

SEASON 2 · FROM EVIDENCE TO ACTION

“BEHIND THE LENS”

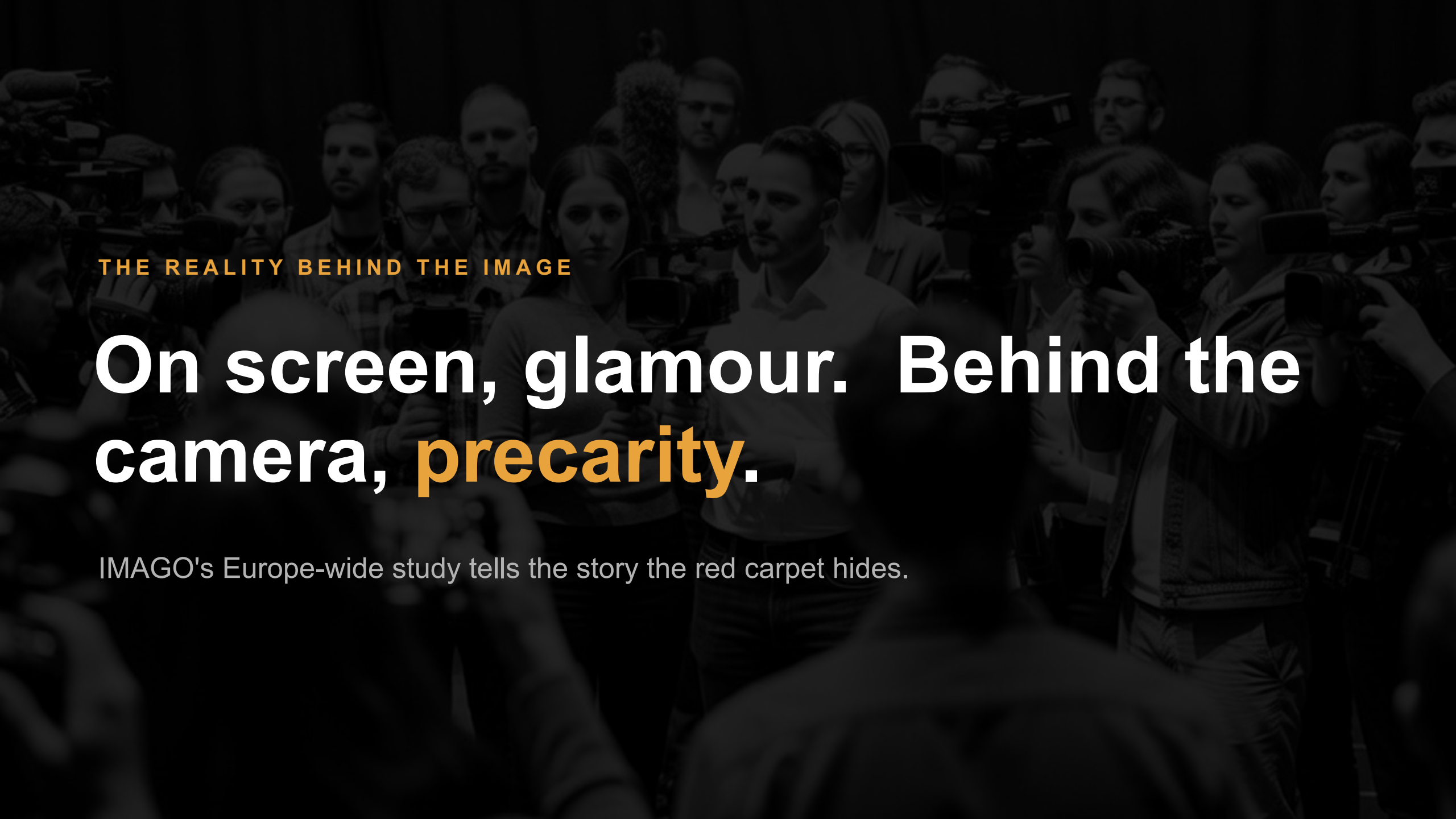
The price of the image: long hours, burnout, insecurity.

Prague · 8 November 2026

Hosted by the Czech Society of Cinematographers (Asociace českých kameramanů, AČK)

3rd edition: “Quality of Life and Work in Czech Audiovisual Production”

Casper Høyberg · Dr. Cristina Busch · IMAGO Working Conditions Committee



THE REALITY BEHIND THE IMAGE

On screen, glamour. Behind the camera, precarity.

IMAGO's Europe-wide study tells the story the red carpet hides.

THE STUDY

What “Behind the Lens” is

496

cinematographers and camera crew surveyed across Europe

82%

of respondents from European countries

Led by the IMAGO Working Conditions Committee, with FORBA (research) and legal assessment by Dr. Cristina Busch.
Fieldwork 2024–25.

