

THE FOUNDATION
OF SWISS
LIVE MUSIC
A MANIFESTO



AT THE
GRASSROOTS
OF SWISS
LIVE MUSIC



Switzerland's non-profit sector of popular music includes hundreds of grassroots music venues, music clubs, festivals, collectives, and independent promoters across all four language regions of the country.

These grassroots music venues, festivals, and independent structures are indispensable fixtures of the cultural, social, and economic life of their communities. They leave a lasting mark on local audiences and fulfil a wide range of roles with significant social impact. Their contribution extends far beyond putting on shows — they generate considerable indirect economic returns through regional value creation, social cohesion, educational outcomes, and the revitalization of neighbourhoods. PETZI, the association of non-profit Swiss music clubs and festivals for popular music, represents over 200 of these key players in the scene.

Together, they stand for the following values and functions:

- Grassroots music venues are the essential conditions for artistic creation: they support new projects, create space for experimentation, and serve as the launchpad for emerging artists and bands.
- Non-profit organisations and independent structures form core pillars of the talent pipeline that underpins the entire Swiss music industry.
- Low-threshold access to live music for everyone — in urban and rural communities alike — is a central commitment, pursued in part by deliberately keeping ticket prices affordable.
- Through partnerships with local businesses (food & beverage, hotel industry, technical suppliers, graphic design, print), grassroots music venues make a significant contribution to regional value creation and tourism.
- These venues actively support diversity, gender equity, and equal opportunities, and stand firmly against discrimination.
- They are spaces for encounter, exchange, and learning.
- Through training, continuing education, and knowledge transfer, they build sector expertise, create jobs, and provide entry points into the music industry.

- Volunteer work and associative structures are central to the DNA of this circuit: they enable civic participation, co-determination, and community engagement far beyond the cultural sphere, embedding these venues deep within civil society.

The live music ecosystem is built on the close interconnection of many players: artists, promoters, music venues, festivals, labels, agencies, ticketing providers, production and technical crew, media, educational institutions, and public bodies. All these collectively contribute to the creation, distribution, and professionalisation of Switzerland's entire live music scene. Ongoing dialogue and collaboration are prerequisites for meeting the artistic, economic, and social challenges of the present, and for securing a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable ecosystem of music. This close interconnection is also the basis for a shared interest: low-threshold access to popular music. To guarantee this, recognition and mutual support among all parts of the industry are essential.

This manifesto takes stock of the situation and identifies where urgent action is needed.

Culture is not a luxury: it is the foundation of a vibrant, diverse, and solidarity-based society. A strong, living cultural landscape needs those who take risks and create space for new talent. Now is the moment to take responsibility together.

THE CRISIS
FACING
SWITZERLAND'S
GRASSROOTS
LIVE MUSIC
SCENE



Grassroots music venues, cultural centres, music clubs, and festivals are the spaces where new music is created, youth culture takes root, diversity is lived and artistic experimentation is made possible. A wide range of artists and culturally engaged people find a stage here. But this foundation of Swiss culture is under threat.

Promoters and venue operators face growing pressures daily. If this ecosystem collapses, a significant part of Switzerland's independent live music scene risks disappearing permanently. The current challenges include:

RISING FIXED COSTS

Rents, energy, staffing, production infrastructure, and insurance have been rising in line with the broader market for years. Artist fees and production costs are also climbing continuously. At the same time, audience behaviour is shifting: food & beverage revenues — long a key source of cross-subsidy for the non-profit scene — are declining or stagnating.

Grassroots music venues and festivals cannot simply pass these dynamics on to their audiences. They operate for the public good, deliberately keeping ticket prices low to maintain accessible entry — which puts them at odds with a logic that increasingly evaluates cultural spaces by commercial criteria.

As a result, many organisations operate at the limit or carry structural deficits. Losses are offset through unpaid labour, self-exploitation, and voluntary effort. This model keeps live music alive, but it is neither fair nor sustainable.

FINANCIAL DEFICITS & OUTDATED FUNDING MODELS

The existing funding system is largely rooted in cultural policy principles from the 1980s. It focuses on project-based, short-term funding applications and implicitly assumes that cultural work can be substantially cross-subsidised through bar and food & beverage income. In today's reality — where promoters must continuously programme shows, build long-term structures, secure spaces, and take on social responsibility — these instruments are no longer fit for purpose.

Changing audience behaviour, rising fixed costs, and new regulatory demands have made such cross-subsidy models barely viable. What is missing is structural base funding that reflects this reality, enables reliable planning, and ensures the long-term sustainability of grassroots music.

FEDERAL INEQUALITIES

In Switzerland's federalist system, significant disparities exist between cantons, municipalities, and language regions. Although grassroots music venues and festivals are very similar in their working methods and community mission, they face very different cultural policy, financial, and administrative conditions. This complicates the coherent development of the scene and reinforces existing structural inequalities.

HIGH ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN & RESTRICTIVE CONDITIONS

Funding applications, reporting requirements, spatial planning restrictions, noise regulations, and safety compliance are complex and affect all stakeholders — from promoters to funding bodies to local authorities.

For grassroots music venues and festivals, this represents a particular challenge: with limited staff capacity, they must manage extensive administrative requirements originally designed for more institutionally resourced organisations. As a result, working time increasingly shifts away from programming and

community work towards administration. Procedures, responsibilities, and requirements need to be made proportionate and practical.

LACK OF SOCIAL SECURITY & MENTAL HEALTH PRESSURES

Behind every stage, people work across a wide range of roles — from production and technical crew to booking and communication, HR, administration, finance, bar staff, and security. Many of these positions are underpaid, spread across small part-time contracts, tied to irregular hours, and yet carry significant responsibility.

In practice, this means people working in these roles often juggle multiple low-percentage contracts just to make ends meet. These conditions lead to persistent pressure, serious mental health strain, and elevated risk of burnout and depression. Structural recognition of this workforce is largely absent. Workers are economically dependent on this project-based, precarious reality. In the long run, this is not a socially sustainable model.

STRUCTURAL DISADVANTAGE COMPARED TO OTHER CULTURAL SECTORS

The popular live music scene in Switzerland is structurally disadvantaged within the cultural funding system compared to other art forms. While established institutions such as opera, theatre and museums typically receive long-term operational grants and stable institutional support, grassroots music venues and festivals are largely reliant on short-term project funding. The popular music scene is characterised by parallel circuits, subcultural niches and diverse organisational models. Central to these scenes are the development of emerging talent and cultural diversity. A vibrant music ecosystem is not built through uniformity, but through the equal coexistence of different artistic expressions.

