

COLLECTIVE MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS: SHOULD COPYRIGHT AND RELATED RIGHTS BE PROTECTED WITHIN PUBLIC FUNDS

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Abstract: *Collective management of copyright and related rights, with collective management organizations that act as an intermediary between authors and other holders of copyright and related rights, on the one hand, and users of protected subject matter, on the other hand, is currently recognized in legal literature and legal practice as the most optimal means of exercise and financing of certain forms of use of copyright works, but also of related rights. Otherwise, these rights would be very difficult to exercise or could not be exercised at all individually. The authors argue that collective management of copyright could be further optimized and new model thereof drawn upon the centennial history of social security public funds. Following the review of selected literature, the authors offer several arguments for the new model of copyright and related rights protection within public funds.*

Key words: *Collective Management Organizations, Copyright Collecting Societies, Public Funds, Copyright, Public Interest, Public Good.*

JEL classification: *K110, O340, K340, H420, H440, L330, I380, H230, H290*

1. INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

Collective management of copyright and related rights and financing thereof is generally accepted as such in the academic literature and legal practice. The authors revisit this topic, and hypothesize about the alternative means of

financing the collective management of copyright and related rights. Specifically, the authors argue that institutionalization of public funding of collective management of copyright and related rights would be not only possible, but beneficial for the interests of both the authors and other holders of copyright and related rights, as well as for the public interest.

The methodology of this research is based on the legal-dogmatic research, historical and comparative legal analysis and literature review. These methods are applied at the same time with the juxtaposition of the positive law regarding collective management of copyright and related rights, on the one hand, against the different legal concepts of social security systems, on the other hand. The research is, therefore, aimed at recognizing if the existing models of social security offer useful and applicable information about the possible evolution of collective management and financing of copyright and related rights.

The term “collective management organizations” or “CMO”, in this article, refers to the organizations that act as an intermediary between a) authors and other holders of copyright and related rights, and b) users of protected subject matter. These organizations are also known as “collecting societies”, “copyright collecting societies”, “copyright collectives” etc. The term “public funds” refers mainly to social security public funds for which different social security contributions and taxes on payroll and workforce

are earmarked. These funds usually confer an entitlement to receive a (contingent) future social benefit.

2. THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF COLLECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF COPYRIGHT AND RELATED RIGHTS

Copyright is a right that protects the personal and economic interests of the author, therefore the copyright consists of personal and economic rights. The economic rights of the author give the author an exclusive power to prohibit or to authorize the exploitation of his work and copies of that work. Related rights are rights related to copyright that protect objects mainly created from the exploitation of copyrighted works. These are the rights of performers, producers of phonograms, film producers, broadcasting organizations, publishers and makers of databases with respect to their performances, phonograms, videograms, broadcasts and databases.

Copyright and related rights belong to the system of private law, and the basic characteristic of civil rights which protect individual interests is their individual exercise and protection. This is one of the most important differences between private and public rights. Given that private rights serve to satisfy individuals' needs, the exercise of rights is left to the free disposition of the parties, and it depends on their will whether they will exercise their rights or not (Stojanović, Antić, 2001, p. 201). Therefore, the right holder decides whether he will exercise his rights or not, as well as how he will do so. However, the specificity of the copyright and related rights and different forms of exploitation the copyrighted works and protected objects require certain deviations from the general rule on the individual exercise of rights. While development in other areas of intellectual property law led, for example, to the emergence of new types of contracts, such as the license agreement, with its specific legal nature (Damjanović, 2024, 33, 34), these deviations from the general rule completely redefined the notion of "individual" in the individual exercise of rights.

Authors have the exclusive power to prohibit or authorize the exploitation of their works and copies thereof. The author, as well as other holders of copyright and related rights, may exercise their copyright or related rights on their own or through a representative. This is individual exercise of rights, in which case the author or his representative concludes a contract on the exploitation of the work with individual users. However, there are some powers that are very difficult to exercise or cannot be exercised at all individually. These are primarily certain forms of communication to the public, such as rights of

public performance, public transmission, broadcasting and cable retransmission, secondary use of a broadcast work, making available to the public etc. These are very common forms of use of copyright works, but also of related rights, in which the author or other right holder cannot conclude a contract with each user individually, because most often he does not know and cannot know who is using his works. Therefore, authors join together in specialized organizations for the purpose of jointly acting towards users, that is, for the purpose of exercising rights for several copyright works by several authors together, or the so-called collective management of rights.

