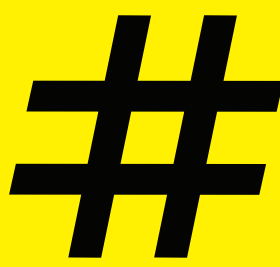
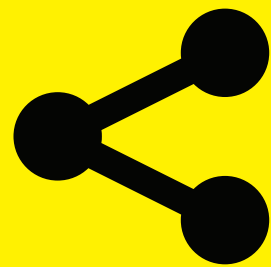
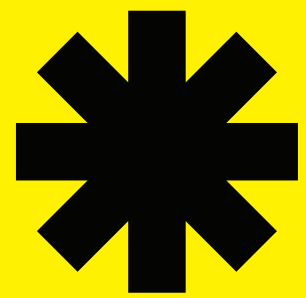


MEDIA INNOVATION XCHANGE

**A conference from the Belgian presidency of the
Council of the European Union March 13 – 14**

CONFERENCE CONCLUSIONS



Co-funded by
the European Union





+ D *

⋈ # ◻

PREFACE BY THE FLEMISH MINISTER OF MEDIA

The European Media sector today stands at a crossroads with only one way forward. New and emerging technologies confront the media sector with unprecedented challenges. However, technologies such as generative AI and virtual production also present immense opportunities to the media sector. It can heighten time and resource efficiency of the production process, and expand the creative possibilities for media professionals, content creators and storytellers. However, there are significant barriers for the common use of these technologies within the media sector such as high investment costs and a lack of technical profiles, and some are still skeptical and hesitant, fearing technology will replace jobs or alter the way the media sector operates in a negative way. We want to bring the message that we need to embrace new technologies and use them in a constructive and creative way, whilst also remaining conscious of the challenges and risks they might pose, to ensure a resilient and productive European media industry. We want to choose the path of innovation.

That is why the Belgian presidency of the Council of the European Union organized Media Innovation Xchange: a European conference on innovation and digital transformation in the media sector. For two days, Brussels set the stage for a gathering of policy makers, media professionals and academia to share experiences, knowledge and best practices on this subject. Central questions to these discussions were: how can the media sector stay relevant throughout the digital transformation? How can it innovate to enhance creative processes and maximize productivity? And how can policy better support the media sector in doing so? Four keywords turned out to be important during the conference: collaboration, adaptability, scale and momentum.

As policy makers, we have the responsibility to facilitate and stimulate collaboration between public and private media organizations, academia, technology companies and other relevant sectors, but also maintain an open dialogue on this topic between the policy level and the sector. We need to bring continuity in our investments regarding media innovation, so the media sector can easily adapt when new technologies emerge and new challenges arise. We need to recognize the scale in which

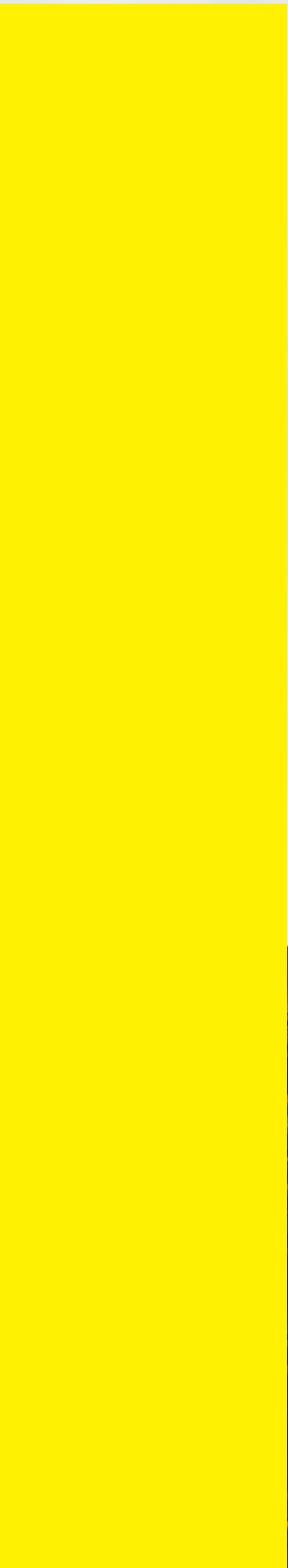
we work and ask ourselves how we can combine national initiatives and European collaboration to compete at a global level, without losing touch with the uniqueness of our local ecosystems.

