**Promoting Europe's digital market through culture - Independent labels launch ten-point Action Plan as news of YouTube abuses resurface and the copyright debate heats up in Brussels**

27 January 2015

Independent music companies launched a unique Digital Action Plan today, calling for a new European industrial policy to drive the digital market through the cultural and creative sectors, which account for 4,2% of EU GDP and 7.1 million EU jobs.

The role of culture in Europe’s digital market will be one of the issues debated in the European Parliament today during an extraordinary meeting of the Culture and Education committee with Digital Economy and Society Commissioner Günther Oettinger. MEP Sabine Verheyen, Co-ordinator for the EPP group in the Parliament’s culture committee commented: “This Action Plan presents very practical ways to boost creativity through smaller actors and deliver a dynamic digital single market built on diversity."

One of the strands of Europe’s new industrial policy would be a range of measures to boost SMEs including independent music companies, who account for 80% of jobs and 80% of investment in new music in Europe today.

IMPALA also asks the EU to rethink how citizens, artists and businesses engage online. The “rules of engagement online” are important in the music world with reports surfacing last week that [YouTube is continuing the same abuses which prompted IMPALA to lodge a complaint to the EC last year](http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2015/jan/23/zoe-keating-youtube-block-channel%29).

With the debate on copyright a hot topic, the action plan takes a robust stance and calls on the EU to reinforce copyright as a fundamental right, a liberator of the creativity that drives the digital market. The importance of stopping the abuse of the so-called “safe harbour” exemption is also underlined, as well as not transferring creators’ rights to trade to those who are behind calls for weaker copyright.

Helen Smith, Executive Chair of IMPALA commented: “An industrial policy for culture is a pre-requisite to Europe’s digital economy. This involves reinforcing copyright and clarifying what operators like YouTube can and can’t do. Ensuring a successful single digital market also implies a host of other measures such as promoting diversity in a measurable way and devising a new regulatory, competition, social and fiscal framework for smaller actors.”

Michel Lambot, co-founder and co-president of [PIAS], one of Europe's leading independent labels, and board member of IMPALA, said: "A healthy licensing environment is fundamental. We look to the EU to take away distortions to the digital single market. It must be clear that “safe harbour” is no place to hide in Europe if you are running a music service.  Let’s couple that with a serious industrial policy that boosts smaller players, gets more investment, provides more exposure for all artists, and then of course quantifies the results. This is what our Action Plan is about.”

One of the ten areas flagged for action is growing investment through measures such as tax credits, new accounting standards and revised statistical codes. IMPALA also asks the European Commission to step up and broker a charter and scoreboards to boost diversity on European radio and other media offline as well as online. This is timely with the news last week that [European radio’s top 50 plays featured only one independent artist](http://www.musicbusinessworldwide.com/milky-chance-claims-top-independent-song-eu-radio-2014/).

The 10 points:

1.    Reinforcing the rights that drive the digital market and grow Europe's copyright capital

2.    Giving citizens the best digital infrastructure in the world

3.    Improving pluralism and diversity online as well as offline

4.    Revisiting the “rules of engagement” online

5.    Growing Europe’s “missing middle” by improving conditions for smaller actors

6.    Effectively tackling websites which are structurally infringing

7.    Increasing investment through a new financial approach to culture

8.    Introducing greater fairness in taxation

9.    Mapping how creativity works and measuring the sectors

10.  Placing culture and diversity at the heart of Europe’s international work

Helen Smith concluded: "The aim of our Digital Action Plan is to inspire decision-makers, ensure Europe’s position as a global power, and re-engage Europe with its creators and citizens. Our aim is to set new standards to make Europe the best place in the world for artists and other creators and for culture enthusiasts.”

IMPALA – the Independent Music Companies Association

70 Coudenberg, 1000 Brussels - Belgium

Phone: +32 2 503 31 38

Twitter: [@IMPALAMusic](https://twitter.com/IMPALAMusic)

Facebook: [IMPALAindie](https://www.facebook.com/IMPALAindie)

[www.impalamusic.org](http://www.impalamusic.org/)