

# (RE)-ENGAGING DIGITAL AUDIENCES IN THE CULTURAL SECTORS

## IMPROVING AUDIENCE DATA



**VOICES OF CULTURE**

Structured Dialogue between the European Commission and the cultural sector

This report represents the individual contributions of the professionals taking part in the group discussion. The views are not necessarily shared by all.



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# Abbreviation terminology.

**AIO**

Activities,  
Interests,  
and Opinions

**AIT**

Appropriate  
Internet  
Technology

**AR**

Augmented  
Reality

**CCS**

Cultural  
and Creative  
Sectors

**CIGREF**

Association des  
Grandes Entreprises  
et Administrations  
Publiques Françaises

**DSI**

Digital Social  
Innovation

**EU**

European  
Union

**GDPR**

General Data  
Protection  
Regulation

**ICT**

Information  
and  
Communication  
Technologies

**IP**

Intellectual  
Property

**KPI**

Key Performance  
Indicator

**R&D**

Research and  
Development

**SDG**

Sustainable  
Developmental  
Goals

**SEO**

Search Engine  
Optimisation

**SM**

Social Media

**UN**

United Nations

**VR**

Virtual Reality

**VoC**

Voices  
of Culture

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VOICES OF CULTURE REPORT ON DIGITAL AUDIENCES MANAGEMENT.

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## CHAPTER 1.

### COVID-19 recovery, impact on cultural consumption by digital means and the EU's role in assisting cultural organisations.

CCS' perception, understanding, and management of digital audiences; needs and constraints experienced throughout the pandemic; future challenges.

- Acknowledgement of the benefits offered by digital audience management.
- Transition period regarding the digital revolution (no radical shifts within the CCS).
- Lack of digital literacy and data management skills within the CCS.
- Pending questions about how to maximise the potential of digital technologies and data to improve digital audience management?
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- Known inequality in cultural participation at live events risks being replicated in the digital environment.
- Urgent need for support in understanding and applying General Data Protection Regulation.
- Need for cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary cooperation on digital audience data management.
- Need for more accessible/affordable educational programmes on digital audience engagement and digital content management.
- Need for a European values canvas on engaging digital audiences in the CCS.
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## CHAPTER 3.

### Aspects of data collection and management with regard to rebuilding and reaching existing and new audiences via digital means (including a focus on the digitally-deprived).

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- Urgent need for technical and structural support to assist cultural organisations in the digital transition (including specific skills in data collection, cleaning, and analysis). Need for critical reflection on new forms of data-driven cultural supply.
- Digital audience data management should serve cultural organisations' missions above all and must translate into action.
- Need to create incentives for other sectors (IT, ICT, digital management) to collaborate with the CCS.
- Need of further data and empirical evidence on online audience profiles and the positive externalities of digital audience data management.



# Main recommendations to cultural organisations

- View digital as an enabler and an asset rather than a complete substitute for physical culture.
- Ask the following questions: Why do we need data? What can data tell us? What data should we gather and for what purpose? What do we want to know? What are we looking for in the data?
- Keep the social value of culture central in your digital strategy.
- Be findable and visible online.
- Understand how audiences experience online culture content.
- Be familiar with the digital instruments and platforms that your audiences most often use.
- Provide hybrid cultural content and experience to various audiences with different needs.
- Consider what values you can provide to the public outside their region by supplying content and services in several languages and ensuring that any digital user can find them easily.
- Consider offering different digital and physical events, without necessarily combining the two, and find creative ways to involve both audiences.
- Charge digital content but at a lower price than the physical one.
- Include artists' views in your digital business plan.
- Monitor the impact of digital format on content quality.
- Monitor the evolution of your digital environment.
- Be willing to share data.
- Mind carbon footprint (digital sustainability).

# Main recommendations to the policy level

## **Main recommendations for enhancing collaborations:**

- Develop a European online platform with a helpdesk on digital audience management.
- Offer innovative funding for cross-disciplinary cooperation on digital audience data management (multidisciplinary teams between the arts and other sectors).
- Creation of a network on digital audience management through which affiliates could gather and share practical information.

## **Main recommendations for training:**

- Further train local administrators and governments to support the CCS digitally.
- Provide free/accessible/affordable educational programmes on digital audience engagement and digital content management for empowering cultural organisations and local administrations in accessing funding and writing proposals.
- Facilitate access to information on the technical side of digital audiences and data management, including information on the environmental sustainability of different providers and systems.

## **Main legal recommendations:**

- Assist cultural organisations in understanding and applying General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) rules.
- Ensure that privacy regulation is not an obstacle to online audiences' engagement with cultural organisations.
- Ensure that regulations related to territorial barriers and geo-blocking in copyright and IP rights frameworks guarantee the largest dissemination of online cultural content and make it accessible to all EU citizens.
- Further guarantee the legal protection of artists' digital work during the creation and performance phases.

## **Main policy recommendations:**

- Update EU policies to consider the changes that occurred in the cultural landscape since the pandemic outbreak.
- Develop tools and initiatives to enable artists and staffs to become better aware of the legal framework related to digital art production and content.
- Consider the issue of co-ownership of digital content in cultural policies, especially in the event of collaborations within the cultural and creative sectors.

- Guarantee fair pay rates to ensure that artists receive the remuneration they deserve for their digital work.

## **Main recommendations for funding:**

- Encourage and introduce new forms of EU funding at a national level that would assist cultural organisations in meeting the increased digital demand and coping with the new circumstances (e.g. providing financial support for hiring ICT experts and for investing in good quality equipment).
- Make funding calls and information more visible and accessible (local and regional authorities should make this information accessible to a broader range of organisations by promoting it through more channels and sending it directly to cultural organisations).
- Develop a European values canvas on engaging digital audiences in the CCS (values to be considered are accessibility, learning, collaboration, advocacy).



# Introduction.

Five years after the Voices of Culture (VoC) brainstorming meeting on *Audience development via digital means* (2017), where do we stand regarding digital audience management? This call aimed to ask the cultural and creative sectors (CCS) about their experiences in reaching and engaging digital audiences in a challenging sanitary context. The pandemic has intensified the consumption of digital culture. It now compels cultural organisations to offer online and offline supplies to meet the demand of broader audiences with different consumption habits. Therefore, understanding how the CCS perceive and deal with digital audiences appeared a top priority for the European Commission and the VoC team, in line with current EU projects<sup>1</sup>. The discussions mainly focused on lessons learned from lockdown-induced practices to engage existing and new digital audiences and collect and manage digital audience data.

Before introducing the reader to this report, three observations that stood out from this 2021-2022 edition must be highlighted.

- **Participants' profiles:** Despite European countries' excellent number of representativeness, the call experienced a lower participation rate than prior editions. Clearly, the simultaneous reopening of the CCS and the urge to re-offer on-site activities can explain this lower rate. Yet, we believe that the technical nature of the topic may have refrained some participants from taking part in the brainstorming meeting. Several prospective candidates just admitted they did not know much about this topic while expressing their eagerness to learn more about digital audience data management. We hope that the advice and recommendations contained in this report will contribute to filling this gap. The reader will also notice that fewer representatives of the performing arts took part in the discussion this year compared to the heritage sector. The performing arts sector has indeed been one of the most affected by the pandemic, with performers not being allowed to perform live for months. Getting back on stage was the priority of those artists, which may explain their lower rate of participation. The higher response rate of "umbrella" organisations (non-governmental organisations, network associations, research

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Creative Europe (2021-2027); the European Digital Strategy for Cultural Heritage; Connect G.2 – Interactive technologies, Digital for Culture and Education; recommendations for a common European data space for cultural heritage (2021/7953/EU); European Competence Centre for Digital preservation and conservation of cultural heritage; DOORS (digital incubator for Museums); Data Space for Cultural Heritage; Data Space for Tourism; Data Space for Media.

institutions) also contrasts with the lower participation of frontline operators (concert venues, theatres, museums, festivals, art galleries, etc.).

Here again, the reopening of the cultural field in Summer 2021, followed by a new shutdown in Fall/Winter 2021, increased the burden on cultural organisations, constrained to reschedule their plan, comply with ever-shifting social distancing measures, and manage high absenteeism rate. Facing such urgent priorities, it is likely that many of them did not have time to address this VoC call.

- **Existence of a “knowledge gap” in digital audience management within the CCS.** Not all cultural organisations are on the same page regarding digital audience management. We attribute this gap to each organisation’s status and mission with, on the one hand, the larger ones involved in representation and research activities and smaller field operators on the other. The efforts made by the latter to overcome the crisis may explain why developing sustainable digital audience management strategies – in addition to creating new forms of digital content – was perhaps not seen as an immediate priority. **Yet again, differences in human, financial, and logistical resources within the CCS can explain why all cultural organisations do not approach digital audience management equally.** Despite this, the current report offers valuable and complementary insights from many sector representatives.
- **Guidelines vs report.** Delivering “guidelines” in such a short timeframe was perceived as challenging by participants. **Cultural organisations’ status, size, scope, mission, and activities vary greatly, making it almost impossible to provide user-friendly and sufficiently specific guidelines to guarantee greater digital audience data management efficiency.** Drafting guidelines require a longer consulting process in collaboration with different working groups involved in designing, testing, revising, and publishing the final output. Additionally, participants have pointed out the existence of other guidelines on digital tools and online audiences (*see Appendix 4*), calling into question the necessity of reengaging in such work. Yet, the online availability of those tools does not mean that they are used. The multiplication of guidelines is overwhelming for cultural organisations that struggle to identify which ones best fit their mission.

Furthermore other vital insights are discussed that also need to be highlighted in this introduction because they tend to reflect shared realities with CCS.

- **The CCS are still in a transition period regarding the digital era.** While several practitioners know the importance of supplying digital services and managing digital audiences, there is still some way to go before convincing the sector as a whole and optimising these practices. At this stage, the digital strategies employed by practitioners are quite heterogenous, from very basic to more advanced ones. Such a situation contributes to accentuating the digital divide among cultural organisations.
- **Cultural organisations often struggle to maximise the potential of existing technologies for digital audience management.** The distinction between “digital supply” and “digital

# Introduction

audience management,” albeit intertwined, is not as easy to grasp. The use of digital tools aiming to reach existing and new audiences rarely go hand in hand with an efficient digital audience management plan. Similarly, systematic data mining and analysis remain marginal practices among field operators that rarely work with data specialists (via their own Research and Development department or external consultancy). Without fully considering digital audiences’ profiles, needs, and expectations, the sustainability of the digital solutions developed throughout the pandemic can be compromised.

- More alarming, **several concerns discussed five years ago, during prior European initiatives on audience development via digital means<sup>2</sup>, are still raised by participants.** While many organisations are now aware of the importance of digitalisation (especially after a two-year pandemic), several participants have not noticed significant shifts since the 2017 Council conclusions. The level of awareness remains quite low, with limited infrastructure for the sector to embark on the digital transition. Insufficient financial and human resources, a lack of local support, the need for more capacity building and reliable information on data protection and regulation remain vital challenges faced by the CCS. This questions **the efficacy of disseminating existing European directives, reports, and guidelines and their actual impact on the CCS. Language is also perceived as a potential obstacle in accessing these guidelines**, especially for smaller and local organisations where English is not necessarily spoken fluently. How to enhance access to online guidelines at every level and guarantee that all cultural organisations can use these recommendations in their everyday activities are two crucial discussion points of this report.
- **Buzz words such as “phygital” should not be misused or overused.** The pandemic has accelerated the supply of services associated with digital technologies such as live streaming, QR codes, or virtual reality (VR). However, terminology matters in the digital sphere. When applied to the cultural field, the term “phygital” can only be used to describe spaces and terrains, not the means of delivering content (e.g. “hyper-reality environments” in which users, digital and physical features are combined and fully interact)<sup>3</sup>. We may only refer to “hybrid” or “mixed” content when describing the mediation means. In this case, elements do not fully interact within the landscape and remain separable (users remain the preceptors and are incapable of altering the given result)<sup>4</sup>. In this report, the term “hybrid” is favoured.

2. Voices of Culture. Structured Dialogue between the European Commission and the cultural sector. Accessible and Inclusive Culture—Promoting access to culture via digital means: policies and strategies for audience development. Report available on <https://voicesofculture.eu/2019/05/16/audience-development-via-digital-means-2/>; Working Group of Member States experts under the Open Method of Coordination, Promoting access to culture via digital means Policies and strategies for audience development: work plan for culture 2015-2018. Report available on <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/7839cb98-651d-11e7-b2f2-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>; Council conclusions on promoting access to culture via digital means with a focus on audience development. Report available on <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/c05689d3-df1a-11e7-9749-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-%20PDF>

3. See for example <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YJg02ivYzSs>, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TjbtH\\_MxDQI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TjbtH_MxDQI), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cbPRDw5dOFI>.