Collective management of copyright encompasses the management of copyright for a number of works of a larger number of authors collectively through legal entities specialized in such activity only, who meet all the conditions under the provisions of the law and have the authorization granted by the Institute for Intellectual Property for carrying out such activity (Law on the Collective Management of Copyright and Related Rights, 2010, Art. 2). Collective management of copyright and related rights is implemented by a collective management organization that acts as an intermediary between authors and other right holders, on the one hand, and users of protected subject matter, on the other hand. Collective management organization is established by the association of a larger number of authors or associations of authors and carries out the activities of collective management of rights as its only and non-profit activity. The organization's activities must be precisely defined in terms of the type of rights holders, the type of subject matter of protection, and the type of property rights it exercises. There can only be one collective organization for the management of copyright relating to the same type of rights in the same category of works. Therefore, the law stipulates the monopoly position of collective management organizations within the same specialization.

The monopoly position of organizations reflects the essence of the collective management of copyright and related rights and contributes to greater legal certainty. However, it is precisely this position of organizations that can lead to abuse in relation to right holders and users. The possibility of monopoly position abuse is one of the reasons for the existence of state control over the organization. The main instrument of state control over the collective management organization is an authorization for collective management of copyright and related rights that has to be obtained from the competent state authority, i.e. the Institute for Intellectual Property. In order for an organization to obtain an authorization for

collective administration of copyright, in addition to the compliance of the organization's statute with the provisions of the law, the absence of a collective organization that already exercises the same rights for the same type of work, and the fulfillment of organizational, technical and personnel requirements, there must be a sufficient economic basis for the legal entity that will enable the efficient exercise of rights. In addition to granting the authorization for collective administration, as a form of prior control, the Institute supervises the work of the organization and controls whether the activities are carried out in accordance with the law.

Given that the organization acts as an intermediary between rightholders and users, the organization's relations with each other must be specified. Authors authorize the organization to conclude contracts with users on their behalf and to collect royalties for the use of the subject matter of protection, which it will distribute to the authors according to a previously established distribution plan. Law on the collective management of copyright and related rights prescribes mandatory management of rights in several cases, in which management is carried out on without the contract with author, on the basis of the law itself. Apart from the case of mandatory collective management, collective organization manages copyright on the basis of a contract with the author. The contract shall contain a provision on the exclusive transfer of the respective economic right of the author to the collective organization, the instruction by the author to a collective organization to manage the rights as transferred in its name and on behalf of the author, the type of work and rights managed by a collective organization for the account of the author, and the term of the contract, which cannot exceed five years, provided that after its expiration, the contract may be extended indefinitely for equal terms (Law on the Collective Management of Copyright and Related Rights, 2010, Art. 9 (2)). The author and other right holders conclude a contract with the organization by which they assign certain economic rights over their works, i.e. objects of protection, which depends on the specialization of the organization. The assignment of economic rights to the organization must always be exclusive, which means that only the organization as the acquirer can manage the assigned rights. Due to the exclusive assignment, an author who decides to conclude a contract with the organization cannot manage the same rights individually. Also, he cannot exclude certain works from the collective management of rights. All subject matter of protection belonging to all right holders who manage their rights through the

organization constitutes the organization's repertoire.

One of the most important issues in the relationship between the author and the organization is distribution of the collected remuneration. The organization is non-profit entity, so the organization's goal is not to make a profit. The organization allocates a portion of the total collected funds to cover the costs of its work, and distributes the rest to its members. Exceptionally, the statute of a collective organization may provide that a certain portion of these funds be allocated for cultural purposes, as well as for improving the pension, health and social status of its members, provided that the amount of funds so allocated under both exceptions may not exceed 10% of the net income of the collective organization (Law on the Collective Management of Copyright and Related Rights, 2010, Art. 7 (2)). The organization is obliged to distribute all income from its activities to its members in accordance with the adopted rules on distribution. The rules on distribution must be based on the principles of proportionality, appropriateness, fairness and the absence of any arbitrariness.

After concluding a contract with the authors, the organization is obliged to conclude contracts with the users on the assignment of economic rights and to collect a fee for the use of the work. The assignment of absolute economic rights is always carried out in a non-exclusive manner, given that, as a rule, there are always several users interested in using the work. This rule is another consequence of the monopoly position of the organization, which is obliged to conclude a contract with each interested user. Therefore, the organization cannot abuse its monopoly position by refusing to conclude a contract with either the right holders or the users.

The basic obligation of the user is to pay remuneration for using the work, in accordance with the contract. In addition to this obligation, users are obliged to report to the collective organization about the use of the subject matter of protection, so that the organization can distribute the collected remuneration to the right holders.

