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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN  
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

**Europe's Media in the Digital Decade:  
An Action Plan to Support Recovery and Transformation**

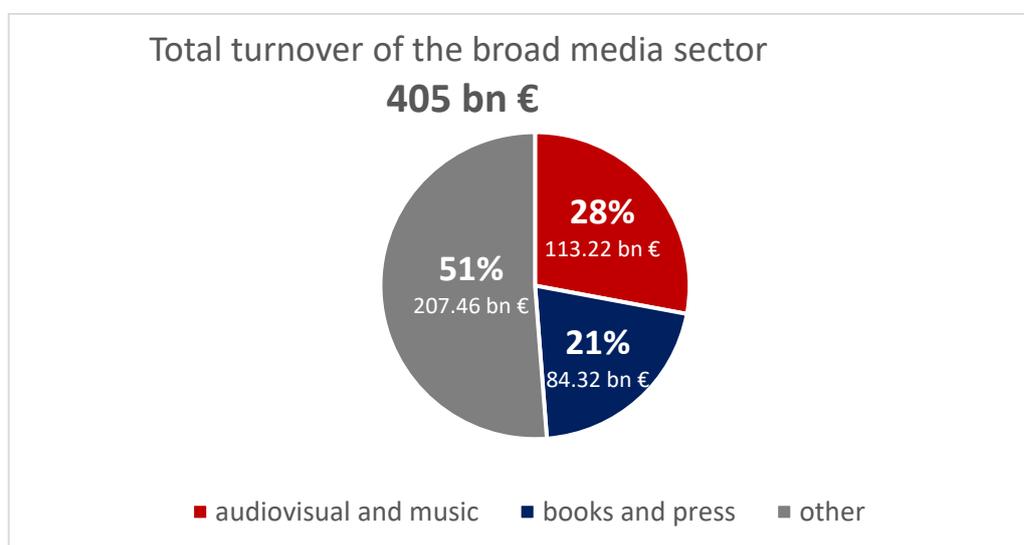
## 1. INTRODUCTION

Europe's news media and audiovisual sector has been critical in keeping citizens informed and entertained during the Covid-19 pandemic. The demand for fact-checked information and news has substantially increased, while films and series have been the main source of entertainment during the months of lockdown.

A free, diverse, and dynamic media environment is key to strengthening open and democratic societies and nurturing Europe's cultural diversity.

### *The economic importance of the European media sector*

The media sector contributes to job creation and growth. The turnover of media<sup>1</sup> () in the EU is estimated at €198 billion or 1.5% of GDP and over a million jobs. Using a more comprehensive definition of media, which includes video games, media advertising and digital content, the turnover of this sector could exceed 3% of GDP.



### *The impact of COVID-19*

The culture and creative ecosystem, of which media and audiovisual industry form an integral part, has been deeply affected by the pandemic. News publishing saw its advertising revenues drop between 30% and 80% and TV by 20%, during generalised lockdowns in 2020 Q2. The many SMEs face severe liquidity issues, while unemployment is increasing and many media professionals and journalists, particularly those who are subject to precarious employment conditions or are freelancers, have found themselves with no income. Cinemas suffered a collapse in revenues (with losses estimated at 100,000 euros per screen per month during lockdown), whilst shooting of new films and TV series has been in many cases halted and often cannot count on insurance policies fit to cover events such a global pandemic

In parallel, the crisis has accelerated major trends long in motion in digital technology. Online platforms have strengthened their market position, launched new services and attracted new audiences during the lockdowns. New online social media platforms –

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<sup>1</sup> using a traditional definition, incl. audiovisual, music, press and books [later to be integrated in a graph legend]

largely based on audiovisual content – have also hit records in downloads, particularly among young users.

The ambition of this Action Plan for Audiovisual and Media is to turn this difficult moment of crisis into an opportunity for transformation. It is necessary to tackle the structural challenges facing the audiovisual and news media industries. Chief amongst these is market fragmentation. By and large, European news media and audiovisual companies focus on national audiences, with a few exceptions. Within the EU, European films are exported to on average three countries whereas US films are exported to 10 countries. US films also represent 66% of the EU box-office.

As a result, even the biggest European media players are remarkably smaller than those of their main global competitors. European groups account for 11% of revenues of the world top 50 audiovisual groups' compared to over 70% by US groups.

#### *The role of platforms in Europe's audiovisual market*

A number of powerful US video-on-demand platforms have entered the European market and are successfully producing content in Europe. This has represented both an opportunity and a challenge for European independent audiovisual producers and works.

