

IMPALA **Equity,** **Diversity,** **Inclusion** **Report 2025/2026**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

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INTRODUCTION

As IMPALA's Charter for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) marks its sixth anniversary, we look back at the progress made over the past year and the challenges that remain.

A key milestone in 2026 was the launch of IMPALA's EDI Toolkit and new sector survey in April. This is an important step in the work of IMPALA's EDI task force, which has been developing this initiative over several years, with the aim of moving from commitments to practical action. Supported by our EU network grant, the Toolkit brings together a self-assessment, sector survey and free online training platform. It helps independent music companies and organisations of all sizes review their EDI practices, identify areas for improvement and take action.



Eva Karman Reinhold,
IMPALA EDI
Task Force Co-chair &
Chair at SOM

"The equity and inclusion survey integrated in the EDI Toolkit for the independent music sector is more than just a survey! Combined with the self-assessment tool, recommendations, training and case studies, it offers members concrete guidance on how they can bring about positive change. Step by step, in ways that work for their organisations and for the wider sector."

Over the past year, we continued to share examples and experiences from across the sector, including new research on the business case for diversity, initiatives from our members and Friends of IMPALA, and discussions with UK Music on Black Music and its economic and cultural contribution. Through our awards and campaigns, we also highlighted artists, professionals and organisations contributing to a more diverse and inclusive music sector, including Popkollo, winner of IMPALA's Changemaker Award, and the 100 Artists to Watch programme in partnership with YouTube.

Cultural diversity remained an important part of IMPALA's wider policy work. Our new Digital Music Plan and the report on the value of independent music highlighted the importance of supporting diverse music, particularly in the context of market concentration, AI and challenges around discoverability.

Looking ahead, our priority is to encourage more companies and organisations to use the Toolkit and take part in the EDI sector survey. Broad participation will help us better understand EDI practices and challenges across Europe and guide our future work. The first sector-level report is planned for March 2027. We will also explore ways to involve the wider independent music community more closely in our EDI activities.

IMPLEMENTING OUR CHARTER

Progress on IMPALA's 12 EDI Charter commitments in 2025–2026, adopted in October 2020.

01

MEASURE DIVERSITY IN THE SECTOR

IMPALA launched its second EDI sector survey as part of the new EDI Toolkit. Organisations completing the self-assessment also contribute to the sector survey, helping IMPALA collect data on EDI practices across Europe. The first sector report is planned for March 2027.

04

CELEBRATE DIVERSITY THROUGH AWARD PROGRAMMES

IMPALA recognised Popkollo with its 2026 Changemaker Award and honoured 19 women through its revamped Outstanding Contribution Award. The fifth edition of 100 Artists to Watch also highlighted emerging independent talent from across Europe

02

MAP AND SHARE EXAMPLES OF EDI PRACTICES IN EUROPE

We continued to share examples of EDI initiatives from members and other organisations. All Changemaker nominees are featured on our dedicated webpage and new company case studies were also added to IMPALA's EDI Business Case.

05

IMPLEMENT OUTREACH PROGRAMMES WITH COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Through its EU-funded Organisations with a Cause scheme, IMPALA supports community organisations recognised through its Changemaker Award, including MEWEM and Popkollo, helping them develop their work on diversity and inclusion in the music sector.

03

APPOINT DIVERSITY ADVOCATES FOR IMPALA BOARD AND COMMITTEES

Gee Davy (AIM) joined Eva Karman Reinhold (SOM) as EDI Task Force Co-chair. IMPALA sustained its work with diversity advocates across its committees and working groups.

06

PROVIDE EDI TRAINING FOR MEMBERS

IMPALA launched a free online training platform as part of its EDI Toolkit, offering five on-demand courses. We also organised online discussions with Mewem and UK Music to share experiences and good practices.

IMPLEMENTING OUR CHARTER

Progress on IMPALA's 12 EDI Charter commitments in 2025–2026, adopted in October 2020.

07

PRODUCE GUIDANCE FOR MEMBERS

IMPALA continued to develop practical guidance for members, including new research findings and company examples for its Business Case for Diversity. The EDI Toolkit also provides recommendations to help organisations identify areas for improvement.

10

PROMOTE EU FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

IMPALA regularly informs members about EU funding opportunities, including those supporting diversity projects. We also welcomed proposals for a dedicated music strand in the future AgoraEU programme, while calling for sufficient funding for the sector.

08

COMMIT TO EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN OUR OPERATIONS

IMPALA upheld EDI principles in its internal practices, including recruitment and paid internships. We also updated the guidance on the second representatives programme, with a new infographic explaining how diversity criteria can be taken into account.

11

ADVOCATE IN BRUSSELS

IMPALA maintained its focus on cultural diversity in its EU policy work, including discussions on AI, discoverability and its Industrial Policy for Culture. We also took part in discussions around the European Commission's study on the discoverability of European cultural content.

