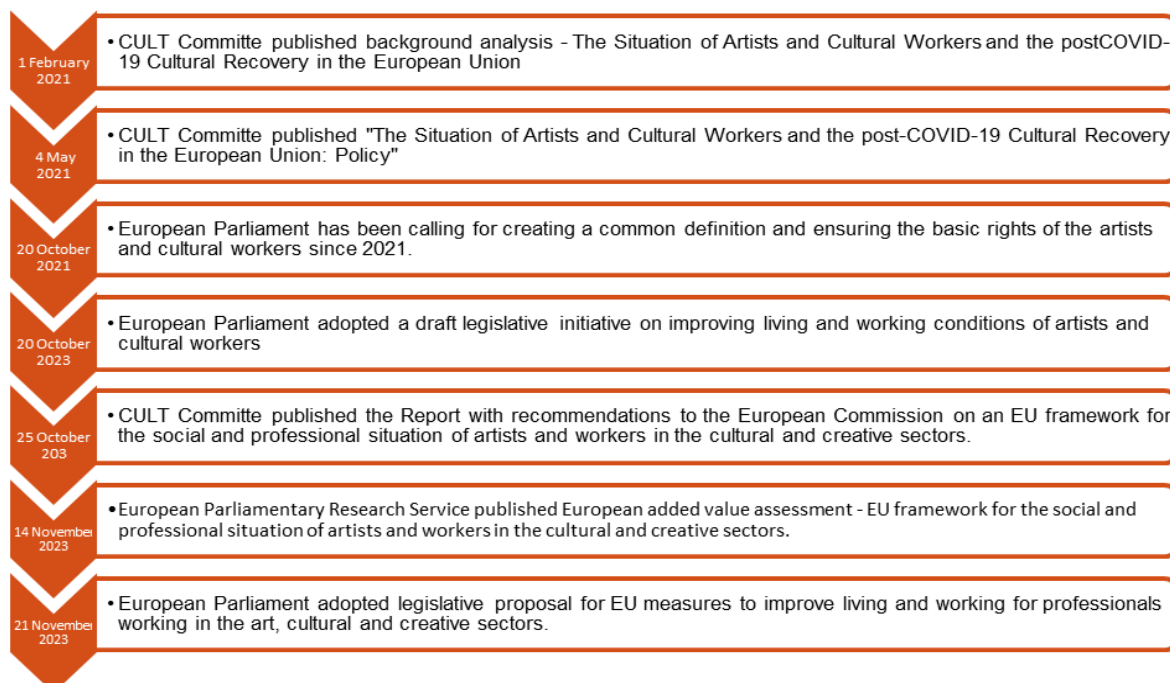
- Enhancing existing non-legal frameworks including, for example open method of coordination and tackling bogus self-employment through European Labour Authority (ELA).
- Amending the legal framework, especially Posting of Workers Directive and Regulation (EU) 987/2009, as well as changing the design of EU funds.
- Setting up a European platform to tackle the challenges that workers in CCS face, using a holistic EU level approach.
- Exploring the possibility of adopting a new framework Directive that would aim to close all regulatory gaps.

On 21 November 2023, the legislative proposal of the European Parliament to the Commission to improve the working conditions of artists was passed with 433 votes in favour, 100 against and 99 abstentions. The initiative called for a European Framework including legislative and non-legislative tools aiming at improving social and professional conditions within the artistic sectors. This package should include a Directive on working conditions and proper recognition of the employment status. Another aspect should be Council’s decision to work towards establishing a European standard within the sector, through for example a European platform for exchange of the best practices and creating mutual understanding between Member States. Additionally, the European Parliament is calling for establishing a new cycle of EU programmes of funding the creative sector, such as Creative Europe and European Horizon. Those programmes can be used to effectively oblige EU and the recipients of financial aids to comply with the international standards for the protection of artists’ rights, for example those set by the International Labour Organisation, and national standards, concerning especially social protection for artis and fair pay, including periods spend on rehearsals.

²³ European Parliament (2023) Status of the artist: improve working conditions of artists and cultural workers (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20231023IPR08139/status-of-the-artist-improve-working-conditions-of-artists-and-cultural-workers>).

²⁴ Cultural Action Europe (2023) EU Parliament endorses a directive on working conditions in the cultural field (<https://cultureactioneurope.org/news/eu-parliament-endorses-working-conditions-in-the-cultural-field/>).

