

# Digital cultural diversity

## SUMMARY

Digital technologies have revolutionised every aspect of our lives, and culture is no exception. They have impacted on the value chains of all the cultural and creative industries not only as regards the creative process and its execution but also as regards the making of a work or product of art and its promotion, distribution, marketing and sale.

Cultural heritage can be digitised and, in the case of analogue film, it needs to be digitised to be made accessible. Some production processes are solely digital and are born digital.

Technology has a huge potential to make culture accessible to all, by democratising both consumption and involvement in cultural creation. However, technology depends on equipment and infrastructure, which does not necessarily facilitate the diversity of content available and discoverable online. Other factors, such as language, skills or geographical location can also make it harder to discover online cultural content reflecting cultural diversity.

Conscious of such barriers, UNESCO has issued guidelines on the implementation of the Convention on Cultural Diversity in Digital Environments. The EU is part of this convention and has tools and funds to promote and protect cultural diversity, in line with its obligation stemming from the Treaties, not just on its own territory.



## IN THIS BRIEFING

- Cultural content online: Profuse but not diverse
- UNESCO
- Council of Europe
- Aspects of cultural diversity in the digital environment
- European Union and digital cultural diversity
- European Union support for digital cultural diversity
- Challenges ahead

## Cultural content online: Profuse but not diverse

The digital shift has changed both the way we function and the way we approach various aspects of human activity. Artists and creators are often trendsetters and experimenters with new approaches and techniques. Cultural institutions and the cultural and creative sectors and operators follow in their steps. Culture and artistic creation have gone digital, giving rise to new art forms; video games are sometimes qualified as such a novel art form.

Digitisation in various cultural domains is perceived as an opportunity to promote different cultural expressions and reach new audiences and spectators, affording them access to art forms as never before. Digital technologies facilitate creativity, self-expression and cultural engagement. They have the potential to democratise culture and bring it to people at lower costs regardless of their location, provided they have the necessary equipment and internet connection. Those who have the proper skills can also share their works online, as digital self-publishing has become a simple procedure to follow. Content is generated at staggering rates: every minute, [500 hours](#) of content are uploaded on YouTube alone, more than a thousand photos are posted on social media and 28 music tracks are added to Spotify (Figure 1).

At the same time, cultural institutions, such as museums, archives, libraries and film, television and music broadcasters have been digitising their collections in an effort to preserve them and make them more broadly available. Sometimes, digitisation is a necessary step, as in the case of analogue films, which cannot be screened in their original form anymore, as cinemas are equipped solely with digital technology.

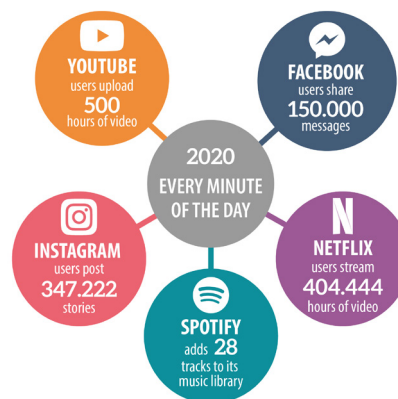
A wealth of digital cultural content is available online either for free, for a fee, or through piracy. Even though the legal online offer of music is varied, [one person in three](#) will nevertheless pirate it. While video on demand (VOD) and subscription video on demand (SVOD) platforms grow increasingly [popular](#), pirated video material is still viewed over [200 billion times](#) a year.

Such an availability and abundance of cultural content and the various ways to consult it online bring new challenges linked to successfully attracting potential viewers' attention and directing it to this specific content among millions of other online items on offer. Algorithms that steer viewers to content<sup>1</sup> that is similar to what they have already consumed or to what other viewers have liked, seem to be the only way out of the chaotic profusion of available online content from all over the world.

Are digital technologies facilitating access to culture and promoting its diversity, or rather, are they benefiting the emergence of a sort of global culture or cultural globalisation? Have they transformed cultural discovery and curiosity into cultural consumption?<sup>2</sup> Does the amount of content match its quality and how does it reflect the rich cultural diversity of the world, and in particular of the EU, which has 'unity in diversity' as its motto? Algorithms used to personalise suggested cultural content raise questions about transparency and potential violation of data privacy. Just as crucially, they are seen as factors restricting users' exposure to diversity and perhaps even the diversity of the offer itself. A 2017 [study](#) for the European Commission on media literacy issues raised by algorithm-driven media services identified the following risks to diversity:

- increased difficulty for small-scale community groups to be visible and share their ideas;
- increased inequalities, as 'hard-to-reach' audiences may not get the same opportunities or information, despite the promise of democratised access to culture;

Figure 1: Content generated on the internet within a single minute



Source: [Visual capitalist](#), September 2020.