On the one hand, platforms can grant European producers, and artists access to a wider international public, along with attractive remunerations. These, in some cases, are complemented by payments based on the exploitation of the film/series and/or bonuses linked to the success of their work.

On the other hand, the application by platforms of what could be defined a “work-for-hire” model (i.e., the acquisition of all the IP rights from the producer since the start, worldwide and in perpetuity) can “lock in” producers/talents with the platform in question.

It is necessary that European players reach sufficient scale to go beyond national borders and invest in content, talents, promotion, distribution, innovation, and technology anywhere in the EU. Companies should be in a position to consider the European continent – and not only their respective national markets – as their native market.

The digital transformation will be the key that unlocks this true potential. This is true for the economy as a whole and media is no exception. Europe has all the necessary assets to thrive in the Digital Decade with its Single Market and 450 million consumers, deep talent pool, creativity of its producers and authors, and quality of the European content.

#### *The sense of urgency*

The combination of the underlying trends with the Covid-19 crisis could, without a strong policy response, undermine the resilience of Europe's media sector and its democratic role. This could weaken Europe's cultural diversity and media pluralism.

Europe's citizens and democratic debate must continue to benefit from this variety and count on high levels of media and artistic freedom. At the same time, citizens should be empowered to choose freely from this variety of options and be able to navigate the modern news environment and take informed decisions.

The EU has recently modernised its regulatory framework with the revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) and Copyright reform. This Communication builds on this modern landscape and proposes further steps combining investment with other policy actions to help the media sector face the crisis and become more competitive thereafter. Accordingly, this Communication is developed around three areas:

- a) *Recover*: what the Commission plans to do to help audiovisual and media companies to weather the current storm and provide liquidity and financial support;
- b) *Transform*: address structural issues by helping industry face the twin transitions of climate change and digitisation, in the context of a fierce global competition;
- c) *Enable and empower*: setting the conditions allowing more innovation for the sector, whilst ensuring a true level-playing field and empowering citizens to access content more easily and take informed decisions.

The economic recovery and competitiveness of the media sector is a precondition for a healthy, independent and pluralistic media environment, which in turn is fundamental for the quality of our democracy. This Communication complements the European Democracy Action Plan which addresses risks to European democratic systems in the area of disinformation, elections integrity and most relevantly in the field of media freedom and pluralism with a series of initiatives to create a safer and better environment for journalists to do their work as well as to promote media literacy.

This Communication is also fully aligned with the Commission's on-going work on the Digital Services Act Package (including the Digital Markets Act), which will aim at modernising the legal framework applicable to digital services in the EU.

Actions outlined in this Communication will be implemented taking into account the geopolitical role of the EU and the 'soft power' that media represent globally. In particular, where feasible and appropriate, the initiatives outlined in this Communication – especially those aimed at news media – will be open to independent professional media in the countries covered by the EU Enlargement and Neighbourhood policies.

Actions listed in this Communication will take into account the need for an inclusive European media sector, reflecting Europe's diversity. They will be implemented encouraging equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalised. This includes notably access to content by people with disabilities. The Commission is also evaluating the application of state aid rules for the press sector.

## **2. RECOVER**

Media companies represent critical assets for Europe's competitiveness. It is thus pivotal to provide the appropriate financial support and liquidity, allowing them to weather the current economic storm. In this context, the Creative Europe programme – and particular its MEDIA strand – has been the main instrument of EU support for cultural and creative sectors, including audiovisual, for the last 30 years.

The 2021-2027 programme budget is expected to increase by over 85% to €2,752 billion for the period 2021-2027, compared to €1,46 billion for 2014-2020<sup>2</sup>. Also, based on the Commission’s proposal, should include for the first time actions focused on media freedom and pluralism and media literacy.

The Commission has already initiated a number of actions throughout 2020. Flexibility measures for the Cultural and Creative Sectors Guarantee Facility<sup>3</sup> have been introduced, notably an increase of the guarantee coverage up to 90% for individual SMEs and a guarantee cap up to 25% for financial intermediaries, together with credit holidays. Support to the network of European cinemas will be increased by 5 million euros in the first quarter of 2021. Moreover, European Structural and Investment Funds<sup>4</sup> have the potential to play an important role in supporting audiovisual and media. Media and audiovisual sectors are also already eligible for support under the “Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative” which redirects existing cohesion funds to key priorities, such as working capital and investments in products and services<sup>5</sup>.

Additional cohesion funding has also been made available in 2020 through REACT-EU, where the culture sector is recognised as a priority and support will be focused on short-time work schemes and the self-employed, as well as investment in small and medium-sized enterprises<sup>6</sup>.

The Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) is a major opportunity for Member States to invest in the twin digital and green transitions and strengthen the resilience of our industry. Each National Recovery and Resilience Plan will earmark a minimum level of 20% of expenditure related to digital. Support to boost the production and distribution of digital content and the development of digital media skills is explicitly foreseen in the methodology to track digital investment within the Member States. National investments through the recovery and resilience plans can also contribute to strengthening European news media and audio-visual digital capacities through multi-country projects which have an important pan-European dimension, such as co-productions of European content, EU media data space infrastructure and a dedicated equity investment platform to foster European audio-visual production and distribution (see Action 2 below).

In this context, as outlined in the Commission’s Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy 2021, Member States should pay attention to sectors that play a key role for our democracies, “especially the media sector where support should be provided in a way that respects and promotes media freedom and pluralism”<sup>7</sup>.

<b><i>ACTION 1 –Easier access to EU support</i></b>
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<sup>2</sup> Based on a provisional agreement on the budget, yet to receive final validation at the moment of publication

<sup>7</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?qid=1600708827568&uri=CELEX:52020DC0575>

- *A new interactive tool guiding media companies through the various support instruments*

The Commission will work to ensure that media companies access EU support opportunities from all various instruments and programmes available. Therefore, it will – in close coordination with the single EU gateway to EU funding opportunities<sup>8</sup> – develop a new interactive tool, tailor-made for the media sector, which the Commission expects to be published in Q1 2021, meant to offer guidance on how to apply for relevant EU support – in the context of the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework, but also through national recovery and resilience plans.

The tool will bundle all relevant EU funding opportunities for audiovisual media, and those for news media. In just a few clicks, any European media company – regardless the size and the focus – will be able, depending on the features and needs of the company, to be directed to the most appropriate source of EU support, and access information on the various calls, and on the opportunities for assistance in the application process.

This will build on existing tools and the experience of the Enterprise Europe Network<sup>9</sup>, which provides support and guidance to companies, including in the media and audiovisual sectors.

***ACTION 2 –MEDIA INVEST [working title] –aimed at boosting investment in the audiovisual industry through***

- *A dedicated equity investment platform to foster European audio-visual productions and distribution strategies;*
- *Building investment pipeline through capacity building for investors and investment readiness for companies.*

The European audiovisual industry is characterised by a large number of highly innovative and creative independent production and distribution companies with a high growth potential. They often however lack the financial strength to compete on a European and global level. At the same time, European investors remain largely unaware about the potential of those companies. They often associate investments in such ventures with high risks linked to the success of productions and the presence of intangible assets.

A significant contribution to increasing access to lending was made through the Cultural and Creative Sectors Guarantee Facility and this type of support will be continued through InvestEU. However, there is also a gap in equity financing for audiovisual, as well as other creative sectors, estimated at 399-648 million euros per year<sup>10</sup>.

A new initiative to support equity finance is needed to boost an independent audiovisual production capability in Europe, able to create quality works for the international market.

<sup>8</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home>

<sup>9</sup> <https://een.ec.europa.eu/>

<sup>10</sup> Ex-ante evaluation of new financial instruments for SMEs, mid-caps and organisations from the cultural and creative sectors, SQW, 2019

European companies must be given the financial means to become more autonomous and exploit the intellectual property of the content they produce.

The Commission will set up a dedicated investment platform kick-started by funds coming, inter alia, from Creative Europe MEDIA and InvestEU. It would aim at mobilising private investors and would be open to collaboration with national promotional institutions, industry associations. It would support audiovisual ventures, which could produce high-end works for the European and international markets, coordinating rights exploitation and distribution across territories.

The investment platform will help audiovisual companies to scale up to the international level, so that they can take higher risks, develop structured collaborations with distributors or other media outlets and manage and exploit their catalogues. In turn, by strengthening the companies' own funds, the latter can invest in bigger productions that will have greater chances of reaching wider audiences and box-office.

The target is to leverage investments of 400 euros over a 7-year period, thus making a significant contribution to closing the gap in equity financing. It might also be combined with Member State Recovery and Resilience Plans financed through Next Generation EU, thus allowing the EU and Member States to work together.

The investment platform will be complemented with capacity building activities for investors aimed at increasing their knowledge of global production and distribution markets and their associated risks, and providing them with market intelligence. An Investor Conference will be held in Q2 2021 to gather and mobilise the investor community.

In addition, investment readiness actions will be offered to AV companies, interested in this type of investment, which will receive tailor-made guidance adapted to their business strategy to attract investors and identify the most promising projects.