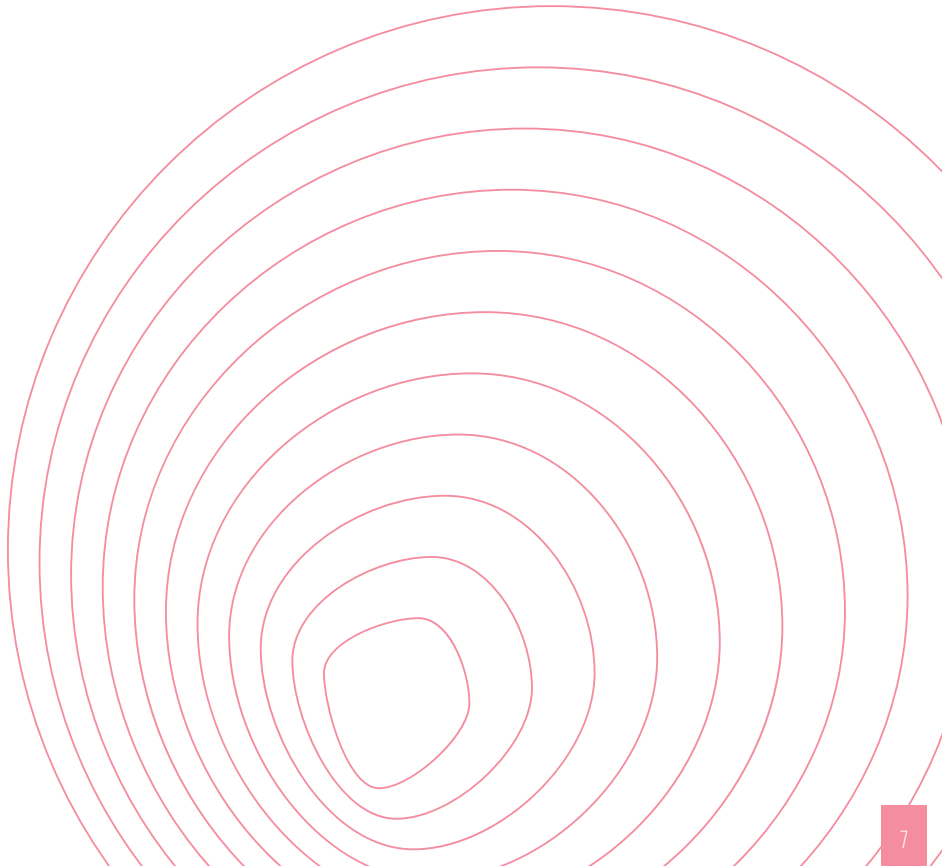
STRUCTURAL DISADVANTAGE COMPARED TO LARGE COMMERCIAL PROMOTERS

Within the live music market, grassroots music venues and festivals are increasingly under pressure from the concentration of resources, visibility, and revenue at large, profit-driven events. Commercial promoters benefit disproportionately from sponsorship and media attention. At the same time, the economic and social value generated by non-profit live music is considerable: it creates jobs, strengthens local supply chains, and drives tourism and regional development. According to the Federal Statistical Office, every franc invested in culture generates approximately three francs in returns across other sectors of the economy.

The cross-subsidy models of the non-profit scene are, however, coming under growing pressure. Declining food & beverage revenues due to shifting going-out habits, and the increasing tendency of commercial promoters to take over or co-produce previously sold-out shows, mean that revenue that once partially flowed back into the local scene is now almost entirely absorbed upstream. This trend is concentrated heavily in large cities, sharpening regional imbalances.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

- Recognition of club and festival culture as equal to theatre, opera and museums
- Creation of a national music promotion act, modelled on the existing Film Promotion Act
- Reform of regulatory frameworks: streamlined processes for permits, reporting, and grant applications
- Public funding must cover ongoing infrastructure and operating costs, not just individual projects. Base funding for grassroots music venues, cultural centres, music clubs and festivals is essential so that they can plan reliably, pay staff fairly in line with their contributions and maintain their spaces.
- Increased public funding from federal, cantonal, and municipal levels to reflect the current operating reality of the circuit
- Statutory protection for cultural spaces in construction and land use planning



THE PEOPLE
BEHIND THE
STAGE:
PRECARITY IN
THE GRASSROOTS
WORKFORCE



Production and technical crew, bookers, promoters, and hospitality staff keep grassroots music venues running night after night.

Many people beside and behind the stage work on a voluntary basis or on minimal contracts, navigating demanding schedules, voluntary unpaid and irregular shifts. However, parallel jobs are unavoidable to earn a living wage. This often leads to staff overload.

Across the broader ecosystem — including booking and promotions agencies, labels, and other parts of the supply chain — current conditions have created an imbalance in which commercial players profit while non-profit structures face increasingly existential pressures.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

Lack of social security, low to precarious wages and insufficient recognition of the work done by the grassroots workforce.

Structural disadvantage in access to funding compared to established cultural institutions or large-scale commercial events.

Lack of inclusive structures for marginalised groups to be meaningfully involved in decision-making and event organisation.

Volunteer work is part of the DNA of the non-profit scene — it enables participation, access and community engagement. At the same time, it has become an economic necessity that reinforces self-exploitation and high staff turnover.

YOUTH & VOLUNTEERING

Inclusive grassroots music venues and festivals provide young people with support for their own projects, opportunities for continuing education and active involvement in cultural, educational, and mediation programmes. Youth-focused work must be strengthened, not cut.

Voluntary work in the cultural sector must be recognised, protected and supported.

Cultural and social programming should be accessible to all, ensuring participation across different social backgrounds.

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Cultural funding must actively enable diversity, inclusion and equality. Public funds and new funding instruments should foster the sustainable anchoring and ongoing development of cultural participation.

Culture promotes education, democracy, and civic engagement: diversity must not merely be stated as a goal but must be made possible through fair access conditions and inclusive decision-making processes.