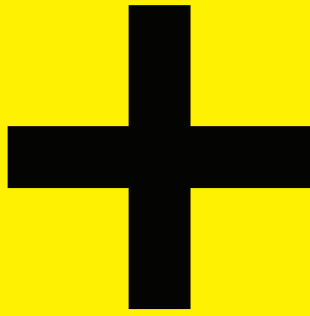
With the European elections coming up, this is a pivotal moment in our collective journey towards strengthening the capacities of the EU media sector, in the light of information integrity and the transformative power of digital technology. In the next 5 years, we find ourselves at a critical juncture and a window of opportunity that demands our immediate attention and action. It is imperative that we seize this moment to strengthen the European media sector for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead in the next decade, by fostering media innovation and embracing digital transformation. At the European level action is already being undertaken. As the Director-General of DG Connect Roberto Viola highlighted in his opening speech at the MIX conference, the European Parliament recently passed two key legislations in this regard upon proposal of the European Commission: the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA) and the AI Act. EMFA is a landmark legislation at the EU level, safeguarding independent and quality media, impacting 500 million citizens. It ensures free choice and access to quality media. The AI Act is the world's first binding and major legislation on AI, aimed at promoting safe, inclusive and innovative AI usage. Additionally, the EU's Creative Europe MEDIA Programme supports creative media endeavors, fostering innovative formats, experiences, tools and applications through new technologies, including VR and AI. To continue the success of this approach it is imperative to work closely together with the member states on the compatibility of the funds and initiatives.

I invite you all to read the conclusions of the conference Media Innovation Xchange. In this document, all sessions are summarized with their main takeaways. It can inspire policymakers and media professionals to come together and discuss how we can move forward and take action.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

AI and Media: reshaping the future	6
Innovation to counter, detect, and refute disinformation	8
The European Video game sector and media crossovers	10
Reaching younger audiences	12
Unleashing creativity through tech	14
Data driven media industry	16
The role of media in a virtual world	18
Ethical boundaries to the mediatech revolution	20
European Broadcasters: staying relevant through tech	22
Policy initiatives stimulating innovation and collaboration	24
Closing debate: future needs regarding the upcoming European policy agenda	28






“There have been countless waves of innovation in the media sector. The only constant has been change.”

Tom Rubin, OpenAI

MODERATOR: Valérie Deridder
(Journalist at Knack)

PANELISTS:

- › Tom Rubin (Chief of Intellectual Property at OpenAI)
- › Yiannis Kompatsiaris (Research Director at CERTH – Information Technologies Institute, Coordinator of AI4Media)
- › Valerie De Naeyer (Head of Gen AI Transformation & Operational Excellence at DPG Media)
- › Giuseppe Abbamonte (Director of Media Policy of DG CONNECT at the European Commission)



AI AND MEDIA: RESHAPING THE FUTURE

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS REGARDING THE USE OF AI FOR CONTENT CREATION HAVE CAUSED SERIOUS CONCERNS IN THE MEDIA SECTOR. HOWEVER, AI ALSO OFFERS A LOT OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE AUDIOVISUAL INDUSTRY AND CREATOR COMMUNITIES. GENERATIVE AI IN PARTICULAR CAN BE A USEFUL TOOL FOR THE INDUSTRY FOR ENHANCING PRODUCTION, WORKFLOW AND DISTRIBUTION PROCESSES. THE INCREASING USE OF AI WILL UNDOUBTEDLY HAVE A SIZEABLE IMPACT ON THE MEDIA AND AUDIOVISUAL SECTOR. THE CENTRAL QUESTION IS HOW THE MEDIA AND AUDIOVISUAL SECTOR CAN HARNESS THE POWER OF AI TO ENHANCE CREATIVITY WHILE MITIGATING POTENTIAL RISKS AND CHALLENGES?

The session started with a keynote from Tom Rubin, Chief of intellectual property at OpenAI. He addressed that we find ourselves at the dawn of the AI age in the media sector, akin to the early days of the internet in the 1990's. While there are numerous opportunities presented by AI, there is also a recognition of the challenges it brings. Tom states that OpenAI is committed to responsible development, collaboration with creators, and prioritization of safety to underscore the importance of navigating this transformative era with careful consideration and foresight.

