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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
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Subject:	Council conclusions on promoting access to culture via digital means with a focus on audience development - <i>Council conclusions (21 November 2017)</i>

Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions on promoting access to culture via digital means with a focus on audience development, adopted by the Council at its 3577th meeting held on 21 November 2017.

Council conclusions on promoting access to culture via digital means with a focus on audience development

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

HAVING REGARD TO:

1. the Council Conclusions of 25 November 2014¹ inviting the Presidencies of the Council to take into account the priorities of the Council Work Plan for Culture 2015-2018 in the context of the Trio Presidencies; in this context NOTES in particular the priority area A of the Work Plan for Culture 'Accessible and inclusive culture', including the topic on promoting access to culture via digital means, and the report of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) Working Group on *Promoting access to culture via digital means: policies and strategies for audience development* that maps existing policies, programmes and good practices in the EU and puts forward recommendations for different levels of governance, and the study on *Audience Development. How to Place Audiences at the Centre of Cultural Organisations*;
2. the Creative Europe Programme (2014 to 2020)² and in particular its objective to support audience development as a means of improving access to cultural heritage and cultural and creative works;
3. the Digital Single Market strategy³ aiming at creating new digital opportunities across Europe, including in the field of culture;

¹ Conclusions of 25 November 2014 of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on a Work Plan for Culture (2015-2018), (OJ C 463, 23.12.2014, p. 4).

² Regulation (EU) No 1295/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing the Creative Europe Programme (2014-2020), (OJ L 347, 20.12.2013).

³ COM (2015)/192 final.

UNDERLINES THAT:

4. digital technologies are rapidly and fundamentally changing the way cultural content is created, accessed and used. Distribution is no longer linear as content is increasingly being circulated in intertwined networks of individuals, audiences, communities and institutions both in the public and private sectors, which shapes the chain of production and distribution of content. This is changing the behaviour and expectations of audiences: they are looking for increased access to digital content as well as a more participatory relationship with content providers. In response, cultural organisations⁴, while being gatekeepers, are increasingly moving towards being facilitators in accessing cultural content;
5. some audiences have reduced access to cultural content, for example due to special needs, language barriers, a lack of information, digital skills, time, resources and interest, geographical location or social background. In many cases these barriers may be overcome by using digital means;
6. an audience development approach⁵ helps cultural organisations to reach new audiences, deepen the relationship with existing audiences and has the potential to increase the cohesion of communities;
7. the digital era requires both cultural organisations and audiences to acquire new skills and knowledge;
8. managing digital tools, systems and workflows demands a different approach from cultural organisations possibly necessitating revised organisational structures;

⁴ Public, private and non-governmental organisations, irrespective of their size, active in all cultural sectors.

⁵ "Audience development is a planned, organisation-wide approach to extending the range and nature of relationships with the public by focusing on their needs. It helps a cultural organisation to achieve its social purpose, financial sustainability and creative ambitions." (Source: OMC group's report).

9. in order to engage with audiences in a meaningful way, cultural organisations need to understand their audiences. A lack of information on audience profiles and how audiences access cultural content using digital means remains an issue. Cultural organisations vary greatly, but all face similar challenges in collecting and managing cultural data, especially in terms of digital audiences;

RECOGNISES THAT:

10. by adapting to an ever-changing digital environment, culture has the potential to further reinforce its relevance in society. Digital technologies provide an opportunity for cultural organisations to develop meaningful and interactive relationships with different audiences, but at the same time this poses challenges in terms of strategic vision, new skills and knowledge, the lack of data on digital audiences, organisational reshaping and financial models. Cultural organisations will need to reconsider how they address these challenges to maximise the opportunities that will arise from embracing digital audience development;

INVITES, WITH DUE REGARD TO THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY, THE MEMBER STATES TO:

11. consider creating favourable policy frameworks and conditions that help cultural organisations prioritise audience development as they adapt to the on-going digital shift;
12. encourage cultural organisations to embrace audience development as an integral part of their functioning;
13. promote innovative approaches and participative initiatives to audience development, capacity-building and funding;
14. acknowledge the importance of collecting data on digital and potential digital audiences as a tool for policy making and for cultural organisations to provide better services;
15. consider the topic of audience development via digital means when designing a new Council Work Plan for Culture;

INVITES THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION, WITHIN THE SPHERES OF THEIR RESPECTIVE COMPETENCES, TO:

16. encourage collaboration and the exchange of knowledge and best practices between different stakeholders, various sectors and at different levels concerning innovative digital approaches to audience development, including with a view to increasing efficiency and reducing costs;
17. compile EU-wide voluntary guidelines for collecting and managing data on digital audiences for a better and more user-oriented provision of services by cultural organisations and as a contribution to evidence-based policy making. These non-binding guidelines should respect the diversity of cultural organisations, cultural sectors and Member States' traditions. Compliance with data protection rules should be a precondition to any data collection activity;
18. raise awareness among cultural organisations of the opportunities related to innovative and alternative funding models which may have a positive impact on audience development in the cultural and creative sectors;
19. increase the capacity, skills and knowledge of cultural organisations and their audiences to face new digital challenges;
20. acknowledge the importance of taking audience development and the digital shift into account when allocating financial resources;
21. continue focusing on the digitisation of cultural content and development of new technologies for digitisation as a means to provide a more diverse cultural offer and increase the re-use of digital content contributing to various sectors of society;
22. promote interoperability of content and technology in order to encourage a wide access by both cultural organisations and their users;

23. acknowledge the need to respect copyright and related rights and recognise the importance of creators' rights while aiming at the broadest possible access to content;
 24. take advantage of the 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage to promote public access to digital heritage resources and services, including Europeana, and to increase participation in the governance of cultural heritage within all social groups, by making better use of digital means.
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