4. An example may be found in the following link for partially augmented reality content <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b2UgmPzITlI> the following link <https://vimeo.com/45417241?fbclid=IwAR02lcTwB146oX1GxUxPQYN25fX7bWkusFF9BQ4nN3VGQ6VUTIO1ErR-aM> for hybrid reality content. For mixed reality content, use the next source [https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=laser+on+wall+dance+interactive+performance](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=laser+on+wall+dance+interactive+performance).



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**Most importantly, cultural audiences should be viewed as subjects rather than objects. To this end :**

- **The shift towards new forms of data-driven supply needs to be addressed critically.** Cultural organisations are increasingly encouraged to collect and process digital audience data to offer more user-centric services. This practice requires technical skills, knowledge, compliance with fair data ethical rules, and critical views to avoid potential abuses. The unfair exploitation of personal data is considered particularly problematic by the CCS. This needs to be seriously addressed by the EU to prevent data instrumentalisation in the future.
- **Preserving the social value of culture** inherent to on-site events where face-to-face and physical interactions occur is another concern expressed by the CCS. Digital content is no substitute for tangible cultural experiences, and a radical digital switchover is by no means what the sector wants or needs. Negative externalities of online consumption such as “digital fatigue” should not be minimised, calling for a more outstanding balance between digital and physical supply.
- **Digital audience data management is a topic that is intrinsically linked to other vital issues, such as democracy, sustainability, national and supranational legislation (especially regarding the Internet and access to digital devices and platforms), artists’ remuneration, information and communication technologies (ICTs), and marketing.** Some of these topics go beyond the traditional expertise of cultural organisations, generating new sources of information asymmetries for practitioners.

On a more positive note, the brainstorming meeting reveals that the CCS begin to **acknowledge the benefits of digital audience management**. The length of the present report reflects the reflective process participants have engaged in and the extent of the task that has yet to be done. No matter their status or scope of activities, cultural organisations agree on the **necessity of developing this practice to progress towards a more inclusive and democratic culture**. This is all the more necessary in a globalised world where digitalisation will continue its revolution. There is also a clear awareness that the **digital divide has never been so marked, especially for the digitally deprived**. Appropriate solutions and facilities must be developed to accelerate their inclusion and active participation in complex cyberenvironments. The CCS are also **aware of imminent challenges in digital audience renewal**. With Generation Alpha (born in the 2010s) being soon the next dominant audience of the cultural field, digital expectations will be higher than ever before. Yet, **the CCS foresee these digital challenges as opportunities for innovation and quality job creation**. The European Commission and the next Work Plan for Culture should take advantage of cultural organisations’ predisposition to learn more about digital audience management and assist them by providing the human, financial, and logistical support they need.

The present report is structured as follows. The three core chapters summarise the main outputs from the VoC discussion. They are organised from the generic to the specific, without pretending to be exhaustive.

## CHAPTER 1.

**COVID-19 recovery, impact on cultural consumption by digital means and the EU's role in assisting cultural organisations** informs the readers on how the CCS perceive, understand, and manage digital audiences. The needs and constraints cultural organisations have experienced throughout the pandemic, and those they anticipate in the future are discussed.

## CHAPTER 2.

**Digital audiences and the EU's role in supporting the management of digital audiences** further reflects on the notion of digital audiences, current challenges in managing mixed audiences, and strategies to move towards more hybridity. Key issues in digital audience management that the EU should pay attention to are also considered.

## CHAPTER 3.

**Aspects of data collection and management regarding rebuilding and reaching existing and new audiences via digital means (including focusing on the digitally deprived) addresses** the most technical and practical aspects of digital audience data management. It first offers critical thoughts on audience data before providing cultural organisations with concrete tips and advice on collecting and analysing it consistently with their mission.

# Chapter 1.

## **COVID-19 recovery, impact on cultural consumption by digital means and the EU's role in assisting cultural organisations.**

*Writers: Olga Kolokytha & Ingrid Stroom.*

### **Introduction.**

The first section of this chapter offers a brief overview of how the cultural and creative sectors have experienced the sudden move online caused by the pandemic by considering positive and negative externalities. It then outlines the main opportunities, concerns, and challenges that cultural organisations, and frontline practitioners, in particular, have faced and anticipated in the foreseeable future.

### **The cultural sectors' experience of the pandemic and reaction towards online culture – A perspective.**

The pandemic has been a changing factor for cultural organisations, cultural audiences, and the CCS as a whole. COVID-19 has triggered changes instinctively and not necessarily as a deliberate strategy. The supply of digital goods and services has experienced an impressive increase, providing audiences with content that would have remained inaccessible otherwise. Digital cultural events either explicitly created for the digital sphere or streamed online while performed live have proven to work well in engaging audiences. Digital space has allowed the artists to reach wider audiences, often outside of their own country, contributing to accelerating their international careers.

Despite these positive changes, there were negative implications too, including the limited or completely absent fees for performers the uneven procedures for artist remuneration, such as intellectual property (IP) and copyright regulations. Additionally, we need to mention the high costs of digital productions and their coverage by cultural organisations and inequalities in access to good-quality online content for both audiences and creators/performers. After two years of online-dominated life, we have also identified what could be called “digital fatigue.”



The digital transformation of the CCS, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has constrained us to deal with new challenges such as the physical and digital forms of cultural production and legal issues. It has also highlighted new forms of inequalities among organisations. **The cultural sector is remarkably diverse, including organisations with different statuses and sizes,**<sup>4</sup> with each of them facing various challenges. Cultural organisations have learned a lot from the digital shifts experienced throughout the pandemic, and they are willing to keep learning. Audiences ask for more digital content but re-engaging them in a meaningful way is not an easy task.

To address the issue of re-engaging audiences, it is **imperative to define what we mean by digital audiences. Because of different understandings and meanings of the term, agreeing on a standard definition seems necessary to make sure proposals and recommendations serve cultural organisations, including artists, in the best possible way. It is also crucial to reflect on what kind of data we want and need to collect, for digital audience data management may differ from one cultural sector to another.** Cultural organisations have different scopes, aims, and needs, making such reflection necessary to gather the information best to assist their work.

Yet, at this point, despite the progress made over the past months, we are still facing uncertainty, with a series of questions that arise. Among these are: why should cultural institutions urgently move towards digital transformation? How to make recent digital progress sustainable? And to what extent should we continue to offer digital content after the pandemic? To seriously consider digital fatigue is also critical, especially regarding its effects on audiences and their willingness to engage in digital culture.

## **Cultural organisations' opportunities, needs, and constraints regarding digital means and online engagement.**

As mentioned above, there is a wide variety of cultural organisations regarding size, budgets, target groups (professional or non professional), art forms, educational goals, strategies, and differences depending on their geographical location. Despite all these differences, we anticipate the following opportunities, challenges, and constraints:

### **Main opportunities for cultural organisations.**

We believe that digital content and online engagement of audiences offer several opportunities:

- Digital content offers the possibility of **reaching wider and new audiences**. It enables cultural organisations to approach more people remotely, for example, with live-streaming, and reach those who would otherwise not participate in their activities. Digitalisation can also assist them in using or developing tools to survey their audiences. Yet, several important questions are still pending: are digital audiences equal to live audiences? Do they enjoy the same content? What is their social profile? How to involve and engage these audiences? Do we go digital because of an audience out there or want to maintain existing audiences in an increasingly digital and global context? Also, do formats that work for live audiences also work for digital audiences, or must they be modified or created explicitly for the digital context?

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<sup>4</sup> For the size and diversity of the cultural sector see <https://www.rebuilding-europe.eu/>.

- Digital content can enable cultural organisations **to go international**, reaching completely new audiences using new means and new artistic formats. Digital services and art forms allow local cultural organisations to connect with global audiences remotely.
- **Digital content can increase inclusivity and accessibility or the risk of excluding digitally deprived audiences.** In addition, virtual stages can create new, shared and sometimes very private/intimate experiences for and with the audience. Cultural organisations can thus **enhance audience experience and create different experiences** for different audiences with varying needs.
- Digital services can also create **growth opportunities for cultural organisations, opening new markets and creating new values** related to the organisations' principal activities. Yet, how to “digitalise” on-site cultural experiences, generate emotions into a digital experience, and make the digital experience accessible remain open questions. Among those opportunities, we can mention:
  - *New value creation:* engaging audiences digitally enables cultural organisations to offer additional value to existing and new audiences by combining physical and digital supply (e.g. live and online performances) or enhancing a physical space with digital data. The possibility of reaching a wider audience has made us more inclusive, bringing cultural events to people who could not physically attend them. To sustain and expand these initiatives, we recommend exploiting opportunities for new creative processes and artistic formats through participatory digital and hybrid formats in virtual environments and finding new business models and sources of income for digital formats.
  - *Connection with audiences:* we must get to know our audiences better by gathering data and information. To this end, we need to find suitable ways to collect this data and to be able to contact our digital audiences after the events for evaluation purposes.
  - *Quality job creation:* the digital era has made specialists from other sectors more critical to cultural organisations. Therefore, it is essential to create opportunities for experts in digital culture to join cultural organisations, allow cultural organisations to develop their digital skills, and open new avenues for cross-sectorial cooperation.

Despite these opportunities, cultural organisations should be aware of the following:

- **Digital is too often associated with replication.** What should be avoided is the radical transformation of a physical venue into a 100% digital one. For example, an organisation might prioritise an onsite strategy while keeping digital events in support. **Digital should be viewed as an enabler and asset rather than a complete substitute for physical culture.** Developing online audiences should prevail over digitalising the venue or the organisation. At the same time, if digital experience cannot replace or replicate live experiences, both have to be combined with all the human and financial challenges such hybrid services raise.
- **It is vital to understand how audiences experience online culture content.** Physical venues are often used to “control” the setup of a live experience. Digital events are different as we can hardly influence the technical arrangement online. As a result, the digital experience can be quite different for

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the audiences even when watching the same content (e.g. watching from a smartphone vs a high-end home cinema, using a good internet connection vs a shaky one).

- **Providing hybrid cultural content and experience** to various audiences with different needs will be a priority in the future. Yet, mixed events pose challenges to organisations as they are more expensive and require more resources. Points to consider here are:
  - To find creative ways to involve both audiences (e.g. enabling the physical audience see the reactions of the digital audience, and vice-versa).
  - To consider offering different digital and physical events without necessarily combining the two.
  - Since digital events may be more expensive due to the equipment and staff needed for an enjoyable and high-quality online experience, monitoring the impact of this format on content quality is essential.
  - Can the same content meet the requirements of both digital and physical methods of delivery? To what extent does feedback from both digital and physical audiences differ from each other? How can we measure digital audiences? How can we assess the reactions from people who watch digital events later, and how can we measure the engagement of those people?

## Main constraints for cultural organisations.

Here we identify several constraints that cultural organisations are likely to experience when dealing with digital content and audiences.

- How to ensure that digital performances/events are still **in line with the organisation's aims**? Current recommendations insist on what goals to reach, but the lack of measurement tools prevents us from clearly assessing the shifts we have embarked on, and their impact.
- The costs of shifting skills in the CCS.
- The variety of **legal rights** such as copyright and the lack of access to and understanding of information and how it works in a digital environment.
- The **lack of reliable knowledge on ownership and co-ownership issues, geocaching (including both geotagging and geo-blocking), privacy issues, and the “right to be forgotten”** (e.g. to limit the duration for which a digital work is made available online).
- Cultural organisations can be cut off from ongoing live streams because of **poor internet quality**.
- Cultural organisations can often **be at the mercy of leading online platforms**, which do not offer support should complications occur (e.g. during a live stream). At the same time, cultural organisations are competing with unknown algorithms and professional content creators on the same platforms. Because of financial reasons, the risk is choosing a more economical version that cannot be customised according to the audience's needs.
- **Livestream limitations regarding audience research**: it isn't easy to gather data on audiences after streaming digital events if they do not register beforehand.