²⁵ European Parliamentary Research Service (2023) EU framework for the social and professional situation of artists and workers in the cultural and creative sectors ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_STU\(2023\)747426](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_STU(2023)747426)).



Source: Panteia, 2024

The European Commission has also been addressing the issue of the status and working conditions. In 2020, **the European Expert Network on Culture and Audiovisual (EENCA) carried out a study on the status and working condition of artists and CCS professionals**, as input for the working group of the EU Open Method of Coordination (OMC) group of Member States' experts on 'The status and working conditions of artists and cultural and creative professionals'.²⁶ The resulting OMC report presents an overview of various measures and systems, compiling best practices to advance further policy learning and development.

In addition to the OMC expert group, a proposal for an online platform was suggested to disseminate information on the working conditions of artists and creative professionals across Member States. The resulting platform, **Creatives Unite**, is a one-stop-shop for the Cultural and Creative Sectors in the EU and beyond.²⁷ The platform aims to bridge the gap between artists and the overall ecosystem by giving voice to creators around Europe and gathering existing information about creative opportunities and mobility schemes, events, good practice examples, research, tools and much more on one platform. This platform relies on data collected in collaboration with social partners from various CCS and will be regularly updated to incorporate new measures.

The **Council's resolution on the EU work plan for culture (2023-2026)** focuses on four main priorities, one of which addresses artists and cultural professionals. According to it, artists typically pursue careers centered around projects and often engage in high levels of mobility. Furthermore, their income is often irregular, leading them to take on multiple jobs to sustain their livelihood. During the pandemic, the CCS demonstrated remarkable adaptability to the circumstances. However, they faced significant repercussions and continue to be impacted by the aftermath of COVID-19.

²⁶ European Expert Network on Culture and Audiovisual (EENCA), 'The status and working conditions of artists and cultural and creative professionals', available at: <https://eenc.eu/uploads/eenc-eu/2021/04/21/07b74a1edf6f782478c55bd85899219c.pdf>

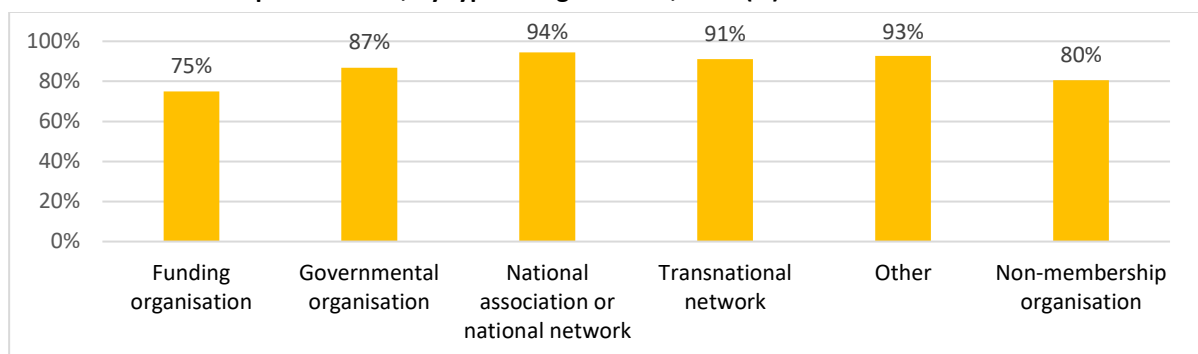
²⁷ See <https://creativesunite.eu/>

3.2 Survey findings

Both the survey of artists/CCS professionals and the survey of cultural organisations, institutions and policy makers included questions regarding the need for and scope of EU legislation or measures to address the status and working conditions of artists and CCS professionals. This section summarises the main findings from the surveys.

Firstly, **71% of cultural organisations, institutions and policy makers surveyed believe that insufficient attention has been given towards the issue of working conditions of artists and creative professionals**. The survey also reveals that **89% of cultural organisations, institutions and policy makers surveyed indicate the need for EU legislation to address the working conditions of artists and creative professionals**. The figure below shows the different levels of organisational support for EU legislation based on the type of respondent.

