



# Minimum Fees for Musicians (Public Funding) "Berlin Model"

*(Version from February 2026)*

This paper was developed by DACH Music Berlin (IG Jazz Berlin, inm, VAM Berlin, ZMB) with support from the Senate Department for Culture and Social Cohesion. It is intended to serve as a basis for an ongoing exchange on the highly complex but very urgent topic of "minimum fees", initially in the area of public funding.

## I. ASSUMPTIONS | PERSPECTIVES | STRATEGIES

As Berlin associations of the independent music scene, we have developed a common calculation model (based on achieving a "Pension Point", see II. CALCULATION: REFERENCE SIZES / CALCULATION SIZES / FACTORS), which applies to the associations in DACH Music and reflects the working practice and conditions of freelance musicians in these areas.

Based on this calculation, a minimum daily rate has been derived of **€ 819** for 2026.

### Gradual introduction

To avoid overloading the existing funding structures and to achieve a sustainable impact, we propose introducing the minimum fee gradually. It is important that both the minimum fees and all intermediate stages leading progressively to this minimum are clearly and transparently marked as such, so they are not perceived as "guideline fees."

Achieving this minimum seems reasonable to us in a gradation of 60%/80%/100%. The following gradation results:

Stage 1: € 492\* (60%) Stage 2: € 655\* (80%) Stage 3: € 819\* (100%)

\* (perspectively adjusted annually to the "average income"/"Rentenpunkt", see below)

**These steps must be accompanied by a commensurate increase in funding.** In view of the tight budget situation, the minimum fee of **€ 375<sup>1</sup>** will continue to apply to publicly funded projects in Berlin in 2026/27 despite an increase in the reference values ("Durchschnittsentgelt", see below) in 2026.

<sup>1</sup> €375 corresponds to "stage 1" for the years 2023/24 (the reference value here was the "average income" for 2022, see II. Calculation: Reference Sizes/Calculation Sizes/Factors) and was retained as the recommendation for 2025 despite an increase in the reference values in 2025. Although refraining once again from raising the "stage 1" in 2026 still appears necessary given the budgetary situation, it leads to a further real reduction in the minimum fee and widens the gap to the target value that is actually needed.

## Sustainability - Socioeconomic, Health

The basis for the calculation is the assumption of a "healthy/normal" workload, aiming for an income that allows for adequate social security and reflects the societal importance and quality of the musicians' work. The current cycle of self-exploitation and overwork must be broken.<sup>2</sup>

A significant part of freelance musicians' work consists of "investive" creative and organizational "invisible" work that has not been compensated so far. This results in low income and inadequate social security (pension), with no statutory unemployment insurance currently available. This situation leads to high societal costs (old-age poverty, basic income support, health system).

### Addressing Potential Issues

It is crucial to consider and develop strategies for the problems that may arise with the introduction of minimum fees. The following questions and demands are essential for sustainably establishing minimum fees without harming the diversity of the independent music scene and its existing structures:

- **Funding pools must be gradually increased** to maintain the number of funded projects while adhering to minimum fees. The diversity of the independent scene must be preserved.
- How to address the risk of an erosion of existing structures if minimum fees cannot be met with **partial public funding**?
- How to incorporate minimum fees into public funding structures without detaching them from the free market and causing **fee distortions**? What strategies can be developed? What responsibility does public funding have here?
- Minimum fees must also apply to the fees of freelance musicians at publicly funded institutions and venues (e.g. theaters, orchestras, opera houses). Considerable efforts are still needed here (see unisono's "Aushilfenampel").<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> An average workload in Germany ranges between 208 and 215 working days. Currently, many musicians work well over 208 or 215 days per year (!). Because "invisible/investive" working hours are not compensated, even with significantly more working days, it is hardly possible to generate a sufficient income – this applies also to renowned groups and artists. This state of permanent overwork and self-exploitation, combined with precarious income situations, must be ended – it is unsustainable both for the artists and from a social policy perspective.

<sup>3</sup> The "Aushilfenampel" developed by unisono Deutsche Musik- und Orchestervereinigung e.V. can be found here: <https://uni-sono.org/aushilfenampel/>. It gives a first impression of what is currently paid in rehearsal and daily rates for so-called orchestra assistants in German orchestras.

## II. Calculation: Reference Sizes / Calculation Sizes / Factors

### Annual Income

#### What is being compared?

An employee's **annual income** (gross) is equivalent to a freelance musician's **annual profit** (revenue minus operating expenses). From both, **annual income** (employee) and **annual profit** (freelance musician), taxes and social security contributions are deducted.