***ACTION 3 - 'NEWS': an initiative to bundle actions and support for the news media sector***

- *Better access to finance, through loans and a pilot equity initiative*
- *Capacity building among investors and media*
- *Support for news media to work on collaborative transformation*
- *A European News Media Forum*

News media can be regarded as an economic sector as well as a public good. It requires time, stability and money to allow news media outlets produce independent, trustworthy content. Yet the Covid crisis has negatively disrupted the news media sector and its funding revenues. Media outlets, in particular at the local and regional level, have had to close down, leading to “news deserts” particularly in small markets. At the same time, European citizens are relying on trustworthy news media more than ever before, as reflected by growing readership and audience numbers.

To address those challenges, the Commission will launch a ‘NEWS’ initiative to bundle actions and support, which will look holistically at the challenges facing the news media industry and provide a coherent response bringing together different funding instruments under a common banner. This will increase the coherence, visibility and impact of actions supported under different funding streams.

First, the Commission will facilitate better access to finance by stimulating loans as well as equity finance:

- For news media in search of liquidity, access to loans will be provided under InvestEU, building on the experience with the Cultural and Creative Sectors Guarantee Facility.
- For news media requiring investment, the Commission will aim to establish an equity-based pilot through InvestEU that can support inter alia the news media sector in innovative ways, co-investing with funds coming from philanthropists, foundations, and other private partners, while fully respecting the independence of the media.

It will be complemented with capacity-building services that aim to increase the knowledge of the European news media market among investors as well as media and support investment readiness among European media outlets, in particular local media. This will create dialogue and engagement with potential investors and facilitate investment.

Furthermore, dedicated support will be provided in the form of grants under the cross-sectoral strand of Creative Europe for collaborative news media partnerships testing new business models, developing business standards and editorial standards, promoting collaborative and cross-border journalism, training of professionals and sharing of best practices. Networking among the selected projects will be facilitated to maximise impact.

To better understand the needs in the sector and exchange best practices, the Commission will discuss the transformation of the industry, and engage in regular exchanges with the industry to work towards a news media innovation agenda that can help the sector thrive in the digital economy and society. This dialogue will take place as part of the European News Media Forum that the Commission will set up to strengthen cooperation with stakeholders on media-related issues.

### **3. TRANSFORM**

The objective of this section is to encourage the long-term resilience and competitiveness of Europe's media industry, accompanying in particular the twin digital and green transitions.

The Commission has identified some priority areas for Europe's future leadership in the media sector.

As for many industrial sectors, data technology is at the centre of the transformation of the media sector.<sup>11</sup> In particular audience data in fields – such as personalised content development and promotion – in which Europe's global competitors are well positioned, allows for new business models based on a more direct relation with the customers.<sup>12</sup> A key example is advertising, where the internet overtook TV as the main channel for advertising in 2015 and has steadily consolidated its lead since then. In 2018 internet advertising totalled over €50 bio whilst TV advertising reached less than €40 bio<sup>13</sup> At the same time, the availability of consumer data continues to increase in step with the use of smart phones. The proportion of readers accessing news from smartphones has risen

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<sup>11</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0066&from=EN>

<sup>12</sup> [https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2020-06/DNR\\_2020\\_FINAL.pdf](https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2020-06/DNR_2020_FINAL.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> European Audiovisual Observatory

from 39% in 2014 to 48% in 2020, thus creating new opportunities for content personalisation and promotion. The emerging area of immersive content – particularly in the light of the Covid-19 outbreak – is also a sector whose potential is largely unexplored, and where synergies could be built between the media sector and other key European industries.

It is also crucial that Europe’s media sector does not lag behind in the green transition. Therefore, in line with the EU objective of climate-neutrality by 2050, actions will be established to reduce the environmental impact of the sector.

***ACTION 4 – Media Data spaces***

- *Create Media Data Spaces for the media industry, to support media companies in sharing data and developing innovative solutions*

In order to become more innovative and competitive European media companies should be empowered to make better decisions and deploy more advanced solutions based on insights gleaned from data. The Commission proposes to bring this about by fostering the creation of European “media data spaces”.

Data spaces can change the way in which creators, producers and distributors collaborate. They will host relevant media data such as content, audience data and content meta-data as well as other types of data on users’ behaviours that might be useful to create content better tailored to consumer needs and distribute it more efficiently. For example, several EU news publishers could pool together their content and customer data to produce news targeting their own national audiences, with the relevant content automatically translated into their own languages.

That data should be available to both public service media and commercial media operators, whether large or small, start-ups or established players. The data spaces could also facilitate access to computing resources for creative SMEs. Furthermore, data can provide valuable insight to services aiming at increasing the findability of media content (news and entertainment content) across borders.

