

Open letter to

European Commission / European Parliament/

National Governments / Press /



Launched on the initiative of the European Music Council on 29 June 2021 by a consortium of European associations from the art and culture sector. Supported and signed by AEC.

Claiming a front row seat for Music

“Music is at the centre of the well-being of our spirit, of our body and mind. It’s not only entertainment, it’s more than that!”

Angélique Kidjo in her keynote at the 2021 European Forum on Music

After more than 15 months of lockdowns, and hardly any concerts, festivals, collective singing, band or orchestra practice, clubbing and music education in or out of schools, the music sector in Europe and the world is at risk of turning into a stigmatised sector where only very few forms will survive.

“In addition to the current health and economic crises, humanity faces nothing less than a potential global “cultural catastrophe”, with severe, long-lasting consequences for cultural rights – and other human rights – if necessary action is not taken immediately by all relevant actors. Karima Benoune, UN Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights

We enjoy the recent re-opening of many parts of the music life and we hope that societies can start to recover from this unexpected pandemic. We welcome the "EU's guidelines for the safe resumption of activities in the cultural and creative sector"¹ and we confirm that the music sector has always put health and safety first and will continue to do so. Nevertheless, infection rates may go up again, and therefore, we turn to you today with the request to take into account the societal relevance of the music sector in your political actions. We are grateful for the diverse and rapid support that the EU and national governments have provided as a reaction to the crisis.² Now comes the time to think long-term and to fully acknowledge the artistic, social and economic value of the music sector.

According to the Study “Rebuilding Europe”³ the music sector faced a loss of 76% in turnover in 2020 as a consequence of Covid-19; the loss in music practices with a cultural and social value will be equally high.

Despite all the restrictions, the music sector demonstrated that it is flexible and able to adapt quickly to change. In the past years, more and more small, organic, non-hierarchical initiatives have seen the light of day. Additionally, venues, centres, festivals across the globe are changing their models and opening their doors in previously unknown ways, embracing concepts of digitisation, co-creation, co-direction, inclusion and shared leadership. Likewise, music education and community music practices have embraced digital learning tools for keeping up with active music making.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/culture/sites/default/files/2021-06/COM-2021-4838-covid_en.pdf

² We appreciate that the impact of the CCS for the economic and societal recovery was highlighted in the Council conclusions on the recovery, resilience and sustainability of the cultural and creative sectors from 18 May <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/49703/st08768-en21.pdf>

We would like to point to the joint open letter signed by more than 110 cultural organisations on the inclusion of culture in the RRF plans <https://cultureactioneurope.org/news/make-culture-central-for-the-eu-recovery-open-letter/>

³ <https://www.rebuilding-europe.eu/>

We therefore ask you to:

- **Ensure equal treatment** with regards to opening strategies. Over the past 15 months the music sector has developed excellent hygiene concepts, however, often without the result of an opening. All kinds of music activities must be treated on an equal footing with other areas of the society.
- **Acknowledge the role of music for personal and social development**, particularly in music education settings and youth music work – areas that are needed for the recovery post Covid when thinking of the young who especially suffered during this crisis.
- **Fully embrace the role of music for health and well-being**, which will contribute to physical and mental recovery.
- **Recognise the specific working environment of the music sector with self-employment, short-term contracts, multiple jobs**. The Covid crisis has entailed a brain-drain and some parts of the music sector are now facing a lack of personnel.
- **Promote fair monetisation of digital content for musical artists⁴ and the whole music value chain**. There are great digital solutions to provide musical offers, however fair remuneration of these works based on strong intellectual property rights is needed and should be distributed in a transparent and equal way.
- **Recognise the unique role played by micro, small and medium structures** in the music sector who take risks and provide stability. The strength of Europe's diverse music sector lies in the multitude of its stakeholder of which over 90% are small and medium sized enterprises.⁵
- **Facilitate the return to sustainable international and European mobility and exchange**, as cross-border music touring and cultural exchanges are vital for a full recovery of the music ecosystem and the societies in Europe.
- **Guarantee continuous long-term support for the music sector**. The deep ruptures that the Covid crisis has brought upon the music sector require continuous funding and backing.
- **Live the rhetoric!** We appreciate that you share the value that culture is at the heart of Europe, that the diversity of culture is what is part of Europe's identity. Today, we ask you to live up to these words and to ensure that music and culture are taken seriously when political decisions in all areas are taken.

We are convinced that the music sector has the capacity to help overcome the Covid-19 crisis. The music sector will contribute to the digital, green and inclusive recovery of Europe. We will use all our potential to come out of the crisis stronger and we ask you to support us in doing so.

⁴ a musical artist is a performer, author, director, composer, creator of music

⁵ <https://www.rebuilding-europe.eu/>