

EUROPEAN

INDEPENDENT

MUSIC SUMMIT 2

REPORT



Co-funded by
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BACKGROUND AND GOALS

IMPALA held the second edition of its Independent Music Summit, co-funded by the EU under the Creative Europe programme. The Summit brought together representatives of the Irish government, currently holding the rotating presidency of the EU, as well as representatives from the European Commission, the European Parliament, the European Investment Fund, the French Centre National de la Musique and the European Music Exporters Exchange, to exchange with IMPALA's members on how to help boost the independent music sector.

This event was organised as a strategic “closed-door” discussion, taking place in person in Dublin and online, and co-organised with IMPALA's member AIM Ireland, as part of an all-day series of meetings.

This year's overall theme was ***Boosting the potential of Europe's independent music ecosystem as a twin economic and cultural engine for Europe***, with a focus on the opportunity to grow the sector through targeted finance measures.

To set the scene and help start the discussion, an overview of some of IMPALA's 2026 reports was shared:

- Powering an independent and culturally diverse European music ecosystem ([here](#))
- IMPALA's Action plan for a European industrial policy for culture ([here](#))
- IMPALA's digital music plan 2026 ([here](#))
- As well as a snapshot of our upcoming finance report, planned for early 2027.

The discussion was organised around the following topics, which are further detailed in the report:

- Scene setting - overview of IMPALA's latest and upcoming reports.
- EU's support to culture/music under the current Creative Europe programme & future AgoraEU programme.
- Zooming in on the EU loan guarantee instrument for cultural and creative SMEs.
- Broadening the discussion to other funding mechanisms, and looking at national level.
- Looking beyond funding & finance - Promoting diversity/discoverability of European works, ensuring strong copyright and a proper AI regime.

As one of the goals of the summit was to encourage an open discussion, the meeting was held under the so-called Chatham House Rule, meaning that anyone is free to use information from the discussion, but is not meant to reveal who made any particular comment. This proved beneficial for the conversation, with positive feedback received both from members and guests about the constructive nature of the exchanges and high level of engagement from participants.

This discussion will feed into our work preparing for our report due early 2027 - also as part of our EU network project - on the financial needs of independent music companies.

PARTICIPANTS

Guests:

- **Nóirín Ní Earcáin**, Head of Copyright Section, Intellectual Property Unit, Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment, Government of Ireland (in person)
- **Ellen Larkin**, Officer, Intellectual Property Unit, Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment, Government of Ireland (in person)
- **Corinne Sadki**, Director of European Affairs and international development, French Centre National de la Musique; President of EMEE, the European Music Exporters Exchange (in person)
- **Jack Jones**, assistant to **MEP Cynthia Ní Mhurchú** (in person)
- **Jérôme Lavallée**, intern to **MEP Cynthia Ní Mhurchú** (in person)
- **Carlotta Scioldo**, Project Officer, European Education and Culture Executive Agency (remote)
- **Jorge Sanz Gonzalez**, Mandate Manager Strategy & Business Development, European Investment Fund (remote)
- **Arnaud Pasquali**, European Commission, Policy Officer, Creative Europe unit, DG EAC (remote)
- **Agnieszka Drzewoska**, European Commission, Policy Coordination and Advisor, Assistant to DG EAC Director in charge of culture, creativity and sport (remote)
- **Silvia Calbi**, European Commission, Creative Europe Programme Assistant, DG EAC (remote)
- **Maciej Szymanowicz**, European Commission, Policy Officer, Media unit, DG CNECT (remote)

We were also joined by a delegation of Irish independent music company representatives:

- **Ciaran Conroy**, Director of finance & European partnerships, AIM Ireland
- **Colm Hanley**, Managing Director, AIM Ireland
- **Odhran O'Brien**, Head of Membership, AIM Ireland

On top of our 11 guests, we had 31 participants from IMPALA's membership from across 21 countries in Europe.

DISCUSSION POINTS

A

Scene setting

To set the scene and help start the discussion, the summit began with an overview of the key findings from several reports published by IMPALA during the first half of 2026 including: 'Powering an independent and culturally diverse European music ecosystem', authored by industry expert Dan Fowler, published in February, IMPALA's Action plan for a European industrial policy for culture, published in May and IMPALA's digital music plan 2026, published in June.