To this end, the Commission will launch a new key initiative, financed through Horizon Europe and Digital Europe Programmes (DEP), to support press publishers, broadcasters, other media companies and technology providers in the creation of an data space dedicated to media applications. DEP will help the deployment of the data infrastructure and define a data interoperability strategy. It will also integrate state-of the art tools and services needed for the management and processing of the data; define the conditions for sharing and using the data, including IP and data protection. Horizon Europe will support research and innovation in innovative data applications that will facilitate the emergence of new business models and improve citizens’ access to trustworthy information.

The data infrastructure should also allow for exploitation of synergies with datasets produced by other creative industries (e.g., data spaces for cultural heritage) and industrial sectors (e.g., retail, automotive).

***ACTION 5 – Fostering a European Virtual and Augmented Reality (VR/AR) industrial coalition***

- *VR/AR industry coalition to stimulate cooperation across sectors and ensure European leadership*

Immersive technologies and high-quality content allow creating new applications and use cases as well as new ways of engaging with audiences. Immersive technologies create more appealing and immersive experiences in different domains such as media, entertainment, culture, healthcare, design, architecture, manufacturing, education, or retail shopping. By 2030, Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) has the potential to add USD \$1.5 trillion to the global economy, up from \$46.4 billion in 2019<sup>14</sup>.

While most of the big players are currently in Asia and the US, Europe also has great strengths to become market leader on this technology<sup>15</sup>. EU research funds have supported more than 450 projects dedicated to VR and AR, for a total of over €1 billion since the 1990s. It also has a distinct competitive advantage when it comes to content thanks to its large cultural diversity: leading cultural players such as the ARTE, the Venice Film Festival and the Centre National du Cinema are actively exploring and supporting the potential of VR. Europe also has highly skilled workers capable of 3D modelling and creating computer-generated (CG) content for the gaming industry and VR animation.

However, the European VR/AR ecosystem suffers from fragmentation, across sectors, players and applications. The Commission therefore proposes to launch an VR/AR Coalition to stimulate cooperation and cross-fertilisation across sectors and ensure European leadership in this crucial, growing market. The VR/AR Coalition would provide a platform for synergies between like-minded industries, by fostering joint actions and commitments.

The Coalition would be based on a broad, cross-sectorial approach, covering different industrial and societal domains, technology providers and creatives. The Coalition would reflect this diversity of skills and consist of prominent players of the ecosystem, ranging from content production and distribution, to the availability of technology as well as innovation and business development. It would include members representing national or regional VR/AR associations, various industry representatives that could benefit from the wider and use of VR/AR technologies for content creation and use.

The Coalition will be tasked to present, by end 2021, a strategic paper setting out a) the extent to which VR/AR are deployed in the media sector; b) objectives for optimum deployment of VR/AR in the media sector to be reached in the next 5 years; c) concrete commitments on how the industry will contribute to meet these objectives.

#### ***ACTION 6 - Towards a climate-neutral audiovisual sector***

- *A structured exchange of best practice with the industry and (sub)national film and audiovisual funds*

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.pwccn.com/en/tmt/economic-impact-of-vr-ar.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/vr\\_ecosystem\\_eu\\_report\\_0.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/vr_ecosystem_eu_report_0.pdf)

The environmental impact of the media sector is significant. Unlike many other industries in Europe, the CO2 emissions of this industry in Europe are on a continuous rise also because of the constant increase in media consumption, particularly through streaming platforms.

In the audiovisual sector, estimates range from 35 MtCO2e for a TV series episode to 1000 MtCO2e for a feature film. One European feature film on average produces 192 Tonnes of CO2. Large international (co) productions could have a much bigger impact of up to several thousands tonnes of CO2.

In line with the EU objective of climate-neutrality by 2050, the Commission will collaborate closely with the industry and (sub)national film and audiovisual funds with the objective of sharing existing best practices<sup>16</sup> and agree on common tools and green standards. Online streaming platforms – whose share of carbon footprint is growing given the rise in consumption – will also be invited to put forward their ideas and initiatives.

The Commission will also be working on a best practice guide for green production and provision of services. The approach will be gradual with the aim of raising awareness and nudging the industry to start to implement more sustainable solutions.

#### **4. ENABLE AND EMPOWER**

European citizens should be the protagonist of the Digital Decade. Europe's companies and citizens, in particular the young generations, must continue to count on high levels of diversity and quality in the online sphere. At the same time, our citizens should be empowered to find and choose freely amongst this variety and be able to navigate smoothly and effectively within the modern media environment.

