

# CONTENT AND DIGITAL INNOVATION IN A MULTI-PLATFORM WORLD

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## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Entertainment, story-telling and high quality content to lead the way with disruptive technology applied as an asset
- Technology to be instrumental to foster new industry approaches and to innovate the users' experiences
- Crucial role that media and creative industries can play in both the EU Funding Programmes Horizon Europe and Digital Europe, boosting creativity and innovation, to be highlighted
- Areas such as AI, virtual reality, audience/community building to be strengthened by key R&D tools and media Innovation hubs for European excellence and know-how sharing
- Talent and skills in the audio-visual sector to be incentivised by technological means and optimised in constant synergy amongst key stakeholders, academics and research tanks
- Innovation to play a fundamental role if applied with a holistic approach, combining investment in the ICT sector and in the creative and media sector
- Networking systems, media hubs and the development of creative/media clusters to be supported, for start-ups, SMEs and media companies to cooperate and create successful models to be competitive in Europe and beyond

## PARTNERS SYNERGY IN MEDIAROAD: CEPI AND EBU'S WAY FORWARD

Jerome Dechesne, CEPI President, underlined the crucial role that the creative industries sector will increasingly play, and the key importance of each stakeholder along the audiovisual value chain. Research and innovation can multiply the potential of the industry: firstly, by powering content production and distribution and adapting the traditional means to the technological era; secondly, by investing on skills and digital literacy for the whole sector and for audiovisual workers to remain competitive. Dechesne suggested the establishment of a dedicated European media innovation scheme within Horizon Europe to amplify the innovation potential of the media sector.

Nicola Frank, Head of European Affairs at the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), highlighted the current evolution of traditional broadcasters into more flexible public service media organisations. The growing complexity of the sector would be reflected by the creation of a European Media Ecosystem, which MediaRoad could serve as blueprint for. The structure could revolve around three main hubs: the SandBox Hub, dedicated to innovation; the Policy Hub, to develop a common policy vision; and the Network Hub, for coordination on policy action between stakeholders.

## CONVERGING MEDIA IN A DIGITAL WORLD, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The buzzword in the presentation delivered by Prof. Dr. Karen Donders from the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) was clearly convergence. Convergence results in the so-called '*platformisation*' phenomenon, an

environment where the distinction between different types of networks is disappearing. Indeed, market players are increasingly integrating functions within and across value chains and moving onto adjacent segments, i.e. TV distributors developing in the broadcasting and production sector. The “boom or doom” for companies depends on their adaptability to the regulatory context while maintaining control on key elements:

- **capital**, by leading and anticipating the mergers and acquisitions game and stepping up the competition against counterparts;
- **consumers**, by avoiding intermediates and securing direct access to them and to their data;
- **cable**, by owning infrastructure to secure direct communication with customers;
- **content**, by making it appealing for users, maintaining a high quality, and channeling it to the right audience.

Traditional market segments have already been subject to heavy regulation, so the attention of policy-makers should now be re—directed to the emerging platform ecosystem: the main goal is to guarantee a distinction between infrastructure and services, and allow for competitiveness on the market.

Key for the industry to start cooperating and scaling up their collaborations at a pan-European level, while ensuring a genuine and shared corporate responsibility. It will be crucial to diversify revenue streams, especially investing on training consumers to pay for content - and on delivering a worth-for-paying content. A broader media literacy strategy will have to be implemented to re-educate customers to more sustainable content consumption models.

This panel focused on the latest trends for production and distribution in the Media Sector including platformisation, new technologies, new business models, research and business developments, diversity of content in the digital world, key availability of funding, and much more. The speakers’ presentations aimed to bridge the gaps between technological innovation, creativity and R&D at the European level. At the core of the debate there was the way the industry is fostering cooperation and collaborations in the research and innovation sector.

Representatives from the industry showcased how they are applying the potential of new technologies to deliver their products in innovative ways, to new audiences. Alejandra Panighi, Director of Digital Content

**PANEL 1:**  
**CONTENT PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION IN THE NEW TECHNOLOGICAL SYSTEM, HOW TO COMBINE CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION?**

at Mediapro, highlighted the crucial importance of trans-media storytelling, i.e. a virtual reality/augmented reality-powered fruition of content, as a way of both engaging the audience and getting an immediate feedback from them.

Colin Bortner, Director Public Policy EMEA at Netflix, underlined the importance of accessibility of content, and the potential of content personalisation for each user while targeting a world-wide audience; personalisation also entails making the product available on a multitude of devices and apps.