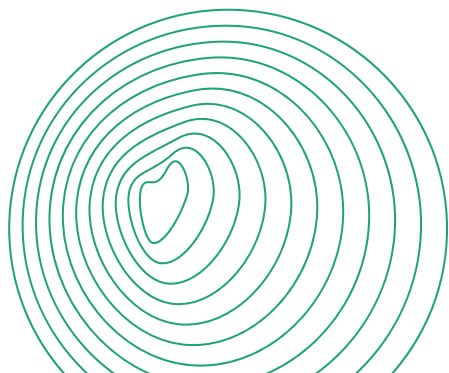
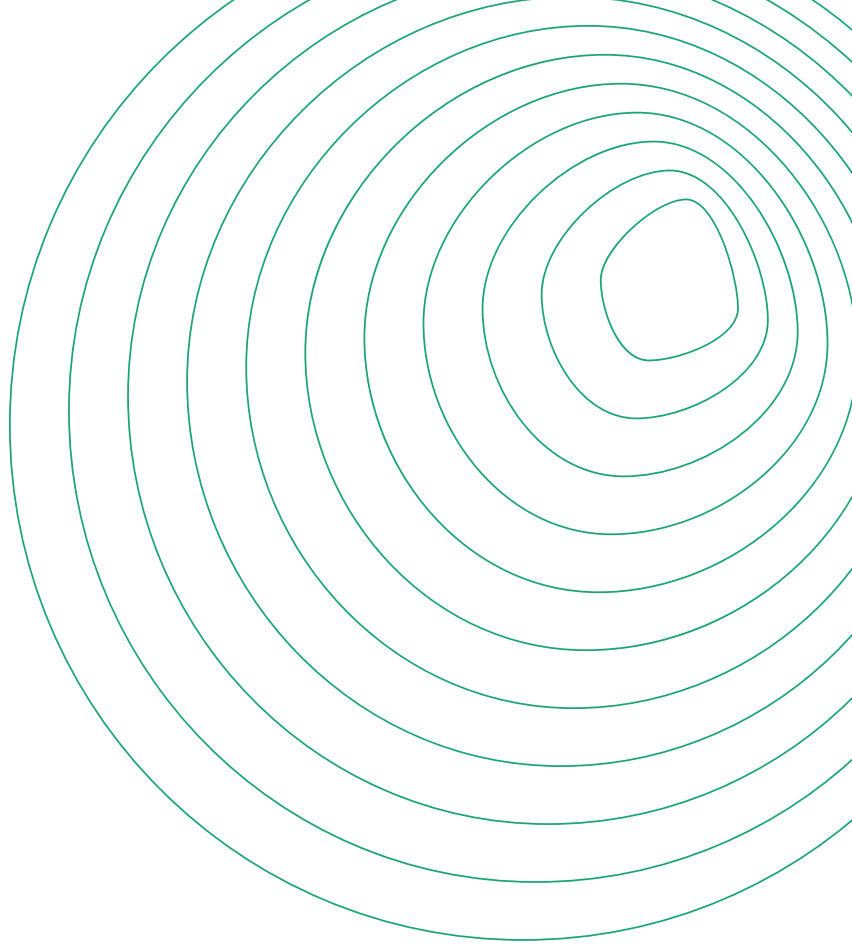
VALUE CREATION & VISIBILITY

Non-profit promoters make a decisive contribution to economic and social value creation. Large-scale events and the entire global music industry build upon this foundation.

Grassroots music venues and festivals serve as the research and development department of the live music industry — hands-on, resource-efficient training grounds for creative professionals and production specialists whose skills and expertise benefit the entire music sector. This contribution is neither adequately recognised nor compensated by the wider industry.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

- Expansion of social security and improved working conditions for all people employed in the cultural sector, combined with concrete implementation structures to ensure these protections reach those entitled to them. This requires structural change: accessible advisory services, sector-specific contact points and oversight mechanisms to support grassroots music venues, festivals and promoters in implementation.
- Development of collective solutions for social insurance, pension provision, and sickness and accident cover. The precarious social safety net of the people who make live music possible is not a marginal issue, it is a systemic failure. International examples show that viable solutions are achievable when different stakeholders — funding bodies, insurers, cultural policymakers, and the circuit itself — work together.
- Mental health prevention through sector-specific counselling and support services
- Structural support for youth work and volunteering, including training programmes, project funding, and formal recognition
- Structural investment in education and training pathways within the live music circuit, leading to greater recognition of the professional work being done across the sector
- Establishment of a fund-based model enabling non-profit players to participate financially in the value generated across the supply chain, with direct reinvestment into their sustainable development
- Targeted funding for diversity and inclusion to systematically incorporate marginalised communities and create equal access across the scene
- Visibility and recognition: non-profit structures are indispensable pillars of the live music scene. This commitment deserves greater public recognition and sustained support.



LIVE MUSIC
NEEDS SPACE:
PLANNING
REFORM AND
THE AGENT OF
CHANGE



The ongoing gentrification of town and city centres is placing grassroots music venues, music clubs and festivals under increasing pressure. Many of these venues are located in former industrial or working-class neighbourhoods that are being transformed by densification and rising property values, bringing new residential development — and with it, lower tolerance for nighttime activity and more conflicts over land use.

Current planning legislation in such cases often results in time restrictions, stricter noise limits or costly soundproofing requirements. These measures threaten the financial viability of venues, especially those whose strength lies in their local roots, authenticity, and cultural impact on their communities. Some venues have already been forced to dramatically scale back their programming or shut down entirely. Festivals, too, are increasingly affected by tightened requirements around permits, safety and noise compliance, which are barely compatible with their non-profit operating models.

In the long run, this trend leads to a loss of performance spaces and experimental venues, the weakening of emerging scenes and a homogenisation of the live music offer. This is a fundamental cultural policy question: Is diverse, grassroots culture understood as a public good worth protecting or as a nuisance?

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

- New development projects must anticipate the impact on existing grassroots music venues and share responsibility for necessary measures (e.g. soundproofing). The agent of change principle — which places responsibility on the incoming development rather than the existing venue — should be embedded in Swiss planning legislation.
- Binding inclusion of grassroots music venues in zoning and development plans: music clubs and festivals must be explicitly named and integrated into planning processes at an early stage.
- Strengthening legal certainty for grassroots music venues: permanent permits and stable regulatory conditions are requirements for long-term programming and the preservation of the existing circuit.
- Reliable statutory standards and frameworks are necessary to ensure that planning disputes are not systematically resolved at the expense of existing cultural venues.