Source: IMAGO / FORBA, Behind the Lens, 2025



THE HOURS

Twelve-hour days, day after day.

Working days that routinely run past 10, 12, even more hours, and rarely paid for them.

WORKING HOURS

The hours behind the camera

57%

work more than 48 hours a week, always or often

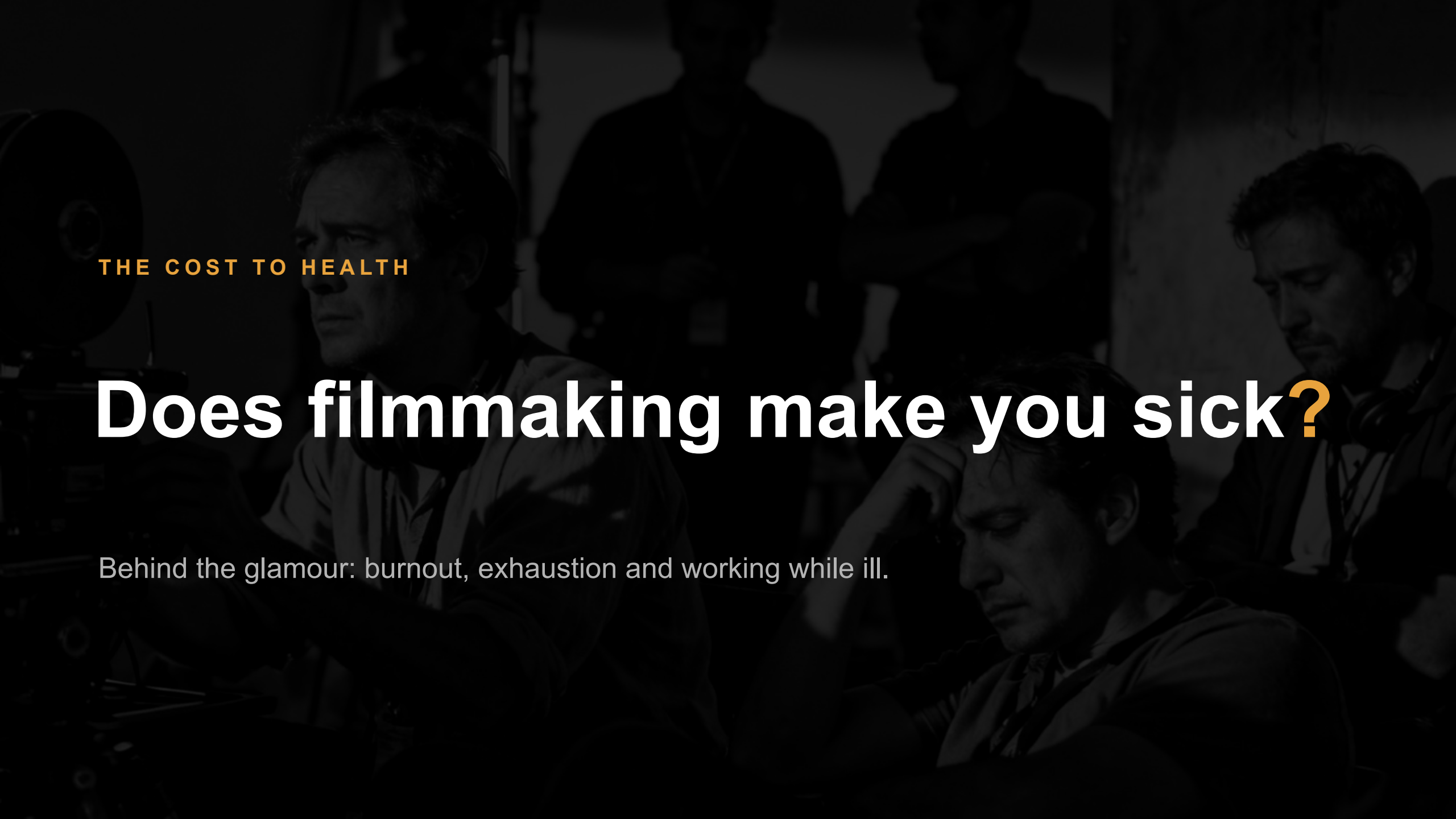
86.6%

often work more than 10 hours a day

36.3%

the minority who are actually paid for overtime

Source: IMAGO / FORBA, Behind the Lens, 2025



THE COST TO HEALTH

Does filmmaking make you sick?

Behind the glamour: burnout, exhaustion and working while ill.

49.1%

THE COST TO HEALTH

have suffered burnout symptoms; 78.6% have seen it in colleagues.

