Keeping Rights Attached to Creative Works

IPFN contribution to the European Commission's targeted copyright consultation

Prepared 1 November 2026 for review and submission by Blinding Visuals Press/IPFN. **Not submitted.** The Commission confirms an extended deadline of 10 November 2026. The live EU Survey questionnaire was temporarily unavailable during this review, so the text below is an accompanying policy contribution, not a claim to reproduce its exact questions or field limits. [1]

Executive position

Problem: Artists cannot reliably attach their names to work web-wide.

Proposal: A web-native identifier for creative work, available voluntarily to creators.

Copyright law can recognize the creator while the internet loses the creator's name. A photograph can be copied, resized, reposted, detached from its metadata, and used far from the page on which it first appeared. A later user may want to identify the claimant or ask for permission and still have no reliable route back to the right person. AI increases the scale of the problem, but the gap already existed.

Europe should address that information problem alongside enforcement, remuneration, and AI transparency. A practical identifier and evidence layer can make claims easier to discover and inspect without making registration a condition of copyright. It can support rights clearance and the communication of rights preferences while preserving exceptions, limitations, and lawful public-interest uses.

Blinding Visuals Press developed IPFN when it needed to identify visual works in commerce. IPFN is a web-native identifier for creative work. Open the identifier to see who claimed the work and verify the available file evidence. The service connects that claim to an exact-file fingerprint, an IPFS certificate record, and a daily registration list whose fingerprint is recorded on a public blockchain. We propose testing how those records can connect to Europe's existing copyright information sources, under published rules and independent review.

1. Protect automatic rights while improving practical discovery

The Berne no-formalities principle is a foundation to preserve. It should not be described as a ban on voluntary registries. National and sectoral records already serve useful functions. The issue is that those records do not together provide a consistent, accessible route from every circulating visual work to reliable information about its claimants and permitted uses. WIPO recognizes the coexistence of automatic protection and voluntary registration systems. [2]

An EU approach should therefore avoid an obligation for a creator to register, avoid treating an unregistered work as unprotected, and avoid granting a private operator exclusive control over public recognition of rights. It should instead specify how voluntary records can be exchanged, checked, corrected, challenged, and connected to the original information provider.

The important distinction is between a claim and a legal determination. A registration may record who asserted rights, what file they submitted, when the record entered the system, and what evidence

accompanied it. It cannot determine every authorship, originality, employment, assignment, licensing, exception, or infringement question.

2. Build on federated copyright information

EUIPO has already identified fragmentation and interoperability as practical barriers. Its CopyrightView work explores better access to existing information sources. IPFN's contribution should be assessed in that context, particularly for photographs and visual works, rather than presented as a request to replace existing registries. [3]

We recommend an interoperable minimum record that includes a stable work identifier; the claimant's stated role; a source record and responsible provider; a version and timestamp; relevant file fingerprints and relationships between versions; a rights or licensing contact route; rights preferences in a machine-readable form where appropriate; and a visible status for corrections, disputes, or withdrawal.

Creators must be able to understand and correct their records. Services should explain each field and identify the source and checks behind each claim.

3. Make AI-related rights information usable

An identifier can give an AI developer, search service, archive, or downstream publisher a consistent reference for discovering an asserted rights preference and its source. It does not itself prove that a model used a particular work, create a licence, override a statutory exception, or guarantee that a preference has been honored.

The Commission should encourage standards that separate claimant identity, work identity, the legal basis asserted, the particular use addressed, the effective date, and the machine-readable expression of a preference. Records should distinguish an affirmative licence from a reservation of rights or a contact request. They should allow competing claims and corrections without presenting the first submitted preference as a binding legal determination.

IPFN and Blinding Visuals Press are also developing image-similarity and AI-assisted discovery capabilities. These may help locate copies or transformed versions that exact-file hashes cannot match. They should be evaluated as evidence-finding tools. Institutions should require published benchmark methods, false-positive and false-negative measurements, human review, and a clear route to contest an allegation. A similarity score alone should not trigger a public accusation of plagiarism or an irreversible rights decision.