VISIBILITY
AND REACH:
MEDIA,
PLATFORMS,
AND THE PUBLIC
SPHERE

The grassroots live music scene makes a significant contribution to cultural diversity, creative innovation and civic participation. Yet its work often remains invisible in the wider public eye.

Digital platforms and public media have the power to amplify this work and make a decisive contribution to strengthening the entire cultural ecosystem. Instead, the visibility and public reach of the non-profit scene are increasingly shaped by conditions that have shifted fundamentally in recent years, bringing the following challenges:

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF STREAMING PLATFORMS

Streaming services such as Spotify and Apple Music significantly shape how music is consumed, monetised and made visible. They generate substantial revenues from music-making but have so far made no systematic contribution to strengthening Switzerland's diverse music scene. At the same time, revenue models in the music industry have increasingly shifted towards digital platforms, while traditional income streams — physical sales and fair copyright remuneration — have declined sharply. This particularly worsens the financial position of the grassroots structures that do the foundational work and take on the risk of developing new music. These platform models concentrate power, visibility and value creation in the hands of a few global players, leaving little room for alternative and community-oriented models.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media platforms such as Meta (Facebook, Instagram) and TikTok increasingly determine which cultural content gets visibility. The organic reach of events has declined dramatically in recent years, with content algorithmically filtered or suppressed. To reach their audiences at all, promoters are increasingly forced to invest in paid advertising — yet even this often fails to achieve the desired results or reaches audiences too late to make shows financially viable. A growing share of already scarce resources is being redirected to commercial platforms.

THE ROLE OF MUSIC JOURNALISM

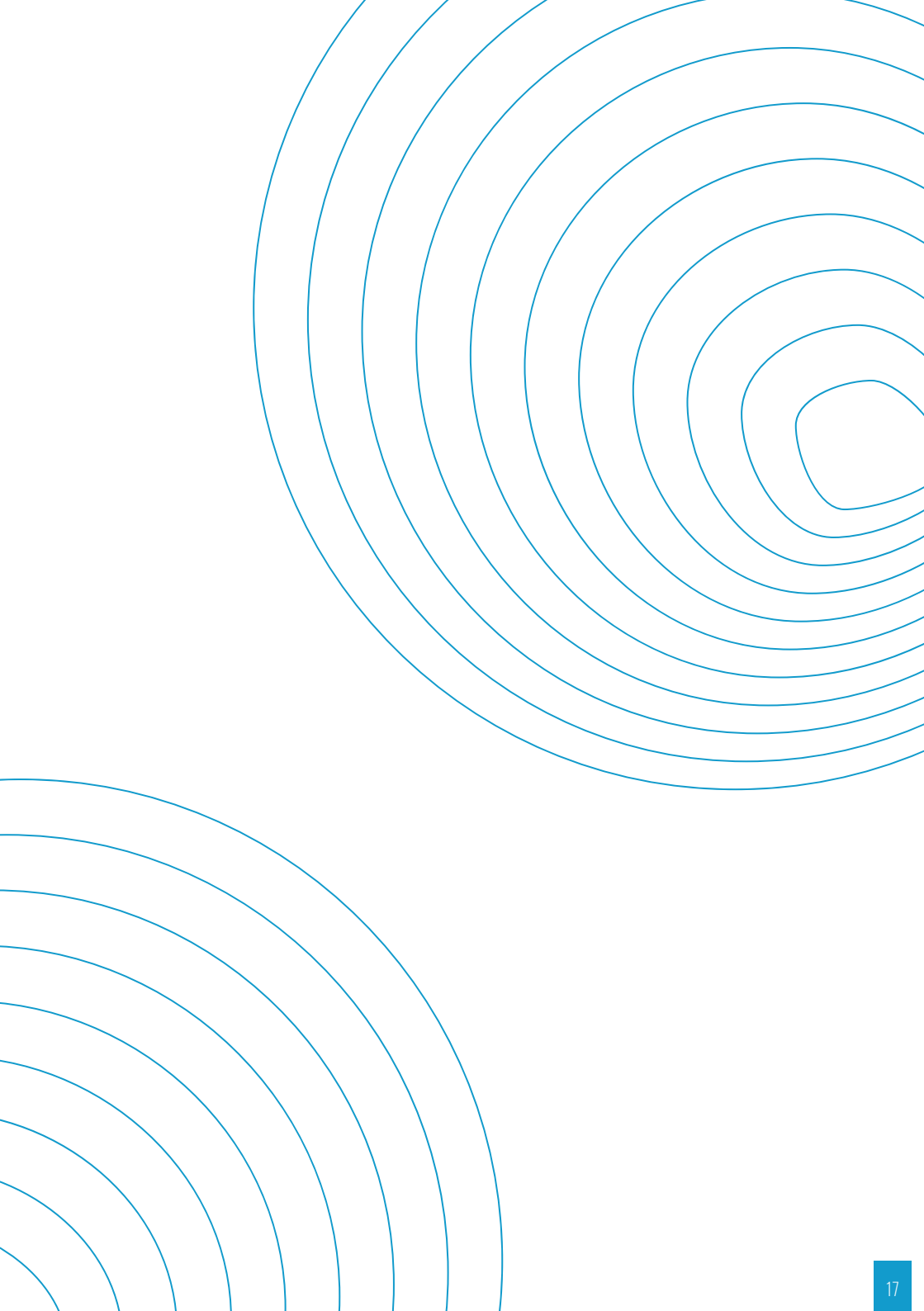
Media play a central role in shaping the visibility, context, and public perception of live music. At the same time, cultural journalism in Switzerland is under enormous pressure: print and online outlets are continuously cutting positions, particularly in cultural coverage. In the sphere of popular and grassroots music, there is a growing absence of in-depth reporting, critical reviews, and event previews. Instead, algorithms, commercial interests, and social media are increasingly dominating public discourse about music.

VISIBILITY AND REACH: MEDIA, PLATFORMS, AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

As a result, non-profit promoters and artists lack important platforms to make their work visible to broader audiences, both regionally and nationally. This weakens not only individual players, but the entire circuit.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

- Legislation should require streaming services to reinvest a share of their Swiss revenues into supporting the diverse Swiss music scene— analogous to the Lex Netflix in film, or the EU's existing frameworks for on-demand platform investment in local content.
- To reduce dependency on commercial, multinational platforms, there is a need to fund alternative, independent, and equitable models (e.g. open and decentralised platforms, co-operative cultural tools, local networks).
- Dedicated funding programmes to strengthen music journalism for popular and grassroots culture.
- Maintaining a democratic media landscape and strengthening public service media are essential.
- Funding for journalism positions in print, online and radio should enable sustained, long-term coverage of the non-profit scene.
- Partnerships between media and grassroots music venues should enable ongoing coverage, reviews, previews and long-form features about grassroots music and the people who make it.
- Monitoring of media coverage of non-profit promoters is of significant value in dialogue with public authorities. It strengthens the legitimacy and public relevance of the circuit and informs cultural policy decisions.
- Statutory requirements, quotas, and targeted funding can contribute to the long-term sustainability of the infrastructure, jobs, and cultural diversity that the Swiss circuit depends on.