- **Environmental sustainability**, such as digital carbon footprint and digital waste. There is a lack of information on which programmes or platforms are more sustainable than others. Due to greenwashing, it is often hard to understand whether corporations are doing what they promise.
- **Fair remuneration**, as much content was offered for free during the pandemic.
- **Digital events cost the same as physical events, if not more.** Yet, their income is not the same. There is currently a lack of funding for organising digital events.
- **Digital offers can also be exclusive**, especially for people who do not have a proper Internet connection/equipment or do not want or cannot use specific programmes.
- **Lack of financial as well as human resources.**

## Most urgent needs for cultural organisations.

To seize the opportunities mentioned above and tackle the challenges ahead, the CCS need the following:

- There is a **need for specialists from other areas related to digital**, such as experts in digital tools, ICTs (information and communication technologies), digital marketing and management. There is also a need for new funding models to assist cultural organisations in developing new tools and programmes and acquiring new equipment to cope with growing digital demand. In addition to these, **the CCS call for more capacity building and staff training in digital technologies and data management.** We also want to stress the need for information on existing tools with robust evaluations, which will enable cultural organisations to choose which approaches are suitable and valuable to them according to their needs and audiences. Benefiting from broadcasters' expertise and support is also needed to assist practitioners in the digital transition. **Our recommendation for governments is to offer innovative funding for multidisciplinary teams between the arts and other sectors.**
- It is essential **to train local administrators to support the CCS digitally.** Decision-makers in charge of the arts and culture do not necessarily know how to provide adequate and meaningful support to the sector, particularly evidenced throughout the pandemic.
- Current **legal frameworks should be reflected upon** to become more flexible regarding geo-blocking regulations, music licensing, and fair remuneration of artists for digital performances, etc.
- Regarding technical requirements, a **high-quality Internet connection is necessary** to cope with the increased complexity and pace of digital productions and ensure an enjoyable digital experience.
- The need to connect with and understand your audiences is imperative. To achieve that, you need to **gather reliable data and find mechanisms for registration** that would enable you to contact your audiences at a later stage (e.g. using free event registration software).
- Next to understanding your audiences and making your content accessible, you also need **to give voice to and understand the artists.** They need to be listened to and provided with the necessary support and tools to produce the highest quality digital artwork. They can also assist cultural organisations in finding creative ways to deal with digital tools.

## MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS.

### 1. Develop a clear digital strategy.

- Ask yourself **how to reach different target groups, communicate efficiently with your audiences, and create new digital content** regularly (as content is short lived in the digital world).
- **Explore digital possibilities and what digital services are relevant for your organisation** (try not to replicate physical formats with digital formats for they differ from each other). What works in a physical environment does not necessarily work in a digital one).
- **Welcome new roles** and positions within your organisation, such as digital community managers and content creators.

### 2. Expand your traditional audiences.

- **Try to reach various types of audiences.** Create new materials, new brochures, and develop a new communication plan with specific aims, goals, and tools to achieve them.
- **Provide digital means of communication through software** (e.g. chatbot, a software application used to conduct an on-line chat on websites; virtual messaging platforms linked to social channels [e.g. Messenger/WhatsApp]).
- **Find tools that can help you analyse audiences** as this enables you to identify new target groups and what comes with them.

### 3. Rethink your supply.

- **Adapt your offer to different target groups** (e.g. using a Business Model Canvas available online).
- **Share more diverse content in addition to your traditional services** and digital content that enhances and supports the live experience.
- Be mindful of both scope and resources. Make **sure your activities are aligned with your organisation's scope and resources.**
- **Interact with artists and collectives** who are not on your "regular list" and discuss new formats with them.
- **Experiment and innovate in production and working mode, explore and invite specialists from outside the organisation** to contribute to this process and do not be afraid to use new skills and new forms of specialisation to create unique content.
- **Create participatory born-digital formats on virtual stages** to connect closely with your audiences.

### 4. Adjust your business model.

- **Seek alternative business models and financing formats and be creative in pricing for different categories of events**, such as live performances, 2D experience online, or 3D-VR (virtual reality) interactions.





- Seek **new online ways to involve audiences in funding your organisation** (e.g. crowdfunding, volunteering schemes).
- **Identify new ways of funding to attract new skills and create new digital content.**
- **Rethink your remuneration framework** (e.g. introduce new systems and concepts similar to Creative Commons for the arts).

#### **5. Ask for assistance.**

- **Seek help and advice from existing platforms or artistic consultancy by digital art collectives** for sharing digital content.
- **Reach out to other organisations** (e.g. regional authorities for financing and synergies).

### **Initiatives to assist cultural organisations in dealing with new challenges in digital audience management (local, national, EU levels).**

To re-engage audiences, we propose initiatives and measures that would assist cultural organisations in tackling the new challenges posed by digital audience management.

- **Updating EU policies** is imperative to embrace the changes in the cultural landscape after the pandemic. A specific point regarding the digital transformation that we find essential entails changing the guidelines for equipment purchase. Having to "write it off" over three years is not practical and makes it difficult for those who use partial funding for equipment from national sources that must often be fully "written off" in the year of purchase.
- It is essential to **continue to improve copyright and IP rights frameworks**, especially **regarding territorial barriers and geo-blocking**. For example, **obtaining copyright and music licenses** from major publishing companies is challenging, especially for small organisations. Still, at the same time, it is crucial for the production of any digital content. EU directives need to be created to **protect artists' work during the creation and performance phases. In the event of co-productions, policies for co-ownership** should also be developed, which would **facilitate the development of synergies and collaborations** between cultural organisations when creating and performing digital content. Additionally, **fair pay rates** must be set to ensure artists receive the remuneration they deserve for their digital work (see the [Voices of Culture 2021 report](#)).
- **New forms of EU funding** are needed to help cultural organisations cope with the new circumstances (e.g. providing **financial support for hiring ICT experts** who can be very expensive and invest in good quality equipment). Specific calls can be developed among existing EU funding programmes to foster digital transformation.
- **Funding calls and information need to be more visible and accessible.** Local and regional authorities would allow the information to be accessible to a broader range of organisations by



promoting them through more channels and sending them directly to cultural organisations. For this purpose, developing a contact list through which the information can be disseminated is essential to ensure that most stakeholders can be reached.

- In addition to that, **the EU should facilitate access to information on the technical side of digital audiences and data management, including information on the environmental sustainability of different providers and systems.** We recommend creating a network through which it would be possible to share practical information. This would be particularly important for smaller organisations which, unlike larger cultural organisations, do not necessarily have the resources and capacity to access and process this information.
- **Encourage and introduce new forms of funding at a national level** that would assist cultural organisations in meeting the increased digital demand, and provide **free, affordable, or funded training opportunities for empowering cultural organisations and local administrations in accessing funding and writing proposals.**
- In connection to the latter point, we should note a **lack of knowledge among cultural organisations regarding legal rights in the digital world.** Tools and initiatives should be developed to enable artists and staff to become better aware of the legal framework related to digital art production and content. **Privacy regulations should be (re)considered to facilitate the involvement and engagement of audiences with cultural organisations.** Last but not least, organisations have to start working on offering more paid digital content to minimise the availability of good quality free content.

## EXAMPLES OF EXISTING FUNDING.

In addition to several programs such as Creative Europe and Horizon Europe, some **European Union funds** can be used to support the development of digital projects, such as the **MusicAIRE project** (funded by Music Moves Europe Funds and coordinated by Inova+), the **European Music Council**, which is predicted to open calls for applications in early 2022, or the Horizon Europe funds. However, some funds are too small or require significant financial shares that cultural organisations cannot always afford. Since COVID-19 has dramatically impacted cultural organisations, it is crucial to make this funding and support accessible to enable the CCS to move forward in the digital transformation and develop new solutions without adding too much burden on already highly pressured staff.

In some countries, more local **funding opportunities** are also available. One example is the German programme **NeustartKultur**. In Flanders, innovative partnerships of cultural organisations or artists have access to multidisciplinary teams. In France, the Observatoire des Politiques culturelles offers **training for cultural practitioners**. Additionally, Nordic Culture Fund has **Globus and Puls programmes** that support developing new audiences and encourage new projects in the Nordic region but also beyond. Some organisations, such as the International network for contemporary performing arts (IETM), suggest the innovation offered by a Business Model Canvas to keep pathways to different stakeholders (audiences, staff, informal or active supporters). This "customer-oriented" method, focused on customer needs, is an intelligent strategy to understand your audiences' needs.

## **Best strategies to make EU guidelines available to the most significant number of cultural organisations.**

This section addresses the following questions: how to secure that all stakeholders benefit from the added value of EU guidelines on digital audience management? How to make these guidelines and research outputs easily accessible and implementable? What is the role of the EU's networks and platforms as facilitators and aggregators of digital audience data (collection, management and sharing)?

- **Standardization and simplification** (through visualisations or audio-visual files) is essential. These formats can foster the diffusion and integration process. Using a common, simple language (by avoiding excessive jargon terminology) is also needed.
- **Language barriers** pose a problem for creating a single platform available to all organisations. We believe it is vital to eliminate language barriers for national, local organisations and practitioners and EU jargon to make proposals understandable by as many stakeholders as possible.
- We should also **involve European networks and practitioners and encourage them to translate the guidelines for their sector**. Another option is to offer training to artists and practitioners to make sure they can access EU guidelines and get involved in their dissemination. Digital managers should also train the CCS to understand and use the guidelines, handle them, and ensure proper implementation.
- The EU abounds of creative ideas to improve digital audience management, but these **outputs do not always filter down to local organisations**. There is, therefore, a need to reflect on how to improve the current situation. This could include, for example, organising more webinars or presenting the guidelines at conferences and across networks to disseminate lessons and good practice examples. Digital managers already mentioned above could also contribute to that goal.
- It is imperative to **respect individual creativity and organisations' strategies**. Cultural organisations could benefit from existing EU programmes such as Erasmus+ and be creative in seeking appropriate solutions. Specialised EU funding should also be introduced to provide valuable tools to assist cultural organisations.

## MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS.

- 1. Translate relevant EU texts into all European languages** by providing resources (funding or personnel) for this task. Translators should work alongside field experts as many translators do not know nor understand cultural jargon. This would help avoid translation issues that do not make sense to practitioners.
- 2. Provide executive summaries** in languages accessible by as many stakeholders as possible without using EU jargon.
- 3. Arrange consultations on vocabulary** in collaboration with network organisations.
- 4. Host a series of EU events to present the guidelines** and explain their relevancy and reasoning (using concrete examples) to CCS stakeholders. Such events could be held online or live-streamed but could also be available on-demand and shared through cultural organisations, networks, and EU platforms to ensure as much visibility as possible.

## CHAPTER 1 - MAIN TAKEAWAYS.

- **Acknowledgement of the benefits offered by digital audience management.**
- **Transition period regarding the digital revolution.**
- **Lack of digital literacy and data management skills among the CCS.**
- **Pending questions about maximising the potential of digital technologies and data to improve digital audience management.**
- **Need to adapt in the context of a constantly changing digital technology capability.**
- **Need to reflect on how to preserve the social value of culture and avoid combat digital fatigue.**
- **Need to update EU regulations (intellectual property, synergies) and provide new frameworks, funding opportunities, and sustainable business models for managing digital cultural content and audiences.**
- **Need to enhance the dissemination of existing EU official documents on digital audiences, tools, and regulations.**



# Chapter 2.

## **Digital audience management and a supportive role for the EU.**

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### **Introduction.**

When engaging the digital transformation of the cultural and creative sectors, one should consider the digital cultural offer that organisations provide (supply) and the audiences that look for this offer, their needs, and preferences (demand). This part of the report addresses the issue of digital audiences, their preferences in terms of digital interactions, some practices cultural organisations can engage in for improving online interactions, and topics that the EU can address to support the CCS in the digital transition.

### **Digital audiences.**

What do “digital audiences” mean remains subject to various interpretations. Applying terms from the business sector to the cultural sector without critical views can be problematic, especially as the latter refers to “audiences” as “consumers”, i.e. passive receivers. It is however crucial to consider audiences as subjects, not objects, and to involve them in the audience “management” process. What the CCS need is a common, harmonised language that can be used within and across organisations to guarantee that everybody is on the same page. The notion of “co-creator” should also be central in the definition.

Through the years, the digital space has been organised and reorganised by many different players -individuals, organisations, companies, and governments, with some rising as the leaders in specific areas: search, social media, video content, etc. (e.g. Google, Facebook, YouTube). Initially, the digital space was viewed as a liberating space, providing freedom of access, speech, and information. Although it still provides these values, it is mainly used for commercial purposes. This limits the impact cultural organisations, significantly smaller non-profit ones, can have on digital audiences. To increase their impact online, cultural organisations have to understand the needs and preferences of their (potential) audiences. We discuss below several aspects to be considered when engaging with digital audiences.

## Chapter 2.

### The importance of empathy and findability.

Organisations have to keep in mind that their (potential) audiences occupy the digital space with primary purposes other than engaging with cultural content. They often search for solutions to a specific problem, entertainment, work, and education. Most of these purposes are integrated into social activities. Cultural organisations must provide services or content tangential to those primary purposes to attract digital audiences. **Therefore, findability (e.g. the ease with which information can be found inside and outside a website)** is of prime importance. Here are several recommendations.

