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AUDIOVISUAL AND MEDIA POLICY

Audiovisual policy in the EU is governed by Articles 167 and 173 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). The key piece of legislation in this field is the Audiovisual Media Services Directive, which was revised in 2018. The main EU instrument to help the industry (especially the film industry) is the MEDIA strand of the Creative Europe programme. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union asks for respect for 'the freedom and pluralism of the media'.

LEGAL BASIS

The Treaty of Rome did not provide for any direct powers in the field of audiovisual and media policy, and neither does the Treaty on European Union. Jurisdiction over media policy is instead drawn from various articles of the TFEU in order to construct policies for the different media and communication technology sectors. This is a necessity arising from the complex nature of media goods and services, which can be defined neither solely as cultural goods nor simply as economic goods. The legal basis is contained in the TFEU in the form of Articles 28, 30, 34 and 35 (free movement of goods); 45-62 (free movement of persons, services and capital); 101-109 (competition policy); 114 (technological harmonisation and approximation); 165 (education); 166 (vocational training); 167 (culture); 173 (industry); and 207 (common commercial policy).

OBJECTIVES

According to Article 167 of the TFEU, the EU encourages cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, supports and supplements their action in the area of artistic and literary creation, including the audiovisual sector. The EU's goal in the audiovisual field is to create a single EU market for audiovisual services. It is also required to take cultural aspects into account in all EU policies. Decisions are reached under the ordinary legislative procedure.

ACHIEVEMENTS

A. Regulatory framework

1. [The Audiovisual Media Services Directive](#) (AVMSD)

During the 1980s, new developments in broadcasting technologies led to an increase in the number of commercial TV stations in the EU and to their broadcasts being able to be received in several countries. This gave rise to a need for common minimum standards, which were first laid out in the so-called [Television without Frontiers Directive](#)



in 1989 (89/552/EEC). Its first revision in 1997 put in place the ‘country of origin’ principle, meaning that broadcasters are under the jurisdiction of the Member State in which they are based. Provisions taking into account new services, such as ‘video on demand’ (VOD), were added in the 2007 revision. The [directive](#) was codified in 2010 and renamed the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD).

The Commission’s 2012 report on the application of the AVMSD and its 2013 Green Paper entitled ‘[Preparing for a Fully Converged Audiovisual World: Growth, Creation and Values](#)’ focus on the steady increase in the convergence of media services and the way in which these services are consumed and delivered.

In order to keep pace with recent developments, in 2016 the Commission proposed a further [revision](#) of the AVMSD. The interinstitutional trilogue negotiations on the text were concluded in mid-2018. Key elements of the text agreed included: (1) changing the limit for commercial communications from 12 minutes per hour to 20% per day between 06.00 and 18.00; (2) protecting minors from content that ‘may impair’ them, with the same regulation applying to traditional broadcasts and on-demand services; (3) extending the provisions on European works to on-demand services providers, which have to ensure that European works make up at least 30% of their catalogues; and (4) bringing video-sharing platforms (VSPs) under the scope of the AVMSD for the purposes of combating hate speech and protecting minors from harmful content. The amended directive ([Directive \(EU\) 2018/1808](#)) was adopted by Parliament and the Council on 14 November 2018.

In order to help the Member States to transpose the revised AVMSD into national law, the Commission adopted two sets of guidelines in 2020: (1) [guidelines on VSPs](#); and (2) [guidelines on European works](#). These guidelines are expected to contribute to the harmonised implementation and enforcement of the directive. The deadline for transposing the Directive into national law, missed by most Member States, was 19 September 2020. Ireland, where the largest number of VSPs are established, was the last country to notify its legislation transposing the directive, in February 2023.

Concerning the protection of minors, the rules of the revised AVMSD were supplemented by the [1998](#) and [2006](#) recommendations on the protection of minors and human dignity. In 2022, a new strategy for a better internet for kids (BIK+) was adopted, following the [European strategy for a better internet for children](#) from 2012. It aims to ensure that children are protected, respected and empowered online. It is supported under the [Connecting Europe Facility](#) and through programmes such as [Horizon Europe](#). Among the various initiatives in this area are the [Better Internet for Kids](#) programme and the [Safer Internet Centres](#). A [child-friendly version](#) of the BIK + Strategy is also available.

2. [Copyright in the digital single market](#)

On 17 April 2019, Parliament and the Council adopted the [Directive on copyright and related rights in the Digital Single Market \(\(EU\) 2019/790\)](#). The legislative text amended two previous directives on copyright-related issues (Directives [96/9/EC](#) and [2001/29/EC](#)). The main aim of the directive was to modernise the copyright rules for the digital single market in order to attain several fundamental objectives: (1) more cross-border access to online content; (2) more opportunities to use copyrighted materials for



education, research and cultural heritage purposes; (3) a better functioning copyright marketplace; and (4) implementation of the [Marrakech Treaty](#) in EU law. The new legislation has the biggest impact on online platforms such as YouTube, Facebook and Google News.