09

SUPPORT SECTOR INITIATIVES FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

IMPALA championed initiatives addressing inequalities in the music sector, eg an online roundtable with UK Music on its Black Music Means Business report, promoting mentoring and leadership programmes such as Merlin Engage and Music Leaders Network.

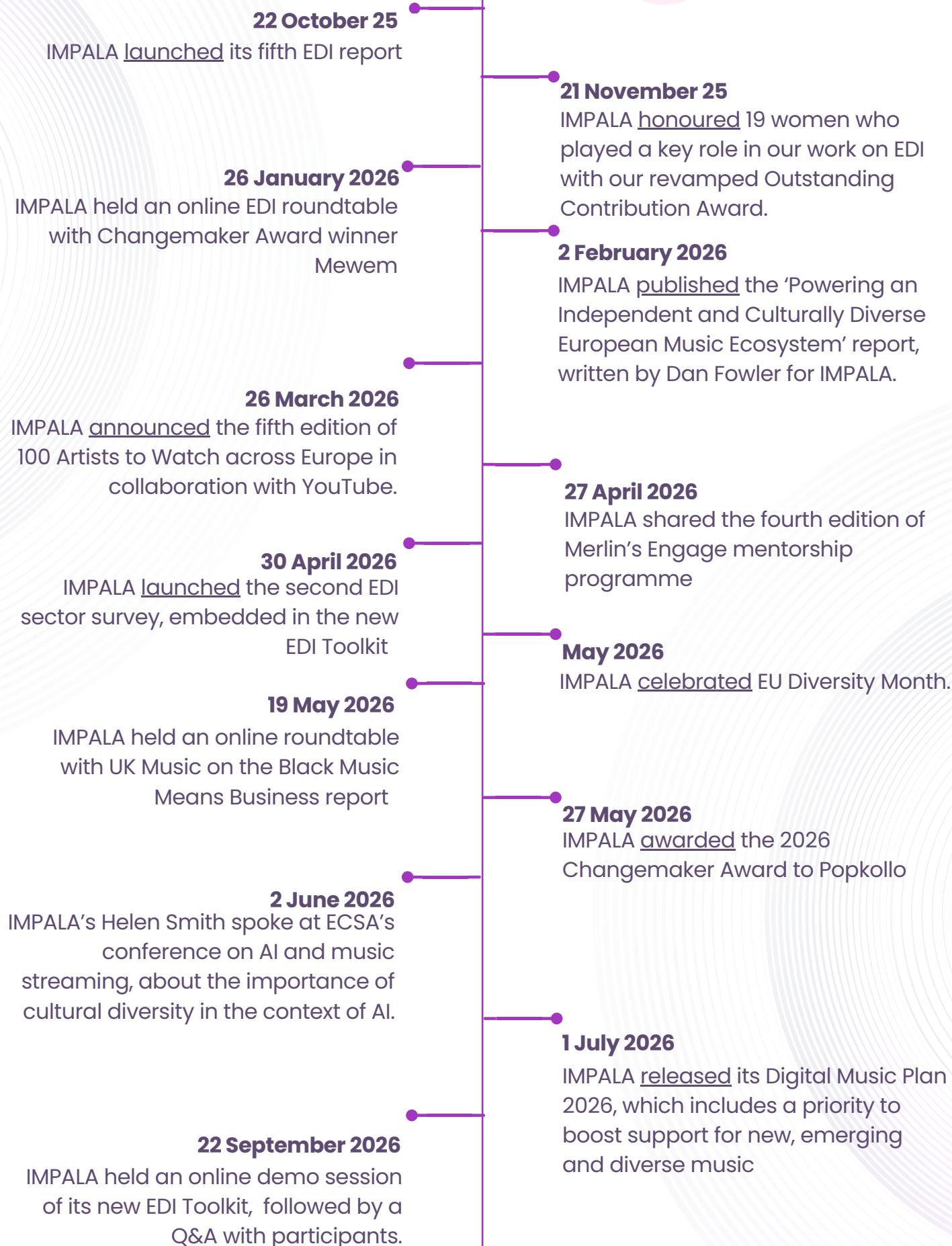
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WORK WITH OFFLINE AND ONLINE MEDIA SERVICES TO BOOST DIVERSITY

IMPALA proceeded to promote cultural diversity through its Digital Music Plan 2026, calling for better support for new, emerging and diverse music on streaming services, including improved discoverability and more local editorial support.



TIMELINE



BUSINESS CASE FOR DIVERSITY

The IMPALA Business Case from 2025 showed that an inclusive culture helps small teams improve performance, talent and creativity and audience engagement. The 2026 update looks at new research on diversity, inclusion and innovation. While these studies are not specific to the music sector, they offer useful insights for independent music companies and could inspire further research in our sector.

KEY RESEARCH INSIGHTS 2026



Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) support business performance through their effects on innovation.



Diversity and inclusion may support innovation, particularly where employees contribute to developing new ideas.