Figure 21 Responses of respondents to the survey of cultural organisations, institutions and policy makers indicating a need for EU legislation to address the working conditions of artists and creative professionals, by type of organisation, 2024 (%)



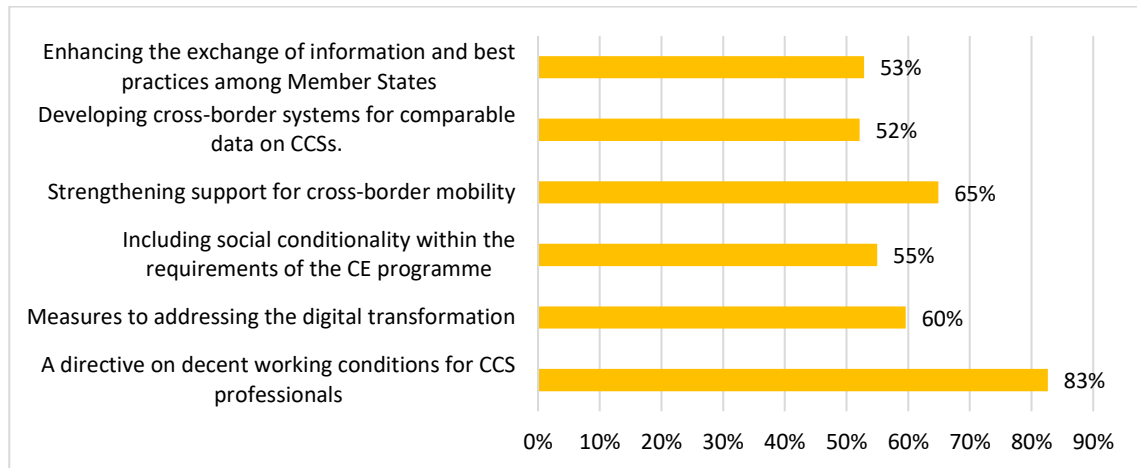
Source: Panteia, 2024

A key finding from the data collected is that **96% of cultural organisations, institutions and policy makers surveyed support the adoption of a European status for artists and CCS professionals** that would aim to improve the social and professional conditions in the CCS, improve access to social protection, the right to fair remuneration. Respondents noted that an effective legislative framework should acknowledge different professions within the CCS and the specific reality of their work. The establishment of such status should also result in the exemption of artists from the competition laws and regulations and allow them to enter into collective agreements. As stated by a representative of a Polish organisation in the books and publishing sector from Poland, *'creative professionals must be recognised as such and cannot be treated as entrepreneurs/business-owners in terms of taxes, social security, and collective bargaining. They should be explicitly exempt from anti-trust laws, as they are the weaker party in negotiations with publishers etc.'*

93% of artists and CCS professionals also show support for a European artist status, revealing a clear consensus on the necessity of such status. Many emphasised the urgent need for a minimum rate framework, which ensures fair compensation and considers market variations and different types of artistic work. Many respondents also urged the need of robust social protection systems tailored to the unique needs of artists, independent from residency and employment status. Given that many workers in the sector are freelance or self-employed and protection does not apply to them, such a status should also include a unified system covering pension plans, social benefits, maternity leave, holiday entitlements, and inclusive healthcare coverage.

Cultural organisations, institutions, and policy makers surveyed in the context of this project were asked what the content of legislation or measures to improve the working conditions of artists and creative professionals. The results are summarised in the figures and the text below:

Figure 22 Types of preferred measures to address working conditions of artists and CCS professionals indicated by cultural organisations, institutions and policy makers surveyed, 2024 (%)



Source: Panteia, 2024

- **83% support an EU Directive on decent working conditions for CCS professionals** and the correct determination of their employment status. Amongst the responses, many respondents pointed out that an EU Directive should regulate aspects such as working hours and safety at work and encourage Member States to establish minimum wage at the national level, to ensure that artists are paid for their whole working time, including rehearsals and overtime. Additionally, organisations also call for regulation of royalties and fees which are paid to the workers within the CCS.
- **65% call for a strengthening of support for cross-border mobility**, involving both increased public funds and facilitating access to information on tax and social security regimes in different countries. The respondents call especially for clear information regarding the taxation of work performed by artists and CCS professionals in other Member States than their state of origin. As one of the respondents representing a transectorial organisation operating at the EU level: *'With regards to access to information, the question is crucial for artists and culture professionals who are not sufficiently aware of their rights particularly when in mobility. Direct, free, and tailor-made access to information is crucial and should be reinforced in all EU member countries.'*
- **60% call for measures to address the digital transformation** that strike a balance between ensuring fair remuneration, protecting intellectual property, and stimulating innovation. Several respondents also emphasised the need for ensuring transparency of the income distribution of digital services and streaming platforms, as well as establishing protections against buyouts, especially in the audiovisual sector. They call also for amending the copyright law to the reality of the digital era and regulation of AI-created content.
- **55% support including social conditionality within the requirements of the Creative Europe programme** to contribute to the compliance with EU, national or collective labour and social obligations. Several organisations and institutions surveyed point out that guaranteeing good working conditions should be one of the requirements for organisations to receive any public funding. Moreover, the respondents also call for transparent application requirements and processes for the public cultural funds at the EU and national levels.