4. Preserve evidence without overstating what it proves

Exact-file fingerprints and public ledger commitments can help a third party verify a record independently of an operator's editable database. Batching many records into a daily commitment can reduce the need for a separate on-chain transaction per work. The reference IPFN service uses Base, an Ethereum Layer 2 network, for that commitment; it does not claim a separate Ethereum mainnet transaction for every work.

The Marseille judgment of20 March 2025 illustrates the judicial utility of blockchain timestamp evidence considered in a complete factual record. It concerns AZ Factory, Valeria Moda, and a different Bitcoin-based service. It does not establish that every blockchain certificate proves authorship or that IPFN is a legal notary. [4]

The Commission should support clear evidence export and reproducible verification procedures, including the relevant source bytes or lawful access path, certificate record, canonical ledger, hash algorithm, chain identity, transaction, and explanation of what each proves. Qualified trust-service status and any statutory presumption should be stated only where it has actually been obtained. [5]

5. Make privacy and correction part of the infrastructure

Public attribution can be useful without making private identity documents, account details, or dispute evidence public. A pilot should minimize public personal data, define lawful purposes and responsible controllers, document retention and international transfers, and operate access, correction, erasure, and objection procedures as applicable. Public IPFS replication and chain persistence require decisions before publication; neither hashing nor a distributed architecture makes data protection disappear. [6]

Institutional support should be tied to an accountable data-flow map, a documented risk assessment, a DPIA wherever required, and independent review. A correction or restriction in the current public interface cannot be represented as erasing every third-party copy of a previously public record.

6. Keep the basic service within reach

The public-interest model should allow creators to make a basic claim and users to inspect it without a transaction fee at the point of use. The operating costs remain real. Funding should explicitly cover preservation, resolution, security, disputes, privacy, and independent oversight, rather than presenting low blockchain fees as the whole budget.

We propose a funded, free-to-creator pilot alongside a transparent cost model and optional professional services. This proposal does not describe the current beta's paid checkout as already free. Nor should institutional support entrench one operator. Export, open verification specifications, additional registrars, and succession arrangements should be conditions of the pilot.

7. A concrete next step

We request a policy and technical discussion with the relevant Commission and EUIPO teams, followed by a bounded visual-work interoperability pilot. In 90 days from an agreed start, the parties could define a small consented dataset, map records to institutional requirements, inspect live evidence, test challenged claims and failure recovery, and publish an independent evaluation.

The immediate decision is whether this working system can help the work Europe is already doing. We are ready to demonstrate the technology, disclose its limits and have an independent team test it.

References

[1] European Commission, targeted consultation announcement,published 29 September 2026,updated 27 October 2026. https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/commission-seeks-feedback-challenges-and-way-forward-area-effect-technology-copyright . Questionnaire: https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/targetedconsultationcopyright

[2] WIPO, Copyright Registration Systems. https://www.wipo.int/en/web/copyright/activities/copyright-registration/index

[3] EUIPO, Mapping of EU databases and metadata standards,28 May 2026. https://www.euipo.europa.eu/en/publications/mapping-of-eu-databases-and-metadata-standards-providing-information-on-copyright-protected-works

[4] TJ Marseille,1st Civil Chamber, 20 March 2025, AZ Factory v Valeria Moda, RG 23/00046. https://www.legalis.net/jurisprudences/tribunal-judiciaire-de-marseille-1ere-ch-civile-jugement-du-20-mars-2025/

[5] Regulation (EU) 910/2014,Article 41: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX%3A32014R0910 ; Regulation (EU) 2024/1183,Articles 45k-45l: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX%3A32024R1183

[6] GDPR,Regulation (EU) 2016/679: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/ENG/ALL/?uri=celex%3A32016R0679 ; EDPB, Guidelines 02/2025, final v2,7 July 2026: https://www.edpb.europa.eu/documents/guideline/guidelines-022025-on-processing-of-personal-data-through-blockchain_en