***ACTION 7 – Towards a broader availability of audiovisual content across the EU***

- *Launch a dialogue with the audiovisual industry in order to agree on concrete steps to improve the access to and availability of audiovisual content across borders in the EU*

With the Covid crisis, the online use of audio visual services at home has increased exponentially together with the willingness of households to invest in home entertainment technologies.<sup>17</sup> The crisis creates an opportunity for industry to reach a broader audience online.

When it comes to availability of audiovisual content online, there is significant potential for increase: the Report on the review of the Geoblocking Regulation<sup>18</sup> shows important

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<sup>16</sup> One of the relevant sources of good practices will be the European Climate Pact to be launched by the European Commission in December 2020

<sup>17</sup> According to the Pwc Report “Global Entertainment & Media Outlook 2020-2024”, as a result of the COVID 19 crisis, SVOD revenue is expected to overtake box office in 2020 and is projected to surge away in the coming five years, reaching more than twice the size of box office in 2024. At the same time, the worldwide turnover of streaming services has increased by 26% in 2020.

<sup>18</sup> ADD LINK TO THE GBR

differences between the audiovisual catalogues across Member States<sup>19</sup>. On average, EU27 catalogues overlap only in 14% . Also, a recent Eurobarometer survey indicates that over a third of internet users are interested in accessing audiovisual content across borders<sup>20</sup>. These findings are confirmed by the latest data from the European Audiovisual Observatory, according to which EU films are made available on average in not more than three EU 27 countries on video on demand platforms<sup>21</sup>. This represents a trove of unexploited potential and diversity to be enjoyed by European citizens.

The audiovisual industry should be able to benefit from Europe as its native market and take advantage of the new consumption trends by making more works available online in the different Member States. In a European integrated market, audiovisual content should reach citizens across Europe so that they can enjoy the diversity and richness of the European audiovisual works.

In order to accompany the audiovisual industry in this transformation, the Commission intends to launch a dialogue with the sector. This dialogue will contribute to agreeing on concrete steps to improve access to and availability of audiovisual content across borders, as a follow-up to the Geo-blocking Regulation review. This would allow the industry to scale up and reach new audiences, and empower European citizens by giving them a wider choice.

The dialogue will gather representatives from the audiovisual industry (producers broadcasters, VoD services, distributors etc), consumers organisations and other interested parties, such as national film funds, and will take place in the course of 2021. Possible specific targets to increase the circulation of audiovisual works across the EU and ways to achieve them could be defined in the dialogue

The Commission, in cooperation with the audiovisual ecosystem will monitor the progress in the achievement of the specific targets and decide on the follow-up, assessing various options, including legislative intervention.

At the same time, cinema theatres should remain cultural venues offering enhanced opportunities for social interaction. To this end the Commission will explore within the Media Programme ways to encourage cinemas to enhance and make even more attractive the experience of cinema goers.

#### ***ACTION 8 – Fostering European media talents***

- *New mentoring programmes for Europe’s media talents*
- *MEDIA boot-camps providing hands-on intensive training for young media professionals*
- *Campaign on diversity in front & behind the camera*
- *MEDIA market gateway to scout Europe’s most promising start-ups active in the media sector and help them thrive*

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<sup>19</sup> An extensive analysis of availability of titles in different Member States shows that VoD catalogues overlap on average, between all EU27 countries (excluding linguistic differences), only by 14%.

<sup>20</sup> Flash Eurobarometer 477b, 2019

<sup>21</sup> European Audiovisual Observatory, Report “Film and TV content in VOD catalogues 2020 Edition”. To be published on 9 Nov

➤ *Creative Innovation Labs open to start-ups and scale-ups*

The Commission will mainstream the mentoring practices that have been emerging as highly successful in the training projects supported in the last years. Such mentoring programmes will develop in diverse formats, exploiting all creative and business opportunities offered by digital technologies. In addition, a communication campaign will be launched to advocate the need to foster diversity not only in front of but also behind the camera, in order to renew representations. Some professions are still perceived as inaccessible by certain populations. Highlighting inspiring "role models" is an essential step in promoting access to these professions through a greater diversity of profiles. The campaign will aim to spotlight European professionals, in order to promote a wide range of professions and encourage women and disadvantaged populations to consider these careers.

Furthermore, skills development initiatives under Creative Europe will be reinforced by the organisation of intensive training courses (MEDIA boot-camps), where media young talents from across Europe can gain practical experience in areas such as innovative storytellers, new business models, and new post-production technologies.