The session continued with a panel discussion which addressed several critical topics related to AI and its impact on the media sector:

› **PRODUCTIVITY AND EFFICIENCY GAINS:** AI, and in particular Generative AI can enhance productivity and efficiency for media companies by assisting journalists in various tasks such as transcription and content creation.

- › **CONTENT ANALYSIS AND PERSONALIZATION:** Machine learning can enable media companies to analyze content more efficiently and personalize content delivery to target specific audiences or local communities.
- › **CHALLENGES VS. OPPORTUNITIES:** There is a perceived risk of job displacement due to AI, but the panel emphasizes the potential opportunities it brings, such as making content creation more accessible and inclusive. However, human creativity and decision-making should remain prominent in the creative process.
- › **MEDIA CONSUMPTION AND ENGAGEMENT:** AI can enhance user engagement through personalized content recommendations, interactive features and reviving archival content, while also acknowledging the challenges of algorithmic bias and the importance of diverse perspectives in combating disinformation.
- › **ETHICAL AND REGULATORY CONSIDERATIONS:** To tackle concerns about bias in AI-generated content there is a need for ongoing efforts to mitigate bias, ensure transparency, and maintain human oversight. The regulatory landscape needs to adapt to AI innovation development and content creation in the media sector.



“ **Factual information needs to be considered as a public good. We as a society need to ensure that people can be well informed with trusted facts and it's not going to happen by itself.**

Jan Jagers



Anna Bulakh

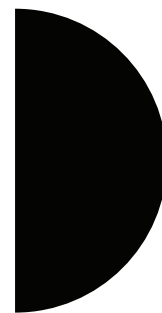
Head of Ethics and Partnerships at Respeecher

MODERATOR: Ike Picone (Associate Professor in Media and Journalism Studies at Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

PANELISTS:

- › Anna Bulakh (Head of Ethics and Partnerships at Respeecher)
- › Carlos Hernández-Echevarría (Assistent Director and Head of Public Policy & Institutional Development at Maldita.es)
- › Jan Jagers (Co-founder and Managing Director at deCheckers)
- › Paolo Cesarini (Program Director at the European Digital Media Observatory - EDMO)

INNOVATION TO COUNTER, DETECT, AND REFUTE DISINFORMATION



EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES, SUCH AS AI, WILL CONTINUE TO IMPACT THE NEWS MEDIA SECTOR AND INFORMATION LANDSCAPE. MANIPULATED AND ALTERED FORMS OF MEDIA LIKE DEEPPAKES INCREASINGLY BLUR THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN AUTHENTIC AND SYNTHETIC CONTENT, UNDERLINING THE VALUE OF TRUSTWORTHY AND TRANSPARENT JOURNALISM. EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES ARE BEING USED TO CREATE AND SPREAD NEW FORMS OF DISINFORMATION, BUT THEY CAN ALSO BE UTILIZED AS TOOLS TO ASSIST THE NEWS MEDIA SECTOR. THIS SESSION ADDRESSED HOW AI AND OTHER TECHNOLOGIES CAN PLAY A PIVOTAL ROLE IN TACKLING DISINFORMATION AND WHAT IS NEEDED BY THE NEWS MEDIA SECTOR TO MAINTAIN QUALITY OF NEWS MEDIA PRODUCTION?

Anna Bulakh kicked off the session with a keynote on how the sector can build trust in times where the speed of the digital (r)evolution is unseen. Releasing technologies like AI online for free creates big challenges for the information ecosystem. Content must be moderated, and consumer-behavior needs to be changed in a way that consumers can and will check the content they see.

The session continued with a panel discussion, giving the message that AI is both part of the problem and the solution. These new technologies are human made, their ethical use and potential risks must be carefully considered in efforts to safeguard the integrity of information and promote trust in the media landscape. The news media sector and policymakers should take following points into account:

› **STANDARDIZATION IS ESSENTIAL:** Everyday, new tools are emerging for tackling disinformation. However, this also makes it harder for fact-checkers

to work because you can never master all existing tools. Tools for countering disinformation need standardization to ensure effectiveness and interoperability across different platforms and stakeholders. Collaboration is therefore necessary.