- **52% call for the development of cross-border systems for comparable data on CCSs and 53% for enhancing the exchange of information and best practices among Member States**, including through a dedicated platform. The respondents emphasise the usefulness of recognising artists' status for the improvement of collecting data regarding the working conditions in the CCS sector. They also point out that best-practice-examples and guidelines should also refer also to the living and working conditions of artists in rural regions and smaller cities in the EU.

According to the surveyed cultural organisations, institutions and policy makers, other elements that an EU legislative framework should include are ensuring access to social protection for artists and creative workers and the coordination of social security policies between Member States. Many of them call even for the harmonisation of the social security schemes between Member States. Additionally, respondents to the survey of cultural organisations, institutions and policymakers also call for **the reduction in the complexity of the application process for EU-funded projects** to encourage the participation of a larger and more varied number of organisations and artists.

Similarly, respondents to the survey of artists and CCS professionals emphasised **the need for a simplified administrative process when applying for funding**. Cultural organisations, institutions and policymakers also emphasise that it is crucial to establish effective mechanisms of evaluation and reporting to hold the Member States accountable when it comes to the implementation of the EU measures to the CCSs. Especially important for several of the respondents of the survey seems to be closing the gap between Western and Eastern European countries.

Contrary to the above, some of the respondents to the survey of cultural organisations, institutions and policy makers voice their concerns as to what degree the above-mentioned issues should be regulated at the EU level. They point out that far-reaching initiatives, concerning especially access to social protection might not be feasible and that **many aspects concerning culture are the best regulated at the national level**. According to the representative of a national association in the CCS from the Czech Republic: *'It depends on the degree, quality, and context of the standardization of the procedure. It may do more harm than good at the EU level. It is better to initiate such measures from the level of the state, which respects the peculiarities at the level to harmonize the legislation in an understandable way so that each artist does not have to hire an expert for understanding.'*

As well as looking at the possibilities for an effective legislative framework at the EU level, the surveyed cultural organisations, institutions, and policy makers were also invited to provide actions they have taken to improve the working conditions in CCS. Respondents across various countries including Portugal, Finland, Sweden, Poland, Czech Republic, Greece, and Ireland, recognised the potential of collective advocacy for effective and meaningful change, thereby expanding the reach and influence of advocacy. This collaborative approach extends to **active participation in the legislative process**, with a number of the responding organisations highlighting it as a key action.

Many organisations and institutions engage with policymakers, leveraging their voices to advocate for more robust legislation and increase attention to the challenges faced by artists. In addition to legislative engagement, **effective communication and consultation among stakeholders was also emphasised as an essential strategy for enhancing working conditions in the CCS**. Survey responses highlighted the critical importance of fostering a strong network to facilitate dialogue and consultation. These networks not only serve as a platform for sharing their best practices but also as a channel for amplifying collective voices to represent artists and CCS professionals.

Moreover, the survey data underscored the **significance of raising awareness and promoting dialogue surrounding the challenges faced by artists**. To have a greater reach, respondents have agreed that press

campaigns, public discussion and educational initiatives were cited as essential tools to draw attention and mobilise support for change. Many organizations take a proactive stance in supporting independent artists to empower them by providing workshops, mentorship programs and guidance for fair pay and employment rights. There is a general understanding among respondents of the importance of their role as the voice for artists and CCS professionals. Hence, many respondents have acknowledged the importance of being involved in research, data collection, monitoring, building knowledge on working conditions, and publishing those facts and findings for better-informed policy and initiatives.

