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PRESS RELEASE

Music sector urges Czech Presidency to deliver an EU proposal that will impact the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of artists in Europe

Brussels, 12th June, 2009 – Organisations representing hundreds of thousands of performers across Europe are calling on the Czech Government to use its EU Presidency to deliver a proposed new EU law that would have an impact on the livelihoods of artists across Europe.

Their call was backed by representatives of the European music sector who urged the Czech Presidency to do everything in its power to ensure the immediate adoption of the proposed EU Directive to extend the copyright protection on sound recordings.

The Czech Government has a unique opportunity to adopt the EU Directive that would allow music performers to receive revenues for their music for 70 years, covering the average lifespan. This would be a big improvement on the current 50 year copyright term on sound recordings in Europe. The proposed Directive also provides for a set of measures aimed at improving the situation of performers in the musical field.

Europe's music sector alerted the Czech Presidency that if it does not act now, this proposal could be lost to European artists. Failure to adopt the new law in the final two weeks of the Czech Presidency would deliver a serious blow to a law that is a matter of fairness to artists across Europe.

More than 38,000 performers from all over Europe, including almost one thousand performers from the Czech Republic, have signed a petition calling for longer copyright term for their music. The petition will be published in Prague over the weekend.

Extending EU copyright term is a matter of fairness for the many talented performers who contribute to Europe's exciting, diverse musical culture. Every year, more and more performers are losing their rights as their early recorded performances fall out of copyright and this is happening in later life, when they most need this income. The Czech Presidency has the possibility to remedy this situation now. The European music sector therefore urges the Czech Presidency to do its utmost to ensure that the proposal be adopted without any further delay.

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What performers have to say about extending copyright term:

Czech artists, Robert Kodym and Wanastowi Vjegy: “Our work has been admired by millions. Given the pressure we are under from the theft of our intellectual property, it would be crazy for the EU not to do something to help. Extending term of protection for performers and producers would send the right message about the importance of the arts.”

American opera singer, Renée Fleming: “My passion for Czech music has been inspired both by my Czech ancestry and by the incredible richness and quality of the nation’s music. Since music is such an integral part of the Czech Republic’s cultural heritage, the country has a very important stake in the current debate at European level on the extension of term of protection in sound recordings. I would therefore urge you to take the opportunity to adopt this legislation now.”

British musician, G.S. Gregory: “I have worked all my life as a freelance saxophonist and have been a member of the Musicians’ Union for over 40 years. I have played as a session musician on some very successful tracks such as George Michael’s ‘Careless Whisper’, the Rolling Stones ‘Honky Tonk Women’ and Queen’s ‘One Year of Love’. I would naturally support the extension of performers’ rights, which would give me a continuing share of the proceeds while I am in the land of the living.”

Irish musician, Bob Geldof: “Our artists have always been the great treasures and wealth of our nations. Why should these old men and women, these great spirits, these articulators of the soul of any country, why should they be denied the small amount of money that they so thoroughly deserve? They should be honoured by your country, not dismissed.”

Slovak artist, Meky Zbirka: “Without term extension, we would lose the rights to the recordings that we have spent our lifetime creating. That would be such a great disincentive to continue working so hard to create and to go on striving to make better music.

Violinist & chairman of the board, Vienna Philharmonic, Dr Clemens Hellsberg: “Due to its history and tradition the Vienna Philharmonic feels especially committed to cultivating and protecting Europe’s rich musical heritage. We are therefore making an urgent appeal for term of protection on sound recordings to be extended in Europe. We are doing this not only for the sake of our own recordings, but in the interests of the outstanding artists with whom we have worked throughout the Philharmonic’s history and for the other great orchestras on our continent. We cannot sit back and watch valuable recordings fall out of copyright and the treasures of various historical archives being exposed to any exploitation, very often against the intentions of the artists at that time.”

Member of the London Symphony Orchestra, Gerald Newson: “I would like to add my personal support to the proposals to extend performers’ rights. It is vital that we recognise, protect and ratify this policy as it fairly rewards and respects the performers who have created the performance, without whom the sound recording would not exist. The proposals are fair, logical and in keeping with other creators – and are long overdue.”

Swedish artists (formerly from ABBA), Björn Ulvae and Benny Anderson: “From an artists’ perspective, there are compelling reasons to increase the length of term of protection in Europe. With our group ABBA we spent countless hours in the recording studio trying to make each album better than the previous one. We believe we should have the right to have some control over what we have created, at least for our lifetime. To know that anyone can exploit our work while we are still alive is really intolerable.”

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