› **KNOWLEDGE SHARING:** Introducing a bottom-up approach to combat disinformation necessitates the sharing of existing knowledge among stakeholders, including the media sector, fact-checkers, civil society, and technology experts.

› **SHARED RESPONSIBILITY AND FUNDING:** Combatting the spread of disinformation is not solely the responsibility of governments but also requires active involvement from the industry itself and news consumers. Fact-checkers are in need of sustainable funding mechanisms to support their crucial role in verifying information as they face funding challenges due to a business paradox.



“It is important to have the diversity of smaller companies, but also the scale of big studios. We have to learn how we can fully use the advantages of this diverse sector.

Lucia Recalde

MODERATOR: Per Strömbäck (Managing Director at Spelplan – Association of Swedish Game Developers and Spokesperson at Dataspelsbranschen – Swedish Games Industry)

KEYNOTE: Hester Woodliffe (Senior Vice President Publishing EMEA and APAC at Warner Bros. Games and Chair of the Board of Directors of Video Games Europe)

PANELISTS:

- › Timothy Vanherberghen (Founder and CEO of Triangle Factory)
- › Lili Blumers (Interactive Commissioning Editor at ARTE France)
- › H el ene Jugu et (Managing Director at Ubisoft Film & TV Paris)
- › David Verbruggen (General Manager at Video Games Federation Belgium)
- › Lucia Recalde (Deputy Director for Media Policy and Head of Unit Audiovisual Industry and Media Support Programmes of DG CONNECT at the European Commission)



THE EUROPEAN VIDEO GAME SECTOR AND MEDIA CROSSOVERS

TODAY, HALF OF THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS PLAY VIDEOGAMES. THE EUROPEAN VIDEO GAME SECTOR IS GROWING FAST AND FINDS ITSELF AT THE FOCAL POINT OF A TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTION IN THE BROADER AUDIOVISUAL AND MEDIA SECTOR. IN THIS SESSION, WE EXAMINED HOW THE MEDIA SECTOR AND THE EUROPEAN VIDEO GAME SECTOR CAN STRENGTHEN EACH OTHER. CENTRAL QUESTIONS IN THIS SESSION WERE: HOW DO WE SUPPORT AND RETAIN THE EXISTING VIDEO GAME TALENT AND HOW DO WE TRANSFER THEIR KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE TO THE MEDIA AND AUDIOVISUAL SECTOR? HOW CAN WE DEVELOP THE EUROPEAN VIDEO GAME SECTOR INTO A THRIVING, COMPETITIVE INDUSTRY AND WHAT IS THE POTENTIAL OF GAMING FOR THE AUDIOVISUAL SECTOR AND VICE VERSA?

The session on the European videogame sector and media crossovers began with an interesting keynote from Hester Woodliffe, Chair of the Board of Directors of Video Games Europe. She shared some illuminating facts about the European video games sector and showed how through great talent, great innovation and great IP we can continue to drive the European video games and media sector forward on the global stage.

The ensuing lively panel discussion highlighted the importance of fostering talent, embracing diversity, and prioritizing player engagement and co-creation to ensure the continued growth and success of the European videogame sector on the global stage. Following points were made in the discussion:

› **CROSS- AND TRANSMEDIA:** Sustaining audience engagement requires increasing cross- and transmedia works, emphasizing the importance of integrating elements from various media formats into gaming experiences.

› **TALENT POOL DEVELOPMENT:** Europe boosts a large pool of creative and technical talent, which must be sustained and further developed, as well as connected to industry needs, in order to maintain leadership in the global gaming industry.

› **PLAYER-CENTRIC APPROACH:** The lines in the classical distinction between creators and users are blurring as co-creation and co-creativity become more central in the development of video games and virtual worlds. Gaming has evolved into an intimate interactive relationship with players actively participating in the creation process. As players determine economic success, talent development, innovation, and societal impact, they are central to the viability of the gaming sector.



