

## **Summary | Union Representation in the Performing Arts and Audiovisual Sectors: Key Challenges and Policy Directions**

This paper examines the role, challenges, and prospects of trade unions in the performing arts, live entertainment, and audiovisual sectors in Greece. It forms part of the *LaPreSc* research project on precarious labour in the cultural and creative industries and highlights the critical importance of union representation for shaping a framework of decent work, fair remuneration, and social protection.

The study shows that unions aim to intervene across multiple areas: ensuring fair wages and working conditions; addressing precarious employment and bogus self-employment; promoting workplace safety; guaranteeing equal access to social protection; strengthening collective bargaining; and contributing to policy-making. Nevertheless, unions face significant obstacles. Structural and ideological barriers, the prevalence of non-standard forms of employment and freelance entrepreneurial labour, a culture of unpaid labour, and the individualised strategies of many artists hinder the formation of collective workers' identities. Technological transformations, platformisation, and artificial intelligence introduce new asymmetries in bargaining power leaving little room for negotiation, while multiple crises (economic crisis, pandemic) have exacerbated precarity and weakened trade unions.

In the Greek context, challenges are amplified by organisational fragmentation, declining union density, dependence on political parties and state funding – that results in the subsequent relatively independence from their own members, and the deregulation of collective bargaining under austerity reforms. Although numerous primary unions exist, their bargaining power is relatively limited, and the institutional visibility of professions remains particularly weak. Collective agreements have largely disappeared from the sector, with only few exceptions, significantly undermining the unions' ability to regulate employment conditions.

Findings from *LaPreSc* reveal that workers face a series of problems: precarious working conditions and low wages, insufficient social protection, lack of collective agreements, tax distortions, limited recognition of professions, and weak protection of intellectual property rights. At the same time, workers' relationship with unions is marked by low participation and trust - although the pandemic acted as a catalyst for re-engagement and mobilisation. Trade union representation is characterized by low density and organizational fragmentation, with numerous small unions operating under limited resources. Self-employment and cultural micro-entrepreneurship further diversify forms of representation. In the absence of strong institutional channels, unions increasingly resort to movement-oriented strategies and cross-sectoral solidarity. Collective bargaining has largely stalled since 2013, with only minimal exceptions.

The policy recommendations focus on strengthening union representation and expanding their role. Proposals include harnessing digital technologies to disseminate knowledge and ensure transparency in pay, developing awareness campaigns, establishing minimum pay frameworks

even in the absence of collective agreements, adopting practices for denouncing unfair employer behaviour, and investing in union education. Furthermore, greater emphasis is placed on fostering strategic collaboration and coordination among unions and shaping a common bargaining agenda, particularly with regard to the reintroduction of sectoral agreements. Finally, special attention is given to the need for union action in addressing the challenges posed by artificial intelligence, ensuring fair compensation, ethical use of technologies, and greater transparency in revenue distribution. Overall, the paper underscores that the revitalisation of trade unions is a prerequisite for protecting artistic labour and advancing a fairer and more sustainable cultural sector.