STRUCTURAL
FUNDING FOR
A SUSTAINABLE
GRASSROOTS
CIRCUIT



Social, cultural, and technological developments over recent decades have driven the professionalisation of non-profit grassroots music venues and festivals. At the same time, the demands and operating realities have fundamentally changed. Despite a moderate expansion of public funding since the 1980s, state contributions today account for just 0–30% of the total budgets of PETZI members. The bulk of financing still comes from ticket sales, food & beverage income and private sponsorship.

For a long time, alcohol and tobacco companies played a central role as sponsors of the scene. Regulatory changes in prevention and advertising have largely ended these funding streams — a socially necessary and correct step. However, the resulting funding gaps have so far only been partially compensated.

As a result, grassroots music venues and festivals are under increasing pressure to diversify their revenue streams, even as operating costs continue to rise. This makes organisations more vulnerable to economic shifts and changes in audience behaviour.

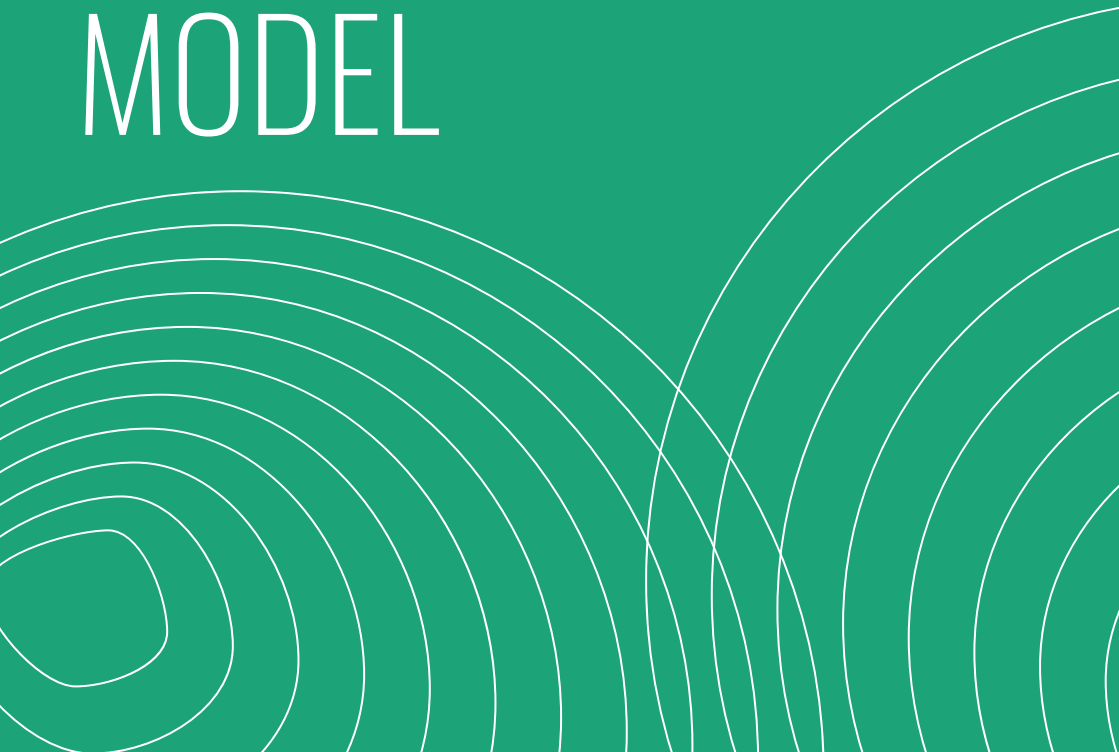
Adapting existing funding models is no longer optional. It raises the central question of how public authorities can actively support this transition and ensure the long-term preservation of a diverse and accessible live music scene across all Swiss regions.

The Swiss live music scene needs new financing strategies for its continued and sustainable development.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

- Strengthening structural funding: reliable, multi-year operational grants must complement — or in some cases replace — one-off project subsidies.
- Supporting professionalisation and transformation: advisory, continuing education, and innovation programmes should help venues adapt to new cultural practices and audience expectations.
- Safeguarding accessibility, participation, and diversity: economic adjustments should be designed to ensure that low-threshold access, support for emerging talent and musical diversity are maintained across the whole scene.
- Strengthening the social role of grassroots music venues and festivals: prevention, safety and the creation of safer spaces are recognised as integral parts of their community function and are reflected in funding and financing models.
- Clear distinction between voluntary engagement and structural funding: volunteering is given targeted support and must not be misunderstood as a substitute for sustainable structural investment.

RETHINKING
THE ECOSYSTEM:
A GRASSROOTS
INVESTMENT
MODEL



Independent grassroots music venues and festivals are predominantly organised as non-profit associations. Unlike commercial players in the music industry, their goal is not to maximise profit, but to deliver a diverse and accessible programme for their communities. They deliberately keep ticket prices low to enable access and participation. They invest in new content, take curatorial risks, and create the conditions for long-term artistic development. Their function is directly comparable to the research and development department in other economic sectors. Almost every established artist and band working in Switzerland today took their first steps at small grassroots music venues and on independent stages before accessing larger venues and formats.

This foundational work by the non-profit scene is essential to the entire talent pipeline, yet it is barely recognised and structurally underfunded. Internal cross-subsidy through club nights has largely disappeared in many venues due to shifts in going-out behaviour.

Similarly, many previously sold-out shows are increasingly being taken over or co-produced directly by commercial promoters. At the same time, costs are rising — putting financial pressure on venues and the workforce that runs them. The result is precarious employment backstage: small contracts, low wages and high turnover.