Diversity and inclusion work as complementary inputs – both contribute to innovation but inclusion is the stronger driver.



D&I in products, services and marketing can make companies appear more innovative and attractive to consumers, especially when integrated in their core offering.



Executive gender diversity may influence how inclusion supports innovation.



Training can raise awareness but there is little evidence that it changes the workplace practices, hiring or structures on its own.

WHAT COULD THIS MEAN FOR INDEPENDENT MUSIC COMPANIES?

These findings offer some possible areas for independent labels and other music companies to explore and could inspire new approaches and further research in the sector.

1

Invest in inclusion

Independent companies could explore how to encourage everyone to contribute ideas, share perspectives and take part in decisions.

2

Build EDI into your offers

Explore how diversity and inclusion could be reflected in artist development, marketing, services and audience engagement, beyond communication alone.

3

Include different perspectives in decisions

Consider whose perspectives are represented in leadership and included in decisions on artists, audiences and business strategy.

4

Combine measures

Explore fair recruitment, mentoring, flexible working and everyday support, rather than relying on training alone.

READ MORE:



Jacobsen et al. (2025)
[Read the study.](#)



Covington et al. (2025)
[Read the study.](#)



Monaco et al. (2026)
[Read the study.](#)



Zhao et al. (2025)
[Read the study.](#)

BUSINESS CASE

DIVERSITY IN PRACTICE

How the independent music sector is putting EDI into action

IMPALA SUPPORTER & PARTNER

MERLIN ENGAGE

Supporting women in the independent music sector

Merlin, a long-standing supporter and partner of IMPALA, runs **Merlin Engage**, a global mentoring programme supporting women working in the independent music sector.

Now in its fourth edition, the programme connects emerging professionals with experienced industry leaders through six months of mentoring, workshops and networking opportunities. It helps participants develop their leadership skills, build professional connections and progress in their careers.



“Joining Merlin Engage as a mentee last year gave me a network of generous women in independent music. Returning as a mentor this year, I got to pass that on. Few programs let you grow from both sides of the table.”

Francesca Caldara,
MENTOR

2026 HIGHLIGHTS



21

cities represented worldwide
with first-time representation
from Australia, India, and
Paraguay



90+

women supported since
the programme launched



18

mentor–mentee pairs



+20%

participation increase in
2026

“Merlin Engage has become part of our culture. It reflects our values – and, I hope, our value – by drawing together the strengths of talented female executives across our membership to foster the next generation of women leaders in independent music. I am especially grateful for the generosity of our mentors, without whom we couldn’t run the programme – and I’m looking forward to watching this year’s mentees progress and succeed.”

Charlie Lexton,
Merlin CEO

BUSINESS CASE

DIVERSITY IN PRACTICE

How the independent music sector is putting EDI into action



is an independent music and media production company, specialising in the manufacture and project management of physical music formats. As part of its B Corp journey, the company has spent the past year putting stronger foundations in place for Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) across its business, through three main areas:

1 Listening to employees

New survey questions on fairness, inclusion, belonging, psychological safety and equal access, plus voluntary diversity data.

2 Making a clear commitment

A formal JEDI Action Plan and public commitment to equity and fair access.

3 Introducing inclusive policies

Additional paid leave, including Gender Affirmation Leave, enhanced Adoption Leave and formalised Personal Leave.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Progress doesn't always start with large programmes – putting the right foundations in place and giving people a voice can be the most valuable step.

believe.

is a global artist development company offering recording, publishing and distribution services for independent artists and labels. Six initiatives show how Believe is working to embed inclusion across its activities.

Emerging career pathways

Office tours, career mentoring and Q&As with AFK help neurodivergent and disabled young adults explore careers in the music industry.

Leadership development

The PULSE programme supports emerging and newly promoted managers in developing their leadership skills.

Inclusive work policies

Formalised hybrid, work-anywhere and flexi-time policies, plus clear parental leave guidelines to support wellbeing, flexibility and long-term workforce sustainability.

Community & social purpose

Social-enterprise catering (Luminary Bakery), the OnHand volunteering app and Pride fundraising campaigns to strengthen allyship and team morale.

LGBTQIA+ awareness

Talk with Bobbi Pickard, CEO of Trans in the City to increase awareness and allyship.

Representation & music history

A screening of Paid in Full: The Battle for Black Music created space for discussion on representation and equality.

FRIENDS OF IMPALA - EDI in practice

Three Friends of IMPALA share how they approach equity, diversity and inclusion through artist support, workplace practices and access to finance.



What happens after reaching parity?

SonoSuite has maintained women's representation in its workforce between 46% and 50%, despite changes in staffing over recent years. For the company, reaching parity raised another question: how can employees have a greater voice and influence once they are part of the organisation?

This led to Influence Conversations, a series of open mentoring discussions within its Women's Employee Resource Group, covering influence, decision-making, organisational awareness and navigating complexity in growing businesses. SonoSuite is now exploring how to extend these conversations to other employee communities, while broadening its approach to diversity to include areas such as intergenerational collaboration.

