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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Council conclusions on empowering the cultural and creative sectors through data-driven audience development

Delegations will find attached the abovementioned Council conclusions, approved by the Council (Education, Youth, Culture and Sport) at its meeting of 13-14 May 2024.

Council conclusions on empowering the cultural and creative sectors through data-driven audience development

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

ACKNOWLEDGING THAT:

1. Digital transformation has become an increasingly important topic in European policy, reflected in initiatives such as the Creative Europe Programme, the Digital Decade Policy Programme, the European Industrial Strategy, the European Skills Agenda, the European Education Area and the European Strategy for Data, leading to the creation of Common European Data Spaces, including a Common EU Data Space for Cultural Heritage¹ and the European Cloud for Cultural Heritage under the Horizon Europe Programme²;
2. The EU Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026³ emphasises the intrinsic value of culture, including cultural heritage. In this context, the Work Plan highlights the need to stimulate the digital transformation of the cultural and creative sectors (CCS), emphasises cultural participation as a priority and includes a specific measure to make diverse European cultural content discoverable in the digital environment;

¹ Commission recommendation on a common European data space for cultural heritage (OJ L 401, 12.11.2021, p. 5)

² Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council, OJ L 170, 12.5.2021.

³ Council Resolution on the EU Work Plan for Culture 2023–2026 2022/C 466/01.

3. Audience development provides an opportunity to build meaningful and interactive relationships with diverse audiences, to improve user experience and to foster cultural diversity and development, social cohesion and democracy⁴. Reaching wide and diverse audiences is one of the intended objectives of the Creative Europe Programme 2021-2027⁵. The CCS are exploring innovative tools and guidelines for collecting and managing data on audiences, in order to develop better and more user-oriented services. This can also contribute towards evidence-informed policy-making⁶. Further collective efforts are needed, however.
4. New technologies have great potential to enhance inclusion and improve access to current and potential audiences, however cultural organisations are at varying stages of digital development and their use of the services offered by technology providers differ;
5. The role of data in understanding, engaging and rebuilding audiences following the COVID-19 pandemic, which accelerated the digital transformation in society, has become an increasing priority for many cultural actors⁷;

⁴ European Commission Report “Culture and Democracy, the evidence. How citizens’ participation in cultural activities enhances civic engagement, democracy and social cohesion: lessons from international research” (2023) and the Porto Santo Charter (2021)

⁵ 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 – OJ L 189, 28.5.2021, p. 34

⁶ Council Conclusions on promoting access to culture through digital means with a focus on audience development (2017/C 425/03).

⁷ Voices of Culture report on ‘(Re)-Engaging digital audiences in the cultural sectors: improving audience data’.

CONSIDERING THAT:

6. Digitalisation in the CCS is generating an increasing amount of data that can be used for audience development. Leveraging audience data provides an opportunity for CCS to better understand audiences' needs and behaviours, build meaningful relationships with them, tailor innovative cultural content and services and create targeted outreach activities to reach broader audiences and maximise cultural participation, in particular physical participation. This promotes cultural diversity in Europe and can strengthen cultural venues as spaces for informal, free social interaction, essential to democracy, also known as 'third places'.
7. Data-driven audience development presents opportunities for CCS to explore new business models and generate additional revenues through innovation and collaborative practices.
8. CCS are highly diverse, and include organisations, sectors and industries operating at different policy and organisational levels, both public and private, encompassing various cultural expressions, artistic disciplines, various stages of digital innovation and differences in digital infrastructure; a differentiated approach should therefore be used when dealing with the question of data-driven audience development.

9. To make progress on digital transformation and on technical, digital and creative skills, leadership and entrepreneurship are required to exploit data-driven solutions and advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence. In addition, the digital skills of audiences should also be taken in account. Therefore, a comprehensive approach and appropriate support for cultural organisations with restricted capacity, expertise and means should be considered to address the opportunities and challenges of digital transformation⁸;
10. Some organisations in the CCS rely on tech companies, social media, platforms or intermediaries to build audiences. These tech market players might not always share audience data relating specifically to those CCS organisations' activities, contents or works. This could affect the CCS' ability to fully harness the potential of digitalisation, as well as their competitiveness;
11. Several Member States have included funding for the development of digitalisation programmes and strategies for CCS in their COVID-19 recovery and resilience plans (some with a focus on participation). However, a shared ambition for strengthening collaboration on a larger scale has the potential to drive progress;
12. Using data for audience development and participation provides numerous opportunities, but also requires CCS to anticipate the risks and impacts of this use and tailor their working methods accordingly. This includes taking into account legal concerns (including intellectual property rights, copyright, privacy and personal data protection rights), ethical, sustainability and ecological concerns, and to carefully assess the impact of artificial intelligence and other advanced digital technologies;

⁸ Open Method of Coordination report on 'Promoting access to culture through digital means'.