3. Portability of online content services throughout the EU

On 14 June 2017, Parliament and the Council adopted [Regulation \(EU\) 2017/1128](#) with the aim of ensuring that subscribers to online content services in their own EU country, such as those providing films, sports events, ebooks, video games and music, can access them when temporarily staying in other EU countries. This regulation came after the adoption of new roaming rules that same year, which are part of the EU's digital single market strategy.

B. Funding programmes and support initiatives

1. [Creative Europe](#)

The MEDIA strand of the Creative Europe programme is designed to strengthen the audiovisual sector's competitiveness. On 14 December 2020, Parliament and the Council reached an agreement securing EUR 2.44 billion of funding for the Creative Europe programme (2021-2027), of which at least 58% must be allocated to the MEDIA strand and up to 9% of which must be allocated to the CROSS-SECTORAL strand, which also partly pertains to the audiovisual sector. The Council adopted its [first-reading position](#) on 13 April 2021 and the text was [adopted](#) by Parliament at its second reading in plenary on 19 May 2021.

The MEDIA strand aims to help audiovisual professionals to develop new skills and also aims to stimulate cross-border cooperation and mobility and boost innovation in the creation and production of European audiovisual works, such as films and television programmes (fiction, children's and animated films, documentaries and short films), interactive works (video games), and European and international co-productions. It also supports the worldwide circulation, promotion and online and theatrical distribution (via distribution platforms and subtitling, dubbing and audio-description) of European works in the new digital environment. Building on the success of its predecessors, the MEDIA and MEDIA Mundus programmes, in 2021 the MEDIA programme celebrated 30 years of supporting European films.

The CROSS-SECTORAL strand promotes activities aimed at helping the media to adjust to the structural and technological challenges it faces, including by strengthening a free, diverse and pluralistic media environment, quality journalism and media literacy.

2. [Action Plan for the media and audiovisual sectors](#)

In December 2020, the Commission launched an action plan entitled 'Europe's Media in the Digital Decade: An Action Plan to Support Recovery and Transformation'. These sectors, which were particularly badly hit by the coronavirus crisis, remain essential for 'democracy, Europe's cultural diversity and digital autonomy'. The action plan focuses on three areas of activity and 10 concrete actions to help the sector: (1) to recover from the crisis (i.e. by facilitating access to EU support, boosting investment and launching a 'NEWS' initiative to bundle actions and support); (2) to transform itself by stimulating investment to enable it to embrace the digital and green transitions (i.e. by



encouraging the development of European media data spaces, by fostering a European virtual and augmented reality industrial coalition, and by facilitating discussions and actions enabling the industry to become climate-neutral by 2050); and finally (3) to empower individuals and companies in Europe to launch a dialogue with the audiovisual industry, foster European media talents, empower individuals in Europe and strengthen cooperation among regulators.

3. [Media literacy](#), pluralism and freedom

Media literacy is the ability to access the media, to understand and to critically evaluate different aspects of the media and media content and to communicate in a variety of contexts. It is a fundamental skill for the younger generation and for adults. The EU considers media literacy to be an important factor in active involvement in today's information society. The [Council conclusions](#) of 30 May 2016 on developing media literacy and critical thinking through education and training underline that media literacy is more important than ever in the age of the internet and social media and that it needs to be an integral part of education and training at all levels. Additionally, in 2019 the Commission organised its first EU-wide Media Literacy Week and convened a meeting of the Expert Group on Media Literacy, which brings together different stakeholders and meets once per year. The 2018 revision of the AVMSD also strengthened the role of media literacy (Articles 33(a) and 28(b)). Furthermore, a new media literacy programme has been launched under the MEDIA strand of Creative Europe (2021-2027).

Media pluralism is the need for transparency, freedom and diversity in the media landscape. In 2011, the European University Institute established the Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom with co-funding from the EU. In addition, the EU implemented the [Media Pluralism Monitor](#) (MPM) in all Member States and select candidate countries in 2016. This is a scientific tool designed to identify potential risks to media pluralism, based on a set of indicators.

In order to take further steps to safeguard media freedom and pluralism, the Commission adopted, on 16 September 2022, a new piece of legislation called the [European Media Freedom Act](#). The proposal aims to set out mechanisms to increase the transparency, independence and accountability of actions affecting media markets, freedom and pluralism within the EU. It is now going through the ordinary legislative procedure. Under this procedure, Parliament adopted its negotiating mandate on [3 October 2023](#) and the Council [on 21 June 2023](#). The trilogue negotiations are currently taking place with the aim of concluding before the upcoming European elections in June 2024.