Creative Europe MEDIA will also join forces with other initiatives – such as the Innovation Radar<sup>22</sup>, Startup Europe<sup>23</sup> and the Media Motor Europe<sup>24</sup> CSA – to scout Europe's most promising start-ups active in the media environment. To that end, a call for expression of interest targeting the creative and media tech communities will be launched under Startup Europe to map out promising ventures.

The Creative Europe MEDIA programme can provide a breeding ground for those companies and help them thrive in a rapidly changing audio-visual sector. Such companies could benefit from the MEDIA Market Gateway; which would involve active preparation, including coaching and mentoring on market trends and positioning, business plans, commercialisation strategies, to make the most of a combined physical/virtual presence in the most important global media markets (Berlinale, Cannes, GamesCom, VR Days) under the European label.

Finally, start-ups and scale-ups will have the possibility to participate in the Creative Innovation Labs, a new initiative under the cross-sectorial strand of Creative Europe, which will bring together media and other creative sectors (e.g., music, publishing) and experiment with data, virtual and augmented reality and other technologies to develop new content, new business models, new skills, to promote diversity and inclusion, and to boost audience engagement.

***ACTION 9 – Empowering citizens***

- *Practical application of the new media literacy obligations of the AVMSD (media literacy toolbox and guidelines to Member States)*
- *Support the creation of alternative media content aggregation services*

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.innoradar.eu/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://startupeuropeclub.eu/>

<sup>24</sup> <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/871552>

Media literacy is critical to empower citizens in today's media environment and it should be supported across various programmes and initiatives, as outlined in the European Democracy Action Plan. Media literacy includes all technical, cognitive, social, civic and creative capacities that allow citizens to access the media, to have a critical understanding of it and to interact with it.

The revised AVMSD has set out specific measures to help improve citizens' media literacy skills. The Directive provides that Member States should promote and take measures for the development of media literacy skills (and report on such measures to the Commission, on the basis of the Commission's guidelines defining the scope of such reports); and that video-sharing platforms should put in place effective media literacy measures and tools and raise users' awareness of those measures and tools.

The effective implementation of these AVMSD provisions is of key importance for further development of media literacy skills across Member States. Therefore, to ensure practical application of the new obligations, especially in the online sphere, the Commission, together with the European Group of Audiovisual Regulators (ERGA) and other experts, as well as and in dialogue with video-sharing platforms, will develop a toolbox to improve users' awareness, improve their critical skills and choices and to help users reach a greater variety of media content available on video sharing platforms.

This initiative is expected to be particularly beneficial for younger users, who should be fully involved in its development. For this reason, the Commission will set-up an ad hoc sounding board composed of students and young journalists to test and promote the toolbox. Such an approach will allow us to make sure that the toolbox addresses effectively needs of younger users and further empowers them in the online environment. Implementation of the toolbox will also be part of AVMSD media literacy reports, the scope of which will be determined via Commission guidelines to be issued in 2021.

The toolbox and the guidelines to Member States contribute to the European Democracy Action Plan which underlines the importance of media literacy and coordinates action and promotes cooperation. As part of the actions, the Commission will also scale up its efforts within the next edition of the European media literacy week with a view to make it even more impactful and inclusive.

The proposed actions will be fully aligned and complementary to the objectives of the Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027, which will aim to make education even more responsive to helping learners to develop the ability to critically approach, filter and assess information, notably to identify disinformation and to manage overload of information as well as develop financial literacy.

To complement these actions, the Commission will foster the creation of independent alternative news aggregation services capable of offering a diverse set of accessible information sources.

***ACTION 10 – Ensuring the functioning of the European audiovisual market***

Strengthen the cooperation framework among European media regulators within the European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (ERGA)

Establishing a true level playing field for all audiovisual media players is one of the central goals of the revised Audiovisual Media Services (AVMS) Directive. For example, to ensure fair competition between broadcasters and video-on-demand platforms in promoting and investing in European content, the revised Directive requires the latter to ensure a 30% share of European works in their catalogues.

The effective and consistent implementation of the revised rules at national level will be key in order to establish a level playing field between established media players and on-demand and video-sharing platforms. Member States, and in particular their media regulators, must adequately monitor the correct application of the new rules, and enforce them where necessary. This will require, in particular, the following:

- The consistent implementation of the share obligations for European content in on-demand catalogues (also based on the Guidelines recently issued by the Commission);
- The coherent application of the new rules on the prominence of European works, by issuing additional practical guidance, and encouraging common approaches on prominence of audiovisual content of general interest;
- The effective enforcement of the new obligations for video-sharing platforms.

In this regard, the Commission will assess whether the cooperation within the Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (ERGA) needs to be reinforced in order to ensure that its format and scope contributes to effective functioning of the new media rules in practice. To this end, the Commission will continue to take stock of best practices in cross-border cooperation, closely monitoring the performance of the ERGA's Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), to be put in place by end of the year.