- To better understand their (potential) audiences and what drives their digital presence, organisations can use the **Persona Canvas Task**. By empathising with a given person, they can better assess building stronger connections with new and established audiences. Other approaches such as **Human-Centred Design** are also appropriate.
- To be easily findable, organisations need to be familiar with the digital instruments and platforms that their audiences most often use. They need to know how to use them and how to optimise their content in a way that makes it easy to find (this includes **SEO – Search Engine Optimization**). Unlike the town square, the digital space is more and more personalised, and it becomes harder for its users to “stumble” into new “spaces” unrelated to something they have already shown interest in. Once findability is ensured, organisations have to provide specific engagement with audiences (see next part).



### PERSONA CANVAS TASK.

<https://voicesofculture.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/apendix-1.pdf>

### Access without borders.

Thanks to digital means, any organisation has the potential to reach audiences beyond its physical reach. As evoked in Chapter 1, digitally accessible content can be a good solution not only for those living at a distance geographically but also for other target groups who would not be physically able to access the content (parents with small children, people with disabilities who cannot leave their home, etc.). To capitalise on this potential, organisations need to consider what values they can provide to the public outside their region by supplying content and services in several languages and ensuring that any digital user can find them easily.

### Willingness to engage with culture in the digital environment.

Digital space users engage in many activities online. This raises the question of their willingness to engage with digital cultural content. Several studies from the past couple of years aimed to answer this question.

A survey of cultural audiences in Spain preceding the COVID-19 pandemic (2018–2019) showed that most public did not attend digital cultural spaces or events. It showcased **a strong correlation between the lack of attendance at physical cultural events and digital ones**. According to the research, 85% of the participants did not use virtual cultural heritage-related content in the previous year. Among them, 46% did not attend cultural heritage sites (such as museums, galleries, exhibitions, archives, etc.) in the past year (See Table 1).

Physical visits	Virtual visits							Total
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	
0	6,090	179	61	37	10	9	12	6,398
1	1,918	156	57	26	7	5	8	2,177
2	1,704	199	121	50	7	5	6	2,092
3	1,409	201	93	47	22	9	14	1,795
4	1,073	216	79	59	22	16	10	1,475
5	702	171	62	48	17	27	25	1,052
6	284	72	28	19	8	10	45	466
Total	13,180	1,194	501	286	93	81	120	15,455

Table 1: Number of different heritage institutions accessed physically and virtually by participants in the previous year.  
[Note: Own elaboration from the data of the Survey on Cultural Habits and Practices in Spain (2018 – 2019)]

In 2018, 9% of France-based residents declared that they had visited a virtual exhibition or museum during the year, compared with 12% during the first lockdown (Lombardo and Jonchery, 2020). **Attendees who engaged in this activity were more likely elderly and people with higher education, which contrasts with the representation of young and geek visitors**. This concludes that organisations' digital capabilities **are not enough to engage people in online cultural activities, at least on institutional websites**. It can be deduced that in situ visitors accessed online websites during the lockdown, while audiences who are considered "digital experts" visit social networks or other places to discuss and share cultural contents outside the institutional framework.

Another research conducted in Bulgaria during the period of complete lockdown also confirms the trend that active audiences (people who attend physical, cultural events more than once a month) become more active online, while passive audiences (people who visit an event or cultural institution physically less than once a month) are even less engaged with digital culture (See Figure 1) (Koleva and Berbenkova, 2021).



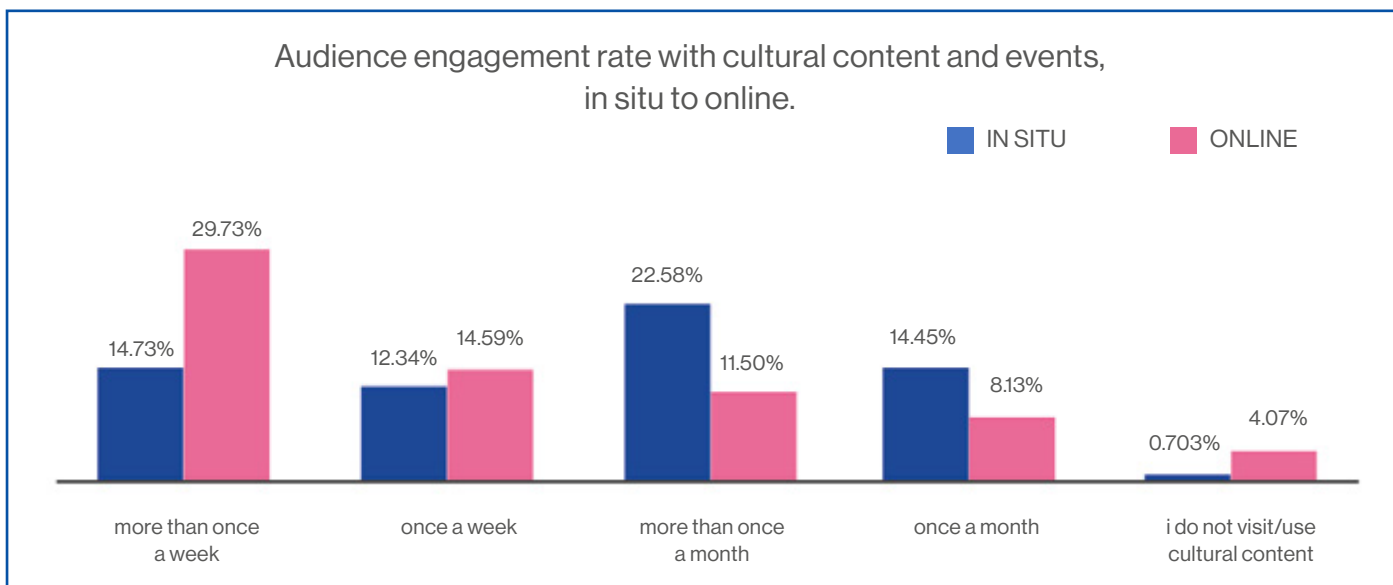


Figure 1: Audience engagement rate with cultural content and events, in situ and online (Koleva and Berbenkova, 2021).

These findings confirm an important group of live attendants who already use virtual visits to complement their demands. The data raises the question of **inequality in cultural participation and the dangers of it being replicated in the digital environment**. To engage all users and ensure cultural democracy, cultural operators must consider different types of engagement with their (potential) audiences.

### **Engaging digital audiences – deepening connections, democratising culture.**

One might say that the key to a successful digital presence for cultural organisations is audience engagement. It is not enough for an organisation to be “present” online and share the archival footage from their activities to sustain meaningful relationships with audiences and overcome the digital divide. There is a need to offer alternatives: new content and services developed specifically for the digital environment. Cultural organisations can adopt an interactive approach in dialogue with their content and services (such as museum collections, exhibitions, performances) (Zourou and Pellegrini, 2021).

### **Some practices to engage digital audiences.**

#### **Crowdsourcing.**

New ways of collaboration between cultural institutions and their public arise to connect digital audiences with cultural heritage. One of the most collaborative and highly involving practices is crowdsourcing. Crowdsourcing is a practice that encourages multiple individual interpretations of digital cultural content and facilitates a unique connection between the collections and a network of individuals who are diffusing cultural content across the Web. Each crowdsourcing project has its characteristics by being either contributory (where individuals contribute with data to a project designed by an organisation), collaborative (the public filters and analyses data, but the organisation still leads the project), or co-creative (where audiences and organisations have equal roles and involvement in the project’s design). According to a thought-provoking article based on the research

project “Modelling Crowdsourcing for Cultural Heritage,” the design of a crowdsourcing project plays a crucial role in engaging audiences and capturing their interest. A practical design approach includes scaffolding beginner’s tasks that gradually become more demanding and require higher involvement. Other success factors include the season of participation that is higher on holiday seasons, and effective marketing activities before the project’s launch. Mia Ridge (2013) stated that cultural institutions have a unique chance to prompt their audiences to connect with their exhibits and add value by outsourcing tasks such as tagging, transcription, collection, geo-location, classification, and co-curation of heritage collections. To take advantage of the “wisdom of the crowds”, cultural institutions need to motivate their audiences by involving them in “altruistic tasks” wherein challenges and individual skills are carefully matched during entertaining and joint activities.

### **Digital access.**

Audience development by using digital technology can also mean creating digital experiences that provide users with access to specific content. An example is [The Commons](#), launched on the Flickr photo-sharing site in 2008. Since then, many institutions have opened their collections to the public allowing users to interact, comment, share and discuss their content.

### **Co-creation.**

Co-creation is a process known in the CCS as participatory arts through media. It is how cultural operators work together with their audiences to create content and experiences. This approach accepts the evolution of audiences from passive recipients into active participants. It is beneficial in attracting and engaging with the public digitally. Co-creation is useful when it provides “experiential interactions and encounters which customers perceive as helping them utilise their resources” (Payne et al., 2008 in Walmsley, 2013). Understanding the audiences’ value-creating process is vital in co-creation for a meaningful experience. This type of engagement provides value to both cultural operators and audiences. For the audiences, it allows self-expression, self-realisation, enhanced socialisation, confidence, and aesthetic insights, together with improved creative thinking, communication, and problem-solving skills. For cultural operators, it maximises the lifetime value of desirable audience groups, fulfils the artistic mission, and develops “artistic exchange relationships” (various in Walmsley, 2013).

### **Direct participation.**

This practice relates to experiences that require direct participation from audiences. Those could be online lectures and discussions, or virtual tours led by a guide where audiences can directly connect with the cultural operator and exchange questions and thoughts. The value of this experience in the digital realm lies in the human connection and educational aspects it provides.



GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES IN EACH  
OF THESE TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT.

<https://voicesofculture.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/appendix-2.pdf>

## Online consumers and behaviours.

Online consumers of culture are generally not those who consume offline culture. Online audiences tend to be quite interactive, engaged, and loyal. Several organisations have identified more specific consumption patterns revealing that online audiences differ from physical ones.

### Example 1.

The National Library of France surveyed online visitors. The library is originally designed for researchers who use its content in the physical space. Online participants are mostly amateurs who want to retrace their genealogy or conduct other types of research. They are usually older and amateur researchers, which suggests that users can have different motivations online. The question that inevitably arises is: how to attract these people into the physical space?

### Example 2.

Theatres that are part of the European Theatre Convention (ETC) experienced a similar situation. According to ETC representatives, some theatres have evidence that indicates that they are attracting new audiences, although they do not know why these new audiences are participating in their events. Here, the question is: is there a difference in attracting new audiences with products that are digitally distributed vs products that are digitally produced? Other examples show that older audiences showed interest in “static” streamed performances, while younger audiences were much more engaged with interactive events.

### Example 3.

The Youth Orchestra Association has examined its audiences through tools and data provided by external platforms, such as YouTube. Those platforms provide basic information, but is it really enough? The way users utilise those platforms can also diverge from their original purpose (e.g. shared accounts for subscription-based platforms such as Netflix and Spotify). The question also applies to people who share devices, especially in a family setting where children/teenagers might not have their own devices. Additionally, when organisations collaborate with “influencers” who distribute content through their channels, they cannot use the data in the same way as they could use it from their own channels.



### **Useful tools for organisations to engage digitally with audiences.**

This section provides valuable tools and resources that cultural organisations can exploit to engage with their digital audiences better.

#### **Professional services and training.**

Cultural organisations rarely work with people with specific knowledge and skills in data analysis or digital community management. In some cases, organisations cannot afford to employ people with these skills or do not need their services full time. In this situation, it is beneficial to consider training or professional services. There is a diverse pool of professionals in every country who offer consulting services in digital communication. For cultural organisations, it is vital to find a provider (or partner) who can relate to all: the digital environment, data analysis, and the values of the cultural sector. When fulfilling the need for such tasks, cultural operators can consider available funding that could bear the costs of these services.

- A professional organisation that provides resources related to data analysis and the cultural sphere is the **Association for Cultural Economics International (ACEI)**. It is a society of academics, practitioners, industry professionals, and policymakers that promotes scholarly investigation of the economics of the arts and cultural activities. Members of the association are specialists from around the globe, which means that an organisation can easily find a professional from their country in their lists.
- Non-profit organisations can **involve volunteers** in these activities. Often, professionals from diverse backgrounds look for opportunities to contribute to a cause with their skills. This can be a budget-free way for small organisations to test the benefits of digital activities and know their audiences through data.
- **Culture and creativity**, a web resource for professionals of the CCS, offers free online courses for cultural professionals, among which is a course dedicated to digital communication. All courses can be found here: <https://www.culturepartnership.eu/en/publishing/online-learning>.

