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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Council conclusions on enhancing the cultural and creative dimension of the European video games sector

Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions on enhancing the cultural and creative dimension of the European video games sector, as approved by the Council (Education, Youth, Culture and Sport) at its meeting on 24 November 2023.

Council conclusions on**Enhancing the cultural and creative dimension of the European video games sector**

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

RECALLING:

1. Culture, with its intrinsic value, and artistic freedom play a fundamental role for the European Union and its citizens in enhancing the European identity, strengthening our democracies and values, triggering sustainable, diverse and inclusive development and driving growth and employment¹;
2. The heterogeneity of the set of subsectors that make up the creative and cultural industries, which share common elements, but also have their own particularities and realities;
3. The great potential that the video games sector, with its cultural dimension, has for growth and cross-sectorial innovation within the framework of the digital transition adopted by the European Union;

¹ The Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) sector represent an economic weight of 3.95% of EU value added (EUR 477 billion), employs 8.02 million people and involves 1.2 million businesses, according to 'Recovery and Resilience Scoreboard. Thematic analysis. Cultural and Creative Industries. April 2022' https://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/recovery-and-resilience-scoreboard/assets/thematic_analysis/scoreboard_thematic_analysis_culture.pdf

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THAT:

4. The video games sector is an integral part of the ecosystem of cultural and creative industries. It interacts with other sectors and has great potential to create and transmit cultural content and values and highlight the richness and diversity of European creation, heritage and history, as well as having a significant impact in terms of job creation and making a significant contribution to GDP;
5. While Europe has established itself as one of the world's leading markets for video games with an estimated value of EUR 23.48 billion in 2022 and plays a key role in all stages of its development (from design to distribution), there is a lack of detailed, standardised and sector-specific data;
6. The independence and the sustainability of European video game industry, that consists mainly of small and micro enterprises² and that is facing strong international competition as well as dealing with the challenge of retaining talent, is relying on the capacity of the European enterprises to remain free to be able to make their own artistic and strategic choices;

² 80% of the 4 600 existing companies employ fewer than ten employees (European Media Industry Outlook – SWD (2023) 150 final Commission Staff Working Document).

7. In the European Union video game users are found in all age segments, but especially in the youngest³⁴⁵. Therefore, the well-being of children and young people should be strongly taken into account when addressing the policies for the video games sector;
8. The great potential of video games in promoting positive cultural and social changes, the strong potential of video games in fighting all kind of discrimination and hate, and the deep potential of video games in representing the diversity and plurality of our societies, of women and of other under-represented groups in the video games sector, progresses and efforts in this fields should be continued and encouraged;
9. Videogames, as a complex creative works with a unique and creative value⁶, have a wide value chain in which intellectual property rights and assets play a significant role for increased competitiveness and innovation and which should be protected to ensure talent, creativity, innovation and technological development flourish;

³ Global market reached EUR 179 billion revenue in 2022, which represents an annual growth of 5.4% (European Media Industry Outlook – SWD (2023) 150 final Commission Staff Working Document).

⁴ The European share is expected to account for 7.3% in 2025, compared to 8.7% in 2017 (European Media Industry Outlook – SWD (2023) 150 final Commission Staff Working Document).

⁵ Although the average age of the player is 31 years, more than 70% of young Europeans between 6 and 24 years of age are video game users (European Media Industry Outlook – SWD (2023) 150 final Commission Staff Working Document).

⁶ For the purpose of these Council conclusions, the definition of videogames is the one recognized by the Court of Justice of the European Union (case C-355/12).

10. The creation of video games involves the application of advanced technologies that may contribute to the development of new business models through, for example, virtual worlds. This may be an additional way to foster cultural and creative growth, as well as the development of other policy areas, including education and training, specially related to the development of media literacy and STEAM⁷ skills;
11. The European Union Work Plan for Culture for the period 2023-2026 includes ‘Enhancing of the cultural and creative dimension of the video game sector in Europe’ as one of the main actions to be carried out in the context of the priority area ‘Artists and cultural professionals: empowering the cultural and creative sectors’;

INVITES MEMBER STATES TO:

12. Explore all relevant options for the implementation of support framework aimed at promoting the creative and cultural dimension of video games and analyse the possibility to introduce different funding mechanisms, including, where relevant, with inspiration from those already in place for other cultural and creative sectors such as the audiovisual industry, fostering the conditions to preserve and exploit intellectual property rights by the creators and companies that took part in their creation and development, and preserving them as part of Europe’s creative sector and cultural heritage;
13. Consider supporting, in cooperation with the video games sector, initiatives aimed at the preservation of European video games as a cultural asset and synergies within the cultural and creative sectors (CCSs) to enhance the European cultural dimension of video games, i.e. re-using cultural heritage data in the creative process, and taking into account existing projects and cooperations with other cultural institutions;.

⁷ Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics.