Albéric Lehuédé from TeamTo Animation dwelled on the technical side of innovative production, and signalled the opening of a new 3D Animation school organised by the Ecole Cartoucherie Animation Solidaire (ECAS).

Agustin Alonso presented RTVE’s Playz, a multi-platform channel that targets young adults, aged 18-34, who have presumably abandoned traditional TV. Highly targeted content and visual style, direct engagement and an effective social media strategy, and a mobile-first approach are the main drivers of RTVE’s vision.

This panel focused on media accessibility and skill improvement. There is often a gap between University learning and the professional/AV Industry world. One way to reduce this gap is through coordination with

Universities to adapt their courses to fit market needs. Training is also important as technology is rapidly changing and can affect the way both young adults and experienced professionals approach their work. Training is an effective way to enhance media literacy and strengthen skills.

**Talent and life-long learning** were the keywords in the skill-dedicated panel. Jan Vermoesen, Director at Mediarte Belgium and project partner at Creative Skills Europe, noted the workforce to be extremely young but at the same time multi-skilled: therefore, he encouraged strengthened links between high educational institutions and industry and on-the-job learning possibilities.

A valuable example along these lines was provided by Leif Holst Jensen, head of Westerdals Institute of Film and Media at the Kristiania University College: he presented the learning potential that comes from school collaborations and projects rather than from dedicated trainings, and underlined that students are extremely valuable creative contributors for industry. Indeed, although the media industry has seen the largest scale of disruption, there's a huge pool of talent that has to be redirected and optimized.

**PANEL 2:**  
**WHAT ROLES ARE NEW SKILLS AND NEW DIGITAL LITERACY PLAYING FOR ADAPTING TO THE MASSIVE TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE? HOW CAN DIGITAL SKILLS HELP TO BUILD A MORE COMPETITIVE EUROPEAN MARKET? HOW TO GET PREPARED FOR IT?**

Nathalie Labourdette, Head EBU Academy, underlined the collective dimension of re-skilling, together with the need of trust across the sector: both these elements could be addressed through micro-learning platforms.

The insertion of dedicated curricula in schools and universities was also endorsed by Peter Freitag, Digital Expert Group of European Federation of Journalists (EFJ). Especially referring to the career of journalist, he noted freelancing to be a dangerous trend, because of precarious conditions and poor pays. Media companies and journalists, including old-school journalists, should rather invest on adapting and acquiring new skills to handle digital media.

Celine Verdier, producer at Shibuya Production, emphasised the team-work dimension of innovation, while Leif Holst Jensen recommended to keep the "Care and Dare" formula in mind, and maintain an ethical approach to technological development.

Vermoesen also stressed the importance of collaboration between small-sized companies to scale up and develop cross-border European solutions.

Sarah Geeroms, Project Leader VRT Sandboxes International, presented the VRT MediaRoad Sandbox Hub together with Kris Peeters, Executive Producer Drama at VRT. The SandBox Hub is meant to serve as the European network of media innovation incubators and accelerators, allowing start-ups and companies to bring their own ideas into a connected ecosystem to test them. SandBoxes are run in parallel and cover the broadest range of themes, topics and technology involved, from weather forecasts to artificial intelligence for video understanding: nonetheless, all are aimed at making the production process more efficient and creative.

Possibilities for the other MediaRoad Hubs were highlighted by Filip Bobinski, Producer at Czech production company Dramedy. He suggested that the Policy Hub could be a possible environment where producers' common goals could be discussed in light of the challenges posed by platforms; once those are

**PANEL 3:**  
**SHAPING THE FUTURE EMBRACING INNOVATION: WHAT NEW OPPORTUNITIES  
 IN THE EUROPEAN MARKET?**

defined, implementation could be facilitated by the Network Hub, which could also make collaboration with Eastern Europe countries swifter and more effective. A possible inclusion of the video-games industry also came up. Bobinski insisted that MediaRoad Hubs can be a viable ecosystem for growth, but producing quality content must remain at the core.

Michelle Olley, Head of Marketing and Producer at Kallisti GmbH, also came back to the collaborative dimension of innovation, and to the potential of powering story-telling with AR and VR technologies to deliver immersive experiences for users. One of the Kallisti main projects will launch at international film and VR festivals throughout 2019.

**FURTHER READINGS:**

You can find all the relevant material and the presentations delivered by the speakers at the Montecarlo workshop available at the following link:

<http://www.mediaroad.eu/mr-conferences/content-and-digital-innovation-in-a-multi-platform-world#materials>