“ **A young audience is looking for new experiences, so if you want to reach them you shouldn't think about the latest trend, but you should look for new things, new ways to reach that audience. They get bored if everyone uses the same strategy.** ”

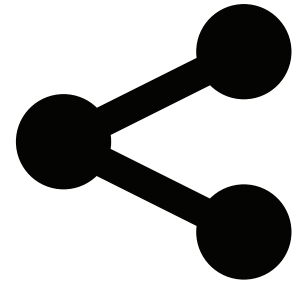
Jordi van den Bussche

MODERATOR: Konrad Collao
(Founder of Craft)

PANELISTS:

- › Jordi van den Bussche (Kwebbelkop, Founder and CEO at JVDB Studios)
- › Laurie MacGregor (Head of Election Coverage at NRK)
- › Daniela Alvarez (Co-Founder and CEO at Ac2ality)
- › Gregory Carette (Expert Video Games and eSports at RTBF)

REACHING YOUNGER AUDIENCES



THE ANALYSIS OF MEDIA CONSUMPTION TRENDS SHOWS THAT GEN Z HAS A DISTINCTIVE HABIT IN CONSUMING NEWS AND ENTERTAINMENT CONTENT. THEY ARE MOVING AWAY FROM TRADITIONAL AND MAINSTREAM, IN FAVOR OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND STREAMING PLATFORMS. IN THIS BREAK-OUT SESSION WE DISCUSSED HOW MEDIA COMPANIES CAN FIND NEW WAYS TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN A YOUNGER AUDIENCE TO ENSURE THEIR LONG-TERM RELEVANCE, WHAT STRATEGIES THEY SHOULD ADOPT, AND WHAT THE FOCUS OF THESE STRATEGIES SHOULD BE. THE FOCAL POINT WAS HOW THEY CAN USE TECHNOLOGY AS A TOOL TO REACH YOUNGER AUDIENCES.

Jordi van den Bussche, also known under his alias Kwebbelkop, is an online content creator that reaches millions of young people every day. In his keynote, he presented his six key principles to drive content reach to the younger generations. The content originates in unique ideas, storytelling and challenges from a content creator which can then be enhanced through the use of technology, gaming mods and data to play into the preferences of youngsters. However, also the mode of distribution is crucial to the success of content as the use of the most suitable (social) media platforms defines this success.

The panel concluded that media companies aiming to reach younger audiences must embrace data-driven strategies and a commitment to trust and quality content, while also recognizing the unique preferences and expectations of different age groups. The panel addressed some recurrent themes to take into account when discussing this matter:

› **NEW EXPERIENCES AND TRUST:** Media companies should emphasize transparency, authenticity, and a commitment to delivering high-quality content to build an essential relationship of trust with young audiences. Young audiences are constantly seeking new experiences, requiring media companies

to adopt innovative approaches to content creation and distribution to capture their attention.

- › **EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA:** Media companies should adopt a social media strategy that is compatible with their standards and goals. Sometimes, this even means using less social media, but in a clear intentional way to better reach younger audiences. The integration of AI with social media also presents opportunities for media companies to leverage AI-driven features and algorithms to enhance engagement and personalization.
- › **CONTENT AND COMMUNICATION:** High-quality content with clear language and simple visuals resonates with everyone, including young audiences. They go to different channels for different content, so channels focused on entertainment should prioritize fun rather than politics.
- › **DATA ANALYSIS FOR OPTIMIZATION:** To understand audience preferences and behavior, daily data analysis is crucial for media companies, allowing them to optimize content strategies and adapt to changing trends quickly, for example using local language in content to attract audiences.



“Technology is a tool. It can be used in positive and negative ways. We can't stop technology. We have to learn how to work with it and to understand what it is.

Chris Umé

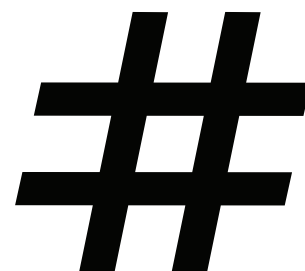


MODERATOR: Valérie Deridder
(Journalist at Knack)

PANELISTS:

- › Chris Umé (Co-founder and CCO at Metaphysic.ai)
- › Jan Hameeuw (Founder and Executive Producer at THE PACK Studio)
- › Eno Henze (CEO at Hyperbowl)
- › Max Cleary (Founder at Create with AI)

UNLEASHING CREATIVITY THROUGH TECH



CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGIES LIKE AI, XR, GAME ENGINES AND INTERACTIVE PLATFORMS ARE REVOLUTIONIZING CREATIVE PROCESSES ACROSS MEDIA INDUSTRIES. THE COMBINATION OF VIRTUAL PRODUCTION TOOLS AND GENERATIVE AI WILL HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE OVERALL CONTENT CREATION PROCESS. THIS SESSION WAS AN INSPIRING DISCUSSION AND SHO CASE ON HOW EMBRACING THESE TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS CAN EMPOWER MEDIA AND AUDIOVISUAL PROFESSIONALS TO TAP INTO THEIR FULL CREATIVE POTENTIAL AND CAN LEAD TO NEW WAYS TO ENGAGE WITH THEIR AUDIENCE.