46-50%

women's representation in the workforce

"Representation opens the door. Influence determines what happens once you're in the room."

Participant in SonoSuite's Influence Conversations



Access to finance for a more diverse music sector

beatBread's approach to funding aims to reduce the influence of subjective decisions and traditional industry connections. Its platform assesses applications using data on artists' commercial performance and future potential, applying a consistent methodology rather than evaluating demographic information.

Since its launch, beatBread reports having funded more than 2,000 independent artists and labels across 55 countries, while allowing creators to retain ownership of their work.

2,000+

artists & labels funded

55

countries reached

Question for the sector:

How can funding processes become more accessible and consistent for independent artists and labels?



EQUAL: A global platform for women in music

In 2026, Spotify marks five years of EQUAL, its global initiative supporting women in music. Since its launch in 2021, the programme has expanded to more than 40 markets and supported over 1,400 women artists through editorial playlists, marketing campaigns, live events, education and community building.

EQUAL artists have generated over 50 billion editorial streams on Spotify, while 59% of EQUAL ambassadors' listeners come from outside their home country. The programme's fifth anniversary also includes the return of the Created By Women Summit.

40+

markets

1,400+

women artists supported through playlists

50bn+

editorial streams

59%

of listeners outside artists' home country

"Over the past five years, EQUAL has grown from a space on our platform into a global community where women connect, create, and rise together."

Bel Aztiria, Lead, Global Music Programs, Spotify

BLACK MUSIC MEANS BUSINESS

The Economic Value of Black Music and perspectives from Europe

In 2026, UK Music, together with industry partners, released *Black Music Means Business: Driving Economic Growth in the UK*, a landmark report and the first of its kind in Europe. The report measures the commercial, cultural and community impact of Black Music in the UK across 30 years of recorded music, from 1994 to 2023.



The report estimates that Black Music accounted for **80% (£24.5 billion) of the £30 billion UK recorded-music market** over the 30-year period. It also proposes a definition of “**Black Music**”, recognising its roots and inspiration in the culture, beliefs and history of Black people and the African diaspora. The report also provides the first mapping of Black Music’s extensive range of genres.

However, the report also identifies a significant gap between the economic success of Black Music and the representation and opportunities available to Black talent. **Only 22% of the senior UK music-industry workforce identifies as Black, Asian or another minority ethnic group.** Black artists and professionals also face disparities in contracts, pay, funding and career progression, including a documented 20% pay gap identified by Black Lives in Music.

SEVEN RECOMMENDATIONS

The report calls for action across the industry with seven key recommendations:

- 1 Institutional funding for Black Music spaces and archives
- 2 Recognition of Black Music within education
- 3 Investment in Black-led organisations and enterprises
- 4 International export development
- 5 Stronger data collection
- 6 Improved community access
- 7 More equitable partnerships between industry and Black Music practitioners

BLACK MUSIC ACROSS EUROPE

Across Europe, Black Music and diasporic communities contribute to local music ecosystems in different ways. Some examples:

Lisbon

Lisbon has become an important meeting point between Portugal and Lusophone Africa, with Afro-Portuguese scenes contributing to new electronic forms and international networks.

Berlin

Berlin offers another good comparison, particularly around migration, club culture and hybridity.

Amsterdam

In Amsterdam, organisations and festivals, eg Kwaku Summer Festival have created platforms where Surinamese, Caribbean, African and wider Dutch musical cultures intersect.

EDI TOOLKIT

A practical tool for the independent music sector

IMPALA launched its **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Toolkit** in April 2026 to help independent music companies and organisations improve their EDI practices. It is co-funded by IMPALA's EU network grant.

The EDI toolkit is free to use and includes three main parts:

1. SECTOR SURVEY

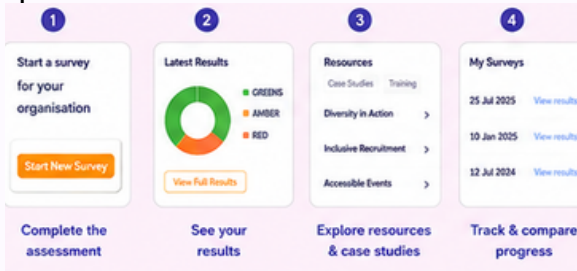
Mapping a picture of EDI across the independent music sector in Europe

A short survey that collects information on EDI practices across the independent music sector. The results will help IMPALA better understand the situation in different countries, identify common challenges and develop recommendations for the sector.

2. SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

Assess your practices, track progress and get tailored recommendations

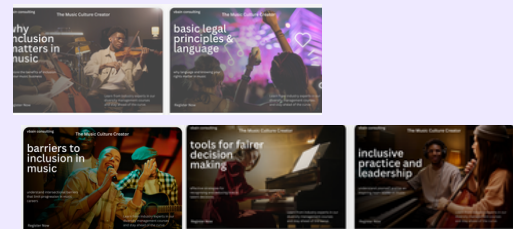
A questionnaire adapted to different types and sizes of organisations. Receive your own results and practical recommendations



3. EDI ONLINE TRAINING PLATFORM

Build knowledge and take action

Five short, on-demand training modules covering different aspects of EDI. Users can complete the training at their own pace.