The MoU is a sectorial and voluntary cooperation mechanism, based on the unique expertise of the European media regulators. It will contain specific cooperation and information exchange mechanisms for European media regulators in view of addressing practical issues and cross-border cases related to the implementation of the revised AVMS Directive that fall within their competences. This initiative, focusing in particular on the above-mentioned regulatory novelties of the revised AVMSD, will complement the horizontal governance system for online services to be established by the Digital Services Act. The Commission will, by end of 2021, assess the functioning of the MoU and propose improvements, if necessary.

Furthermore, in cooperation with Member States and ERGA, and involving the on-demand platforms, the Commission will explore further ways of fostering more diversity in video-on-demand catalogues. In line with the goal of the AVMS Directive to encourage broadcasters to include an adequate share of co-produced European works or of European works of non-domestic origin in their services, the aim will be to agree on voluntary targets for increased presence of such works also in video-on-demand catalogues. This will mutually reinforce the goal of Creative Europe MEDIA to boost presence of such works on all distribution platforms.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

With this Media and Audiovisual Action Plan, Commission is setting out a comprehensive vision for the media and audiovisual sector for exploiting the potential of a true European media Market and embracing Digital Decade. The Action Plan will be implemented in close cooperation with Member States, the European Parliament, the media industry and

all interested stakeholders. In this sense, it will constitute a concrete roadmap for media as part of the culture and creative ecosystem to reap benefits of digital transformation and foster its competitiveness.

## ANNEX – INDICATIVE TIMELINE

Action	Sub-action	Indicative timeline
<b>ACTION 1 –Easier access to EU support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A new interactive tool guiding media companies through the various support instruments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Q1 2021</li> </ul>
<b>ACTION 2 - MEDIA INVEST [working title] – aimed at boosting investment in the audio-visual industry through</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A dedicated equity investment platform to foster European audio-visual productions and distribution strategies;</li> <li>➤ Building investment pipeline through capacity building for investors and investment readiness for companies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ As of H2 2021</li> <li>➤ As of H2 2021</li> </ul>
<b>ACTION 3 - ‘NEWS’: an initiative to bundle actions and support for the news media sector</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Better access to finance, through loans and a pilot equity initiative</li> <li>➤ Capacity building among investors and media</li> <li>➤ Support for news media to work on collaborative transformation</li> <li>➤ A European News Media Forum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ As of H2 2021</li> <li>➤ As of H2 2021</li> <li>➤ As of H2 2021</li> <li>➤ H2 2021</li> </ul>
<b>ACTION 4 – Media Data spaces</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Create Media Data Spaces for the media industry, to support media companies in sharing data and developing innovative solutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ As of H2 2021</li> </ul>
<b>ACTION 5 – Fostering a European Virtual and Augmented Reality (VR/AR) industrial coalition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ VR/AR industry coalition to stimulate cooperation across sectors and ensure European leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ H2 2021</li> </ul>
<b>ACTION 6 - Towards a climate-neutral media sector</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A structured cooperation Forum with the industry and (sub)national film and audiovisual funds</li> <li>➤ A stronger focus on environmental sustainability by Creative Europe MEDIA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ As of H1 2021</li> <li>➤ As of H1 2021</li> </ul>
<b>ACTION 7 - A broader access to and availability of audiovisual content across the EU</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Launch a dialogue with the audiovisual industry in order to agree on concrete steps to improve the access to and availability of audiovisual content across borders in the EU</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ As of H1 2021</li> </ul>
<b>ACTION 8 – Fostering European media talents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ New mentoring programmes for Europe’s media talents</li> <li>➤ MEDIA boot-camps providing hands-on intensive training for young media professionals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ As of H2 2021</li> <li>➤ As of H1 2022</li> <li>➤ As of H1 2021</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ MEDIA market gateway to scout Europe's most promising start-ups active in the media sector and help them thrive</li> <li>➤ Creative Innovation Labs open to start-ups and scale-ups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ As of H2 2021</li> </ul>
<b>ACTION 9 – Empowering citizens</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Practical application of the new media literacy obligations of the AVMSD (media literacy toolbox and guidelines to Member States)</li> <li>➤ Support the creation of alternative media content aggregation services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Q4 2021</li> <li>➤ As of H2 2021</li> </ul>
<b>ACTION 10 – Ensuring the functioning of the European audiovisual market</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Strengthen the cooperation framework among European media regulators within the European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (ERGA)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ As of Q1 2021</li> </ul>

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