- decreased cultural diversity in audiovisual consumption and a lesser chance of 'stumbling upon' something on the internet;
- undermined local content, etc.

On the other hand, music streaming platforms make efforts to provide 'out of the bubble' recommendations and to expose curious listeners to new music, which they often try, as the cost of doing so is much lower than buying a whole CD. However, a study shows that exposure to diversity is a real phenomenon and audiences are prone to discovering [more diverse](#) music even without getting recommendations from the platforms they are on.

## UNESCO

The 2001 UNESCO Universal [Declaration on Cultural Diversity](#) recognised cultural and biological diversity as equally important for humanity. Cultural diversity refers to 'distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group' and also encompasses languages. Cultural diversity, when embedded in policies for citizen inclusion and participation, guarantees social cohesion, vital civil society, and peace. It is considered central to development – a development that does not cover solely economic growth but also a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence. Cultural diversity is also understood as diversity in terms of the supply of creative work that does not get treated as a commodity, and as a principle underlying the recognition of authors' and artists' rights.

The declaration was followed in 2005 by the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the [Diversity of Cultural Expressions](#), in force since 2007. It refers to both the commercial and non-commercial nature of cultural activities, goods and services (non-commercial being linked to the fact that they convey identities, values and meanings). The convention warns against focusing solely on the commercial value of culture. Its globalisation, facilitated by ICT, is a challenge to cultural diversity, and risks creating further imbalances between rich and poor countries. Cultural diversity includes women, various social groups, minorities and indigenous peoples, and has linguistic diversity as its cornerstone. It refers to the idea that 'freedom of thought, expression and information, as well as diversity of the media, enable cultural expressions to flourish within societies'. The convention considers this to be indispensable for peace and security at the local, national and international levels. The European Union has been a [party](#) to the convention since December 2006.

Given the swift development of digital technologies and their presence in the cultural domains, UNESCO's 2017 Conference of Parties approved a set of [Guidelines](#) on the Implementation of the Convention in the Digital Environment. The document highlights the impact of the digital divide between and within countries and between women and men, as well as between urban and rural areas, in both developed and developing countries, on the creation, production, distribution of and access to cultural goods and services in the digital environment. User-generated content, the data economy, new distribution models, connected multimedia devices massively used by individuals, have all had a huge impact on the creative sector in all parts of the world. New technologies have also led to the emergence of new players and new modes of operation in the cultural sectors.

The guidelines recommend introducing preferential treatment provisions for works created or produced by artists and cultural professionals, enterprises and independent organisations from developing countries. They furthermore recommend promoting artistic freedom as a corollary to freedom of expression, as well as the social and economic rights of authors and artists working in the digital environment, including gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

## Council of Europe

The Council of Europe (CoE) recognises the potential of digital technologies for promoting cultural and creative activities and for enabling access to and participation in culture, while also pointing out that they may be detrimental to cultural diversity. One of its Platform Exchanges on [Culture and Digitisation](#), held in 2016, addressed the role of control over cultural data, representation of cultural

diversity and a diverse cultural memory. The concentration of data processing in the hands of powerful global corporations is considered a problem for cultural diversity. In February 2016, the CoE issued recommendations on the [Internet of Citizens](#), focusing on i) the modernisation of cultural institutions, ii) the empowerment of citizens as consumers, creators and prosumers who interfere as creators into the content they 'consume', and iii) ways to foster multi-literacy skills education for access to, creation and management of digital culture, aspects that impact cultural diversity in the digital environment. The 2017 CoE [Recommendation](#) on Big Data for Culture, Literacy and Democracy stresses that people can choose not to have predictions made by algorithmic decisions about their cultural preferences and behaviours and thus avoid the echo chamber effect.

## Aspects of cultural diversity in the digital environment

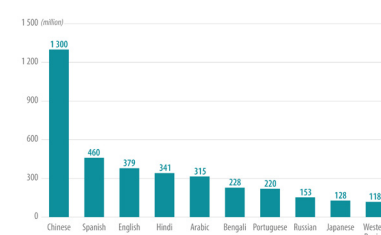
Digital technologies have transformed every aspect of the [value chain](#) in the cultural sectors: creation, production, dissemination/distribution, exhibition/reception, and consumption/participation. Being a vehicle of [dematerialised](#) cultural expressions, digital and digitised content travels faster, increases and potentially diversifies the offer, empowers the public but also the dominant players. Nevertheless, it can also widen the digital divide between individuals, social groups, regions and countries, due to their unequal access to the internet and equipment, and their disparate levels of digital skills.