4. Other initiatives

European film heritage

On 16 November 2005, Parliament and the Council published their [recommendation on film heritage and the competitiveness of related industrial activities](#), wherein the Member States are urged to methodically collect, catalogue, preserve and restore the EU's film heritage so that it can be passed on to future generations. The Member States are also asked to report on what they have done in this context every two years so the Commission can produce an implementation report on the basis of that information.



The promotion of Europe's audiovisual heritage is also explicitly mentioned as one of the priorities of the MEDIA strand of the Creative Europe programme.

Furthermore, during the Cannes Film Festival, the EU organises discussions and panels on various topics such as film financing and distribution, audience development and innovation. In 2005, the [European Film Forum](#) was launched as a platform for structured dialogue between policymakers and the audiovisual sector. A 'New talent in the EU' award was introduced in 2004 to promote the work of young European directors who have taken MEDIA-sponsored training. The European Border Breakers Award was a prize for emerging artists, introduced in 2004 and co-funded by the Creative Europe programme. In 2019, the prize was renamed the [Music Moves Europe Awards](#).

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Parliament has emphasised that the EU should stimulate the growth and competitiveness of the audiovisual sector while recognising its wider significance in safeguarding cultural diversity.

1. Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD)

Parliament's resolutions on television from the 1980s and early 1990s repeatedly called for common technical standards for direct broadcasting by satellite and for high-definition television. The approval of the AVMSD in 2010 was the outcome of negotiations between Parliament and the Council that took into account most of the concerns raised during Parliament's first reading.

Parliament has been following the implementation of the AVMSD very closely. In its [2013 resolution on the implementation of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive](#), Parliament presented several observations and recommendations, in particular as regards accessibility, the promotion of European audiovisual works, the protection of minors, advertising, future challenges and international competition.

In its [2013 resolution on connected TV](#), Parliament called on the Commission to evaluate the need to revise the AVMSD and other current requirements laid down in the network and media regulations. The need for revision pertained in particular to the rules on findability and non-discriminatory access to platforms, to expanding the concept of platforms and to adapting the existing instruments to new developments.

In a March 2014 [resolution on preparing for a fully converged audiovisual world](#) (responding to the Commission's Green Paper on the same issue), Parliament takes note of the convergence of markets and stresses the need to preserve access and findability and to safeguard diversity and funding models.

Following the conclusion of the negotiations on the revised AVMSD, the revised act now applies not only to broadcasters, but also to video-on-demand and VSPs such as Netflix, YouTube and Facebook, as well as to live streaming on VSPs. Parliament negotiators also managed to secure enhanced protection for children, stricter rules on advertising and a requirement for at least 30% of the content distributed via TV channels and VOD platforms to be EU-made. In March 2023, the CULT Committee adopted a draft [implementation report](#) on the 2018 revised AVMSD in which MEPs ask for the



harmonisation of the EU's audiovisual media market to be sped up. A [study](#) on the subject was also commissioned.

2. Creative Europe

Building on its [2011 resolution on European cinema in the digital era](#), Parliament's April 2015 [resolution on European film in the digital era](#) expresses strong support for European filmmakers, highlighting the role of the financial support provided by the MEDIA sub-programme of the 2014-2020 Creative Europe programme. It also stresses the importance of film literacy and audience development.

Its [September 2012 resolution on the online distribution of audiovisual works in the European Union](#) explores aspects of copyright and the challenges posed by the digital availability of audiovisual works. In a March 2017 resolution on the implementation of the 2014-2020 Creative Europe programme, MEPs emphasised the importance of an appropriate budget, simplified administrative procedures and support in enabling small-scale organisations or projects to access funding.

3. [Action plan for the media and audiovisual sectors](#)

In an October 2021 [resolution](#) on the Commission's 2020 media action plan, MEPs called for a permanent EU news media fund to safeguard the independence of European journalism, warned that media diversity is at risk due to concentration of ownership and state capture, and highlighted the urgent need to address the 'vast disruptive impact' of global online platforms.

4. Media literacy

In a December 2008 [resolution](#) on media literacy in a digital world, MEPs stressed the central role of media literacy in 'political culture and active participation by Union citizens'. This resolution marked an important step towards further EU action in this field.

Parliament's 2019 [resolution](#) on foreign electoral interference and disinformation in national and European democratic processes urged Member States to include specific courses on media literacy in their school curriculums in order to improve media literacy from an early age. Parliament again gave much attention to the topic in its 2020 [resolution](#) on strengthening media freedom.

5. [LUX - The European Audience Film Award](#)

'LUX - The European Audience Film Award' is an award organised by Parliament and the European Film Academy. It aims to promote the distribution and visibility of European films throughout the EU by inviting European audiences to become active protagonists by voting for their favourite films, and by providing subtitling for the three films nominated for the prize in the 24 official EU languages and for persons who are deaf and hard of hearing.

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