#### **Creative tools.**

Many creative and managerial tools can be used today to develop engaging digital content. Some of these tools are free or offer plans for smaller budgets. Another advantage of some of these tools is the user-friendly format that allows people with little to no experience or knowledge to use them. Here is a selection of valuable resources:

- **Europeana** – a list of services and tools for professionals in the cultural heritage sector.
- **BnF** – an app that allows users to integrate cultural heritage and comics.
- A toolkit from the ERASMUS+ project **“European Stories”** with tools for design, geolocation mapping, video, sound editing, and others.
- **Radio Aporee project** – provides a platform for sound cartography where users can upload sounds from different locations.
- **Open Street Map** – a tool where users (including cultural professionals) can upload and update locations.

### **Environment and collaboration with other digital practitioners.**

Apart from accessibility without borders, the digital realm provides the opportunity for audiences to engage with cultural content outside of cultural spaces (as it is possible to hear music in a bar and not only in a concert venue). Organisations have to interact and “play” with digital environments by using social networks, platforms, content creators (such as video and others), opinion leaders (influencers), etc. After engaging audiences through “affiliate” practitioners, cultural organisations should be offered the possibility to follow up on the new audiences without the mediation of the “affiliate” practitioners.

### **Providing space for coping with digital fatigue.**

Since the digital space is used for many activities, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic, more people have been experiencing digital fatigue. **Digital fatigue is the physical and mental exhaustion from spending time in digital meetings and events, staying in front of a screen.** Cultural organisations can work towards coping with digital fatigue by offering experiences that do not require more screen time or interaction. Counterintuitive to all digital trends, organisations must think more in “analogue” terms. This does not mean not providing digital experiences but rather providing additional opportunities that do not require screen time or engagement only. This could involve audio content that can be listened to away from the screen or ideas for activities that a person can do by themselves without using a screen. Crowdsourcing and co-creation experiences can provide such opportunities. In Annex 3, the good practice example from “Malle-malle” theatre in Bulgaria combines the digital offer with an experience away from the screen.

### **The shift towards hybridity – challenges in managing audiences.**

Hybridity has become a ubiquitous term in the past couple of years. Many events have taken a hybrid form, with society adjusting to a more “flexible” way of life. What does hybridity mean in terms of cultural experiences?

#### **Hybrid events: definition**

The most commonly used term is hybrid events or experiences. The University of London defines hybrid events as follows: **“Hybrid events are a type of organised events that combines both physical and digital participation experiences. A hybrid event is delivered as usual, with a portion of attendees physically present and the other portion viewing and participating remotely. The underlying principle of a hybrid event is for both digital and physical participants to have identical experiences in terms of quality, interaction, viewing, and access.”** (University of London Venues Blog, 2020). Most definitions and advice available for hybrid events are related to conferences and seminars. For cultural events that do not follow this format, the execution of hybrid events or experiences is up to the organisers’ needs and capabilities.

#### **Hybrid events and experiences for arts and culture**

The need to produce hybrid experiences may not always be clear to cultural operators. With the constant shift between lockdowns and loosening measures, it might feel daunting to commit to

investing in this area. However, as mentioned above, using the digital environment increases the potential reach of any organisation. In a study from Bulgaria, 54.98% of respondents answered that the primary motivation for attending online cultural events concerns “the opportunity to participate in events that are otherwise unavailable” (Koleva and Berbenkova, 2021). Additionally, 71.6% of the respondents shared that they intend to continue attending online cultural events after the state of emergency imposed in the country due to COVID-19 ends (idem, 2021). Together with practices from other sectors such as home working and digital professional events (conferences and seminars), these attitudes showcase **that the need for a digital presence that actively engages the public is more than a trend**. This, however, does not mean that physical attendance will stop. There are different benefits for a visitor in the physical and digital experiences. When physically attending, individuals engage with all their senses and have a better chance of socialising and expressing themselves. Although technology is trying to provide immersive experiences through virtual reality (VR), this is not yet the case with digital experience. Essential aspects that cultural organisations should consider when hosting hybrid events are cultural participation, sustainability, and partnerships.

### Cultural democracy

It is a wide belief that the simple act of digitising cultural content and making it accessible online is democratising culture. However, this is not inherently the case, and digital cultural experiences are often accessed mainly by people who already engage with ‘in situ’ culture. Digital audience engagement is something more than a management issue. It involves a complex interplay between cultural democratisation, social change, and cultural democracy. None of these domains is mutually exclusive but when set in creative tension with each other, they can give expression to a human and cultural rights approach which helps rejuvenate the public value of culture. Therefore, how can digital content be steered towards deeper cultural participation? As stated above, one way to do so is to make your organisation easily findable online. Since the Internet runs on more and more commercial terms, cultural organisations must become findable and accessible to potential audiences. Providing content that relates to these audiences’ needs and preferences can be one way to achieve a more democratic reach. Another way to do so is through education, by providing resources for people with limited knowledge and skills to work in the digital space. This can include sessions with potential audiences before the online part of the event, where they test the functionality of the digital space and where they can ask questions related to the digital experience. These could also take the form of pre-recorded tutorials that potential visitors can use independently. An essential aspect of this activity would be to reach these audiences wherever they are. Since they may not be digitally inclined, this would be in the physical space. Working with partnering organisations such as schools, adult learning centres, or retiree clubs would make the process more feasible.

### Sustainability

Regarding hybrid events, sustainability concerns mostly digital carbon footprint vs in situ events, organisations’ cost efficiency, and audiences’ cost efficiency.

## Chapter 2.

- **Environmental sustainability:** according to current estimations, a digital event that attracts a broad audience has a lower carbon footprint than a live event, which often requires (international) travels for the event organisers, the participants, and the audiences. Yet, the carbon footprint of a digital event is still far from 0 and can be significant. Additionally, video streaming is one of the activities with higher carbon output (Obringer et al., 2021). However, its lower impact can be an attractive option for large or small venues hosting events with potentially larger audiences.
- **Cost efficiency for organisations:** hybrid experiences can provide a cost-efficient solution for organisations in certain situations. On the one hand, they can provide a cheaper option to host significantly more people during their events. On the other hand, the digital presentation of content allows showcasing more in less space. In these cases, the hybridity of the experience relates to virtual visitors and on-site visitors, who can use technology to access content that is not available in the physical space. This is specifically true for exhibitions and collections of museums and galleries that often have artefacts hidden from audiences for years because of a lack of space and opportunities to be displayed publicly. Providing a partly digital experience can add value to visitors (virtual or in situ) and help organisations make the public more aware of their collections.
- **Cost efficiency for audiences:** hybrid cultural experiences can also provide an opportunity for audiences to experience culture at lower costs. Lower costs can mean less money, but also less time invested. The option to take part digitally in a cultural experience can allow people to save on time and travel as well as on all other costs that accompany the cultural experience. This aspect is especially important in terms of democratisation of culture but can have economic consequences for the geographical area where the physical venue is located. To make the digital aspect of a hybrid experience more accessible, organisations have to supply it at a lower price than the physical one, or even for free. Since 2020 many organisations are offering free-of-charge digital experiences which seem to meet the audiences' expectations. If the digital experience is paid, the challenge is to combine a cost and participation value proposition that convinces an audience.
- **Partnerships:** this aspect relates to both participation in culture and sustainability. It entails interdisciplinary partnerships between cultural organisations and other cultural operators, educational institutions, and social and professional groups. Through partnerships with such organisations, cultural operators can reach more potential audiences more efficiently. Partnerships with technology companies (from the broader IT industry or the gaming, film, and TV industries) can help provide a sustainable, high-quality experience in the digital environment. Small NGOs might have an option to find an IT company with social responsibility programmes that could provide services at lower costs or for free. When looking for a partner, make sure that the values of both organisations match or complement each other.

### Key issues in digital audience management that the EU should consider.

This section highlights some aspects that the EU should consider supporting the CCS at the policy level. These topics require further discussion and investigation to determine their specific approach and scale. In line with the suggestions made in Chapter 1, the EU can support cultural organisations in several aspects related to engagement with digital audiences through existing and new programs and instruments:



- 1. Cultural organisations need support in understanding and applying [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#) rules.** While the rules are already defined and implemented, many small to medium-size organisations from the CCS do not have the means to apply them. Very often, the artists and creators themselves do not know what their own copyrights are. Similarly, practitioners do not always know what licenses they must obtain and how. In some sectors, it can also be challenging to know who is the actual author and who should be contacted to get the license. Copyright therefore turns into something that people just hope to get away with, which is dramatic for the artists. Education on the subject is also led by private companies whose fees are often too high for cultural professionals to afford. If there are any public resources, they are not easily findable or accessible to non-experts in privacy law. Essentially, the CCS depend on interactions with and knowledge of their audiences, and this knowledge has become all the more necessary in the digital environment. Therefore, it is crucial for small- and medium-size organisations and artists to understand the level at which they can operate and use audience data and what potential breaches they should look out for. **Understanding the legal framework, together with a protocol for small and medium organisations and open access data, are topics to be explored.**
- 2. Specific support for intersectoral and interdisciplinary cooperation** is needed to enhance sustainability. This support could be financed through already existing tools such as **ERASMUS+**, **Creative Europe**, and others not systematically dedicated to the CCS (e.g. Interreg programmes for cooperation). **Organisations from the ICT industry and other industries need to be incentivised to collaborate with CCS players**, not only the other way around.
- 3. Support for educational programmes on digital audience engagement and content management is needed.** The main question is how to engage audiences and preserve their rights (e.g. the right to stay anonymous or when participating in co-creation, intellectual property rights (IPR)). The European IP Desk can be involved with a more focused programme on the CCS for complex intellectual property rights cases.
- 4. According to the topics discussed in this paper, the EU could adopt a series of values related to engaging digital audiences in the CCS.** Indicative values could be:
  - *Accessibility:* Provide cultural stakeholders equality, inclusion, and fair access to digital audience resources.
  - *Learning:* Knowledge building and sharing by promoting information, education through collaborative learning, sharing best practices through varied learning opportunities for organisations and their audiences.
  - *Collaboration:* Global reach and networks by developing connections between institutions around the EU networks, and creating collaborations with organisations, individuals, institutions that share the same vision (e.g. supporting city museums of all European capitals).
  - *Advocacy:* promoting and empowering the cultural sector to engage with new digital audiences.

Based on these values, the EU could create **an online platform with a helpdesk and a Social Media (SM) platform** as an extra tool to support its work and provide access to a series of advice and tools.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A EU ONLINE PLATFORM AND HELPDESK

#### **Platform designers and developers should consider the following:**

- To map the needs of prospective users to structure the platform's content according to different layers, depending on users' interests or experiences.
- The platform should be easily findable and accessible to all cultural organisations (findability).
- Pay attention to users' experience and involve users in the platform design and technical development.
- The materials should be interactive (workshops, seminars, webinars instead of PDFs, chatbots) with engaging social media and regular posts and updates.
- Provide well-curated and levelled content, while avoiding too much information which, in combination with the digital fatigue, can be overwhelming (keep it simple).
- The platform could take the form of a unified, crowdsourced tool with a decision tree (i.e. a platform where stakeholders could bring and share their knowledge, with an integrated evaluation/quality mechanism that could allow only certified or trusted content to be published). It could also be designed as a structured knowledge database with accessible open and reusable resources with a co-design system for future users.
- The helpdesk should be the central point of contact.
- The platform should grant cultural stakeholders access to depositories to share data, findings, and know-how in a fair manner.

#### **In terms of content, the platform should take into account the following:**

- An introduction to what we mean by online audience development and engagement.
- How to do an online audience audit.
- Advice on how to approach digital distribution.
- Advantages and disadvantages of leading social media platforms.
- Dos and Don'ts for creating great social media content.
- How to provide your content in the best way through Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), social media algorithms, and seeding strategies.
- Guidance on how to measure success in a meaningful way.
- To develop a digital token program, especially for young people (e.g. similar to the voucher provided to the 18 to 20 years old to travel by train across Europe). This digital token will combine limited-time free access to digital cultural content and a discount for physical visits.
- Community training programs for the digitally deprived public to enable them in working with digital technology.