A 2016 research [paper on diversity](#) in the audiovisual industry in the digital age proposes an approach to online cultural diversity, by analysing diversity in terms of source, content and exposure. The authors ask: how to measure and define diversity, given the lack of data and indicators and the fact that their definitions take geographical and sociocultural origins into account. Prosumer activities (e.g. content recycling and reutilisation, downloading, streaming, repeated viewing, illegal, unauthorised offers and peer-to-peer sharing), make such data more complex to analyse. The authors also argue that the possibility for prosumers to personalise content in line with the current fashion or dominant marketing strategy can also limit consumption diversity.

According to the report from the 2019 [International Meeting](#) on Diversity of Content in the Digital Age held in Canada, a large amount of online content does not guarantee its diversity, while the exposure to diverse cultural content diminishes the 'echo chamber' effect and social polarisation. Since digitisation has amplified the imbalance in the visibility of cultural diversity, it is necessary to redress the situation by supporting content that reflects diversity so that it reaches the public. Diversity in the consumption of cultural content, its discoverability and recommendation systems in search engines (algorithms) are crucial elements of the digital culture. For instance, participants in the meeting expressed concern about global content from culturally dominant countries becoming disproportionately prominent on digital platforms.

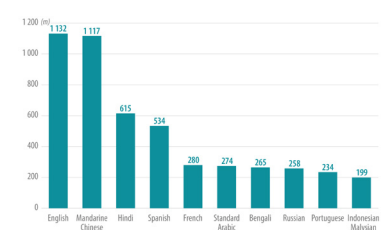
Language is essential for content creation and curation, as well as for its promotion and discoverability. However, digitisation can be challenging for languages, particularly those that are [underrepresented](#) on the internet and risk digital extinction, one of the factors in language extinction. Figures 2-4 illustrate the complexity of the issue. Three of the 10 languages with the highest number of native speakers are not among the 10 most common languages on the internet. This points to an even greater visibility problem for languages that are less used on the internet. Such a situation makes it more difficult for

Figure 2: The 10 most spoken languages in the world by native speakers



Source: [Babel Magazine](#), 2019.

Figure 3: 10 most spoken languages in the world



Source: [Babel Magazine](#), 2019.

users in smaller countries to be exposed to local or national content. It is also particularly challenging for cultural operatives with a minority language or for a minority cultural community eager to reach its public.

Similarly, minority or marginalised groups often do not see themselves reflected in digital content. A December 2020 publication by the French Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel on the [perception of diversity on-screen](#) provides an insight into the scale of underrepresentation of minorities in audiovisual works. Figure 5 shows a striking under-representation of people with disabilities and the poor, and an over-representation of wealthy people. The phenomenon also applies to women, the elderly (especially elderly women) and ethnic minorities. A similar situation may be expected to prevail in other domains of cultural activity as well.

The 2019 report points out the following general aspects that impact cultural diversity in the digital environment:

- data transparency allowing to manage or make decisions about how data can be used or shared;
- metadata associated with diverse cultural content so that algorithms would be able to recognise such content in their curation processes and improve its discoverability;
- content quotas to ensure the presence and particular visibility or recommendation of minority cultures' content, bearing in mind that such promotion of discoverability entails potential tensions between cultural diversity imposed by public bodies and the private interests of digital business owners, which could be solved by regulations;
- support for creators, i.e. remuneration and economic sustainability of content creators via copyright enforcement and monetisation schemes, a definition of 'content creator', 'creative entrepreneur' and 'professional creator', as well as creators' awareness of their remuneration rights in the face of users' expectations to access content for free.

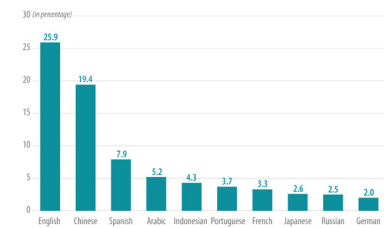
Some of these issues can be addressed through training and awareness: for instance, digital literacy is needed for the creation of and access to digital content, creators need to be aware of their copyrights and audiences need to be aware of the costs involved in professional content creation.

Among the solutions to these issues the report mentions regulatory approaches, for example, as regards:

- governance of algorithms via market regulations on content and data privacy;
- governance through algorithms, such as tools promoting exposure to a diversity of content by increasing the visibility and discoverability of certain types of content through editorial processes done by algorithms;
- regulations on discoverability of content, data privacy, etc.;
- taxation to fund the creation of content, and copyright (rules) to preserve the revenues of creators and artists as a means of ensuring diversity of content.