Chris Umé from Metaphysic.ai showcased how AI can be harnessed creatively. In his keynote, he emphasized that despite advancements in AI, creativity remains the domain of the human mind. AI serves as a tool to enhance creativity rather than replacing it entirely. He also highlighted the importance of understanding how to handle data, differences in training processes, and technological developments in AI.

The panel showcased the diverse ways in which technology is shaping and empowering creativity, while also highlighting the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead in the digital era. The session emphasized collaboration, innovation, and investment in digital infrastructure to support the creative industries' transformation, aiming for an innovative and digital future benefiting society. Following matters should be taken into account when using new technologies in the media sector:

- › **TECHNOLOGY BRIDGING LANGUAGE BARRIERS:** New technological possibilities enable direct translation in video content and facilitate real-time multilingual conversations, applicable in education, travel, and global communication. That way, technology can be used as a tool to overcome language barriers.
- › **CONCERNS, RISKS AND CHALLENGES:** While technology's potential was acknowledged, concerns were raised about its rapid advancement, financial hurdles for smaller companies, and the challenge of distinguishing real from misleading information in the digital age. There are also some ethical challenges in using AI and new technologies, including achieving lifelike CGI and balancing technological progress with ethical considerations, like consent for projects such as digital concerts featuring deceased artists.
- › **PUBLIC FUNDING AND SUPPORT:** Initiatives like low-threshold calls and public-private partnerships are ways in which governments can foster creativity and entrepreneurship, showing the importance of public funding for innovation in the creative industry.
- › **DEMOCRATIZATION OF CREATIVITY:** User-generated tools, virtual production studios, and AI-driven content creation platforms become more and more accessible, which democratizes the creative process and can benefit European SMEs.



“ If you want to exchange content you need meta-data. You need to be interested when you need extra content. Players are interested in foreign content and to decide what foreign content they want, they need metadata.

Wouter Quartier

MODERATOR: Valérie Deridder
(Journalist at Knack)

PANELISTS:

- › Véronique Demilly (Delegate for Foreign Collaborations at France Télévisions)
- › Wouter Quartier (Head of Digital, Transformation and Platforms at EBU)
- › Catalina Iordache (Postdoctoral Researcher at Vrije Universiteit Brussel)
- › Bart Temmerman (Secretary General at the Flemish Department of Culture, Youth and Media)

DATA DRIVEN MEDIA INDUSTRY

BIG DATA HAS AN IMPORTANT IMPACT ON MEDIA OPERATIONS, AS A SUFFICIENTLY COMPREHENSIVE RETRIEVAL AND DEEP ANALYSIS OF USER DATA CAN ENABLE THE MEDIA SECTOR TO CREATE MORE DETAILED PREDICTIVE MODELS AND COMPETITIVE OPPORTUNITIES. DATA ARE A CRUCIAL RESOURCE IN NEW DISTRIBUTION AND BUSINESS MODELS. THIS SESSION EXPLORED HOW THE EUROPEAN MEDIA INDUSTRY CAN BE MORE DATA DRIVEN AND BETTER UNDERSTAND, ATTRACT AND SERVE ITS AUDIENCE. THE PANELISTS ALSO DISCUSSED HOW DATA CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE DISCOVERABILITY AND PERSONALIZATION OF CONTENT.

The session on data-driven media industry began with a keynote by Véronique Demilly. She stated that strategic decisions in media are increasingly based on data. However, data should never be in a position to take all decisions and to determine all strategies of media. The role of data is not to optimize revenue by tricking the audience into algorithms, but to help the media sector in collecting statistics of their content.