## CHAPTER 2 - MAIN TAKEAWAYS

- **Known inequality in cultural participation at live events risks being replicated in the digital environment.**
- **Need for support in understanding and applying General Data Protection Regulation.**
- **Need for cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary cooperation in digital audience data management.**
- **Need for more accessible/affordable educational programmes on digital audience engagement and content management.**
- **Need for an EU values canvas to engage digital audiences in the CCS.**
- **Need for a European online platform with a helpdesk on digital audience management.**

# Chapter 3.

## **Aspects of data collection and management with regard to reaching and rebuilding existing and new audiences via digital means (including a focus on the digitally deprived).**

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### **Introduction.**

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted existing issues in the cultural and creative sectors (e.g. lack of digital tools, gaps in skills and human capital, poor audience diversity, and weaknesses in coping with the digital transformation (e.g. open-air festivals, museums, galleries, freelance art producers) and called attention to data collection and management. Many stakeholders did not know how to react and get better prepared for digital innovation in a situation that has disrupted the entire sector, mainly due to a lack of sector-specific approaches. Innovation economics, however, suggests that the access to cultural products and cultural heritage via digital means introduces a new environment in which organisations respond positively to high audiences' digital literacy and sustainable resource allocation that enables skilled staff and long-term strategic planning. Thus, innovation is enhanced by digital literacy from both producers and audiences (Borowiecki and Navarrete, 2016). Research showcases that Appropriate Internet Technology (AIT) may become a tool to support cultural diversity in Digital Social Innovation (DSI) processes (Shea, 2015). The effects of recent lockdowns suggest that many cultural institutions will need to think about durably shifting some of their activities online.

The subject is more relevant than ever, as it influences the work of the CCS and raises important questions such as: how is digital perceived and processed? How to make it through the digital transformation? What is the value of data, and how does it help reach new digital audiences? What is the best process to learn to use data tools effectively and keep track of the rapid changes? What should actors/organisations expect to achieve by exploiting data, and how should they be gathered? What are the possible funding and organisational schemes? Finally, how to include and engage with the digitally deprived?

This section focuses on how to elaborate organisations' development processes for improving engagement of existing and potential digital audiences, focusing on the digitally deprived, no matter



the size, when, and whether or not you decide to consider data collection and management analysis procedures.

### **What data should be considered digital audience data? On the importance of knowing why you need it.**

The first legitimate question is, what exactly are we talking about?

- “Big data”, more correctly referred to as “mega data”, covers all technologies that produce, collect and process huge and often non-stop quantities of data or information. Possessing these “stocks” of data, considered a major immaterial asset, has become a crucial value that stimulates solid economic competition.
- Their significant volume and exponential growth characterise such data sets, as well as the variety of ways they can be structured (raw vs roughly processed) and the rapidity of their production and access.
- The growth of mega data has led to its regulation and restriction on use, as notably implemented in Europe through the [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#), which strictly codifies how and to what end it can be used.
- Gathering and studying data is permissible as long as it shows strict respect for regulations, information on people concerned by data collection, and methodological and ethical standards specific to scientific research.

### **What about “mega data” challenges and opportunities in the cultural and creative sectors (CCS)?**

Data is not only about numbers and figures and should be accompanied by storytelling. What practitioners fear the most is what data could prove, with results going against data providers or cultural organisations’ missions. Formal education and training in data management should be combined with more informal education to make data more accessible and understandable. Basic AI technologies can also be useful for small organisations to achieve significant results without necessarily developing new ways of data gathering and management. In some cases, collective training events may even be more appropriate than technical guidelines, especially since such events help narrow the gap without individuals feeling digitally deprived. The CCS also need to understand that, in many cases, data relates more to the experience than the product or service itself.

Yet, the CCS need to be aware of the following:

- In every realm of activity, mega data has become a crucial resource for describing and understanding the behaviour of nations, corporations, institutions, and social groups. In the field of culture and heritage, data is produced by, and for institutions and covers an extensive range of sectors and media: multimedia devices designed for museumgoers (stationary or in movement), information points in the galleries, mobile apps for preparing a visit, immersive virtual reality experiences and follower interactions on social media, online cultural events, and so on.

- Mega data has raised high – yet sometimes unfulfilled – hopes regarding its potential and benefits to the society because its value (in the strictly scientific and economic meaning of the term) is potentially significant. Data plays a vital role in the field of culture by empowering cultural goers through information or tools adapted to their needs, helping them discover a building or a gallery, suggesting itineraries that can be adjusted in real-time, or offering online cultural activities at large.
- There has been little research on such content and the limits and constraints involved in gathering and using mega data (such as its uneven quality, storage requirements, specialised software for data collection and analysis, and a great deal of time often needed to process it). It entails analysing ever-greater volumes that require specific accessing and processing platforms for describing the observed data, which can differ widely (e.g. statistics, models, data-set mining, linguistic and sectional analyses, and discourse analysis). Therefore, the quality and consistency of gathering data must be ensured when using mega data. And more work is required on the still-emerging theoretical framework for analysing and interpreting such data, potentially calling for more varied, specialised skills (information processing, statistics, linguistics, sociology, and so on).
- Furthermore, the technology offered to culture-goers can quickly become obsolete and entail significant expenses (e.g. virtual tour apps, self-audio/video walking tours apps, customised access-point apps, dedicated apps like video access software, live broadcasting apps, customised exhibition-event apps that are used once-off, gallery apps). The tools employed are often costly (their design is original and uncondusive to mass production), content must be updated regularly, and technical glitches must be monitored constantly. An assessment of those tools' efficiency and cultural relevance is therefore indispensable in the context of a public policy, which must address several levels: improving public access to cultural resources and the expertise inherent in their role in sharing and promoting cultural assets, as well as expanding the social identities of cultural audiences and engaging with younger generations.

Therefore, new lines of research are required regarding the digitisation of cultural goods and services:

- How can cultural property and knowledge be disseminated across a digital environment that is increasingly complex?
- How can one adapt to swift changes in digital services given the proliferation of sites and socio-technological systems?
- Do these digital tools improve the cultural experience and enhance its quality?
- Can they redefine the relationship between a cultural facility and its users?
- What are the concrete implications of such cultural analyses, and are they likely to reinforce the field's efforts?

### What is the value of data?

Data and mega data represent a significant issue regarding intangible cultural assets. It is less a question of economic value and more a question of social value and global creativity. From this perspective, **mega data represents an essential condition for building a common framework for audiences' development at the European level.** The analysis should lead to assess the quality of our cultural activities and programs:

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- Is there any proven spillover effect of the digital development and transformation of the cultural field?
- How might our digital efforts contribute to the overall creativity of the sector?

According to Manovich (2017), large cultural datasets allow us to create large-scale representative samples and identify trends and patterns resulting from data analysis. Ideally, the study of larger patterns may also lead to more specific results, e.g. individual artists and their incentives when producing art. To this extent, the value of data management and utilisation may only be identified under the framework and scope of the organisation which initiates its programming. To give an example: a museum like the Louvre has an interest in particular sets of data (accessibility, ticket cost, diversity in representation of exhibits, etc.), whilst a festival company might be interested in data proving low CO<sup>2</sup> emissions, in compliance with the UN's Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDG). In the case of the EU, as a sum of economies, data related to economic characteristics may be more significant than data proving diversity in artistic content presentation. The value of data management related to digital audience engagement also allows actors/organisations to gain insights on who, when, why, how, at what costs one may choose to access online cultural content. Yet again, we need to understand that data collection and management is not easy, especially for medium, small, and micro-organisations.

### **Why tools, frameworks, and existing guidelines are not being used and followed?**

Although it is evident that in a technological-oriented world based on digital interactivity, existing tools and guidelines are incorporated as quickly as possible, this is not the case for most cultural actors/organisations. The reasoning lies in various constraints. First, such a change goes hand in hand with the mindset of the people forming the organisation and the organisation's engagement strategy to change it. This process needs significant internal work, such as HR management, funding, support at the local, national, and EU levels (e.g. legislation about art repositories, open access data provision, a framework of partnership with research institutes-universities). Data collection and management do not fall within the core artistic activities of the CCS. As a result, we often lack data-analysis competencies and awareness of what to do with the collected data. Second, as in the case of small- and medium-sized organisations, **the idea of "keeping it simple" is equally strong due to a lack of capacity building and digital deprivation**. There is also a fear that digitalisation will alter the form and characteristics of cultural organisations' original missions and projects. Other constraints also deal with the lack of resources to acquire digital tools. **Data collection and management can still be weak if the tools are not available even with the right human capital in place**. Specific software and tools require substantial financial investments, and analysing data also requires significant financial resources.

### **Digital audience data management.**

The first part of this section offers an overview of cultural data collection, management, analysis, and evaluation. The second part provides a more specific approach to digital audience data management, no matter the organisation's size. Some of the problems surfacing about data management related to data collection, data storage, data cleaning, data analysis, and the strategic use of the data are in line with indicators relevant to a given organisation. **Yet, it is in an organisation's best interest to consider "Why do we need data?" "What can data tell us?" "What data should we gather and for what purpose?", "What do we want to know?", "What are we looking for in the data?"**.


Rather than offering a comprehensive approach on how to engage with and enlarge existing audiences to reach new ones (e.g. in the case of a small gallery that would like to see its audience grow), data might offer insights on the notion of co-creation that could be put into action to attract more members of the community as co-creators rather than just as audiences. What “audience” means in this context can also be further expanded. Current and prospective donors are also part of an audience at the individual or organisational levels. However, analysing data about them might differ from analysing data for ticket holders or members of an arts organisation. Other audience groups can include sponsors and potential international partners or collaborators.

<b>Aspects to Consider</b>	
Acquirement costs.	The challenge is to know what you need the data for, and thus, create the appropriate mix for data acquisition.
Maintenance costs	Partnering up with third-party vendors specialised in data maintenance.
Data cleaning methods and costs.	Data cleaning is the process of fixing or removing incorrect, corrupted, incorrectly formatted, duplicate, or incomplete data within a dataset. When combining multiple data sources, there are many opportunities for data to be duplicated or mislabelled. If data is incorrect, outcomes and algorithms are unreliable, even though they may look correct. There is no absolute way to prescribe the exact steps in the data cleaning process because the processes will vary from dataset to dataset. But it is crucial to establish a template for your data cleaning process, so you know you are doing it the right way every time. As part of the skills and capacities, it can be both a pro and a con if not treated accordingly.
Data storage methods and costs.	Determine how much data is enough for your scope and targets. Security is also a factor further linked to the previously mentioned resource limitations.
Data ownership.	Who owns the data is a challenge that needs to be answered both at the political and practical-professional levels? It is yet unclear how the ownership of data can be proven or to whom they belong (e.g. does the data gathered by a third party belong to that vendor, or does it belong to the organisation that commissioned the vendor on specific data acquisition analysis?).





# Chapter 3.

Aspects to Consider	
 Multidisciplinary skills.	Cultural organisations agree that data management is not a core cultural activity, and thus, they need to rely on the assistance of professionals outside the CCS. Cultural organisations and professionals should expand their skills or integrate people holding these skills in their teams.
Digitally deprived and hard to reach groups.	Increase access and participation in cultural activities by those who are socio-economically marginalised, populations on the move and the digitally deprived. Considering ways to reach these audiences will add value to your overall policy.

### Benefits.

The use of digital audience data offers various insights that allow cultural organisations to get to know, engage and be engaged with their audiences on a digital level. For such a goal to be achieved, collaborations between the CCS and research/academic institutes are recommended, especially if an organisation lacks personnel, technology, capacities, and funding.

### **Example.**

A music theatre company may reach out to a local university and conduct research alongside a PhD candidate to produce evidence on how much time postgraduate students spend online for cultural content, what kind of services they consume, how much they are willing to pay, etc. For the theatre company, the data might come from different segments. By default, all people in question are students of the facility (e.g. upper education audience, many probably studying music-related subjects). This could lead to possible partnerships and co-creation opportunities. As a result, the organisation may supply more diverse programming. This is also a win-win situation for the research institute, as it can help the management team develop more partnerships with local cultural operators.

Keeping an open mind for possible partnerships with experts in data management and growing your peer network to exchange knowledge and insights will be a helpful approach. Working on shared interests and affiliations can also create advantages. This can mean building on human capital and sharing data and strategies (within GDPR and other confidentiality/policy agreements), especially for smaller organisations.

### Limitations.

First and foremost, it is evident that **not all cultural organisations will undergo digital transformation simultaneously. The reasoning might vary from economic to organisational limitations to ethical and personal ones.** In many cases undergoing a digital transformation does not mean that the

organisation will start harvesting and managing data. As data management is a non-core artistic activity, many professionals and organisations lack the personnel (statisticians, computer scientists, data management and GDPR officers, tech assistants, computer engineers, etc.) to embark on this work, nor have the technological infrastructures (data-storage centres) or financial means (funding, governmental support). Organisational transformation and mindset changes are needed, but this process can be challenging if not implemented timely or without the appropriate funding, HR allocations, supportive infrastructure development, and training. And we are only discussing limitations within the capacities of a given cultural organisation. When moving to a more centralised level, the real problems begin. Within the past five years that the EU imposed the GDPR legislation, many actors/organisations still try to keep up with the legislation on setting and managing their data collections. For instance, it is unclear whether EU GDPR directives affect citizens of countries outside the EU, and what happens if a third country accuses a cultural stakeholder of data utilisation? Who will offer cultural players the legal support at an international level to take the dispute to court? In the case of gender activism and rights, who are the ones to decide on how the data of a trans individuality should be recorded in the system? Or, in the context of a global pandemic, who can have access to your medical data? A museum certainly not; an open-air festival is out of the question, not to mention independent artists. You would not go around offering your ID for anyone to use, would you? And at the same time, isn't it a huge **misconception to think that we know our digital audiences based only on social media participation or personal computer access?** We all understand a low-income and middle-class audience might not have access to private digital means or lack the capacities of accessing digital content. Regarding diversity, it is also crucial to keep in mind that no data fully capture presentation standards that serve people with disabilities (audio description for blind people, subtitling for the deaf, friendly online environments for autistic users, etc.).