#### Germany's "Average Income" ("Pension Point") as reference for Annual Income

As preliminary reference for determining what the minimum annual income for freelance musicians should be (to be generated with "full workload"<sup>4</sup>) we chose the "**Average Income**" ("**Pension Point**").

The "Average Income" (*Durchschnittsentgelt*) is an important figure in the German social security system and depicts the average annual gross income of all employees in Germany. It is evaluated each year and is one of the main parameters which define how many "Pension Points" can be collected. The number of collected "Pension Points" determines how high the individual state pension will be. Reaching the "Average Income" equals one "Pension Point" for that year. Staying below the average results in fewer points and consequently in a lower pension.

#### Advantages of "Average Income" as reference:

- Considers the aspect of social security (retirement security, "Pension Points").
- Societal relevance.
- Continuous dynamism, as it indirectly reflects, for example, tariff increases.

The "Average Income" is for 2025 at **€ 50,493 gross**. (2022: € 38,901)

In comparison: The average annual profit of freelance musicians in Germany in 2025 was **€ 16,272**.

(NB: Average male musicians € 18,953, Average female musicians € 13,592!).<sup>5</sup>

#### Music-Specific Factors:

To achieve this **annual income** (equivalent to **annual profit** of a freelance musician), a **target revenue** exceeding the annual income must be generated, which includes various elements of freelance musicians' activities:

- 40% operating expenses
- 10% "investment surcharge"
- "Invisible/investive" work (assuming 226 working days ["full workload"] with 113 paid and 113 investive workdays).

<sup>4</sup> "Full capacity utilization"=226 working days/year, see below

<sup>5</sup> <https://miz.org/de/statistiken/ksk-musik>, see fig. "Freiberuflich tätige ausübende Künstler:innen/Ausübende Künstler\*innen", as of June 2025

## Reference Size → Target Revenue → Daily Rate

### Reference Size: Average Income 2025

	%	€/p.a.
Target Annual Income (equivalent to "Annual Profit" of a freelance musician)		<b>50.493</b> (="Average Income" 2025)
plus Operating Expenses	40% of Revenue	33.662
<b>Target Revenue</b>		<b>84.155</b>
plus "Investment and Risk Surcharge"	10% of Revenue	8.416
<b>Target Revenue Including "Investment Surcharge"</b>		<b>92.571</b>

Full workload: 226 workdays/year, with 113 paid and 113 investive workdays.  
The target revenue must be achieved in 113 days ("visible/paid" working time).

**Daily Rate Calculation: € 92,571 / 113 = € 819 daily rate**

#### Workdays (Full Workload)

- Average Workdays for Employees in Berlin: 213/year (excluding weekends, holidays, average vacation days, and average sick days)
  - For freelance musicians we assume slightly more workdays due to self-employment: **226 days total (Full Workload)**
- covering both "invisible/investive" and "visible/paid" work.

#### Operating Expenses

40 % of Target Revenue: Is priced in as a lump sum. (See also [Jazzstudie 2022](#))

#### "Investment and Risk Surcharge"

- 10% of Target Revenue: Is priced in as a lump sum for Reserves/Risk/Private Retirement Planning (longer periods of illness, contract risks, ...).

Freelance musicians do not have access to statutory unemployment insurance.

Also: Reflects entrepreneurial activity that requires reinvestment in order to operate sustainably.

#### Time Units

- Day/Daily Rate: e.g., 2 rehearsals of 3 hours each or 1 concert + warm-up rehearsal/sound check.
- Artistic activities cannot be calculated on an hourly basis!

#### "Invisible/Investive" vs. "Visible/Paid" Work

##### "Invisible/Investive Work"

- integral part of the profession, including practising, research, project development, further training, office work, marketing, travel times etc.
- constitutes a significant portion of freelancers' work time and has not been compensated so far.

##### "Visible/Paid" Work:

- Rehearsals and Concerts.

##### Ratio "Invisible/Investive" / "Visible/Paid":

**50:50\***

(\*Cross-Genre consensus of DACH Musik Berlin based on experience)

**Conclusion:** The Target Revenue must be generated over 113 paid workdays per year, assuming a total of 226 workdays (= "Full Workload").

#### Classifications

- Classification by age, professional experience, or qualifications are not practical for minimum fees in the music sector as it could lead to age discrimination and has no informative value in many music fields.