INVITES THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION, WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE AREAS OF COMPETENCE, TO:

14. Improve information on the video game sector by addressing standardising and improving data and statistics in collaboration with the video games sector, and consider the revision of the European Union Statistical Classification of Economic Activities (NACE⁸) as a way to improve access to sector-specific data;
15. Share and disseminate information and best practices, in particular related to public aid supporting video games, effective measures contributing to cultural and linguistic diversity and equality, access to finance and support for research, development and innovation and for start-ups, and the sustainable development of the video games sector;
16. Exchange best practices and consider actions to foster better growth conditions for European videogames enterprises, particularly start-ups, facilitating innovation and their integration and smooth market entry, access to finance and private funding, thus helping to reduce pressures on public funding and create new sources;
17. Attract and promote talent and initiatives aimed at providing specialised education and training in professions linked to the video games industry, supported by a strategic dialogue with the sector to reflect the needs, and focusing on the cultural, creative, technical, legal and economic characteristics of these professions as well as the applicable intellectual property framework, and improve their sustainable integration and retention in the European job market, also addressing challenges related to circulation of talents;
18. Foster linguistic diversity, access and reach of new players, including through localisation of videogames by the industry;

⁸ Nomenclature of economic activities in the European Union.

19. Promote initiatives aimed at protecting users and ensuring a safe online environment for video games with continuous stakeholder dialogue, in particular media literacy as a means of providing in-depth awareness in relation to responsible gaming and preventing harmful behaviour;
20. Support, through public-private partnerships, accessibility, enhancement of skills through videogames, protection and well-being of vulnerable groups in using videogames, especially young people and children, and in particular by encouraging the development of information campaigns and minor protecting instruments such as parental control tools and age rating systems.

INVITES THE COMMISSION, WITHIN ITS AREAS OF COMPETENCE, TO:

21. Explore the possibility of proposing a European video game strategy that considers the challenges of industry and consumers, especially the vulnerable groups as children and young people, promotes European values and cultural and linguistic diversity, while safeguarding artistic freedom, and contributes to the development of the economic, social, educational, cultural and innovative potential of the video game sector while reaching its leadership in the global video game market;
22. Taking into consideration, where relevant, the European Commission's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, promote equality in the video game sector to ensure gender balance and promote equal pay, inclusive professional environments and diverse representation at all stages of development of the video game industry, i.e. by fostering career entry and career development, plans to tackle gender-based violence; as well as avoid creating, perpetuating or exacerbating stereotypes;

23. Encourage cross-border collaboration in the video games sector, as well as with other cultural and creative industries and other sectors of the European economy, in order to exploit the opportunities and synergies offered by cooperation in terms of funding, resources, visibility and expertise, and to improve competitiveness and international standing;
24. Support and stimulate the competitiveness and independence of European videogames sector companies, in particular SMEs, through a review of the application of state aid rules, in particular, where appropriate, within the framework of a revision of the General Block Exemption Regulation, and through appropriate European programs and funds.

References

- Commission Communication “An EU initiative on Web 4.0 and virtual worlds: a head start in the next technological transition” – SWD (2023) 250, 11 July 2023;
- European Media Industry Outlook – SWD (2023) 150 final Commission Staff Working Document, 22 May 2023;
- European Parliament resolution of 18 January 2023 on consumer protection in online video-games: a European single market approach (2022/2014 (INI));
- European Parliament resolution of 14 December 2022 on the implementation of the New European Agenda for Culture and the EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations (2022/2047(INI));
- Council Resolution on the EU Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026 (OJ C 466, 7.12.2022);
- European Parliament Resolution of 10 November 2022 on e-sports and video games (2022/2027(INI));
- Commission Communication “A digital decade for Children and youth, the new European Strategy for Better Internet for kids” of 11 May 2022 - COM (2022) 212 final;
- Council Conclusions of 13 April 2022 on building a European Strategy for the Cultural and Creative IndustriesEcosystem (2022/C 160/06);
- Commission Staff Working Document, Annual Single Market Report 2021 (SWD/2021/351 final).

- Recovery and Resilience Scoreboard Thematic Analysis on Cultural and Creative Industries (April 2022);
- Council Conclusions of 13 December 2021 on increasing the availability and competitiveness of European audiovisual and media content (2021/C 501 I/02);
- Council conclusions of 3 June 2021 on Europe’s Media in the Digital Decade: An Action Plan to Support Recovery and Transformation (2021/C 210/01);
- Council Conclusions of 2 June 2021 on the recovery, resilience and sustainability of the cultural and creative sectors (2021/C 209/03);
- Regulation (EU) 2021/818 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing the Creative Europe Programme (2021 to 2027) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1295/2013;
- European Council Conclusions of 21 July 2020 on the recovery plan and the multiannual financial framework for 2021-2027;
- Commission communication on ‘A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025’ of 5 March 2020 – COM (2020) 152 final
- Council conclusions on cultural and creative crossovers to stimulate innovation, economic sustainability and social inclusion (2015/C 172/04);
- Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty (OJ L 187, 26.6.2014, pp. 1-78) and successive amendments (‘General Block Exemption Regulation’ - GBER).