Source: IMAGO / FORBA, Behind the Lens, 2025

THE COST TO HEALTH

A profession under pressure

74.2%

say work pressure has risen in the last five years

70%

say the work has harmed their personal life

56.3%

worked while visibly ill in the past year

Source: IMAGO / FORBA, Behind the Lens, 2025

WHY IT HAPPENS

A structural mismatch

HOW THE PROFESSION WORKS

Mostly self-employed
Irregular, project-based income
Long hours are the norm

HOW PROTECTION IS BUILT

Designed for stable employment
Based on continuous contributions
Working-time rules often ineffective

Only 37.7% are union members · just **19.2%** are paid under a collective agreement

69.1% say no society or union can negotiate their working conditions

Figures: IMAGO / FORBA, Behind the Lens, 2025.

A EUROPEAN PROBLEM

Not national. European.

United Kingdom: 74% have considered leaving the industry (Film & TV Charity, 2024).

Across the EU: 84% of artists not fairly paid, 71% without adequate social protection (Creative Pulse, 2024).

Country by country: national surveys find the same: Spain (AEC) and Denmark (Dansk Kunstnerråd).

Only a European coalition can answer it.

THE LEGAL GAP

The rights exist. They stop at the set door.

EU Working Time Directive: a limit on paper, rarely enforced on set.

EU right to collective bargaining (2022): open to self-employed crews, almost unused in film.

Even Europe's own experts call this the central challenge. **Research for the EU Artists' Charter (EENC, 2026)**

"Europe must become social — or it has no future." Kurt Brazda, Chair of the IMAGO Working Conditions Committee



THE SCANDINAVIAN EXPERIENCE

What we won, and how fast it slips

Casper Høyberg, chair, Danish Society of Cinematographers (DFF)

THE DANISH MODEL · 2003–2018

The rules a generation fought for

A 40-hour week as the norm, with every hour past the eighth paid as overtime.

An 11-hour daily rest, secured since 2003 through the EU Working Time Directive: not a Danish quirk, but a European right against burnout.

For fifteen years, among the best working and living conditions for cinematographers in Europe.

Sources: Danish collective agreement; EU Working Time Directive (1993 / 2003).

SLIPPING BACK · SINCE THE PANDEMIC

Even the Scandinavian model is eroding

Schedules squeezed: a feature once shot in 7 weeks, now in 5; flat-fee deals push crews to run faster than ever.

Royalties → buy-outs: broadcasters replacing fair ongoing pay with one-off deals (e.g. SVT).

Sweden, 2025–26: only 60.5% can still make a living from the profession, and talent is leaving.

Hard-won national rules don't hold when the money pushes the other way.

Source: Swedish Society of Cinematographers (FSF), member survey 2025–26.

THE DANISH FAIR PRACTICE CODE

More than a code: a claim to respect

What it is: a voluntary standard, “comply or explain”, backed by 25 Danish arts organisations.

What it's for: recognition that artists are a needed part of society, not “playful kids in the corner”.

Where it's going: a pioneer frontier toward the Ministry of Culture, and an alliance across the whole creative field: authors, composers, painters, cinematographers.

A powerful statement, and the start of an alliance across the arts.

Source: Fair Practice Code for the Arts and Cultural Life in Denmark, The Council of Danish Artists.

THE DANISH FAIR PRACTICE CODE

Five core values

01 Fair payment

02 Sustainable working life

03 Diversity

04 Transparency

05 Trust

The commitments of a fair industry.

Source: Fair Practice Code for the Arts and Cultural Life in Denmark, The Council of Danish Artists.

THE EUROPEAN ANSWER

Europe is drafting an Artists' Charter, due 2027.

Fair pay · Fair share · A fair system

This is the moment to be heard.

The sector's three principles: Towards the EU Artists' Charter, civil-society blueprint (2026).



FROM EVIDENCE TO ACTION

Behind the Lens: Season 2

From a study into a movement.

Story by story, country by country, carrying the evidence to Brussels, 2027.

THE ROAD TO BRUSSELS · 2027

A conference for the whole sector

Beyond cinematographers alone: everyone whose creativity shapes a film, and allies across the wider creative sector.

Around one table: crews, industry, unions and European policymakers.

One shared agenda: portable protection across borders, fair pay through social dialogue, and enforcement, not just principles.

From scattered voices to a shared agenda.

Let's build it together.

Join us as partners, as voices, as a movement for dignified working and living conditions in film.

IMAGO Working Conditions Committee · iwc@imago.org

Casper Høyberg, Danish Society of Cinematographers (DFF)
Dr. Cristina Busch, legal adviser, IMAGO Working Conditions Committee

Thank you · #BehindTheLens