INVITES THE MEMBER STATES TO:

13. Consider developing policy frameworks and creating conditions that foster and encourage a data-driven approach in the CCS, including through support at national and regional levels for the collection, protection, management and use of audience data;
14. Encourage and support organisations in the CCS to develop a strategy on data-driven solutions as part of their audience development policies. Encourage and support organisations in the CCS in the smarter and ethical sharing and use of audience data. The aim is to ensure that the sectors themselves can become more familiar with, identify and attract new audiences and make European content more easily discoverable, and that audiences can find appropriate and diverse cultural and creative services.
15. Encourage and assist organisations in the CCS to engage in relevant EU-funded programmes that aim to support data-driven collaboration and innovative solutions in the CCS;
16. Promote the digital skills of CCS organisations and professionals, and facilitate the development of interoperable tools, capacity-building activities and support programmes to strengthen digital processes in organisations, thus empowering them to navigate the evolving digital landscape in an effective manner;

INVITES THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND MEMBER STATES WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE SPHERES OF COMPETENCE, AND WITH DUE REGARD FOR THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY, TO:

17. Encourage research and facilitate cross-sectoral and cross-border collaboration (for instance with other levels of government, academia and commercial players) on exploring and using standards for accessible, basic and sustainable digital infrastructure that enables secure, reliable and interoperable data, adhering to the Union's intellectual property, copyright, data and privacy protection rules, and building on existing infrastructure;
18. Promote the development and use of standards and frameworks to support CCS in the collection and management of their audience data, so that data becomes accessible, comparable, usable and interoperable, and can thus be used for new (more user-centred) services.
19. Encourage CCS, whenever feasible, to use Open data⁹ and FAIR¹⁰ data principles to underpin the sharing and circulation of data, as laid down especially in the Open Data and Public Sector Information Directive, and 'My data' principles to guarantee the right of individuals to access the data collected about them¹¹, while effectively protecting their data as their asset for competitiveness;

⁹ 'Open data' refers to data that is openly accessible, exploitable, editable and sharable. Open data is licenced under an open licence which allows others to reuse another creator's work as they wish. Without a special licence, these uses are normally prohibited by copyright, patent or commercial licence.

¹⁰ 'The FAIR principles' refer to international guidelines for data management that aim to optimise the reuse of data. This is achieved by making data Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable. Key elements for FAIR data are rich metadata and documentation, using open or standard file formats and using licences for reuse.

¹¹ "My data" refers to a human-centric approach to personal data management, which combines the industry need for data with digital human rights. The goal is to give people better control of their personal data by offering them the opportunity to determine the circumstances in which these data are used.

20. Stimulate the development of data literacy and capacity-building programmes in the CCS for data collection, analysis, protection, management and governance; for developing a strategy for the use of data in audience development and audience management; and for increasing awareness and knowledge of the European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles and how it can be applied in the context of data-driven audience development, ensuring transparency towards audiences whose sensitive data are handled;
21. Encourage and stimulate research to harvest the potential of digital tools for audience development, identifying emerging trends and the future-proof skills that are needed in the CCS, as well as how these skills can be developed in educational and in professional training programmes leading to jobs in the CCS. At European level, the European Education Area, the European Skills Agenda, the Pact for Skills¹², the European Blueprint Alliances and the Digital Skills and Jobs Platform may contribute to this¹³;
22. Encourage consultation, knowledge and good practice-sharing and cooperation between Member States and relevant partners at European level on developing and/or implementing digital ecosystems, strategies and shared digital tools for collecting data on audience participation and development, taking into account smaller cultural organisations with limited resources, and differences in the availability of technology infrastructure between Member States;
23. Carry out a stocktake of good practices in CCS data collection, protection, management and analysis of audience participation and development.

¹² Large-scale skills partnership (LSP) for the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) ecosystem. See the Creative Pact for Skills Manifesto at https://pact-for-skills.ec.europa.eu/about/industrial-ecosystems-and-partnerships/creative-and-cultural-industries_en

¹³ See, for example the 2022 Voices of Culture report on ‘re-engaging digital audiences in the culture sector’ and the Creative Pact for Skills.