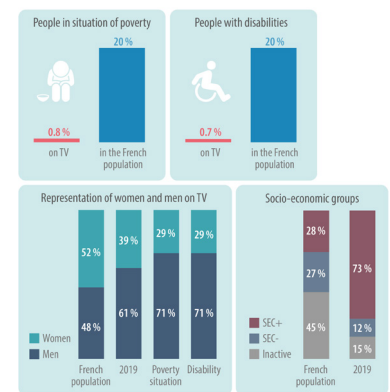
In December 2018, the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions issued a [road map](#) for the implementation of operational guidelines to promote the diversity of cultural expressions in the digital environment. The section on the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms also covers women's rights and artistic freedom in the digital environment as elements of the promotion of cultural diversity. It also

Figure 4: Share of the most common languages on the internet (%)



Source: [Statista](#), 2020.

Figure 5: Minorities on screen



Source: [The perception of diversity on-screen](#), CSA, December 2020.



includes international agreements promoting a balanced flow in cultural goods and services aimed at establishing equality between countries in the digital environment.

All these aspects are to be considered at the local, regional, national and global levels. Moreover, [content availability](#), particularly local, is of special concern for the culture of indigenous peoples and populations in rural areas, and of minorities, women, refugees and disadvantaged groups.

## European Union and digital cultural diversity

According to [Article 167](#) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), the European Union 'shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States', to the 'improvement of the knowledge and dissemination of the culture and history of the European peoples', to respect for national and regional diversity, and to the promotion of cultural diversity.

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union also declares that the EU respects the [diversity of the cultures](#) and traditions of the peoples of Europe as well as the national identities of the Member States, as a way to preserve its own values. This principle is enshrined in Article 22 on cultural, religious and linguistic diversity.

The [European Culture Forum](#), a biennial keynote event organised by the European Commission for the key sectoral players, aims to enhance European cultural cooperation and take stock of the implementation of and debates on EU culture policy and initiatives. Its [2016 edition](#) devoted one session to cultural diversity in the digital single market, focusing in particular on a modernised copyright framework, a subject raised already in the Commission's 2012 [communication](#) 'on content in the Digital Single Market'.

In its 2018 communication, 'A New European [Agenda for Culture](#)', the European Commission, which sets policy guidance on cultural policy, identified cultural diversity as its top cultural policy strategic objective, focusing on its social dimension. A cross-sectoral approach with collaborative projects, for example, on digital co-creation to enrich the diversity of cultural expressions, could be a means to achieving this goal. The document refers to the UNESCO 2005 convention in the context of the EU cultural diplomacy and the role of culture as a component of and enabler in development policies.

## Council of the EU

In its 2018 conclusions on promoting access to [culture via digital means](#) with a focus on audience development, the Council invited the Commission and the Member States to pursue the digitisation of cultural content and the development of new technologies for digitisation as a way to provide a more diverse cultural offer potentially increasing the re-use of digital content by various sectors of society. The document benefited from a report prepared in the framework of the open method of coordination (OMC) by the [Working Group](#) on promoting access to culture via digital means.

The 2017 [Rome Declaration](#), signed by the leaders of the 27 Member States and the EU institutions to commemorate the signature of the Treaty of Rome, pledged to work towards a 'Union which preserves our cultural heritage and promotes cultural diversity' as part of 'social Europe'. A year later, the Council adopted its conclusions on the [work plan](#) for culture 2019-2022, a document that set out its ambitions for cultural policy. In line with the Rome Declaration, it focused on cultural diversity as a factor of social cohesion and covered aspects related to artists' mobility, gender equality, international cultural relations and cultural heritage. The previous work plan covered cultural diversity, together with culture in international relations and artists' mobility, as a [stand-alone priority](#).

The Council paid special attention to the music sector and its diversity in the competitive digital world. In this context, the Council focused on the Commission's initiative [Music Moves Europe](#), developed since 2015 to enhance and promote the diversity of styles and genres. The sector needs to take maximum advantage of the opportunities offered by digitisation. The digital shift, making it

possible to stream music, and increased competition from global players have led to fundamental changes in the way music is created, produced, performed, distributed, listened to and monetised. Music Moves Europe offers experts a platform for exchanging information on public policies seeking to promote the mobility of artists and the circulation of local repertoire within and beyond Europe.

Translation is key to enabling broader access to European content. The Council recognises its importance together with multilingualism and proposes to build upon Europe's linguistic diversity as an asset and to promote better circulation of European works. Thus, its work plan includes the assessment of existing support mechanisms for translation at European and national level. It also envisages addressing the needs of translation professionals, as digitalisation has a big impact on linguistic diversity.