This economic and structural imbalance raises a fundamental question of fairness: non-profit structures make a decisive contribution to the development of artists and audiences and bear the costs and risks of nurturing emerging talent. Yet as soon as an artist's project becomes commercially viable, the revenue is frequently captured by commercial promoters. It is precisely at this upstream level — where artistic development is first made possible — that stable and reliable funding mechanisms are absent.

Against this backdrop, new and complementary financing instruments are needed to create a systematic flow of funds back to the grassroots from the commercial live music sector. This would distribute responsibility across the ecosystem and enable a sustainable, self-reinforcing circuit. The introduction of a ticket levy is one such instrument. A solidarity contribution would be levied on tickets for large-capacity or high-revenue events. The funds would flow into a dedicated pool to support non-profit grassroots music venues, festivals and shows by emerging artists, as well as grassroots cultural infrastructure.

Such a reinvestment model would strengthen the sustainability of the ecosystem without placing any significant burden on audiences. New financing strategies do not threaten existing commercial business models — rather, they invest in the structures that develop the talent and the audiences on which the whole industry depends.

THE FUTURE
IS BUILT AT
THE GRASSROOTS



When small grassroots music venues close, we lose not only stages, but the social spaces where culture is lived, shaped, and developed. Spaces that open up new perspectives and strengthen community cohesion.

Small and mid-sized venues and festivals are indispensable to the Swiss live music scene. They are where young people gain first experiences, where new scenes form, where cultural diversity becomes visible, and where social innovation becomes possible. These are real community spaces. Diverse live music programming enables encounter, exchange, and participation that no digital platform or algorithm can replicate.

The non-profit scene delivers community work, education, integration and grassroots cultural participation. This outreach work is barely recognised in political discourse — even though other cultural institutions receive funding precisely for these kinds of outcomes.

Commercial promoters and large-scale events benefit from the cultural value created by the grassroots ecosystem, while the risks, the development work, and much of the precarity remain at the bottom of the circuit. This structural imbalance is no longer culturally or politically acceptable.

Structural underfunding, rising fixed costs, inadequate social safety nets and a funding logic that favours established institutions are placing one of Switzerland's most important cultural foundations under severe and growing pressure.

For Switzerland to maintain a diverse, innovative, and independent popular music scene, clear political prioritisation of the grassroots scene is needed, along with equal standing across sectors:

- Strengthening public funding, with an explicit focus on structural and operational support for the non-profit scene
- Strengthening social security for all those who make live music possible — on, in front of and behind the stage: fair wages, fees and access to social protection
- Protection and preservation of grassroots music venues and festivals as community spaces for encounter, participation and cultural education
- Recognition of the social function of grassroots music venues and festivals as spaces for civic interaction and democratic participation
- Recognition of the economic function of non-profit grassroots music venues as the research and development arm and training ground of the live music and cultural industries and as a key driver of regional attractiveness and value creation

The Swiss live music ecosystem needs new financing strategies for its continued and sustainable development. A grassroots investment levy on large or particularly profitable events creates a targeted reinvestment within the ecosystem back into the structures that form one of the essential pillars of Swiss live music. An independent fund can secure operational continuity, promote fair working conditions, strengthen youth and volunteer work, foster diversity and enable experimentation.

A fair and future-proof live music scene thrives on diversity. To sustain the entire ecosystem, the grassroots must be protected, secured and improved.

GLOSSARY



BIG PLAYERS

Big players are larger to large event and cultural organisations, corporations, and legal entities that are closely connected to the ecosystem of non-profit music-making. In some cases, one- or two-way dependencies exist. Big players often belong — in part or in full — to broader corporate structures that pursue economic or commercial objectives to varying degrees. The term 'big players' is neither evaluative nor coded: big players are an important part of the ecosystem.

CLUBS / VENUES

Clubs and venues are spaces for cultural performances such as concerts, club nights, festivals, and much more. They sometimes curate their own programme but also frequently rent out their spaces and infrastructure to other promoters and projects. Clubs and venues are typically spaces and organisational structures with seasonal or year-round opening and operating hours, while festivals and other cultural promoters rent in on a project-by-project basis. This has a significant impact on finances — particularly fixed operating costs, risk management, and other factors central to how clubs and venues are run.

COMMISSIONS / AGENCY FEES

Commissions are typically percentage-based charges levied by agencies (e.g. booking agencies) for their services. Commissions are not necessarily part of every deal, and who pays them varies by situation. In the Swiss popular music sector, booking agencies have generally charged around 15% of artist fees as commission in recent years. Management commissions vary significantly and are often confidential: they can be 20% or more, applied across a wide range of income streams including fees, merchandise sales, subsidies, and more.

CONSUMPTION HABITS / AUDIENCE BEHAVIOUR

Consumption habits refer to the practices and routines of cultural audiences and consumer groups. The term is used in the context of hospitality (e.g. bar spend) as well as ticket purchasing. More broadly, audience behaviour across society has shifted considerably in recent years: lower alcohol consumption, greater economic and health awareness, and other changes in going-out habits all have direct implications for how cultural venues and events are funded.

CULTURAL PARTICIPATION

Cultural participation describes the commitment of cultural projects and their organisers to enabling low-threshold access to cultural life — both for audiences and for those who wish to actively contribute (e.g. as volunteers). Cultural participation also encompasses social and integrative engagement in support of cultural education, social cohesion, mutual understanding, respect, diversity, and democratic processes.

DEFICIT / DEFICIT-BASED FUNDING

In the cultural sector, a deficit refers to an overall financial result in which expenditure exceeds income. Currently, many (public) funding bodies in the popular music sector award so-called deficit guarantees: a project is only funded if a loss would occur without the subsidy. The maximum deficit amount is defined in advance. This approach is intended to prevent subsidies from being used to generate profits with public funds.

DIVERSITY

Diversity describes plurality in many dimensions — on, in front of, and behind the stage. Diversity may relate to the (perceived) identities of individuals, the range of genres and forms of cultural expression, the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of people involved, and numerous other aspects that diverge from the informal, established norms of a Central European society.

ECOSYSTEM

The ecosystem describes the network of cultural institutions, service providers, and other stakeholders. In this context, it encompasses venues, promoters, agencies, ticketing platforms, artists, and numerous other players who stand in direct and indirect relationships of interdependence — ideological, service-oriented, and economic. A broadly shared interest in cultural activity does not necessarily mean that business models are the same: for some, cultural and social values are the primary driver; for others, profitable financial outcomes — or, frequently, the goal of cross-subsidising deficit-making projects with profitable ones.

