



# MUSIC IN THE DIGITAL AGE

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE | DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES AND ARTISTS' RIGHTS

ATHENS, OCTOBER 22-24, STAVROS NIARCHOS FOUNDATION CULTURAL CENTER

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES

**Music in the Digital Age: Streaming & Artificial Intelligence** has been a three-day international forum organized by APOLLON (Greek CMO for musicians' neighboring rights) and FIM (International Federation of Musicians). Against the backdrop of **AI-generated content and the dominance of streaming platforms**, the conference examined how **revenue models, legal frameworks and artistic labor are being reshaped** in a digital economy that prioritizes scale over sustainability.

Bringing together artists, journalists, industry professionals, legal experts, academics, policy makers and technologists, the event focused on three core questions:

- How to build **sustainable and equitable compensation** models in a saturated streaming market?
- How to protect creators' rights when **AI is trained on and competes with their work?**
- What role should legislation play in **securing ethical AI and fairer digital markets** without stifling innovation?

The first panel set the tone for the conference by contrasting record streaming revenues with widespread artist dissatisfaction.



**APOLLON**  
GREEK MUSICIANS'  
COLLECTING SOCIETY



## A. STREAMING | THE ECONOMIC REALITIES FOR ARTISTS

### 1. Keynote by Dinnos Georgountzos, APOLLON Secretary General

Georgountzos argued that streaming has turned recorded music from a product into a **centrally controlled service**, enriching platforms and large intermediaries while most artists receive tiny fractions of a cent per stream. He showed that about 70% of global recorded-music revenue now comes from streaming, yet **only around 10% reaches performers**, with extreme inequality: roughly 0.5% of artists capture 90% of streams, while Spotify no longer pays for tracks under 1,000 annual streams.

He stressed that **non-featured musicians (session players, orchestra members, backing vocalists) get nothing from streaming, despite having remuneration rights in broadcasting. This is due to streaming being treated legally as a “making-available” (on-demand) right, not communication to the public.** He highlighted Spain’s model, which grants performers a non-waivable equitable-remuneration right for streaming, and endorsed AEPO-ARTIS proposals for **statutory ER, mandatory collective management, direct non-transferable payments from platforms**, and recognizing algorithmic “radio” as broadcasting. His conclusion: the core issues are labour and power, not technology, and **without structural change, both musicians’ livelihoods and musical quality are at risk.**

### 2. Panel discussion - moderated by Horace Trubridge, musician & activist

- **Ioan Kaes (AEPO-ARTIS)** traced the legal roots of the problem to the mid-1990s WIPO treaties, where **“making available” was created to fight piracy, not to structure remuneration.** Performers received an exclusive right without a built-in payment mechanism, unlike authors. His studies suggest only 4–9% of streaming income values performance itself, and he called for a new, rental-like ER right for performers.
- **Xenia Iwaszko-Manning (Spotify)** emphasized that Spotify legalized the access model, pays about two-thirds of its music revenue to rights holders, and has helped restore industry growth. She argued **pay-per-stream figures are misleading** in a subscription model; the key metric is total payouts, which Spotify leads. She defended the 1,000-stream threshold as a way to recycle otherwise trapped micropayments back to the royalty pool and said Spotify is open to different payout models but needs consensus from rights holders.
- **Lauri Rechardt (IFPI)** highlighted a decade of **strong growth driven by streaming**, rising artist payout shares at majors, and growing indie market share. He stressed that artists now have more formal choices (DIY, distribution, label deals), but **acknowledged breaking artists is harder than ever** in a global attention economy. **IFPI opposes adding a statutory ER right, arguing it would dilute exclusive rights and blunt contractual flexibility.**

- **David Martin (Featured Artists Coalition)** agreed streaming revived a decimated industry but said **unfairness lies in legacy recording contracts and non-transparent label–DSP deals. “Choice” is distorted when majors may capture 20–40% more value per stream than DIY routes.** After five years of UK talks (including a rejected performer-fund proposal), **FAC now backs legislative reform and supports user-centric payouts** primarily for fairness, reduced fraud and stronger fan–artist links.
- **Manos Dedevesis (Stay Independent)** described an over-saturated, AI-intensifying market where **young artists are forced to be entrepreneurs, marketers and lawyers while still learning their craft.** Many become one-hit wonders who quickly burn out. His label focuses on educating artists, encouraging fairer master-side splits with musicians and songwriters, and building team-based careers.

### 3. KEY THEMES

- Streaming is widely acknowledged as having saved the industry financially, but not yet made it fair for most creators.
- There is broad agreement that non-featured musicians and many performers are structurally under-rewarded, and that current legal architecture (especially “making available”) is inadequate.
- **Stakeholders diverge on solutions: creators and unions lean toward statutory ER and legislative intervention, while labels and Spotify prefer contractual and model tweaks within the current framework.**
- Everyone emphasized the need for education, transparency, and maintaining a “critical mass” of professional musicians as essential for a healthy, sustainable music ecosystem.