The German Presidency of the Council, in the second half of 2020, presented culture from the perspective of gender equality and cultural and media diversity. It focused on [civil society](#) participation and stressed the central role that culture and media play in communicating a European identity and its history and values. The presidency highlighted the importance of protecting diversity and freedom, which are crucial in this respect, while pointing out the urgent need for digitalisation and the promotion of digital skills. The coronavirus pandemic proved this assessment correct. Closures of cultural venues resulted in a quick shift to digital provision of cultural content, and the need for artistic freedom and diversity as well as for trust has been stronger than ever.

## European Parliament

In 2016, the Parliament adopted two resolutions relating to cultural diversity and the digital environment. The January 2016 [resolution](#), 'Towards a Digital Single Market Act', recalling the 2005 convention, called on the Commission to preserve the internet as an open, neutral, secured, inclusive, global platform for cultural diversity. The Parliament wanted to make sure that any reform of the Copyright Directive would take into account the possible impact on cultural diversity. It pointed out that the approach to copyright exceptions and limitations should be balanced, targeted and format-neutral, and should not undermine European cultural diversity, its financing and the fair compensation of authors. The resolution also underlined the importance of rules enhancing the ease with which legal content is found and safeguarding linguistic and cultural diversity, including those of minorities. It urged the Commission to support the legal offer of audiovisual media content by favouring independent European works, and cross-border access to content.

Emphasising that platforms dealing with cultural goods have to be treated in a specific manner that respects the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, the Parliament noted that some online intermediaries and online platforms generate income from cultural works and content, which they do not always share with the creators. Hence, the Parliament called on the Commission to consider evidence-based options to address any lack of transparency and transfer of value from content to services that will make it possible for authors, performers and rights holders to be fairly remunerated for the use of their work on the internet without hampering innovation.

Again in 2016, the Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) on a coherent EU policy for cultural and creative industries (CCIs) focusing on their role and importance for cultural diversity and the impact of

### European Parliament on digital linguistic diversity

On 11 September 2018, the Parliament adopted its own-initiative [resolution](#) on language equality in the digital age, stating that [lesser-used](#) European languages need to have the chance to be expressed in culturally meaningful ways and to create their own cultural content. The legislator called on the Council to draft a recommendation on the protection and promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity. It also called on the Commission to set up a policy area for 'multilingualism and language technology'.

The Parliament voiced concern that smaller languages, which would benefit the most from language technologies, lack the tools and resources to do so while at the same time risking digital extinction. It stressed that cultural diversity and multilingualism in Europe could benefit from cross-border access to content.

digitisation on the sector. It noted that the dissemination of cultural and creative goods and services online through cultural institutions still needed to be improved to strengthen digital cultural diversity. It also called for a framework for fair remuneration of creators and artists in the digital environment, insisting that their contribution to content is crucial for the technology sector. The Parliament emphasised the importance of guaranteeing funding for the digitisation, preservation and online availability of European cultural heritage, as digitisation creates new opportunities for accessing, distributing and promoting European works. The resolution pointed to the importance of developing the right media and digital skills that would enable people to benefit from the diversity of online content.

Finally, the resolution stated that respect for the Member States' national and regional cultural diversity, traditions and linguistic diversity; recognition for the role of culture in international relations; as well as the creation of the digital single market confirm the above-mentioned potential areas and scope of action at the EU level in support of digital cultural diversity.

## European Union support for digital cultural diversity

Diversity of cultural content according to criteria such as language, ethnicity, gender and age, added to the historical context, geographical area, style and format contributes to the cultural and linguistic richness online. In order to navigate through such an environment and engage with the content, one needs equipment, internet connection and skills.

Some authors warn that EU citizens risk becoming '[lost in diversity](#)', instead of being 'united in diversity' unless stronger focus is put on the demand side of cultural diversity through, for example, media literacy programmes or greater transparency about editorial decisions. Researchers point out the need for filtering mechanisms that strike a balance between empowering citizens and helping them to navigate efficiently through an abundance of diverse content without constraining them and thereby fragmenting public spheres to unacceptable levels. The EU, as an area of diversity, and its mission under the Treaty to preserve and promote it, has tools and funds to address many issues related to cultural diversity in general and online, and to digital services and skills.

## Minorities and indigenous cultures, and languages online

Digital technologies have increased fragmentation through audience segmentation and content personalisation for individuals, which undermines [consumption diversity](#). Exchange of best practices on supporting translation in the book and publishing sector, and in other cultural and creative sectors, and the recommendation of concrete measures under the Creative Europe programme aim to promote linguistic diversity and the circulation of works, as well as digital cultural diversity.