GEE DAVY

IMPALA's Task Force Co-chair & Chief Executive at AIM UK

"The survey gives us the necessary insight to direct our activities and understand where more work is needed, while the Toolkit provides targeted knowledge and guidance for music businesses of all shapes and sizes. Built on expertise, community learnings and effective programmes, these help us all towards a more truly diverse, inclusive, and representative independent music sector."



Your results, a wider sector picture

Organisations completing the self-assessment also contribute to the wider sector survey, without having to fill it in separately. You receive feedback on your own practices, while also helping IMPALA build a better understanding of EDI practices across the independent music sector.



Take part in the EDI sector survey

Your contribution will help IMPALA identify EDI challenges and priorities in the sector and the survey findings will contribute to IMPALA's sector report, planned for spring 2027.

Complete the EDI survey

(around 5 minutes)



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

FÉLIN



Since 2009, FÉLIN (French National Federation of Independent Labels and Distributors) has represented over 400 organisations, key players in independent music creation and guarantors of cultural diversity and its democratisation.

Indies First Campaign

Held annually throughout October or November, Indies First is a nationwide campaign supported by FÉLIN's campaign, celebrating the independent music ecosystem – labels, distributors, artists and independent record stores – which contributes to fostering musical vitality and cultural diversity.

For its 7th edition, Indies First brings together 84 independent labels and 6 physical distributors, highlighting 30 independent albums selected for the campaign. The selection will be revealed on 1 November 2026, when the campaign officially launches. The initiative showcases the diversity of independent music and encourages the public to discover and support independent artists, labels and record stores.



A playful, educational communication campaign encourages the public to support independent music through simple actions. A dedicated website and social media channels share videos, interviews, articles and album recommendations, explaining why the independent sector matters for cultural diversity. The campaign also shares practical ways to support the ecosystem, from buying records in independent shops and choosing streaming platforms that better support artists and independent labels. Indies First also works with higher education institutions to raise awareness among future music professionals. Media and platform partnerships further extend the campaign's reach.

2026 CAMPAIGN HIGHLIGHTS



6

physical
distributors



84

labels
involved



30

independent
albums promoted



39

record stores
participating

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

AIM UK



The Association of Independent Music (AIM) UK continues to support equity, diversity and inclusion through its own practices, member services and partnerships across the music industry. Its work covers several areas:

1

Access to careers

Through the **Amplify Apprenticeship Scheme**, in partnership with Amazon Music and Women In Ctrl, AIM supports opportunities for underrepresented talent. Other initiatives include the **Small Label Group Mentor Programme**, connecting independent labels with experienced mentors, and sponsorship of **Cre8ing Vision**, helping young people gain insights into the music industry

2

Internal EDI practices

AIM has introduced inclusive employment policies, signed up to the **Real Living Wage** and adopted a board **Code of Conduct** covering anti-racism, bullying, harassment and micro-aggressions, which is also available to members. Regular diversity surveys of its team and board help inform its internal practices.

3

Regional inclusion

AIM organises **regional roundtables** and works with local music communities across the UK, including through partnerships with **Bristol Beacon** and **Tileyard North**. Its **Outside of London Discount** offers reduced event ticket prices for members based outside London, recognising additional costs and barriers they may face.

4

Awards & collaboration

AIM supports initiatives incl. **Power Up**, the **Independent Music Awards' DEI Champion Award** (won by ESEA Music in 2025) and the **Women in Music Awards**. It also works with organisations including She.Said.So and Youth Music. AIM aims to include EDI in its conferences, from speakers and topics to accessibility and event planning. It also contributes to **UK Music's diversity work** and **IMPALA's EDI Taskforce**, co-chaired by Gee Davy.

PARTNER INITIATIVE

Come Play With Me is a Leeds-based non-profit supporting people from marginalised communities to develop careers in music. Its **Come Platform Me** programme, developed with Eiger Studios and Our House Studios, offers practical training, mentoring, funding and hands-on experience in sound engineering and event promotion.

