

## Position paper on Digital Cultural Relations

In the last two decades, the cultural sector has undergone a radical transformation due to the rise of new media technologies and the digital revolution **has deeply transformed the daily practice of international cultural relations**. Although it is true that the digital era is opening opportunities in the field of international cultural relations, there is an ever growing need **to ensure fair access, to digital tools, to information, to fair remuneration and protection of intellectual property** as a basis of securing growth and fairness within the global digital cultural economy and global cultural relations.

Following the Covid-19 outbreak early 2020 and the acceleration of the shift it brought towards digital formats, digitization of cultural content became a necessity for many actors, as the only possible alternative to the total stoppage of activities as well as the abrupt halt of international exchanges. Historically, technological innovation constitutes an indispensable part of recovery from economic, social and environmental crises and we believe that **culture can benefit from rapid technological change as dynamics of digital transition and culture are interconnected**. This has been seen during the pandemic, in which digital technologies have greatly aided the creative sector. Museums, concert halls and other cultural institutions have taken to live-streaming, online events, and open access to digital material.

The digital revolution has radically transformed the daily practice of international cultural relations and the digital era is opening a **new realm of possibilities in the field of international cultural relations**. Thus, **digital cultural relations** incorporate the inclusive nature of traditional cultural relations and refer to the cross-cultural practices through digital and networked technologies, including the internet, mobile devices, and social media channels. Digital technologies provide **new opportunities to produce and preserve cultural content** and to make it accessible and visible to a wider audience. It offers **an interactive and participative potential to facilitate cross-cultural cooperation, enhance cultural experiences** and bring about **new forms of cooperation among artists**, cultural professionals and other actors beyond borders.

As digital tools permeate virtually every aspect of our lives, we are connected through devices which constantly yield data that are being captured, analyzed, and returned to us in processed forms such as personalized ads and recommendations. This unquestionably shapes global connections and encounters with peers and like-minded people. As digital media hold the promise of social increased interaction, global integration and human solidarity, they also **make inequalities more visible** and can isolate individuals and large groups – regional, political, ethnic, class-based – in echo chambers or ‘filter bubbles’, **compromising the existence of cross sectoral connections** and of, at a large, a common space for public debate. Misused, it enables the spread of fake news, hate speech, populism, and xenophobia.

We acknowledge that the role of digital technologies for the cultural and creative sector is at the heart of **the European Commission's #Digital4Culture<sup>1</sup> strategy** and we see there an opportunity for innovative technologies to build bridges among cultural and creative sectors within the EU and beyond on an equal footing basis provided that several conditions are met. In order to deal with the increased-use of digital tools for international cultural relations i.e., disruptions affecting the cultural sector, as a consequence of new digital practices, there is a need to:

- Design **innovative frameworks** for international cultural relations, using the **power of new technologies**;
- Encourage **cross-border cultural cooperation and experiences** using digital technologies;
- Develop **digital strategies and incentives** adapted to the cultural sector to reach wider audiences and connect with global networks;
- Protect **copyright** and ensure **fair remuneration** for cultural content creators;
- Ensure **protection of cultural diversity** against the **hegemony of global platforms**;
- **Address key ethical concepts** in policymaking and programmes, from non-discrimination, transparency, accessibility, accountability and social justice to data protection and privacy issues;
- Enable cultural operators and civil societies to engage in international digital cultural relations with **fair and transparent conditions**;
- Develop and enhance existing frameworks for **cultural professionals** to use digital tools and face new vulnerabilities;
- Enhance **digital skills and literacy** in the cultural field and among youth ;
- Deepen **capacity-building efforts** in digital cultural relations.

Overall, digital transformation is a scenario in which both **opportunities and challenges** abound. Behind a **multitude of trends, the digital age entails a new logic, one that is linked to collaboration, connection and horizontality.**

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<sup>1</sup> The strategy announced in 2018 is a call for digital to amplify culture's contribution to the social, economic and innovation agenda of Europe.



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