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Nordic Music Performers Challenge Record Labels' AI Partnerships:

Built on Our Work – Without Our Consent

The undersigned European unions and organisations representing hundreds of thousands of music performers across Europe express serious concern about the growing number of AI partnerships between record labels, AI developers and digital music platforms, including Spotify.

Across the music industry, music catalogues are being licensed for AI training, synthetic content generation and other AI applications. Deals are being negotiated without the meaningful involvement of the performers whose works, performances, voices and identities create the value being licensed.

Our concern is not innovation. It is the exclusion of creators from decisions about their work and how it is being used in new technologies without their consent and proper remuneration. At a time when European institutions are calling for stronger safeguards on consent, transparency and human oversight in AI, major commercial agreements are being concluded without meaningful performer participation or approval.

Particularly concerning is the fact that Universal Music Group (UMG) has already formed AI partnerships with companies such as Udio and Spotify while simultaneously seeking new AI-related permissions from performers through updated contractual provisions. The attempt to secure new AI-related rights after such partnerships have already been established reinforces the fact that existing recording agreements do not provide a clear or sufficient basis for these uses.

Existing recording agreements were never negotiated with generative AI business models in mind and it should not be assumed that they authorise the use of performers' works, performances, voices or identities for generative AI purposes. We therefore reject any assumption that existing contracts or industry arrangements provide such authorisation.

The same concern applies to non-featured performers (musicians), whose rights are typically not subject to written agreements that would authorise labels to represent them for such purposes. We therefore firmly object to any attempt by labels to invoke or claim authority over the rights of non-featured performers in the context of generative AI licensing.

More broadly, these developments expose a growing imbalance in the music industry. AI agreements are being negotiated without meaningful performer participation, while there is little evidence that performers will share fairly in the value generated from the exploitation of their work.

Music is not merely data. It is human expression, creativity and culture. The future of AI in music must be built on consent, transparency and fair remuneration.

Our Call to the Music Industry

Music performers must be properly represented in all decisions concerning generative AI. The future of AI in music requires transparent licensing, meaningful consent, clear attribution and fair remuneration. Collective agreements remain the most legitimate and sustainable framework for ensuring that creators share fairly in the value generated from their work.

We call on record labels, AI developers, digital platforms, policymakers and the wider music industry to engage directly with representative unions and collective management organisations to ensure that AI in music is governed through collectively negotiated frameworks based on consent, transparency, fair remuneration and respect for artistic rights, human creativity and cultural integrity.

As AI develops, music performers must retain meaningful control over the use of their works, performances, voices and identities.

On behalf of the undersigned Nordic artists', musicians' and performers' unions and organisations

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Organisations who sign in support of the principles and concerns expressed in this statement

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