The panel discussion also emphasized the evolving role of data in media, the need for collaboration, regulatory support, and the responsible use of data to address challenges and improve the media landscape. Since the media sector increasingly uses data to make decisions, following points should be taken into account when taking such decisions:

› **COLLABORATION TO MAINTAIN MEDIA PLURALISM:** Shifts in viewer behavior pose challenges for smaller media entities in competition with larger online players. To compete, integration of data and collabora-

tion are essential, particularly in the European Union to maintain pluralistic media. However, challenges remain regarding data sharing and interoperability, especially across borders.

- › **BALANCING DATA AND PRIVACY:** While data-driven decisions are crucial, privacy concerns arise, necessitating a balance between utilizing data effectively and respecting privacy rights. Initiatives like TEMS aim to break down data silos while empowering individuals to decide how data is used.
- › **IMPROVING DISCOVERABILITY:** Data, particularly metadata, plays a key role in enhancing content discoverability. Prominence and discoverability discussions require regulatory support and industry responsibility to ensure quality content is findable.
- › **INVESTMENT AND SUPPORT:** To address challenges and support ongoing initiatives in the media sector, more investment in research and collaborative efforts is necessary.



“Who can afford to be away from these platforms if you want to be relevant?”

Laura Olin

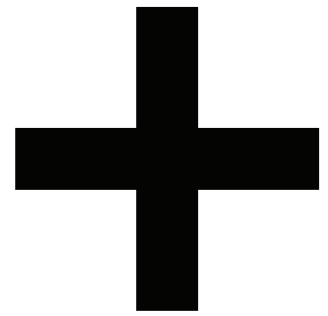


MODERATOR: Per Strömbäck
(Managing Director at Spelplan –
Association of Swedish Game Developers
and Spokesperson at Dataspelsbranschen
– Swedish Games Industry)

PANELISTS:

- › Tom Ffiske (Editor at Immersive Wire)
- › Ania Helseth (EU Public Policy
Manager at Meta)
- › Wesa Aapro (Metaverse Lead at YLE)
- › Laura Olin (Head of Studio at Younite-AI)

THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN A VIRTUAL WORLD



EXTENDED REALITY (XR) IS SET TO BECOME MAINSTREAM IN THE COMING YEARS. IN SOME VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENTS, THE LINES BETWEEN VIDEO GAMING, SOCIAL PLATFORMS, MUSIC VENUES OR FASHION RETAILERS ARE BLURRING. SOCIAL PLATFORMS ARE ALSO BOUND TO CONSOLIDATE THEIR PLACE ON THE MARKET AND INFLUENCE FUTURE CONSUMPTION TRENDS. THE PANELISTS CONSIDERED THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS: WHAT WILL THE ROLE OF MEDIA BE IN THESE VIRTUAL AND IMMERSIVE WORLDS? IS IT IMPORTANT THAT THEY ARE PRESENT IN THESE WORLDS AS WELL?

Tom Ffiske from Immersive Wire kicked off the session with a keynote on virtual worlds, setting the scene and explaining the process that has been made in the development of VR. Virtual Reality is not new, and the sector is increasing its capacity and process power over time. However, recently, investments tend to go to generative AI more often, contributing to some start-ups struggling and leaving the development of VR in a cooling-off period. Nonetheless, this slowdown gives developers some breathing room to think about virtual reality, and the way that it is going to develop.

The panel concluded that the media's role in virtual and immersive worlds involves fostering community, understanding and embracing emerging technologies, such as XR and AI, and addressing legal and regulatory challenges to ensure safe and enjoyable experiences for users. The media sector and policy should focus on the following points when discussing their presence in virtual worlds:

- › **IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA:** Opportunities to bring people of different ages together in virtual worlds should be explored by public service media and broadcasters to reconnect with public institutions and democratic moments.
- › **ENCOURAGING PLATFORM FAMILIARITY:** It's essential for all actors to gain knowledge about virtual platforms and participate in them, given that many young people spend significant time in these spaces.
- › **AI'S ROLE IN VIRTUAL WORLDS:** AI plays and will continue to play a significant role in the creation and functioning of virtual worlds, shaping user experiences and interactions within these environments.
- › **LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS:** As virtual crimes emerge, addressing legal questions, such as law enforcement in virtual worlds, is crucial. Investigations can inform policymakers about the need for regulations and enforcement mechanisms in these digital spaces.