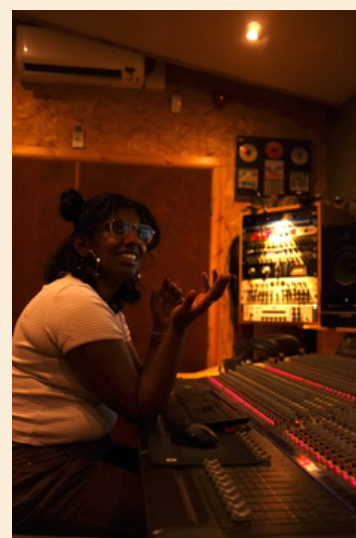
40+

emerging promoters supported

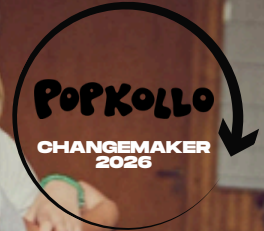
20

sound engineers supported

COME
PLAY
WITH
ME



IMPALA CHANGEMAKER AWARD



The Changemaker Award recognises organisations and projects making a real difference for inclusion in the music industry. Each year, IMPALA members nominate outstanding initiatives, with the final selection made by the EDI taskforce, shining a light on the work being done to support underrepresented voices across the sector.

IMPALA's 2026 Changemaker Award went to Popkollo, a Swedish non-profit organisation that has been running music camps, workshops and creative activities for girls and trans youth since 2003. Through their "Do It Together" approach, inspired by DIY culture, Popkollo creates spaces where young people aged 10 to 18 can learn instruments, form bands, write songs and perform live, with no previous experience required.

“Receiving the IMPALA Changemaker Award means a lot to us because it recognises this work and the people who make it possible. Popkollo has always been a grassroots organisation, built through local associations and volunteers. The award gives visibility to the importance of this kind of work and to the role that safe, supportive spaces can play in creating a more diverse music sector.”



Matilda Köpcke,
Operations Coordinator
of Popkollo



Summer Camp
participant

“I feel passionate about starting a band, and all the beautiful songs at the open stage inspired me to start writing my own music, which I had never done before. [...] I've learned that I'm not different and that I safely belong somewhere -- and that is Popkollo.”

More Changemakers

- [IndieBalkans](#)
- [Sisters Music Chain](#)
- [Women in Music Romania](#)
- [ESEA Music](#)
- [Lila Music](#)
- [Cat's Mother](#)
- [Come Play With Me](#)
- [Black Lives in Music](#)
- [Finesse Foreva](#)
- [White Hut Studios in Education](#)
- [Black Funding Network](#)
- [Midi Music Company](#)
- [Rechi project](#)
- [Saffron Music](#)
- [Ezra Collective Foundation](#)
- [Small Green Shoots](#)
- [Wiccan Play Blues label](#)
- [The Right to Sing e.V](#)
- [Global Trans Charter for the Music Industry](#)
- [Pachamama Culture: Music C·A·R·E·S](#)
- [Why Not Her?](#)
- [Psy-Sisters](#)
- [Asian Tones](#)
- [Stichting Backstage Pass](#)
- [Taskforce Go!](#)
- [Heal the Healer](#)
- [Musik Für Alle](#)
- [Black Entertainment Network](#)
- [Transtonica Festival](#)
- [Barrierefrei Feiern](#)
- [The Next Big Thing Festival](#)

2026

Previous Winners

2025 - Mewem [Germany](#) and [France](#) · 2024 - [Black & Irish](#) · 2023 - [Women in CTRL](#) · 2022 - [POWER UP](#)

100 ARTISTS TO WATCH 2026

IMPALA's 100 Artists to Watch programme, in partnership with YouTube and co-funded by the EU, returned for its fifth edition in 2026, marking five years and 500 artists spotlighted since the initiative launched in 2022. Curated by IMPALA members from across Europe, the programme highlights emerging independent talent recognised for their creativity, diversity and commercial potential. This year's list spans artists from over 30 countries, from Ukraine to North Macedonia, reflecting the full breadth of Europe's independent music landscape. Check out the dedicated webpage to read each artist's profile and listen to the full playlist and genre-curated selections on YouTube.



Helen Smith,
Executive Chair,
IMPALA

“The independent sector is the backbone of Europe’s music ecosystem. Initiatives like ‘100 Artists to Watch’ highlight artists and their labels who are shaping new sounds and making Europe’s cultural diversity world leading. Supporting these artists is about visibility as well as highlighting the unique contribution of independent labels and the amazing artists they work with.”

“As the 100 Artists to Watch programme marks its 5th anniversary, celebrating 500 artists discovered over the past five years, we at YouTube Music are proud to continue our partnership with IMPALA in showcasing emerging independent artists and their labels. Our role is to help these artists reach global audiences, giving them unique tools and visibility to thrive.”



