Copyright

The European Commission is adapting EU copyright rules to new consumer behaviours in a Europe which values its cultural diversity.

Digital technologies have radically changed the way creative content is produced, distributed and accessed. Copyright ensures that authors, composers, artists, film makers and other creators receive recognition, payment and protection for their works. It rewards creativity and stimulates investment in the creative sector. Thirty-three sectors of the EU economy are considered copyright-intensive, accounting directly for over 7 million jobs, or 3% of employment in the EU.

What are copyright and related rights?

These are rights granted to authors (copyright or authors' rights) and performers, producers and broadcasters (related rights). They include:

- Economic rights that enable rightholders to control the use of their works and other protected material and be remunerated for their use. They normally take the form of exclusive rights, notably to authorise or prohibit the making and distribution of copies as well as communication to the public. Economic rights and their terms of protection are harmonised at EU level.
- Moral rights include the right to claim authorship of the work and the right to object to any derogatory action in relation to the work. They are not harmonised at EU level.
Licensing is the main mechanism for the exercise of copyright and related rights. Depending on the relevant right, the type of use and the sector, licences are most often granted directly by the rightholder or collective management organisations. The EU has recently adopted legislation to improve the functioning of collective management organisations including through facilitating the provision of multi-territorial licences.

**Exceptions to these rights**

Copyright systems balance the recognition of exclusive rights in order to facilitate the use of protected content in specific circumstances. The EU copyright rules set out an exhaustive list of exceptions to rights across various copyright directives.

Exceptions allow beneficiaries to use protected material without authorisation from the rightholders. Enforcement of procedures and remedies against infringements of copyright have been partly harmonised at EU level.

**The EU's role**

EU actions have led to more harmonised protection of rightholders, lower transaction costs and greater choice for users of content, notably through:

- a European regulatory framework for copyright and related rights;
- the promotion of inclusive and dynamic stakeholders dialogues on copyright and related issues, to seek views, concrete experience and contributions from all interested parties;
- a leading role in international negotiations and discussions on copyright and related issues.

Steps have already been taken to facilitate the digitisation and dissemination of cultural heritage in the Orphan Works Directive. The management and licensing of rights are covered in the Collective Rights Management Directive and Licenses for Europe stakeholder dialogue.

Two international treaties in the area of Copyright, the 2012 Beijing Treaty on Audiovisual Performances and the 2013 Marrakesh Treaty on visually impaired persons have been adopted in the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO).

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The Commission has decided to send reasoned opinions to Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia and Finland over their failure to notify the Commission
of transposition measures on copyright and related rights applicable to certain online transmissions (EU Directive 2019/789).

REPORT / STUDY | 16 March 2022
Study on copyright and new technologies

This study looks at creative sectors and their use of new technologies, such as blockchain and artificial intelligence (AI), from a copyright perspective. The study identifies avenues for further exploration by stakeholders, policy makers and academics.

REPORT / STUDY | 17 December 2021
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The European Audiovisual Observatory has published a mapping report on national remedies against online piracy of sport content.

PRESS RELEASE | 02 December 2021
December infringements package: the Commission calls on Romania to comply with EU copyright rules

The Commission has decided to send an additional letter of formal notice to Romania on the grounds that their national rules on the management of rights in musical works run contrary to EU copyright rules.

Info
The Commission is defending European media and digital culture with policies that empower citizens and encourage media pluralism.

Dig deeper

The EU copyright legislation
The EU copyright law consists of 11 directives and 2 regulations, harmonising the essential rights of authors, performers, producers and broadcasters.

Implementation of the Marrakesh Treaty in EU law

The Marrakesh Treaty allows people with print disabilities to access more books and other print material in formats that are accessible to them.

Protection of databases

Databases in the European Union are protected under EU Law. The Directive on the legal protection of databases was adopted in 1996 and was evaluated in 2018.

See Also

Audiovisual and Media Services

These days we can watch our favourite programmes not just on TV, but also online. These shows are subject to the rules of the single market.

Supporting media and digital culture

The Commission is promoting a coherent approach on media policies, covering legislation on media services and the preservation of European cultural heritage.

Digital cultural heritage

Cultural heritage is evolving rapidly thanks to digital technologies. The momentum is now to preserve our cultural heritage and bring it to this digital decade.

Media freedom and pluralism

The European Union upholds media freedom and pluralism as pillars of modern democracy and enablers of free and open debate.

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