FESTIVALS / SHOWCASES

Festivals, showcases, and individual concerts are event formats whose activities and organisational structures are typically project-based. They are often initiated and organised by cultural associations. These promoters depend on clubs, venues, or outdoor sites where they can stage their events. There are deep mutual dependencies between clubs, venues, festivals, and the initiators of time-limited event formats — they are all part of the music and cultural ecosystem.

FIXED COSTS

Fixed costs are financial obligations that an organisation or project must meet over an extended period of time. Staff and social security costs, premises rental and utilities, infrastructure, and various other tangible and intangible expenses all generate fixed costs. Fixed costs are generally independent of the financial success of a given project or organisation and require long-term financial planning.

FOOD & BEVERAGE REVENUE / HOSPITALITY REVENUE

Hospitality refers to the provision and sale of food and beverages. Most organisations in the popular music sector rely on food and beverage revenues for a significant share of their operational financing. As a result, shifts in audience consumption habits can have a direct impact on the funding of cultural projects. By contrast, subsidies for projects and organisational structures in the visual and performing arts are often calculated without any expectation of food and beverage income, while the popular music circuit is heavily dependent on it. Beyond a certain threshold, hospitality income is also subject to taxation, even for tax-exempt organisations.

GENTRIFICATION

Gentrification refers to processes of transformation that, in almost all cases, involve displacement. The term describes spatial and economic developments in which neighbourhoods, for example, are upgraded in value. As a consequence of rising rents and shifting social demographics, projects, uses, and people who depend on affordable spaces are frequently displaced. In turn, the achievements of the displaced individuals and initiatives — valued for their scene-building or subcultural appeal — are often taken over and commercially exploited by a more economically privileged and demographically homogenised environment.

INCLUSION

Inclusion describes measures that enable marginalised individuals or groups to access cultural life and creative practice on equal terms. These measures take many forms: they may be physical (accessible infrastructure), financial (tiered ticket pricing), communicative (multilingual outreach), conceptual (frameworks for peaceful coexistence and mutual respect), or may initiate processes of change across many other areas of cultural work.

INDEPENDENT

A structure or organisation is independent in the way it is designed and operated, and in its relationship to its private or legal backers. There are no financial or content-related obligations to commercial or profit-oriented partners. Excluded from this are service agreements with public institutions, as well as short-term agreements and working relationships with artists, their representatives, and other parties necessary for the delivery of individual projects or events.

LARGE-SCALE EVENTS

Large-scale events are events that attract a substantial audience. No fixed legal definition exists in Switzerland. The term is interpreted differently depending on context (culture, sport, politics, business, etc.) and in accordance with local and regional regulations. In Switzerland, events with more than 1,000 attendees are classified as large-scale events by SUISA who represents authors' rights.

MARGINALISATION

Marginalisation describes deviation from established, informal norms. The term is often used in relation to individuals or groups who are excluded, face barriers to access, or are not proactively integrated due to discrimination or other structural obstacles arising from prevailing social conditions.

NON-PROFIT / NOT-FOR-PROFIT

A non-profit structure does not orient its financial results towards generating a profit. Instead, it aims to cover its costs and implement its work to the best of its ability within given financial constraints. The focus, both in the short and long term, is on delivering the best possible outcome relative to the resources available.

NON-COMMERCIAL

All projects, collaborations, and activities of a non-commercial structure are conducted without commercial interest or profit-driven goals. Organising club nights, running crowdfunding campaigns, and other forms of cross-subsidy that serve the overall organisational structure are excluded from this definition, provided they serve solely the genuine non-commercial purpose of that structure.

ORGANISATIONS / ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES

This refers to operational forms that collectively pursue certain goals, projects, or activities. Organisational structures can be place-based, operate their own venue, or run individual event formats such as festivals.

OWN REVENUE / EARNED INCOME

Own revenue refers to income generated by an organisation or project itself. This also includes unpaid staff contributions (volunteer labour). Whether third-party funds from crowdfunding or sponsorship can be counted as own revenue must be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

PAID EMPLOYMENT / WAGED WORK

Paid employment refers to staff services that are financially compensated. Voluntary work is not paid employment; in the case of flat-rate expense payments, the relationship between work performed and the associated costs must be assessed individually. In cultural circles, paid work often specifically refers to labour that people take on out of financial necessity. In subcultural contexts, paid employment frequently carries with it an implicit expectation that additional voluntary contributions will be made beyond contracted hours.

PAY TO PLAY

Pay to play refers to event formats where promoters are unable to offer or pay a fee to performing artists — meaning the artists themselves, along with their representatives, bear both the financial and often the organisational risk. Pay to play is not widely practised in Switzerland, thanks to the availability of various forms of subsidy. However, the practice is common internationally, which can be financially and logistically challenging for lesser-known and emerging artists and their representatives.

PETZI

Since 1996, PETZI has been the Swiss umbrella association of currently over 200 music clubs and festivals across 21 cantons and the four language regions of Switzerland. PETZI represents music clubs and festivals that operate on a cultural, non-profit basis, advocates for their interests, and supports its members as well as the wider music-making landscape and its conditions at every level — from local to national, from youth culture to networking, from statistics to conferences and continuing education. Since 2001, PETZI has offered its members an independent, in-house ticketing platform and an online event calendar.

POPULAR MUSIC / POPULAR CULTURE

This term describes cultural movements, tendencies, and trends that, while genre-independent, engage primarily with the forms of expression and consumption habits of the present. Popular music is part of current music-making that draws on countless references while typically going far beyond the mere interpretation or reproduction of existing music.

PROJECT FUNDING

Project funding is typically a time-limited or scope-limited subsidy for a single project. Currently, public subsidy for subcultural projects tends towards project funding. Its advantages include targeted support for specific projects and ideas. Its disadvantages are typically the significant bureaucratic and administrative workload involved, as well as uncertainty — since planning phases must be undertaken without financial support or security.

PUBLIC BENEFIT / CHARITABLE PURPOSE

An organisational structure serves a public benefit when private individuals or legal entities are statutorily excluded from any share in profits. Furthermore, upon the dissolution of the structure, all assets must be transferred in full and exclusively to other organisations with a similarly recognised public benefit purpose.