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

24. Where applicable, promote access for the CCS to European programmes other than the Creative Europe Programme relevant to digital transformation and innovation with available financial support, such as the Digital Europe Programme, Horizon Europe and the Single Market Programme, including by providing clear guidance and information;
 25. Explore ways to further encourage data transparency initiatives in favour of the CCS to enable them to better understand the impact of their work and activities and build on relevant insights in their creative processes.
 26. Explore ways to further support digital transformation needs and the evolving requirements of the CCS, through the use of data-driven solutions and the promotion of innovative digital projects in European initiatives;
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References

- Commission Recommendation on a common EU data space for cultural heritage (OJ L 401, 12.11.2021, p. 5)
- Conference conclusions ‘European Audiences: 2020 and beyond’ (2012)
- Council Conclusions on promoting access to culture through digital means with a focus on audience development (OJ C 425, 12.12.2017, p. 4)
- Council Resolution on the EU Work Plan for Culture 2023–2026 (OJ C 466, 7.12.2022, p. 1)
- Directive (EU) 2019/1024 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on open data and the re-use of public sector information (Open Data and PSI Directive) (OJ L 172, 26.6.2019, p. 56)
- European Commission Report “Culture and Democracy, the evidence. How citizens’ participation in cultural activities enhances civic engagement, democracy and social cohesion: lessons from international research”, 2023
- European industrial strategy: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/european-industrial-strategy_en
- Commission Staff Working Document “Annual Single Market Report 2021” identifying the Cultural and Creative Industries CCIs ecosystem p. 98-104 (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021SC0351>).
- European Pact for Skills: https://pact-for-skills.ec.europa.eu/index_en
- Innovation Policy Platform for the Cultural and Creative Industries: <https://ekipengine.eu/policy-areas/>

- Open Method of Coordination report on ‘Promoting access to culture through digital means’ (2017)
- CORDIS results pack on digital cultural heritage, Publications Office of the European Union, 2020, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2830/941375>
- Porto Santo Charter (2021) <https://portosantocharter.eu/the-charter>
- Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation) (OJ L 119, 4.5.2016, p. 1)
- Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (OJ L 170, 12.5.2021).
- The Cultural Heritage Cloud: https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/research-area/social-sciences-and-humanities/cultural-heritage-and-cultural-and-creative-industries-ccis/cultural-heritage-cloud_en
- The European Commission’s priority ‘fit for the digital age’ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age_en
- Voices of Culture report on ‘(Re)-Engaging digital audiences in the cultural sectors: improving audience data’ (2022)
- Vuylsteke, Devoldere, et al. (2023) Digital transformation of the cultural and creative sectors in preparation for the 2024 Belgian EU presidency

Definitions

- For the purposes of these Council conclusions, the following definitions apply:
- 'Audience data' refers to information collected and processed by cultural organisations about individuals or a group of people who are (intended) users of cultural products, activities, sites, services or content. Audience data may include demographic information, data on visitor attendance and behaviour, audience interactions and participation, membership data, survey and feedback responses, or information on cultural preferences.
- 'Audience development' refers to efforts and activities undertaken by cultural organisations to cultivate, diversify and expand their audiences with the aim of enhancing engagement, participation, and connection. Audience development can be understood in various ways, depending on its objectives and target groups: increasing audiences (attracting audiences with the same socio-demographic profile as the current audience), deepening the relationship with audiences (enhancing the experience of the current audiences) and diversifying audiences (attracting people with a different socio-demographic profile to the current audience). This process involves understanding the needs, preferences, and interests of current and potential audience, and implementing outreach initiatives to reach a wider and more diverse audience.

- ‘Digital infrastructure’ refers to communication services and platforms, storage services, and underlying software functionality, protocols and standards. Digital infrastructure does not necessarily refer to the material and technical infrastructure (such as cables, wireless networks, data centres, internet exchanges) but rather to services and platforms that enable connection and exchange between cultural organisations.
 - ‘Interoperability’ refers to the ability of information systems and software to exchange data and make use of shared information, which is a precondition for cultural organisations to exchange and use audience data seamlessly. It involves the capacity of diverse software systems to work together, allowing them to understand, interpret, and use the data shared between them. In an interoperable data environment, various systems can interact and communicate effectively, ensuring that data can be transferred, accessed, and utilised across different platforms and technologies without encountering significant compatibility issues.
 - ‘Third places’ are spaces for informal, free social interaction, essential to democracy. Where the cultural and creative sector is concerned, third places could include museums, community centres, public libraries, bookstores, theatres and opera houses.
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