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Performers greet the European Commission's move towards a better recognition of their rights

AEPO-ARTIS representing European organisations in charge of the management of performers' rights warmly welcomes Commissioner Charlie McCreevy's position for a better recognition of their rights.

In a press conference, Mr McCreevy yesterday expressed his attachment to a strong European culture and set his heart on having performing artists received the recognition they deserve.

Performers should no longer remain the "poor cousins" of the culture business, he said to explain his intention to table a proposal that the term of protection for the rights of European performers be extended from 50 to 95 years.

Contrary to authors, whose rights last until 70 years after their death, performers see some of their performances fall within the public domain during their lifetime.

Because of the current protection term limited to 50 years, a growing number of performers are facing the eventuality of being deprived from their rights on a recording their made in their early years while they are still alive.

This concerns large repertoires that are still very popular and much exploited today, like jazz, blues, country, pop or rock music, but also TV and cinema films that are part of the European cultural heritage.

The performers' community is particularly sensitive to Mr McCreevy's determination to act not only for the main featured stars but for all artists, as he made clear by saying: "As things stand, once copyright protection for sound recordings has ended, performers no longer receive any income from their work. Neither will they get any payment when their performances are sold on the Internet. For session musicians and lesser known artists that means that their income stops when they are at a very vulnerable financial period of their lives – approaching retirement."

While some elements of the declaration by Mr McCreevy still need to be clarified, performers see this involvement as a clear signal that their situation will no longer be neglected in the 'acquis communautaire'.

As a recently published AEPO-ARTIS study demonstrates, a number of rights granted to performers are still inefficient and a large majority of performing artists do not receive any remuneration for the various types of use made of their recordings on the Internet.

AEPO-ARTIS thanks the Commission for this long awaited move to better recognize the specific situation and the value of performers' rights in European Culture.

Contact:

Xavier Blanc, General Secretary
Guenaëlle Collet, Head of Office
Boulevard du Régent, 58
B - 1000 Brussels
Tel: +32 2 280 19 34
Fax: +32 2 230 35 07
aepo-artis@aepo-artis.org

AEPO-ARTIS represents 27 European performers' collective management societies from 21 countries, 17 of which are established in Member States of the European Union. The other countries represented are Croatia, Norway, Russia and Switzerland.

With different sizes and ages, they totalize some 350.000 performers as members.

In most countries performers' rights are collectively managed for both performers who are members and those who are not members of the collecting societies. Thus globally, the number of performers represented by the 27 member organisations of AEPO-ARTIS can be estimated between 400.000 and 500.000.

The membership of the Association is made up of the following collecting societies:

Austria: LSG
Belgium: URADEX
Czech Republic: INTERGRAM
Croatia: HUZIP
Denmark: GRAMEX and FILMEX
Finland: GRAMEX
France: ADAMI and SPEDIDAM
Germany: GVL
Greece: APOLLON, DIONYSOS and ERATO
Hungary: EJI
Lithuania: AGATA
The Netherlands: NORMA
Norway: GRAMO
Poland: SAWP and STOART
Romania: CREDIDAM
Russia: ROUPI
Slovakia: OZIS and SLOVGRAM
Spain: AISGE
Sweden: SAMI
Switzerland: SWISSPERFORM
United Kingdom: BECS