

Powering an Independent and Culturally Diverse Music Ecosystem

The importance of strengthening the music economy through fair markets and a sustainable independent sector.

Cultural diversity drives a resilient, innovative, and globally competitive music ecosystem. It fuels the export of distinctive creative content, while strengthening communities and sustaining local economies. **Independence is synonymous with cultural diversity.** Independent music businesses that are artist-first and comfortable with creative risks by necessity, are the infrastructure through which diversity thrives.

Independence, and by extension cultural diversity, faces acute structural challenges. Market concentration, financial and data asymmetries, intentional co-opting of an “independent” identity, as well as other factors, such as the rapid rise of generative AI and streaming manipulation, are providing severe tests that need to be overcome to maintain a healthy ecosystem.

Issues of ownership, infrastructure, investment and oversight are fundamental. This is as much a question of sovereignty and democracy as it is an economic, social, and cultural imperative; a challenge and an opportunity.

Regional institutions, national governments, and the music sector at large, must recognize the independent sector as a unique economic engine, a cultural custodian and a key pillar of soft power. To secure a future of diverse culture and maximize the opportunities that this brings, we recommend:

1. **Increasing focus on a wider range of financing options:** Effective investment in cultural diversity requires a range of potential routes for companies and artists to finance their endeavors and grow, ranging from public to private to public-private initiatives.
2. **Guaranteeing independent infrastructure and fair access to markets (digital and other):** Independent companies can only reliably invest in new artists with free and fair access to markets (digital and other), without dilution of opportunities and revenue.
3. **Reinforcing voluntary collective negotiation:** The right to choose collective options for licensing must be protected as it remains the most effective way to ensure small and independent rightsholders can monetize their works in a global market.
4. **Embedding cultural diversity and plurality in digital market frameworks:** Diversity must be explicitly recognized within digital services, platform governance and AI framework regulation, as well as competition regulation and other essential oversight tools.
5. **Making diversity a measurable, trackable priority:** Music Observatories could gather data on performance and ownership, functioning as an evidence base for an industrial strategy.
6. **Supporting industry collaboration and standards to protect independence:** Industry-led collaborative action to build an optimal ecosystem, agree on terminology

such as “independent”, and more, will deliver enhanced clarity and trust without the need for further regulatory oversight.

In summary, a culturally diverse ecosystem is a huge asset, which requires strong independent music companies and infrastructure at its core, supported by significant investment, targeted regulatory oversight and ambitious collaboration within the sector. As the wider, global, political landscape continues to change radically, we face a **critical point in history that necessitates an urgent rethink by regulators and the sector.**

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Access the full report here: <https://impalamusic.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Powering-an-Independent-and-Culturally-Diverse-European-Music-Ecosystem-040226.pdf>