RÖSTIGRABEN

The Röstigraben (=‘rösti ditch’, named after a potato dish) describes the linguistic and cultural differences between the various language regions of Switzerland — particularly between the French-speaking and German-speaking parts of the country. In the cultural sector, significant differences can also be observed in approaches to cultural funding and in broader cultural and social understandings of what culture is and who it is for.

SAFER SPACES

Safer spaces are intentionally designed environments in which people are meant to feel as safe, respected, and welcome as possible. They aim to prevent discrimination, boundary violations, and violence: to reflect on power dynamics; and to enable participation across different social realities. Safer spaces require active prevention work, clear positions, transparent ground rules, and shared responsibility among all stakeholders involved.

SECTORS / ART FORMS

In the cultural field, 'sectors / art forms' refers to both genres and forms of expression. Classical music or jazz are examples of 'sectors / art forms', as are theatre or visual art. In cultural funding, the term 'cross-sector' describes programmes or productions that bring together multiple forms of artistic and cultural expression.

SPONSORSHIP

Sponsorship is a form of donation tied to a return — in contrast to subsidies and grants, which in most cases involve no direct economic return (with the exception of service agreements). Sponsorships are therefore typically subject to taxation, as they include a service exchange that generates value for both parties.

SUBCULTURE / ALTERNATIVE CULTURE

Subculture and alternative culture are often seen as a counterpoint to the mainstream. They serve as umbrella terms under which a wide range of cultural organisational forms and modes of expression can gather. Subculture and alternative culture have historically been associated with left-leaning politics, rooted in protest and reform movements against the values and cultural norms of mainstream society. Today, the aesthetic surfaces of subculture and alternative culture are frequently appropriated as market-driven tools in the service of ongoing gentrification.

SUBSIDIES / GRANTS

Subsidies and grants are third-party funds that are of great value to non-commercial cultural projects. They can come from public bodies as well as from legal entities and private individuals. Subsidies are not tied to financial or material returns — with the exception of service agreements that are defined in mutual consultation with the goals of the funded institutions and projects.

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability describes measures that are future-oriented and effective over the long term. The term can be used in economic, social, and ecological contexts alike.

STRUCTURAL FUNDING

Structural funding describes a form of public subsidy in which the focus is not on programming or cultural content, but on the entire organisational structure — including staff, infrastructure, premises, and much more. The counterpart to structural funding in the cultural sector is programme funding, where the emphasis is placed on content.

SWISS LIVE MUSIC

Swiss live music refers to concerts and other musical performances taking place in Switzerland. The nationalities of the people involved, as well as any other ethnic or religious backgrounds, have no bearing on this term. Swiss live music encompasses the active practice of music and music culture: concerts, performances, and more. DJs can also be considered part of Swiss live music — however, the purely mechanical reproduction of recorded music without human intervention does not qualify as live music.

TICKET REVENUE

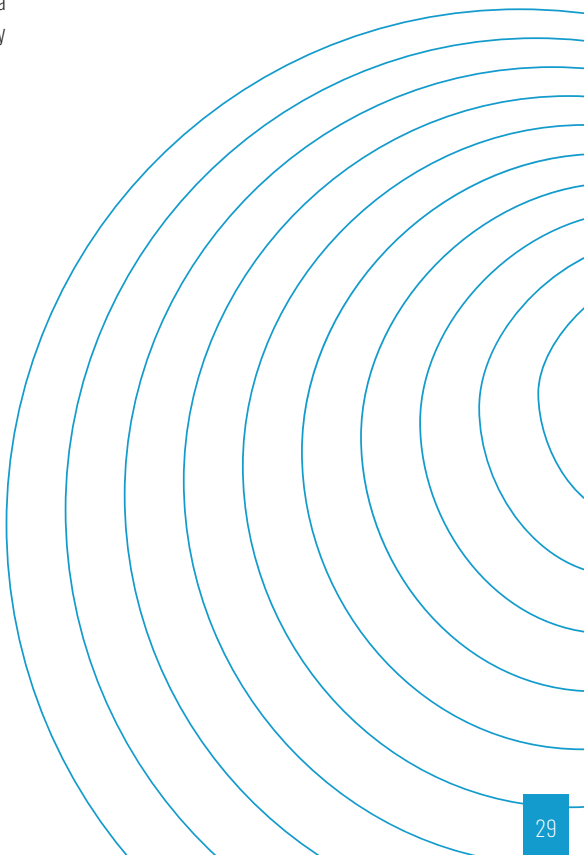
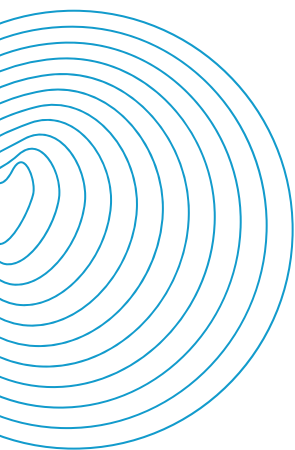
Ticket revenue refers to the direct income generated through the sale of tickets by event promoters. For charitable and tax-exempt organisations, this income is generally not subject to taxation — at least as long as it does not include additional services such as welcome drinks or other non-cultural benefits.

URBANISATION

Urbanisation refers to the growth and intensification of urban centres and the gravitational pull they exert on surrounding regions. The term is also used in architecture and planning to describe processes of densification in which formerly rural or small-scale neighbourhoods or areas are built up. Like gentrification, urbanisation almost always involves some degree of displacement.

VOLUNTEERING / VOLUNTARY WORK

Voluntary contributions are unpaid staff services. A large proportion of non-commercial organisations and projects depend on voluntary engagement. At the same time, volunteering represents inclusion, (cultural) participation, meaningful contribution, and offers valuable experience and entry points into professional music and cultural work — for both the volunteers and the organisations they support. Volunteering is also a key pillar of social cohesion. However, it is worth acknowledging that voluntary engagement is also a position of privilege: people in precarious or financially insecure circumstances can rarely afford to volunteer.



A fair and future-proof live music scene
thrives on diversity.

To sustain the entire ecosystem, the grassroots
must be protected, secured and improved.

Now is the moment to take responsibility together.



VERBAND SCHWEIZER MUSIKCLUBS UND FESTIVALS
FÉDÉRATION SUISSE DES CLUBS ET DES FESTIVALS DE MUSIQUES ACTUELLES
FEDERAZIONE SVIZZERA DEI CLUB E FESTIVAL DI MUSICA
SWISS FEDERATION OF MUSIC VENUES AND FESTIVALS