Early takeaways from IMPALA's upcoming finance report were also shared. Slides were presented to help visualise the main findings.

B

EU support for culture

Having discussed the EU's support for music and culture during the first edition of our Summit, we took stock with our guests of how the discussion had evolved on one year on, also looking ahead at the future AgoraEU Programme 2028-2034 which is currently being discussed by the EU's co-legislators.

Existing funding strands and mechanisms under some of the more relevant EU programmes (Creative Europe, InvestEU) were mentioned, as well as the discussion in the European Parliament on the need for stronger and more dedicated support for music in the future AgoraEU programme.

C

Zooming in on EC loan guarantee

The discussion then focused on the EC's loan guarantee instrument for cultural and creative businesses, an instrument supported by IMPALA which has been in existence for nearly 10 years, first as part of Creative Europe and now as part of InvestEU.

While the instrument is generally deemed a success, the loans are largely concentrated across a very limited number of countries and sectors, with access a remaining challenge for many music companies.

D

Other funding mechanisms

The discussion moved to other types of funding mechanisms and financing options for the music sector, with a focus on music production, and looking at the national level for inspiration.

The French system, which is seen as a model in terms of support to music and music production, was presented, triggering a discussion about what mechanisms are mostly lacking in other countries. Some of the schemes mentioned include tax credits for music production, loan guarantee instruments, specific funding for music production, subsidies.

E

Looking beyond funding & finance

Looking beyond funding and finance while building on IMPALA's recommendations in its various reports published in 2026, the conversation concluded on other means to boost the European independent music sector, among which:

- The need to make diversity trackable, e.g. through an EU music observatory and/or the EC's future cultural data hub.
- Promoting the diversity and discoverability of European works, in line with findings in the EC report on discoverability.
- The importance of strong copyright rules, and a proper AI regime.

LEARNINGS AND NEXT STEPS

- The second edition of our Summit confirmed that the format - a hybrid and closed-door meeting with a few selected EU and industry guests - was the right one for this type of informal and strategic exchange.
- The discussion proved productive again, with a good level of interaction between our guests and members and a high level of engagement overall.
- In terms of key takeaways from our discussion:
 - IMPALA's membership is keen to see more strategic and dedicated support for music, and especially music production, at EU and national level.
 - The EU loan guarantee instrument could be made more accessible to independent music companies by working on the capacity building of banks and businesses, especially in countries where specialised financial institutions (like IFCIC in France) do not exist.
 - The EU and national governments are encouraged to introduce business plans in support of their cultural industries, as recommended in IMPALA's action plan for an industrial policy for culture.
- This discussion will feed into the report which IMPALA will publish in early 2027 - also as part of our EU network project - on the financial needs of independent music companies.

TESTIMONIALS



"One of this year's key priorities for IMPALA will be the focus on financing options for the independent sector, ensuring that the sector can reach its full economic and cultural potential. As part of our mandate, there will also be a continued focus on further developing the Central and Eastern European region. The second edition of our European Independent Music Summit was a key milestone of our work on these questions, and our exchanges will feed into our upcoming report on the financing needs of independents."

Dario Draštata, President of RUNDA Adria and Executive Director of Dallas Records

"Our work on finance has highlighted key gaps we need to address together. As independents, we have the talent and drive to lead innovation, we continue our call for a more coordinated approach across Europe to maximise the sector's ability to take risks and grow."

Geert De Blaere, Belgian association BIMA



"It has been a pleasure to welcome IMPALA members, industry guests and EU policymakers to Dublin during Ireland Music Week. This summit is a great platform to discuss the independent sector's most pressing priorities, including finance, copyright and AI."



Colm Hanley, Managing Director of AIM Ireland



"This is a significant moment for IMPALA as we celebrate our 25th anniversary this year and an excellent illustration of #WhyIndependentsMatter. Our summit was a meaningful moment to reflect on the milestones we've achieved and discuss the future we want to build together. We thank AIM Ireland and Ireland Music Week for bringing IMPALA's network to Dublin, and our members, Friends, and the EU for their continued support."

Helen Smith, IMPALA Executive Chair