THE CISAC NETWORK IS A GUARDIAN FOR CREATORS

Q&A WITH CISAC DIRECTOR GENERAL GADI ORON

WHAT, FOR YOU, ARE THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS YEAR'S CISAC ANNUAL REPORT?

This has been a year of strong progress for our community – and of challenges as well. First and foremost, this was the year when discussion of the impact of generative AI on our sector really took off. Our members looked to CISAC to take a leadership role. This remains our top priority in 2024.

There was also a very important change in the ownership of CIS-Net, the tool which underpins members' global data exchanges. The system has now been transferred from FastTrack to CISAC. This will help us improve our services to members in the technology field.

We also provided a lot of lobbying support for many countries, responding to legislative initiatives around digital, AI and collective management. We are focusing on markets where CISAC's help can make a concrete difference.

In the past year, we have seen a remarkable recovery in global collections, which is a tribute to the resilience of our community. At the same time, partly because of this success, new commercial competitors are aggressively entering the market and that is creating new challenges for the traditional, non-profit collective management network. This is now a big part of our work.

WHAT ARE THE KEY DEVELOPMENTS ON AI?

AI is transforming our world, and I see CISAC's mission as being a global guardian of creators' rights. We have worked relentlessly to guide the international centres of decision-making, such as the EU, WIPO, UNESCO as well as national governments. Our message is that human creators need to be protected and must be able to license their works and obtain information about their use. This is a critical moment to influence the regulation of AI in favour of creators.

In July 2023, we brought together a coalition of international rightsholders organisations and issued an "Open Letter" to governments. We laid down key principles and established a policy template focused on three priorities for creators: authorisation, remuneration and transparency. This was central to our campaign around AI that later continued with direct lobbying in many countries.

DO YOU THINK POLICY MAKERS HAVE TAKEN ON BOARD THE MESSAGE ON AI?

We have to educate policy makers on what is at stake for human creativity. In the last year, together with CISAC President Björn Ulvaeus, we have met leaders and ministers from Belgium, Greece, China, Japan and Mexico. Particular effort was made prior to the adoption of the EU AI Act, the first major Regulation on this important issue that will no doubt serve as a precedent for policy makers internationally. I think copyright and creators' interests are now higher on the agenda of governments than before, but there is still a huge amount of education and advocacy to do.

WHAT ARE THE HIGHLIGHTS ON THE TECHNOLOGY FRONT?

Our mission here is to improve the data quality and the use of identifiers, so that we can support better and more efficient remuneration for creators. The last year has seen a big step forward on two fronts. First, by completing the transfer of CIS-Net from FastTrack to CISAC, we have put the global systems under CISAC's control for the first time. This places us in a position to draw up a roadmap towards the future, to respond to members' business needs in the years ahead.

Second, adoption of the ISWC is steadily extending across the music value chain. It is increasing among publishers and we now have agreements with a number of Digital Service Providers to access the codes as well. We are also supporting the efforts among societies to issue the codes at the point of release of a song.

WHAT DEVELOPMENTS HAVE THERE BEEN AROUND GOVERNANCE?

We have a daily caseload of actions supporting individual members, in Turkey, China, Georgia and many other countries. We've made particular progress in managing the issues around CISAC Clients. The experience we've gained over several years puts us in a better place to monitor Clients' use of our information systems, and to evaluate their compliance with the agreed terms and conditions. As more commercial entities enter our world, we are more attentive in the way we address the use of our services.

HOW ARE CISAC'S LOBBYING EFFORTS EVOLVING?

More and more governments are focusing on copyright matters and that means more requests for us to intervene locally. We show many examples in this Report, including on countering the damaging copyright Bill in South Africa, working on the resale right in Chile, or implementing EU directives in Bulgaria. We are also continuing to build partnerships with international agencies such as WIPO, UNESCO, ARIPO and OAPI. Our President and VPs have brought the voice of prominent creators to numerous platforms, and I'm extremely grateful for their support.

WHAT ARE THE PRIORITIES LOOKING FORWARD?

It is clear from our members that AI is going to stay top of the agenda. It's a fast-moving target, with legislative developments in many countries which brings growing demands for CISAC's support. Another key project for us is designing the future of CIS-Net.

Our community is working in an environment that is changing dramatically. Competition is increasing, bringing new pressures. Despite that, I am optimistic about the future. Our members are embracing change, while at the same time working to show that, despite growing competition, it is they who can lay claim to being the true home for authors. ●

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