Dan Chalmers,
Director,
YouTube Music, EMEA

OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION AWARD

In November 2025, IMPALA expanded its Outstanding Contribution Award as part of a revamped, EU co-funded awards programme. The first awards under the new scheme recognised 19 women who have made important contributions to IMPALA's work on sustainability and equity, diversity and inclusion, particularly through its task forces. Inspired by the International Women's Day 2025's theme 'Accelerate Action', members were invited to nominate candidates before the final awardees were selected



Alison Tickell



Anna Johnson



Antonia Lines



Arit Eminue MBE



Beate Dietrich



Caroline Hansen



Céline Lepage



Chiara Badiali



Fabienne Schmuki



Gill Dooley



Hélène Larrouturou



Iryna Gorova



Karen Emanuel



Lana Culig



Laureen Kornemann



Paulina Parvanov



Remi Harris



Tamara Gal-On



Vick Bain

[Find out more about the 19 awardees](#) 

FACES OF THE INDEPENDENT SECTOR

As part of IMPALA's 25th anniversary celebrations, our 'Faces of the Independent Sector' series highlights the people shaping independent music and the values that define our sector. Featuring interviews with Mariana Voronina (Best Music), Mark Kitcatt (Everlasting Records), Caroline Hansen (Warp Records), Andrea Lacroix (!K7 Music), Céline Lepage (FÉLIN), Luciano Winter (Stormi Capital), Pavle Eftimovski (Glitch Records), Kristiyana Georgieva (ANMIP) and Shrina Patel (Merlin). The series explores the freedom and independence that allow companies to make decisions in the best interests of artists. This aspect stands out in all these interviews. Independently owned music businesses are smarter, faster and fairer because having freedom means they can decide what's important. Be sure to watch our campaign video [here](#).

For many, that freedom also means putting EDI at the heart of their work:



SHRINA PATEL
Senior Director,
Business & Legal Affairs
at Merlin

"I would like to see music from different countries, languages and musical traditions brought more fully into the conversation, to ensure that culturally and artistically rich work continues to be made and monetised, and that we can continue to learn about other people through music."

"Equity, diversity and sustainability are becoming real business drivers, not communication exercises. Independents that take this seriously will attract the best talent, the most loyal artists and the most engaged audiences."



ANDREA LACROIX
Head of Sync & Licensing
at !K7 Music



MARK KITCATT
Co-owner and MD
of Everlasting Records



KRISTİYANA GEORGIEVA
Project Manager
at ANMIP



PAVLE EFTIMOVSKI
Founder of
Glitch Records



MARIANA VORONINA
CEO and co-owner
of Best Music



CÉLINE LEPAGE
General Manager
of FÉLIN



CAROLINE HANSEN
Head of Operations
at Warp Records



LUCIANO WINTER
Founder & CEO,
Stormi Capital

DISCOVERABILITY & DIVERSITY

A recent study on discoverability commissioned by the European Commission (2026) identified challenges and barriers, as well as opportunities to the discoverability of music, underscoring the importance of diversity.

Challenges & Barriers

Market concentration

Playlists and algorithms favour mainstream and nationally dominant content and reinforce existing listener preferences. This reduces the visibility of niche genres and music from other European countries.

Sheer volume of new music

So much new music is released each week that diverse European works struggle to reach audiences. Streaming fraud and the rapid expansion of AI-generated music make this even harder.

Insufficient metadata

Inconsistent, incomplete or insufficiently standardised metadata can hinder music discoverability and fair attribution.

Smaller and non-Anglo markets

Artists from smaller or non-Anglo markets have limited access to industry intermediaries and face opaque curation processes, which makes playlisting difficult.

Opportunities

Curation and discovery by chance

Human-curated models and new interface designs offer alternatives to purely algorithm-driven recommendation, helping audiences discover niche and diverse music

Conversational AI

Playlists often favour and reinforce mainstream and nationally dominant content

Tools for creators

Some platforms give creators greater insight into recommendation algorithms, plus tools for metadata optimisation and audience targeting, supporting fairer audience reach.

Beyond music streaming services

Viral trends, livestreamed concerts and crossovers with gaming are expanding music discovery beyond traditional music streaming services (MSS).

CONCENTRATION & DIVERSITY

80% +

of new releases in Europe come from independents

Top 1%

of artists attract 80% of total streams

85% +

of all streams go to catalogue music

1

A highly concentrated market

Major labels play an important role in setting standards on copyright, remuneration and inclusivity. But music is already highly concentrated, and further consolidation puts even more pressure on independents.

2

Streaming demonetisation

UMG leads the demonetisation policy. Since 2024, Spotify no longer pays royalties for under 1,000 streams a year, and Deezer and Amazon Music apply their own thresholds. According to Midia, this disproportionately affects the smallest independent labels.

3

Lower revenues for independents

Modelling by Professor Amelia Fletcher shows that even a small reduction in revenues for independent labels substantially reduces the total number of releases and total artist income.

4

Less cultural diversity

Independents are the risk-takers who acquire and develop new talent. When they release less, smaller genres and countries, including non-English language music, are hit hardest.

IMPALA continues to work on concentration issues to avoid a further increase in income imbalances affecting independents and a decrease in cultural diversity.

IMPALA's 2026 digital music plan

In July, IMPALA released its new digital music plan. As the music sector was about to hit one billion subscribers on streaming services at the time of writing, IMPALA put forward recommendations to reach the music market's potential to become larger, fairer, more diverse and transparent.

That includes a focus on “**supercharging support for new, emerging & diverse music**” and helps address the findings of the Commission's Discoverability study.