### Data management objectives.

Cultural organisations need to consider **what data management objectives best meet their organisational goals** by identifying their field's critical and relevant data types. Another heads-up approach relates to **objectivity in managing digital audience data**. It is one thing to have data and another to produce evidence-based changes based on the available data. For example, if your organisation aims to raise sales, the number of followers on social media is nothing but a vanity rating, especially if those followers do not become buyers. The same applies when producing engagement metrics on a digital cultural service. It is pointless to say a performance generated 100 paid tickets when other thousands of people have used the same good, based on free-ware use (e.g. a concert initially accessed by ticket holders that later becomes freely accessible on YouTube). Therefore, how to ensure that the service covers the audience's needs, if no critics are produced for it, or if there is a lack of ticket-based input to show that sales went viral among a specific targeted group of users? What about those who did not manage to watch it because of bad Internet connection, defective online payment access, or personal incapacity because of a given disability? And how to reach people in a digital environment that they do not want to access? Again, a partial solution lies in clearly defining the overall scope and goals each organisation wishes to achieve and an ethical approach to keep cultural goods and services available to anyone.

### Questions to be asked when defining your data management objectives.

1. Does the collected data allow your organisation to establish relationships with existing or new digital audiences?
2. What kind of relationships do you want to establish with your audiences (e.g. a co-creation relationship, a passive consumer relationship, an active participant relationship, a fan-based relationship)?
3. How can you customise your data management to establish new participation and engagement channels with your targeted audiences?
4. How can you use data to transform passive audiences into active users?
5. What kind of channels should you be setting up to meet your audiences' needs?

**Another objective regarding data management and protection is compliance with international and national legislation. Our main advice is to have a keen eye on implementing and incorporating various related legislations, such as the EU GDPR compliance rules.** National rules should also be accounted for, and international and non-EU ones, for cultural audiences often come from outside Europe. A possible option is to ask for assistance from the [International Association of Privacy Professionals](#) or educate dedicated employees on privacy protection laws, privacy, compliance, and risk management principles. Data is a way to keep in touch and get to know your audiences, mainly since the relevance of cultural organisations increasingly lies in the relationships they build with their audiences. This needs to be part of their strategic management. Lastly, another equally important point to keep in mind is not to make data management policy a tool that enforces the transfer from the objects (cultural goods and services) to the subjects (audiences).

### Digital audience data: collection process.

Digital audience data helps us understand our audiences better and gives us insights into the socio-economic profiles of the users, among other characteristics. We advise that **the first step that cultural organisations should take is self-evaluation.** This would answer how ready or advanced you are regarding data management and analysis and what should be improved in your internal ecosystem.

As a second step, **we suggest identifying which data type is essential for a given organisation in a specific field** (e.g. personal, behavioural, engagement, attitudinal). What methodology you should use (survey, test groups, mail engagement) and for what purpose (introducing new audiences, re-establishing relationships with existing ones, etc.) are other essential questions to consider.

### Existing tools.

Many data management tools are already available, but cultural organisations should know that new tools will be on the market soon. Below are some data-management techniques already in use in the CCS.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND GOOD PRACTICES.

There are many different techniques to collect data, but the fundamental process below needs to be followed, no matter what data collection method you decide to use. This process consists of the following steps:

- Determine what information you want to collect.
- Set a timeframe for data collection.
- Determine the data collection method.
- Collect the data.
- Analyse the data and implement the findings.

## REACHING THE DIGITALLY DEPRIVED

To meet the needs of the digitally deprived, by considering their means, practices, and availabilities, is essential. These audiences are particularly heterogeneous. Even within the digitally deprived groups, differences in cultural practices are noticeable. Understanding who they are, and mapping their needs and expectations is fundamental and could be done through closer collaborations with specialised associations and networks, or via direct contacts. Studying behavioural patterns might also be useful. Yet, the main challenge that researchers are likely to face is that this segment often feels overwhelmed by digital content. Subsequently, it tends to overcome this fear by ignoring the digital transition. If older technologies are still relevant for some audiences (e.g. phone), these technologies should not be completely abandoned by cultural organisations. Further exploring the social aspect of digital, as well as internet access and countries' digital readiness, will be essential to better target those groups. Reinforcing the aspect of Diversity and Inclusion in cultural policy at the organisational level could also help reach this goal.

### Data collection through the organisation's website.

**An organisation's website or an app are excellent tools for collecting customer data.** When someone visits a website, they create as many as 40 data points. Accessing this data allows cultural organisations to see how many people visited their website, how long their visit lasted, what they clicked on, etc. A website provider may collect this information, just as other analytics software. Adding pixels on an organisation's website enables it to place and read cookies to track users' behaviours. Data on digital audiences visiting the organisation's website can be gathered using **Google Analytics**. This free tool starts collecting data after being incorporated into a website by JavaScript. It provides detailed statistics of website visitors: users and new users, bounce rate, conversion rate, average session duration, sessions by country, sessions by device, number of sessions, sources of incoming traffic, user flow, user retention, users by time of the day, demographics, etc. The data report is shown in real-time or in custom time ranges. Comparisons between different periods are also available. Similar tools to Google Analytics are **HubSpot, Mixpanel, Woopra, FoxMetrics, Piwik PRO Analytics Suite, Gauges, W3counter, or Clicky.**



### Data collection through social media platforms.

Social media platforms also collect digital audience data. However, it is vital to be aware that the data disappears after some time, depending on the terms of use. Therefore, it seems necessary to periodically export it.

- Facebook offers **Facebook Insights**, a tool connected to Facebook Business Page that can be accessed through Facebook Business Suite. Facebook Insights presents data reports on page performance (visitors, actions taken on the page, likes, followers, reach), content performance (reach, likes and reactions, comments, shares, distribution score, top-performing content), and audiences. The audience insights contain basic information on age and gender, cities and countries of origin, and the device used to access the page. What is more, two significant indicators can be found in the Facebook audience insights tool: when fans are online, considering days of the week and times of the day and the top pages they follow, which give further information on their interests.
- Instagram also offers **Instagram Insights**, although the data focuses more on content performance than audience data. Instagram Insights provides limited data on audience gender, age range, location, and Instagram usage habits.
- You can access audience data through **LinkedIn for business**, with information on followers' and visitors' companies and occupations, where they live, and how they found the published content.
- At the end of 2020, **Twitter** decided to remove its Audience Insights page that provided data on followers' profiles, including demographics, purchasing behaviours and mobile device usage stats. Currently, Twitter users can rely on Media Studio audience insights. However, the tool is available solely to profiles with over 1,000 followers. Alternatively, external tools can be used, such as **FollowersAnalysis, Followerwonk, TweetFeast, ExportTweet**.
- Considered the second most popular search engine after Google, **YouTube** also gives information about the channel's audiences. Available data primarily relates to geography, age, and basic demographics. Also, when viewers are online, you may find data concerning other channels and videos they watch, whether and what type of top subtitle/closed captioning (CC) languages they use, etc. To benefit from **YouTube analytics** fully, your channel needs to have enough eligible audience (e.g. a more significant number of followers and views). YouTube does not state specific numbers.
- The youngest social media platform, **TikTok**, provides its business users with follower metrics, among which gender, territory, followers' activities and content (videos and sounds) users engage with.

### Data collection through external tools.

Different methodologies can be used for data collection and analysis. Most are based on a core set of essential tools. These include interviews, focus group discussions, on-site observation, photography, videos, surveys, questionnaires, and case studies. Data may also be generated through direct measurement, reviewing secondary data, and informal project/programme management processes.

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Additional tools to collect digital audience data are:

- **Transactional data tracking:** Transactional data offers valuable insights stored in a customer relationship management system. These data can be extracted from a web store, a third-party contracted platform, or an in-store point-of-sale system.
- **Online marketing analytics:** Valuable data is collected through marketing campaigns, whether through surveys, webpages, emails, or offline marketing campaigns. Tracking the performance of offline ads by asking customers how they heard about the brand will provide data to be introduced into the Data Management Policy.
- **Collecting subscription and registration data:** This tactic may be achieved by requiring basic information from customers or website visitors who want to sign up for an email list, rewards program, etc. When creating the form used to collect this information, it is essential to find the right balance in the amount of data asked. Asking too many questions can discourage people from participating, while not asking enough means the data will not be as valuable as it could be.
- **In-store traffic monitoring:** insights may also be produced from monitoring the foot traffic data. The most straightforward way to do this is to use a traffic counter on the door to track how many people access a venue on a physical or a digital level. This data will reveal what the busiest days and hours are.

### Some additional tools (software) you may want to explore:

- [Europeana Impact Playbook](#) .
- [Interact](#) is a data collection tool that uses custom quizzes for marketing your business.
- [Survey Sparrow](#) is a data collection tool using surveys as the primary method.
- [JotForm](#) is an online form builder for every business's unique data collection demands.
- [Thrive Quiz Builder](#) – WordPress plugin data collection tool for WordPress sites.
- [Typeform](#) is a data collection tool that uses forms, quizzes, and surveys.
- [Mouseflow](#) is a data collection tool that uses mouse tracking and heat maps.
- [Hotjar](#) is a data collection tool for start-ups and enterprises that want to use recorded visitors. Sessions and heat mapping for solving processes and marketing strategies.

### Digital audience data: analysis process.

#### How to analyse the data?

Although we do not expect the readers of this report to be professional data scientists, some key questions arise before engaging in data analysis. Again, what cultural stakeholders want to achieve by exploiting available data sets and the context in which the data will be analysed must be addressed. For example, an artist might want to analyse sales data (online vs offline sales) to showcase their market placement, whilst a well-known band might want to gather data on how to make their concerts greener and what effect such a choice will have on their fan base or in terms of lowering the cost of a sustainable show and increasing participation rate. The variables should be selected according to the focus points of the analysis.

For example, age data becomes a valid variable if the organisation prepares a “silver economy strategy” to engage with the elderly from a given community or area. Another critical issue is selecting software and analysis methods, especially since many companies offer data management services. Data management bias should also be carefully considered. One should, for example, watch out for cookies’ dependence on social media, as many platforms alternate their cookies policies and some of the analytics once in place are now out of date. Similarly, dependency might alter the results (e.g. forced participation for a school class vs voluntary participation based on personal interests). When dealing with data analytics, it is vital to ask yourself, “What does this data mean” to confidently embark on the data collection, management, and analysis process.

### How to analyse the data, depending on audiences’ different profiles?

To alleviate audience analysis and profiling difficulties, the following metrics may be considered for data assessment:

- **Demographics** provide the foundations of a thorough audience evaluation. They allow you to classify people based on a set of consistent individual features (age, gender, ethnicity).
- **Psychographics**, also known as activities, interests and opinions (AIO), categorise a target audience based on its sentiments towards a particular subject, product, service, event, or situation. It focuses on how individuals make choices based on their values and beliefs. Some methods include oral interviews, focus groups, and passive observation.
- **Prior knowledge** refers to a person’s preconceived assumptions, interpretations, and perceptions of a situation, service, and product. Prior knowledge often translates into either positive or negative viewpoints regarding specific subjects.
- **Behavioural patterns** measure how people interact with certain products or services. This definition can also be expanded to include how individuals behave when exposed to specific scenarios. Developing usage patterns may enable your team to provide context behind psychographic conclusions and granular data regarding demographics. For example, researchers scrutinised how people used the web for social purposes. They broke users down into “embryonic,” “amateur”, and “expert” users. While experts had the most active and diversified presence, embryonic ones merely used the web.

### How can data analysis help enlarge audiences and foster the connections between digital, physical and phygital audiences?

To answer this question, cultural organisations need to decide what they want to achieve when analysing their data sets. A simple answer is that data analysis offers insights into better introducing diversity when attaining a digital audience. Yet, this approach appears more aspirational and vague rhetoric has to translate into practice. The good practice example provided in this report comes from the Creators of Cosmos SMPC (Greece). This company has introduced an innovative R&D to bridge the gap between the physical and digital and created a phygital-metaverse environment to meet its audience. Appendix 3 offers an analytical approach to Creators of Cosmos SMPC’s model.