Only 350 of some 6 000 languages in the world are represented online, while English dominates the web. It is also the only one among European languages to have good [language technology support](#).

### Translation technology promoting diversity

Cultural diversity in a digital environment also depends on the linguistic diversity of the internet. The latter can be ensured thanks to translation, particularly by using human language technologies that are currently dominated by English. Thus, smaller languages are disadvantaged, due to a lack of or poor access to linguistic data, while the technology is mainly developed in [the US](#) and other English-speaking countries.

#### Indigenous languages and culture online

Sami people living in Nordic regions represent the only indigenous culture in the EU. The EU-supported [Giellagáldu](#) project was devoted to the Sami languages. Experts involved in it worked on language tools such as proofing systems, spell-check programmes, web dictionaries and machine translation software. They are currently available at no cost to users and open the way to the online presence of Sami people and their culture.



As regards language technology, a number of initiatives have made it easier to bring together communities that are fragmented according to the language they speak. Among these are the EU Horizon 2020 research programme, which provides funding for the European [Language Resource Coordination](#) network and data project; [CRACKER](#) – Cracking the Language Barrier Federation; and the Multilingual Europe Technology Alliance network [META-NET](#), involved in research and engineering needed for content production across all European languages.

## Cultural minorities, migrants and dissident creators online

The [Roma](#) minority is hardly represented in cultural spaces in the EU, although its population is present all over the EU as one of the biggest non-territorial linguistic and cultural minorities. The Horizon 2020-funded [Topotéka](#) project enabled the creation of a digital platform for the local Hungarian Roma collection and the launch of an exhibition in the building of the Budapest Collection, Metropolitan Ervin Szabó Library. It contributed to a [digital repository](#) of ethnographic material entitled 'the Virtual House of Roma Culture'.

The Jewish minority's cultural heritage is covered in [Europeana Judaica](#), a network of 22 institutions (archives, libraries and museums) in Europe, Israel and the US, home to important Jewish diaspora from Europe. It makes the most important collections of European Jewish heritage discoverable.

Co-financed by the Connecting Europe Facility, the [Europeana](#) platform aggregates content from all of the Member States and provides multilingual access to 58 million digitised cultural heritage records from over 3 600 cultural heritage institutions and organisations, including audio-visual archives and galleries. The platform also hosts '[Migration](#) stories and objects: mementos of lost homelands' – stories of massive migration waves from the past to the present, showing similarities and differences in reasons for the migratory waves, and memories of homelands. The content can be re-used by other sectors such as education, research, tourism and the creative industries.

Cultural content from the northern European peripheries is present online thanks to the [CINE](#) collaborative digital heritage project between nine partners and 10 associated partners from Norway, Iceland, Ireland and Scotland, under the lead of Museum Nord. Funded by the Northern and Arctic Periphery programme (part of the European Regional Development Fund), CINE is a [platform](#) for various initiatives such as interactive digital reconstructions. Projects rely heavily on technology, with interactive and re-usable elements and subsystems providing an example for potential future reconstructions based on interactivity.

Another project co-funded by Horizon 2020 – [Courage](#) ('Cultural Opposition – Understanding the Cultural Heritage of Dissent in the Former Socialist Countries') – is a comprehensive online database of scattered collections of cultural works considered illegal and forbidden in the former socialist countries. The project made it possible to preserve the works of prominent dissident artists – a risky endeavour in the socialist era – while also making them [accessible](#).

Similarly, [Unearthing the Music](#) is a collaborative project on the history of experimental music in Europe throughout the second part of the 20th century. The project, funded by the Creative Europe programme, focuses on countries that limited creative and artistic freedom, among them Spain and Portugal under dictatorship, and the former communist countries, including East Germany and the Soviet republics. However, very few audio files are actually available.

## Local and regional cultural heritage online

[Locally created](#) content or content relevant for a local community is a factor both for digital cultural diversity and for the development of digital technology and skills. It is an engine of local creativity and cultural engagement. [Pluggy](#), the Pluggable Social Platform for Heritage Awareness and Participation, is a Horizon 2020-funded project seeking to [actively involve](#) the whole local community in cultural heritage projects as [online heritage curators](#).

[Cultural gems](#) maps cultural and creative places in European cities and towns for those interested in the local cultural offer. Currently, a wide selection of online initiatives and events is accessible

from this platform, which is another Horizon 2020 project. Due to travel restrictions and social distancing linked to the ongoing pandemic, which are limiting our possibility to visit places in European cities and towns in person, a new functionality – [EUCultureFromHome](#) – allows individuals to provide information on [local cultural](#) life for everyone to enjoy from their home wherever they are in the world.