A few typical features of collective organizations can be identified. Firstly, copyright collectives usually operate in an exclusive national territory. Collective organizations are specialized for specific types of copyright and uses. They have a legally guaranteed monopoly position within their specialization in most countries. Collecting societies are non-profit organizations and the main goal of organizations is to distribute the collected remuneration to the right holders. Collective

management organizations have the market power which enables them to bargain effectively with users (Handke, 2013).

The benefit of collective administration is to reduce the number of transactions and to develop standard arrangements for deals between rights holders and users of copyright works. Collective management organizations reduce transaction costs, such as search costs, contracting costs, monitoring costs and enforcement costs, and the number of transactions compared to individual administration. Another widely acknowledged function of copyright collecting societies is that they operate similarly to a trade union for right holders, as they enable rights holders to bargain collectively with potential users, so that their members can achieve a better deal than they could individually (Handke, 2013).

The purpose of collective management is to reduce the transaction costs of legally using copyrighted works. In this way, collective management makes the enforcement of large segments of copyright protection economically viable (Marković, 2018, 132).

Some authors point out that organizations also have a function that resembles a kind of social insurance. For certain works that are not popular, the cost of collective management is higher than the remuneration collected from their use. This shortfall is covered by the income collected from the collective management of copyright for other, more commercially attractive works in the organization's repertoire. "National CCS operate similarly to an insurer that is regulated in order to provide an essential service for everyone in the market it serves, analogously, for example, to a private health insurer that is prevented from excluding high risk categories from its insurance. This seems similar to the 'common carrier' requirement imposed by regulator in transport and telecommunications and the like. In the present context, it has implications for creativity." (Towse, Handke, 2007, 10).

3. SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEMS AS A POTENTIAL PRECURSOR TO A NEW COLLECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF COPYRIGHT AND RELATED RIGHTS

3.1. A BRIEF HISTORY OF SOCIAL SECURITY PUBLIC FUNDS

The social security public funds, that are widely accepted in modern comparative law as means for managing and collecting of taxes and contributions which are used for financing social benefits, have a rather interesting history. The three main, or the most influential, models of social security provision – the Bismarck model, the Semashko

model and the Beveridge model – are all publicly run or administered. However, there is a model that predates these models of publicly procured social security, and it is the private insurance model. Private insurance was the alternative to previous economic support for the poor. There were different causes of impoverishment, most of which derived from or were combined with the old age, injuries, unemployment and other circumstances that are, in modern world, subject to social security regulation. "As an alternative means of providing support for the thousands of indigent aged, various private pension programs were initiated. The three dominant types of organizations providing benefits were fraternal organizations, labor unions, and business corporations." (Quadagno, 1987, 240 & 241).

During the 19th Century, parallel processes of developing social security and establishing copyright collection societies took place – fraternal unions, labor union plans, and the first industrial pension programs were introduced in the late nineteenth century (Quadagno, 1987, 242), which was followed by the establishment of Bismarck era Compulsory Insurance Act of 1883, the Accident Insurance Act of 1884 and an old-age and disability pension system of 1889, while "The first proper copyright collecting society was set up in France in the middle of the 19th Century" (Handke, 2013). From then on, the evolution of these organizations took different paths. On the one hand, organizations providing benefits, such as fraternal organizations, labor unions, business corporations and private insurance funds, were gradually replaced or surprised by social security public funds. Collective management organizations, on the other hand, gained special status, monopoly position, etc., while remaining nominally private in nature.

The possibility to voluntarily join private mutual assistance schemes was a very significant innovation of the second half of the nineteenth century, but it demonstrated the inability of the public to overrun, with compulsory administrative schemes, a still undisputed hegemony of the private (Pacinotti, 2024, 11). The Bismarck's model may be seen as a complete departure from the concept of private insurance and other privately initiated and implemented solutions to the problem of social security. However, quite the contrary was probably the case – some authors regard the birth of social insurance in Germany as the means of stopping the Socialist movement, and one of the methods of combating dissent (Cutler, Johnson, 2004, 92).

In more than three decades after the introduction of the Bismarck system, the Semashko model in USSR introduced the first universal coverage of

free basic healthcare in the world, based on single and unified service provided by the state. Although this socialist healthcare model “was able to improve basic healthcare provision for the large majority of people (especially in the post-war periods), it was not able to adequately satisfy more demanding healthcare needs and the healthcare needs created by modern industrialised societies” (Heinrich, 2022, 44).

