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Live DMA calls for dedicated measures for the music sector in the next steps of the Culture Compass



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Live DMA welcomes the Culture Compass as a coherent framework that is broadly aligned with our advocacy roadmap and with the objectives of the Live Style Europe project.

The Communication rightly starts from a vision of culture as a core component of the European way of life and as a driver of openness, democracy, social and territorial cohesion, and economic strength, while underlining that its strategic importance remains underestimated in EU and national policymaking.

The Culture Compass also reflects several challenges that Live DMA repeatedly observes in the live music sector. It acknowledges threats to artistic freedom, precarious working conditions, unequal access to culture and increasing global competition.

This diagnosis is consistent with the realities faced by independent live music venues, clubs and festivals across Europe, and it matches core priorities of Live Style Europe, in particular our work on fair practice codes and better working conditions, and on safeguarding diverse, locally rooted live music ecosystems as well as ensuring participation and inclusion in live music.

We particularly welcome the proposed concrete tools that answer long standing demands from the sector. The State of Culture report, the EU structured dialogue, the EU artists' charter with guidelines and commitments on fair working conditions, and the EU cultural data hub respond directly to the need for a more systematic and evidence-based approach to cultural policy, including for smaller and independent operators. In addition, the strong emphasis on cultural rights and youth access to culture goes in the same direction as Live DMA's work on participation, audience development and inclusion in live music.

Live DMA also supports the Compass' recognition of territorial imbalances, highlighting that 38% of Europeans in rural areas see distance from cultural venues as a barrier to access. This confirms the need to use cohesion policy and other territorial instruments to support cultural infrastructure and offers, including live music venues, in non-urban areas. It is essential that future programmes of the regional policy translate this diagnosis into concrete measures that strengthen local cultural ecosystems.

At the same time, we regret the lack of dedicated measures for the music sector. Music appears explicitly in relation to online discoverability of European content, but the live dimension is largely absent, even though independent stages are key places of discovery and take significant artistic and financial risks on emerging and non-mainstream artists.

This omission increases the risk that live music venues and clubs remain invisible when the Culture Compass is translated into funding, regulation and national strategies. Because the sector is not explicitly named, we will need to ensure that live music venues are systematically included in cultural strategies and funding schemes, which is far from guaranteed today in several Member States.

From a funding perspective, we underline how competitive current EU schemes already are, as shown again by the latest Creative Europe results. The LIVEMX experience illustrates both the appetite and the unmet needs in the music field, with requests far exceeding the available envelope.

We further regret that sustainability in the Compass is framed mainly through design, architecture and heritage, whereas the environmental transition of cultural operators, including live music venues, also requires operational support and incentives for day to day practices.

Finally, the Communication recognises global competition as a challenge but does not yet propose concrete measures. Observation through the future data hub is necessary, but it should be complemented by a critical review of EU competition and internal market rules as they apply to media and culture, especially in a context of increasing concentration power.

In conclusion, Live DMA considers that the Culture Compass offers a solid basis for future EU cultural policy. We acknowledge the substantial consultation effort undertaken by the Commission in preparing this framework and we are eager to remain part of the next steps. We are ready to work with the EU institutions and with Member States so that forthcoming strategies and instruments respond concretely to sector needs and fully integrate live music venues, clubs and festivals as key cultural spaces in Europe.