

United Arab Emirates: Approves first music rights collecting society

13 May 2025 • 4 minute read

Copyright and Collecting Societies

In brief

In a significant development for the music industry and intellectual property rights holders in the United Arab Emirates, the Ministry of Economy (MoE) has issued a licence to the Emirates Music Rights Association (EMRA) to collect and distribute royalties for every public performance, broadcast and digital stream of music across all platforms and venues in the UAE. EMRA will be the first collecting society for musicians, artists and publishers in the UAE. It will operate alongside the Emirates Reprographic Rights Management Association (ERRA), which was established in 2022 to issue permits for photocopying, scanning and digital distribution of books, magazines, newspapers and other written works. These two collective management organisations (CMOs) reflect a significant evolution in copyright protection and enforcement in the UAE.

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What does EMRA mean for music users and creators?

EMRA is the UAE's first music collecting society and is licensed to authorise every public performance, broadcast and digital stream of music in the country. Any service that delivers content into the UAE, whether headquartered locally or abroad, must either conclude a licence with EMRA or demonstrate that existing agreements already extend to the UAE audience. Usage data such as minutes played, audience size and revenue share will be filed through EMRA's forthcoming e-portal allowing royalties to flow to composers, lyricists and publishers.

Streaming and social media platforms must clear every music track through EMRA unless their existing worldwide licensing arrangements explicitly cover the UAE audience. Traditional businesses have similar obligations. Cafes, gyms, hotels, shopping malls, event promoters, broadcasters, cinemas, and in-flight entertainment providers will be required to obtain EMRA licences for background playlists, live performances, incidental music, and video content in the UAE.

For creators, EMRA fills a crucial role. The UAE's Copyright Law had always allowed for copyright holders to assign their economic rights to competent professional associations for the management of such rights but specified that such associations or entities required a permit from the MoE. The introduction of the first music CMO for the UAE should lower enforcement costs for individual creators by enabling them to rely on a single body with statutory authority to collect royalties instead of pursuing multiple parties for negotiation of licences, remuneration and enforcement of their rights.

ERRA's impact on reprographic rights

Since its establishment in 2022, ERRA has become increasingly significant in IP rights management in the UAE. It is a licensed non-profit body national association representing Emirati and foreign publishers and authors.

ERRA licenses the reprographic reproduction of books, journals, newspapers, sheet music, and images. It plays an important role in raising awareness and providing education around copyright issues. E-learning portals, universities, schools, and training providers that compile course packs or publish materials may be required to obtain an ERRA license. Digital publishers, corporate knowledge hubs, and intranets hosting extracts from published works could also fall under ERRA's scope when distributing material beyond brief quotations. A single ERRA license can legitimise a range educational or corporate copying, provided that the licensee maintains usage logs and adheres to the page-limit conditions specified in the permit. Libraries, copy centres, and corporations that archive or distribute articles internally must ensure proper authorization once copying exceeds fair use limits.

ERRA introduced an organised mechanism to earn fees when books are photocopied for classrooms, scanned for digital course packs, or reproduced in corporate training materials. For authors and publishers, membership of ERRA or a foreign reprographic society with a mandate from ERRA ensures that works are included in the licensed repertoire and eligible for distributions that reflect real-world copying, as captured through institutional surveys and digital monitoring tools.

Compliance actions

Organisations in the UAE should conduct an audit of their activities to determine where music is played, or text is copied across their operations. Having mapped those use cases, they should secure the appropriate licence from EMRA (for music) and ERRA (for reprographic content). Implementation of a straightforward reporting system is essential. Minutes of audio played, or pages reproduced should be logged to ensure compliance with licence conditions. Employment contracts and creator agreements should be updated to compel employees, contractors and other content contributors to use only licensed material or to stay within copying limits set by ERRA. Finally, organisations should reserve budget lines for licensing fees, which remain modest compared with the cost of infringement, litigation, or unplanned service interruption.

Enforcement timeline

Throughout the second quarter of 2025, it is anticipated that the MoE will conduct outreach sessions and publish explanatory material on the finalised structures of both CMOs. The first EMRA invoices and broader ERRA licensing campaigns are expected during the third or fourth quarter of 2025. Thereafter, MoE is likely to shift from education to enforcement using spot audits, formal notices and potential financial penalties against non-compliant organisations. As the CMOs operate on a non-profit basis, the funds collected from users will be redistributed to the creative community, reinforcing the UAE's ambition to serve as a regional hub for music publishing and creative content.

Need assistance?

Our IP, Technology and Commercial team advises on all aspects of copyright licensing and enforcement in the UAE.

Mona Matouri, Paralegal, has contributed to this legal update.

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