Respondents stressed the importance of implementing policies and initiatives that not only improve the economic conditions of artists but also **foster a supportive and inclusive environment for their creative endeavours**. Initiatives such as providing residency spaces, offering educational opportunities, and funding for artistic projects further underscore the commitment of cultural organizations, institutions, and policymakers to nurturing the growth and development of the CCS.

4 Closing remarks from Culture Action Europe

The call for improved working conditions for artists in Europe is growing louder and stronger. The issue of an inclusive labour market and fairer working conditions was emphasised during the Conference for the Future of Europe, reflecting the concerns of European citizens. Later, the European Parliament [resolution](#) of 21 November 2023 (2023/2051(INL)) paved the way for an EU framework for the social and professional situation of artists and workers in the cultural and creative sectors.

Culture Action Europe is proud to have consolidated the cultural sector's efforts and contributed to the European Parliament joint report, which formed the basis of the resolution. Culture Action Europe facilitated an action group on working conditions for its members in 2023. The group met four times (25 May, 20 June, 7 July, 8 September) to monitor the progress in the political debate, contact the involved MEPs and political groups, and propose amendments to improve the text. The action group ended up drafting amendments to the [report](#) for a European Parliament resolution with recommendations to the Commission on an EU framework for the social and professional situation of artists and workers in the cultural and creative sectors.

The CAE community strongly and successfully advocated for a legally binding directive on the working conditions of artists with minimum standards to be transposed in national legislation. Our amendments helped to clarify and broaden the scope of CCS professionals, recognise mental health and discrimination in culture as critical issues, and highlight the precarious working conditions of culture workers. Culture Action Europe called for fair and equitable remuneration for cultural work and simplifying the procedures of funding programmes. The action group emphasised the role of Member States in implementing measures for improving working conditions and advocated for 2% of national spending to be allocated to culture. We also called on the Commission to effectively monitor breaches of artistic freedom as part of the annual rule of law reports.

The dialogue within the cultural sectors illuminated the concerns of cultural workers and their organisations first-hand. And this survey, which we were happy to launch together with Panteia, following up on our previous collaboration—a study on 'The status and working conditions of artists and cultural and creative professionals,' provides solid evidence for advocacy, informing EU policy in the near future.

The community's message is unequivocal: decisive action at the EU level is needed. Given the complex geopolitical and economic circumstances, the cultural sector is at risk of distortion if the EU simply maintains the status quo. Creatives will be increasingly affected by low wages that do not align with rising living costs, job losses from technological disruptions, a lack of social security, and restrictions on artistic freedom due to rightward shifts in governance. A recession, a decline in Europe's working-age population, and decreased government spending on culture, as UNESCO [reports](#), exacerbate these challenges.

In response to the European Parliament's resolution, the European Commission has proposed 13 actions. The plan focuses on strengthening and implementing existing legislation, from the Copyright Directive to the Minimum Wages Directive, alongside analytical exercises to collect further evidence for action. These steps will form the basis for the new EU Strategic Framework for Culture.

The Commission acknowledges the significant role of networks and will engage social partners in discussions on improving working conditions. Brussels is ready to support the cultural sector's internal negotiations for

an autonomous social partner framework agreement—a self-managed agreement between the associations of workers and employers. The initiatives also include a mutual learning programme and an exchange of best practices among Member States.

Furthermore, the Commission is considering the concept of social conditionality for the EU's relevant funding programmes, which would require grant recipients to adhere to high standards of fair remuneration and working conditions.

Culture Action Europe expects this survey to contribute to the Commission's ongoing analysis and to our own work as an interlocutor between the EU institutions and the cultural sectors in Europe.

At the same time, as evidenced by the survey results, the cultural sector strongly believes that the next step should be proposing a new EU Directive on decent working conditions for CCS professionals. This directive would define their status and establish minimum quality standards for working conditions to be implemented by Member States.

As Europe navigates uncertain times and in light of the new political cycle of 2024-2029, cultural workers face both challenges and opportunities. Therefore, we ask the Commission to heed the sector's opinion and act on the European Parliament's recommendations to protect cultural workers' rights and ensure fair remuneration and artistic freedom in a democratic and tolerant Europe by proposing a directive. Culture Action Europe remains dedicated to representing the interests of cultural workers and seizing every opportunity to improve their conditions in conversation with the political actors.

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