Key recommendations related to Digital Service Providers (DSPs):

- **Maximise local insight and editorial support across all digital services**, regardless of their position or size in the market, and regularly review how recommendation algorithms operate.
- **Maintain strong human involvement** in curation and editorial decisions.
- Encourage DSPs with significant market share to establish a **minimum level of local editorial expertise** (language and market competence) in every country where they operate.
- **Celebrate great music** by actively promoting emerging local & international artists, new releases, and diverse repertoire more than just offering all music.
- **Introduce measurable and transparent reporting** on discoverability and diversity, with annual reporting covering indicators such as representation in editorial playlists and algorithmic recommendations.
- **Strengthen connections between fans and artists** to improve diversity including through dedicated “superfan” tiers, artist-to-fan spaces, and other features that enable fans to satisfy their curiosity.
- **Provide rightsholders with more comprehensive data** on how fans engage with music, including insights into listening behaviour.

Recommendation for labels:

- Encourage labels and distributors to **continue investing in artist development, repertoire diversity, and audience engagement**, including new artist-to-fan features, while ensuring that accurate metadata and effective practices are in place to maximise discoverability.

OUR EDI TASKFORCE

The people that drive our EDI work forward
(alphabetical order – chairs and adviser first)

Eva Karman Reinhold

Taskforce Co-chair
Chair at SOM

Gee Davy

Taskforce Co-chair,
Chief executive AIM UK

Keith Harris OBE

Adviser to the taskforce

Burak Tanyolaç, BMYD

Céline Lepage, FELIN

Ciaran Conroy, AIM Ireland

Dan Waite, Better Noise Music

Francesca Trainini, PMI

Helen Smith, IMPALA

Jörg Heidemann, VUT

Kees van Weijen, STOMP

Lana Culig, Aquarius Records/RUNDA

Laureen Kornemann, VUT

Lina Burghausen, VUT

Luciano Winter, Stormi Capital/ STOMP

Mark Kitcatt, Everlasting Records

Nastasja Prévost, IMPALA

Roger Dorresteyn, Epitaph

Rebecka Sjöström, Playground Records

Sophie Netter, AIM UK

Santina Elena, STOMP

IMPALA's diversity advocates

Our diversity advocates help keep EDI on the agenda across IMPALA's committees and working groups. They raise relevant issues and encourage committees to take EDI into account in their discussions and work.

Executive Board – Eva Karman Reinhold, SOM

Management committee – Eva Karman Reinhold, SOM

Membership committee – Nastasja Prévost, IMPALA

IMPALA National association network – Eva Karman Reinhold, SOM

Collecting societies committee – Francesca Trainini, PMI

Digital committee – Dan Waite, Better Noise Music

Emerging tech Group – Gee Davy, AIM UK

Sustainability task force – Frank Shortle, IMPALA

EU projects committee – Nastasja Prévost, IMPALA

Friends working group – Nastasja Prévost, IMPALA

Copyright committee – Helen Smith, IMPALA

Finance committee – Helen Smith, IMPALA

PR and awards committee – Roger Dorresteyn, Epitaph Europe

RAAP working group – Helen Smith, IMPALA

Streaming committee – Francesca Trainini, PMI

Touring committee – Helen Smith, IMPALA

Vinyl pressing Group – Helen Smith, IMPALA

CEE group – Kees van Weijen, STOMP

RESOURCES FOR MEMBERS

On our website, we continued to update our [equity, diversity and inclusion resources](#) to share best practices and references. IMPALA members can access guidance, training and more.



Practical tools and guidance

IMPALA's [Charter](#)

[EDI toolkit](#)

[EDI Guidance for companies](#)

[EDI Guidance for associations](#)

[Business case for equity, diversity and inclusion](#)

[One pager](#) summarising our work



Research and reports

IMPALA "Powering an Independent and Culturally Diverse European Music Ecosystem" – [Report](#)

IMPALA Digital Music Plan 2026 – [Report](#)

IMPALA "Towards a more diverse and inclusive independent music sector" – [Report](#)

UK Music Black Music Means Business – [Report](#)

CONCLUSIONS BY IMPALA'S EDI TASKFORCE ADVISER AND CO-CHAIR

“

It is really gratifying to see that IMPALA has carried through on its commitment to advancing equity, diversity and inclusion. It shows a genuine desire to continue improving our industry and society for the benefit of us all. More power to you. ”



Keith Harris OBE
Adviser
IMPALA's EDI task force



Gee Davy
IMPALA's EDI
taskforce Co-chair
and CEO at AIM UK

“

Over the past six years, the focus of the Taskforce has moved from intentions to impact. In developing the toolkit, survey and training platform we look to drive action – starting with the data, progressing through knowledge and measuring outcomes. In the current climate of de-prioritisation, we must renew our commitment to building an equitable, diverse, inclusive and truly representative industry. The toolkit provides tailored results, inspiration and recommendations to contribute meaningfully. We call on labels across Europe to take part in building a better music sector. ”