

## Collective management organisations support authors during the COVID-19 crisis

When the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, European collective management organisations (CMOs) were quick to mobilise speedy distribution of royalties and financial support to screenwriters and directors suffering due to the crisis. A much-needed help for many authors who do not fit the categories to benefit from governments' emergency support.

The cultural and creative sectors have suffered tremendously as they were first to be shut down. Even if some activities are slowly returning, such as shootings and cinemas, there is still a very long way to go. It is therefore urgent to implement support plans at the national and European levels that answer to the magnitude of the crisis and ensure that these measures target authors' professional survival and growth.

Among SAA's 33 members, 20 CMOs from 15 countries reported in an SAA's survey that they have either used their regular social funds, established emergency funds or a joint fund with the film institute to help audiovisual authors in financial difficulty due to the COVID-19 crisis. They are also supporting authors via fast-track distributions of royalties, more money distributed, advance payments, donations to other funds and advocacy activities for adequate government support to authors.

The SAA therefore recommends the EU and Member States to:

- Channel EU Recovery Plan's support to the cultural and creative sectors and increase the Creative Europe budget in the MFF 2021-2027.
- Urgently implement the Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market and remuneration mechanisms for audiovisual authors to ensure they receive remuneration for the on-demand exploitation of their works.
- Explore the creation of a European status of authors and artists to ensure access to employment rights, social protection and pension.

*"The SAA and its members will continue doing their part, mobilising their resources and efforts to support authors during the health and economic crisis. Now it is up to the EU and national governments to make sure that their support reaches the cultural and creative sectors and do not leave the audiovisual authors behind. The Recovery Plan must be urgently completed so as not to ignore culture and authors",* said Cécile Despringre, Executive Director of the SAA.

### Note to Editors

**SAA** - The Society of Audiovisual Authors is the association of European collective management organisations representing audiovisual authors. Its 33 members in 25 countries manage rights for over 140,000 film, television and multimedia European screenwriters and directors. [@saabrussels](#) | [#WeLoveAuthors](#). Press: Annica Ryngbeck - [a.ryngbeck@saa-authors.eu](mailto:a.ryngbeck@saa-authors.eu) - +32 475 66 95 94

## Main findings of SAA's members survey

In April 2020, the SAA conducted a survey among its members to map the financial assistance and other measures CMOs put in place to support audiovisual authors during the COVID-19 crisis. 20 CMOs from 15 countries participated.

### Social and special funds

- 15 SAA members have a regular social fund in place to help audiovisual authors in financial difficulty. Cultural, social and educational activities are an essential part of the mission of authors' CMOs, in addition to collecting and distributing royalties.
- Some SAA members indicated that they injected additional money to cope with the crisis (e.g. savings from activities not performed during 2020 due to the pandemic) and others emphasized that they do not necessarily have more money, but that most of the money available this year will be dedicated to help authors impacted by the crisis.
- Five SAA members have put a **special emergency fund** in place to deal with the impact of the COVID-19 crisis. For some of them, it was a necessity to have a separate fund to answer rapidly to the crisis with adapted rules.
- Two SAA members operate their support through a foundation, and one made a donation to an external fund addressing authors.
- The money of the CMOs social funds originates mainly from deductions from the collections of CMOs and non-distributable amounts. To face the crisis, some extra money came from the private copying levies in Italy, France and Lithuania. By law, part of the private copying money collected by CMOs goes to financing cultural activities. Special arrangements were made in these countries to allow CMOs to use part of this money for individual distribution to authors impacted by the COVID-19 crisis.
- SAA members in France and Poland have established a **special joint fund with the film fund**. The governments of these countries have channelled their financial support to audiovisual authors through these CMOs as they are the best placed to quickly distribute the financial support and to understand their situation which do not necessarily fit the classic categories of governmental support plans.

### Additional measures

- Having been able to reorganise quickly their operations via homeworking, many SAA members have speeded-up their distribution of royalties to respond to the lack of income of their authors. Some even managed to distribute more money (liquidation of reserves).
- CMOs have developed advance payments of royalties by increasing the proportion of advance payments, enlarging the conditions of access or making them automatic.
- Some offered other social measures such as a free daily delivery meal service to elderly authors on lowest incomes and connecting via telephone volunteers with those elderly authors in isolation.
- Finally, many SAA members have been actively advocating for governmental support to authors and helped authors to request government funds where they exist.

# Recommendations

## **Channel EU Recovery Plan's support to the cultural and creative sectors and increase the Creative Europe budget in the MFF 2021-27**

- The European Commission has made substantial money available to Member States with the **SURE** fund, set up for companies to keep employees at work and relaxed rules on State aids and Structural Funds. It is essential that Member States take advantage of this European support in a way that benefits the cultural and creative sectors, as well as authors. The next step is the Multi-annual Financial Framework for 2021-2027 and the Recovery Plan. The European Commission's proposal presented on 27 May does not meet the cultural sector's expectations. The SAA is strongly disappointed that the proposed budget for the Creative Europe programme is lower than the 2018 proposal and that no specific measure of the Recovery Plan targets the cultural sector, while the impact of the health and economic crisis on it is well documented. We count on the European Parliament and Council to redress this situation and include the cultural sector among the priorities of the Recovery Plan.

## **Urgently implement the Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market and remuneration mechanisms for audiovisual authors to ensure they receive remuneration for the on-demand exploitation of their works.**

- Audiovisual authors have extremely unstable and usually very modest incomes. Very few can make ends meet through their income as an author and needs to find alternative work to support themselves (FERA's [study](#)). Authors' weak bargaining position in negotiating their authors' rights is recognised in the Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market as well as their right to an appropriate and proportionate remuneration for the exploitation of their works. However, the directive still needs to be implemented by the Member States.

## **Explore the creation of a European status of authors and artists to ensure access to employment rights, social protection and pension.**

- CMOs' support has been a safety net to many authors who have fallen through the cracks of governments' support, because they do not fit the categories of self-employed and SMEs. One of the issues is that there is no European status of author and artist that ensures their access to employment rights, social protection and pension.