## Skills, media literacy, education and research

The promotion of European cultural diversity depends on the existence of flourishing and resilient cultural and creative sectors, able to create, produce and distribute their works to a large and diverse European audience. Ensuring that European artists and creators from all over the EU contribute to cultural content online and that audiences have sufficient skills to access it, requires digital and cultural education.

The [Erasmus +](#) programme co-founded InART2DiverCity Project (Introducing Cultural Diversity of European Cities to Youth) and resulted among other things in a [guidebook](#) (in English, Greek, Spanish, Slovenian and Italian) providing insights on the importance of intercultural communication, cultural diversity, and the need for continuous professional development regarding fine arts trainers in the digital era. The publication focuses on various skills, among them digital skills, creativity and [cultural awareness](#).

Recognising the role of digital technologies in culture and creativity, the Commission identified the promotion of European cooperation on cultural and linguistic diversity as the first objective in the [Creative Europe](#) programme 2021-2027. The proposal for the programme seeks to offer opportunities for operators to develop technologically and artistically innovative European trans-border initiatives to exchange, co-create, co-produce and distribute European works and make them accessible to a wide and diverse audience. Such an ambition requires skills development for both creators and audiences. The proposal stresses possible synergies with other programmes, such as the future [European Social Fund +](#) for the acquisition of basic digital skills.

Thus, the [Digital Europe](#) programme (2021-2027) will support around [256 000 people](#) in acquiring skills allowing them to deploy the latest technology in business throughout Europe. With support from the [European Social Fund +](#), national education and training systems will improve the quality, effectiveness and labour market relevance of new skills. This fund will also support the Member States in promoting the acquisition of key competences and in providing upskilling and reskilling opportunities for all, placing a particular emphasis on digital skills.

Activities linked to the [#Digital4Culture](#) strategy include projects on: the digital transformation of the cultural heritage sector; the curation of online art collections; and the creation of easily accessible search engines for films and other online heritage collections. The part of the programme focusing on digital skills has synergies with issues such as media literacy and film education.

The Horizon 2020 programme co-financed '[The Cabinet of Dr Caligari](#)' project on the digital restoration of the world's most important silent movies. Thus, the treasures of the first films became accessible and available on digital support and equipment. It can be accessed for educational purposes and help teach about the history of European cinematography. Film education is part of cultural awareness among young Europeans. Analysing the European film heritage, students can acquire not only historic knowledge, but also practice critical thinking and learn arts analysis, together with developing their digital skills.

### Digital skills during the pandemic-related lockdowns

The [pandemic](#) and its impact on digitisation in employment have enhanced the focus on digital skills. A recent French study on the [cultural practices](#) of the French during confinement confirmed the importance of digital skills for cultural engagement to enable people to contribute their cultural content.

## Remuneration for digital content

Online content piracy and the dominant position of mostly Silicon Valley digital giants are obstacles to sustainably remunerating content creation. The [Directive](#) on Copyright in the Digital Single Market adopted in spring 2019 introduced content monitoring measures on online platforms to resolve the 'value gap' for creators in the [controversial](#) Article 17 on the grounds of freedom of expression. The aim is to help rights holders to better monetise and control the distribution of their content online. It also aims to facilitate access to content.

However, even paid-for content on music streaming platforms raises questions about fair payments and sustainability of the current model, where 'winners get (almost) all'. New models, such as [user-centric](#) distribution and pay-off, have been introduced to support the revenues of less-known musicians and artists. In this model, every artist gets what the users paid for their work, as opposed to getting paid a pro-rata share of all streams on the platform (an approach that privileges the most popular performers). This model supports diversity of content by offering fair pay to less popular artists and thus enabling them to continue creating and be listened to.

### Digital creation during pandemic-related lockdowns

The coronavirus pandemic pointed to the urgent need to address artists' and creators' revenues in the digital environment. During lockdowns, artists, creators, cultural institutions and venues provided those locked in their homes with mostly free content. Various sanitary measures requiring closures of cultural venues have kept artists, creatives, cultural and supporting workers out of work. Precarious jobs in the cultural and creative sectors have strained people's finances and forced them to consider changing jobs. This could curtail cultural diversity worldwide.