**Case Study:** A data-driven approach to unlocking the value of diversity, a Best Practice of Creators of Cosmos SMPC working with Diversity Atlas, a tool developed by Cultural Infusion.

<https://voicesofculture.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/appendix-3.pdf>

### Limitations in interpreting the results.

As already discussed, various limitations are to be considered when translating data analysis into results. As a reminder, **cultural organisations should pay particular attention to lower participation rates of socially excluded groups, whose socioeconomic background, disability, or ethnicity tend to make these individuals invisible in current audience data sets.** When discussing charged data management services third-party vendors provide, economic limitations also have to be considered. Limits concerning a specified cultural good that cannot be accounted for another are also to be considered (e.g. different adjustments need to be made when producing an online performance for people with disabilities). Lack of data analysis capacities and skills, when conducted by non-professionals, may also result in misleading findings. Another limitation concerns the timing of your data collection and analysis. As suggested earlier, some data remains available for a short period, and you may not be able to re-attain it if the platform changes its model.

### **Using data outputs for developing more user-centric services and reinforcing funding eligibility.**

#### How to make data outputs meaningful for audiences, cultural managers, and policymakers?

Various approaches can be identified when introducing how data analysis outputs may become of interest for cultural stakeholders (from audiences to cultural managers and from organisations to politicians). Here are some of them for your consideration:

- **Strengthen the participatory approach** with certain principles to be considered when co-creation is involved (e.g. be aware not to transfer the interest from the production of goods to the display of audiences, incorporate elements introduced by the community for better representation of population, etc.). To this end, using the inputs of interested parties and actors/organisations can produce evidence-based guidelines.
- **Return on investment, participation and engagement** can produce tailor-made solutions that cultural organisations need. Developing specific KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) to assess your objectives and missions can allow you to meet the needs of any given stakeholder better.
- **Data must be contextualised to produce meaningful results** (e.g. how an organisation performs and its audience to re-engage are two different aspects).
- **Data helps set up discussions with the users themselves and contributes to building bridges between various cultural organisations** (e.g. in many EU member-states, audience data management



tools are not necessarily available within the CCS because of differences in capacities/infrastructure/funding/legislation).

- **Where to publish and share the results, and the most helpful way to do so is another question.** There is much to be achieved if cultural organisations could develop a shared robust-data mentality, with **sectoral development perspectives**, e.g. best practices on how to deal with data (collection/analysis/interpretation/valorisation/dissemination/storage/protection, etc.), how to use the data ethically, how to mitigate risks and achieve compliance with international legislation such as the GDPR).
- **Digital maturity – sobriety:** the digital transition has a heavy carbon footprint, as its share in greenhouse gas emissions has increased by half since 2013, rising from 2.5% to 3.7% out of total global emissions. The current development of digital technology's environmental impact goes against decoupling energy and climate from GDP growth set by the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement. We need updates on analytical software (access, availability, consumption) to avoid confirming the predictions of CIGREF (Association des grandes entreprises et administrations publiques françaises), according to which digital technology's global energy consumption will rise from around 3% in 2018 (the same level as air transport) to about 7% in 2025 (grade of automobile emissions).

### How to assess “a successful strategy”, and what fundamental key performance indicators could be developed?

To discuss successful strategies, we need to go beyond the CCS and learn from existing methods already applied in other sectors. Key questions are:

1. Where are we now?
2. What do we want to achieve?
3. Is the target outcome feasible?
4. What are the main existing strategies to achieve this objective?
5. What is their purpose and expected benefits?
6. Which ones should be selected in priority for the guidelines?
7. What are the most accessible and affordable means to achieve digital re-engagement?
8. What do cultural organisations need to implement efficiently these strategies (human, technological, financial resources)?
9. What do cultural organisations need to be aware of? (limitations, how to circumvent difficulties, etc.).

Key performance indicators (KPI) that may help cultural organisations assess their digital strategy are:

- The level of a mix between what policy expect and the organisation's capacity to meet these expectations (e.g. museums are compelled by governments to provide data but do not know how to do so). Thus, there is a necessity for reforming policies to allow these organisations to undergo a digital transformation and introduce new business models without fearing losing their organisational, operational, and business statutes. We cannot ask for results and neglect to offer a concrete framework and support. The technological readiness of organisations is of crucial importance and can be considered a baseline KPI for developing strategies.

- Regarding back-office, a viable cost/result ratio balance between the cost of data collection, safekeeping and sharing, and expected outputs can offer a KPI which reflects the cost/benefit relationship between spending on data management and the number of new visitors reached.
- Regarding data analysis skills, a KPI about technological readiness that reflects internal management procedures towards digital transformation (developing capacities, allocating resources, etc.) might also benefit cultural organisations.
- Regarding data analysis (e.g. social networks), a solid KPI that reflects the scope rather than the tools can significantly assist the development of a transformative policy.
- From a holistic approach, KPIs related to the European Sustainable and Development Goals (SDG) agenda/the green agenda/the gender rights agenda/the digitally deprived can help you develop an inclusive, diversified, and expansive transformation to meet the needs of larger audiences.
- Regarding policymaking, KPIs related to open data repositories and sharing strategies could be considered. They may allow introducing various funding schemes to meet the needs of cultural organisations (small-medium-national-international). New procedures (e.g. funding for audience research by EU/national authorities) and common recommendations (e.g. implement a pan-European CCS repository and guidance for sharing data) may also lead to the development of various KPIs that could add value to the production chain of cultural goods and services (e.g. the European Commission could enable a platform for data storage and sharing, not limited to but with a focus on smaller organisations).

#### CHAPTER 3- MAIN TAKEAWAYS.

- **Need for critical reflection on new forms of data-driven cultural supply.**
- **Digital audience data management should serve cultural organisations' missions above all and must translate into action.**
- **Need for technical and structural support to assist cultural organisations in the digital transition (including specific skills in data management).**
- **Need to create incentives for other sectors (IT, ICT, digital management) to collaborate with the CCS.**
- **Need of further data and empirical evidence on online audience profiles and the positive externalities of digital audience data management.**



## Conclusions.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had the effect of a bombshell within the CCS, with many stakeholders now **aware of the importance of embedding digital technologies in their daily activities to diversify their supply and meet the growing growth needs of digital audiences**. Yet, while the benefits of digital audience management are acknowledged by most participants – especially for deepening participation, audience development and diversification – the very notion of data remains perceived with scepticism. **Data management can be viewed as scary or out-of-reach for practitioners who are not always familiar with database management and quantification. The use of personal digital audience data without a clearly defined framework is also viewed as problematic in a non-profit sector that particularly values individual freedoms. Audience data management often remains pejoratively associated with pure marketing, despite recent advances in arts marketing.**

**More generally, the CCS stress that transitioning towards a new economic model and developing effective digital audience management are complex processes requiring full time and stakeholders' commitment. Yet, the CCS's open-mindedness towards data management makes it a timely opportunity for the EU to alleviate current deficiencies before the sector gets entirely overwhelmed by the tide of future digital innovations. More broadly, this topic calls for more integrated and transdisciplinary training in the humanities; a background from which many cultural managers and professionals come from. Education efforts and technical assistance appear as the only solution to maximise the potential of digital audience data, consistently with cultural organisations' missions.**

As also demonstrated throughout this report, the subject is vast and quite technical for non-experts, with many tasks and challenges lying ahead. This report inevitably reflects the topic's technicality, despite significant efforts to make it as approachable as possible. At this stage, only a handful of cultural organisations feels completely comfortable with managing digital audience data. Hence, sensitising practitioners on the importance of taking advantage of available data and providing recommendations on how to initiate this process was the first necessary step we undertook in this report. Future discussions could further consider more technical and practical strategies (how to compute key performance indicators related to digital audiences, what data visualisations to favour, etc.).



# Conclusions.

The essential outlines from this report, which requires careful examination by EU member states experts and European representatives in the short run, are the following:

- **Further empirical evidence on the positive externalities of digital audience data management is needed** to show cultural organisations the actual impact of efficient digital audience management. Similarly, a culture-based segmentation of online audiences would be helpful to provide better targeted digital services. Current data is scattered or limited to hardly generalisable case studies. Yet such evidence could make data outputs more telling and tangible to cultural practitioners. Digital audiences must also be sensitised to these benefits since too frequent data surveys may be detrimental to culture goers already exposed to daily “data harassment.” Respectful data collection strategies need to be developed **to preserve people’s well being** in the CCS.
- **Data collection and analysis should serve cultural organisations’ missions above all, as well as the social value of culture.** Developing a digital audience management plan for the sake of data is pointless, just as switching 100% digital should not be a priority for practitioners, as long as they can offer on-site cultural activities. Further, the interpretation of data can be just as misleading if done without minimum expertise. Knowing both your physical and digital audiences qualitatively remains of uttermost importance.
- Since digital content consumption goes beyond cultural consumption per se and entails **non-cultural factors**, the CCS need to get a clear overview of the digital situation of the 27 member states of the UE. Mapping the quality level of Internet connection per country and region and citizens’ access to digital devices, and national digital regulations could help identify cultural organisations and audiences’ needs.
- The contrast between global and local cultures jeopardises the efficient use of digital audience data. Since virtually anyone can consume digital cultural content online, **practitioners face new profiles of consumers and consumption habits they are not familiar with.** This situation reinforces the complexity of interpreting audience data, especially when you have little knowledge of foreign audiences’ cultural practices.
- **In 2022, technical and structural support is still urgently needed to assist cultural organisations in the digital transition in terms of supply (digital heritage, tourism) and demand (audiences and communities).** Digital data management is a new task that cultural organisations are increasingly compelled to integrate into their daily workload. Because of limited staff, time, and digital skills, the EU should consider new task forces and tools (e.g. cultural sector-specific tutorials, incubators for digital cultural managers) to assist cultural organisations (and NPO in particular) in this transition process. Developing a similar framework as the [European Data Space for Cultural Heritage](#), focused on digital audience management, could be a worth exploring option.
- Cultural organisations still **lack accessible and affordable funding opportunities at the European and national levels.** The move online has been notably slow in the CCS, whereas metaverse and virtual realities are at a stone’s throw. These entirely virtual environments will not be spared in the short run, as already observed in the private cultural sector (e.g. video game industry, auction houses). Therefore,



## Conclusions.

it is urgent to develop sustainable funding that considers structural solutions to offset current lacunas observed in the CCS and anticipate the digital innovations of tomorrow. EU digital and cultural programs (e.g. Creative Europe, Horizon Europe, DIGITAL) could serve as springboards for such initiatives.

- More than ever, **cross-sector transversality must be considered**. There is a fundamental difference between getting acquainted with essential digital tools such as social media or streaming platforms and efficiently managing digital audience data. The latter requires more advanced knowledge and skills in the hands of data specialists (digital marketers, economists, statisticians, computer scientists). More transversal and intersectoral funding and grants opportunities (from IT services, digital marketing, academia) are needed to initiate new types of fruitful collaborations. Creating incentives for other sectors to collaborate with the cultural field will be essential to achieve this goal. Education programs in cultural management should also consider these aspects to fill current skill gaps.
- Finally, the CCS claim **more systematic monitoring of EU reports and guidelines dissemination**. Ensuring the practical application of these outputs at the national and local level, and providing the necessary follow-up, is crucial, especially in European countries where governments do not envision culture as an essential sector, as particularly evidenced during the pandemic.

Given the unusual context in which the 2021 VoC brainstorming meeting took place, rescheduling another appointment on digital audience management in the post-pandemic context is necessary to assess the current report's impact and EU consequential measures. Future topics and questions to be addressed could be: digital audiences' level of engagement, the role of interactivity online, mapping existing and new policies, how the CCS use tools and create environments for these new tools, the value chain of digital culture, and the social model of digital culture (what kind of society do we want to build through digital culture?). Taking a step back from the two past years should allow future participants to take stock of the situation better and assess their progress in managing digital audiences.

Future VoC meetings should also consider the potential of new technologies such as AI for digital audience management. A recently-published report by the European Commission (Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology – Directorate I Media Policy), accessible via [this link](#), already includes a set of practical examples that the cultural and creative sectors can reflect on and use in a near future.



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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND TOOLS.

<https://voicesofculture.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/appendix-4-2305-b.pdf>



# Working Groups.

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**Cultural organisations:  
COVID-19 recovery and impact on cultural  
consumption by digital means + EU role in  
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2022  
REPORT



# VOICES OF CULTURE

Structured Dialogue between the European Commission and the cultural sector

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**(RE)-ENGAGING DIGITAL AUDIENCES IN THE CULTURAL SECTORS  
IMPROVING AUDIENCE DATA.**

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