More than half a century after the Bismarck model introduction, the Beveridge model of health care in United Kingdom was established. Based on the principles of universality, with the entire population included, public management and state financing, with fixed and constant contributions, “the Beveridge model means a flat-rate basic pension that is financed by taxes or tax-like contributions” (Leite, Leite, Ribeiro, Alves, Sardinha, 2022, 257).

3.2. POTENTIAL PARALLELS BETWEEN THE (BISMARCK) SOCIAL SECURITY MODEL AND COLLECTIVE MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS

Out of the three models of social security (Bismarck, Semashko and Beveridge), the Bismarck model may be the most inspiring and useful regarding the analysis of potential changes to copyright and related rights protection and collective management organizations.

Firstly, the Bismarck model has been based on the principles of private insurance, and gained widespread support and acceptance throughout the world. Although altered in certain aspects, depending on the specific needs and political and legal circumstances of different countries, this model led to the establishment of public funds that collect and reallocate social security contributions and other forms of revenue, leading to stable and reliable social security funding. The notion of private insurance and private law context, however, can be recognized against the backdrop of the social security legal nature in some legal systems – “Social security law has been relegated to the area of public law in Japanese law, although it is regarded as a branch of private law in other nations, such as France” (Harada, 2014, 221).

Although the Bismarck model reflects more the market values, therefore involving private agents (Leite, 2022, 256), privatization of social security, in the terms of management and funding, is not widely accepted. While there are arguments for the privatization of social security (Solomon, Barrow, 1995), there are, also, the arguments against such a privatization – “Dismantling public social services through privatisation did not contribute to either fiscal soundness or social development in most cases.” (Yi, 2010, 65). Even the Chilean four-

decade long experience with privatized social security showed that “continued need for state support for low-income retirees suggests that privatization failed to achieve true independence from public funding” (Chase, Hemadri, 2025, 41).

Collective management organizations, at the same time, facilitate the exercise and protection of copyright and related rights, which belong to the system of private law. Do the collective management organizations, in their own capacity, meet the criteria of private law organizations? We have already delineated the main characteristics of CMOs, which suggests significant deflection from the principles of private law. The cause of such special features, such as:

- Legally guaranteed monopoly position of CMO,
- Authorization needed for the of CMO establishment and operation, from the state authority,
- Mandatory management of rights in several cases,
- Exclusive assignment of rights to CMO, due to which an author who decides to conclude a contract with the organization cannot manage the same rights individually,
- Non-profit character of CMO,
- Operation in an exclusive national territory,
- Operation similarly to a trade union for right holders,
- Function of CMO that resembles a kind of social insurance and promotion of social welfare, with cross-subsidization of weaker members by the commercially successful creators,

may all be attributed to the peculiarities of the markets for copyright works. These markets deviate from standard assumptions about perfect markets, while copyright works give rise to substantial externalities and potentially have the characteristics of quasi-public goods (Handke, 2013).

When compared to the social security funds, the CMOs have more than one similarity. The legally guaranteed monopoly position of CMO to collect royalties for the use of the subject matter of protection, together with the mandatory management of rights could be compared with the legal obligation to pay social security contributions. Even though there could be a supplementary private insurance, the social security funding is usually the norm, and not the choice. Similarly, the author may choose one of the alternatives – author can decide to conclude a contract with the organization or can manage the same rights individually, but not both at the same

time, due to exclusive assignment of rights to CMO.

Public funds are not only established but also controlled by a public authority, which has similar effects that the obtaining public authorities' authorization has with regard to CMO establishment and operation. Non-profit character can be attributed to both public funds and CMO. Even though public funds may engage in profit related investments, the profit itself is not what the beneficiaries of the fund receive – persons insured on the basis of the social security public funds will only receive the benefits they are entitled to, and any profit-related actions of public funds should be aimed at improving the financial stability of the fund. Both the social security funds and CMOs operate in an exclusive national territory, or legal jurisdiction.

Financing of the social security funds is based on social security contributions, which are a para-fiscal public revenue, precisely defined by a law (Dimitrijević, Obradović, 2005, 55). There should be no discretion regarding the determination of the social security amount, date due etc. Unlike public revenue, license fees and administration charges are set by CMOs with the considerable discretion – “Arrangements differ substantially between different territories and collecting societies, and these differences do not appear to correspond reliably to differences in statutory regulation or market conditions” (Handke, 2013). The determination of the price of a license can be based on the “pay per use” principle or through revenue sharing (Handke, 2013), which may relate to “user pays” principle in public goods provision. If the social security is regarded as a public good (Marilović, 2023, 465, 481), although not the pure public good, that is an additional reason to compare it with the copyright protection, due to the imminent characteristics of quasi-public goods of the latter. Further similarities can be seen when social security contributions and license tariffs are compared. Both can be subject to public authorities' control – it is clear when it comes to social security contributions, since they are a public revenue, but even the CMOs' license tariff decision can be examined in court, administrative dispute before the Court may be instigated (Ivanović, 2011, 389). Size of the benefits is not necessarily related to the amount of the social security contributions, just as the royalties collected are not just distributed among the members of CMO, but rather redistributed.