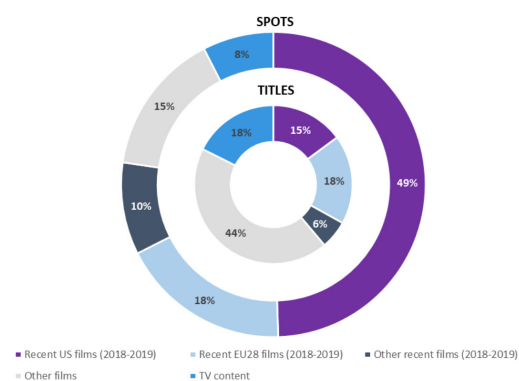
## Taxation, geo-blocking and quotas of content: support to diversity

[Taxation of digital](#) giants who dominate the global market could create conditions for the emergence of EU start-ups, including in the cultural domain, which would create more local content and support cultural diversity. A levy for companies making more than €7 million in revenue a year and having more than 100 000 users and over 3 000 business contracts could help achieve this goal. Under this arrangement, digital services, such as subscription streaming platforms, would be liable in a Member State where their performance corresponds to one of the above-mentioned criteria.

Geo-blocking of cultural content is a barrier to accessing diverse cultural content across borders, but the film industry, which is financed through licences for particular EU territories, is opposed to removing it. Global [streaming platforms](#) continue providing their content across the EU, because, as they finance their own productions, they choose where to make them available. The question remains if this really contributes to cultural diversity or if it rather unifies various expressions into one genre.

The Audiovisual Services Directive imposed, thanks to the Parliament, the obligation for on-demand services to reserve at least a [30 % share](#) for EU works in their catalogues and to ensure adequate prominence of such works. Whether it is an efficient tool to guarantee content diversity remains to be verified. The mere fact that TVOD catalogues include 30 % of EU titles does not mean the share or promotional spots are sufficient. Figure 6 shows that 49 % of promotional spots go to US films, against 18 % to EU-28 (prior to the UK's withdrawal from the EU). The situation seems to be better for EU films: 18 % of promoted films (titles) are of EU-28 origin, while only 15 % of US origin. Yet, the EU produces

Figure 6: Origin of promotion spots by age and origin (% , October 2019)



Source: [The visibility of audio-visual works on TVOD](#), European Audiovisual Observatory.

almost [twice as many](#) films as the US and, given that the UK is a major film producer, post-2021 statistics will look different. Only 10 % of spots (6 % of titles) go to non-EU or US films.

It is also interesting to see the promotion of EU non-national films (Figure 7), which varies enormously across the Member States included in a study. France by far promotes mainly (71 %) its own productions (and co-productions), followed by Italy and the UK (42 %), while the Belgian TVOD promote almost exclusively other EU films. Given that France, Germany, Spain and Italy are major film producers, it is difficult to compare their statistics with those of [Belgium](#) and the Netherlands. On average, one third of promotion spots go to national productions and two thirds to other EU productions.

## Challenges ahead

Most cultural and creative sectors have been using artificial intelligence (AI) to compose music or lyrics, to paint or to produce video games or film animation for quite a while. The Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) organised a hearing on AI in February 2020 to get a deeper understanding of the challenges and risks linked to its use in culture, education and media. In December 2020, in its [opinion](#) on the use of AI in the digital single market, CULT stressed that AI should respect freedom of expression and cultural diversity. It also voiced its regret that the EU AI strategy did not include cultural aspects and pointed out that future EU regulation on AI for the cultural and creative sectors should be in line with the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD). While it could help remove illegal cultural content, such regulation could pose threats to freedom of expression and cultural diversity.

Algorithms, their transparency as well as industrial big [data from the cultural and creative](#) sectors are also potential areas of concern from the point of view of cultural diversity. Some issues need potentially to be addressed to protect and promote diversity of cultural expressions online.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> E. Durand, *L'attaque des clones : La diversité culturelle à l'ère de l'hyperchoix*; Presse de Sciences Po, Paris, 2016.
- <sup>2</sup> K. Berger, M. Alduy and C. Le Moign, *La culture sans état. De Modiano à Google*, Odile Jacob, Paris, 2016.

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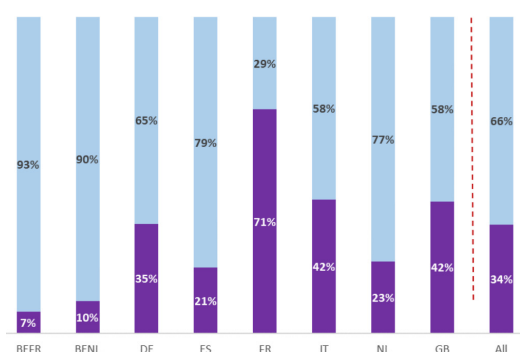
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[www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank) (internet)

<http://epthinktank.eu> (blog)

Figure 7: Breakdown of EU-28 promotion spots by national and EU-28 non-national (% , October 2019) films



Source: [The visibility of audio-visual works on TVOD](#), European Audiovisual Observatory.