Another similarity between the CMOs and social security funds is cross-subsidization of weaker members by the commercially successful creators within the CMOs, which resembles social

insurance and of social welfare function, as well as the solidarity principle of social security.

Finally, the device-based levies, private copying levy or blank media tax or levy, are all different terms for fees imposed on certain electronics to compensate copyright holders for potential lost revenue due to private copying. These levies are not exactly taxes, but are mandated by the government, and have the similar distortionary effect on the market. There is a growing criticism regarding the blank media levy, in terms of unjust taxation, radically changed consumer behavior, unfair impact on businesses, especially SMEs, lack of transparency and accountability, its inefficient and burdensome way to compensate rightholders, as well as significant distortionary impact to the EU single market (The 60-year copyright levies saga: High time for reform, 2024).

Social security insurance is introduced only regarding those risks that society considers significant at that stage of development, which gives moral dimension to the topic (Šunderić, 2011, 3). Similarly, the significant deviations of the protection of copyright and related rights from the private law principles, which were all mandated and supported, and even controlled, by the government, are recognized as necessary and justified.

4. POTENTIAL FOR A NEW MODEL OF COLLECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF COPYRIGHT AND RELATED RIGHTS

Theory and practice of social security provision offer potential solutions to the challenges that CMOs face in the context of modern technologies, internalization and changes in the very copyright and related rights. CMOs could be redefined and framed into the public funds category. We believe this would introduce multiple benefits of public funds organization and management into the field of collective management of copyright and related rights. Special status of such a public fund could guarantee the special status within the public finance system of the country, which would not preclude the need to preserve original private law nature of personal and economic rights within copyright and related rights.

Certain aspects of this idea have already been implemented, with regard to blank media levy – “Following Finland's example, device-based levies could be replaced with a state fund managed by an advisory board, ensuring fair compensation with reduced administrative costs” (The 60-year copyright levies saga: High time for reform, 2024). We propose the application of this model to the wider scope of copyright related rights, including the redefining of the CMOs, to be considered and further analyzed.

The new era of digitalization is a call to action – the CMOs should be able to collect and process different type of information, including personal information, track of the relevant internet traffic, cloud storage and distribution of information, etc. The current model of CMOs, founded in the 19th century, is far from convenient.

Even the internal market of the European Union challenges the capacities of the national CMOs. The public fund model of copyright and related rights collective management and financing would most probably solve this problem, or at least contribute to the existing efforts in this matter. There are, already, EU social security coordination rules, under which member countries can to decide who is to be insured under their legislation, which benefits are granted and under what conditions (EU social security coordination).

The shift from primarily private organization to public fund would lead to new possibilities, which would be hard to imagine under the existing CMO model. The problem of inheritance of author's rights, just to mention one example, could be solved in those jurisdictions that have special inheritance regimes with regard to author's rights. For instance, there is a specific solution of the Republic of Srpska Law on Inheritance regarding the inheritance of author's right, which leads to "to the legislative failings, as well as to the inconsistency of the provisions of the Law on Inheritance with the provisions of the Law on Copyright and Related Rights" (Ćeranić, Ivanović, 2017, 41). The public fund could serve as a state authority in those cases when the state appears as a successor. Furthermore, it could have a temporary role of mediator, or guardian, before or during the inheritance proceedings.

Finally, the CMOs' resemblance to the social security public funds speaks for itself. The contemplation on the possible organizational reform of CMOs toward public funds model should be at least nominated within academia and professional community, and we do hope that this article gives food for thought on this matter.

CONCLUSION

Collective Management Organizations share history and certain aspects of development with the social security public funds. The multiple similarities between the two types of institutions lead us to believe that further evolution of copyright and related rights management should be considered within the model of social security funds. This model would not, however, completely alter the functions that CMOs have at this moment. On the contrary, just as the social security funds evolved from the private insurance funds, and maintained the features that protected the

beneficiaries, while attaining multiple advantages of public law entities, the CMOs reorganized to public funds would probably benefit the same.

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