“ You can be anyone in less than 30 seconds using deepfakes, and this content is more accessible than ever before.

Nika Nour

MODERATOR: Allie Weis (Ethics Coordinator in International Game Development at Howest – Digital Arts and Entertainment)

PANELISTS:

- › Nika Nour (PhD researcher at the UC Irvine)
- › Anthony Longo (PhD researcher at Universiteit Antwerpen)
- › Ben Zevenbergen (Responsible Innovation Ethics and Policy Advisor at Google)
- › Anssi Komulainen (Project Director at Sitra)

ETHICAL BOUNDARIES TO THE MEDIATECH REVOLUTION



TECHNOLOGY IS EVOLVING AT A RAPID PACE WHICH CONFRONTS THE MEDIA SECTOR WITH BRAND-NEW OPPORTUNITIES AND POSSIBILITIES IN CREATING AND DISTRIBUTING CONTENT. THESE NEW POSSIBILITIES HOWEVER COME WITH NEW RESPONSIBILITIES, AND THIS BRINGS INTO QUESTION IF ALREADY EXISTING ETHICAL STANDARDS USED BY MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS STILL APPLY. THIS SESSION WAS A MOMENT FOR CONTEMPLATION SURROUNDING QUESTIONS SUCH AS: HOW DO WE REMAIN CRITICAL OF THESE EMERGING POSSIBILITIES, AND CAN WE ASSUME WE CAN USE THE NEW TECHNOLOGIES FOR EVERYTHING? DO MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS NEED TO CHANGE THEIR CODES OF CONDUCT IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN INTEGRITY AND UPHOLD ETHICAL STANDARDS?

Nika Nour introduced the session by discussing the challenges posed by AI-generated deepfakes, which blur the distinction between authenticity and fabrication. This phenomenon can significantly erode trust and potentially implant false memories, both at an individual and societal level. However, it's worth noting that deepfakes also offer certain benefits, such as enhancing historical footage to more effectively convey narratives.

The keynote formed the perfect use case to build on during a panel discussion. The panel highlighted the importance of considering ethical implications in the evolving media technology landscape. Following challenges were addressed by the panelists:

- › **DEFINING ETHICAL MEDIA CONTENT:** There are differing perspectives on ethical media content creation. It refers to both how the content is produced, but also the nature of the content. Some content is in itself unethical as well, for example creating deep nudes without consent.
- › **ACCESSIBILITY OF AI CONTENT CREATION:** AI-driven content creation tools become more and more accessible, which raises concerns about innovation without permission, highlighting the need for ethical considerations in emerging media technologies.
- › **ADDRESSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE:** Current presentations of AI technology often alienate the general public, which shows that the digital divide presents challenges in developing critical AI skills.
- › **REGULATING DEEPFAKES AND RESPONSIBILITY:** Platforms lack dialogue with governments on regulating content, suggesting the need for informal cooperation to address ethical concerns and ensure alignment on standards. Ethical content is not a competitive issue, so cooperation is in place. Governments and platforms should set global standards together and determine who bears the responsibility in regulating unethical content such as deepfakes since platforms are well-positioned to moderate content.



“**Whilst competing on the level of content, it is important to collaborate at the level of innovation.**”

Karen Donders

MODERATOR: Jonathan Van de Velde
(Program and Communications Director at MediaNet Vlaanderen)

PANELISTS:

- › Ezra Eeman (Strategy and Innovation Director at NPO)
- › Karen Donders (Director Public Affairs at VRT)
- › Gabriella Vacca (Chief Technical Officer at Sky Italia)
- › Bevan Gibson (Chief Operating Officer at EMG)

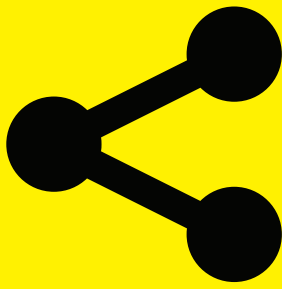
EUROPEAN BROADCASTERS: STAYING RELEVANT THROUGH TECH

INCREASING COMPETITION FROM GLOBAL DIGITAL MEDIA PLATFORMS HAS DISRUPTED TRADITIONAL BUSINESS MODELS AND HAS FORCED EUROPEAN BROADCASTERS TO ADAPT TO NEW MARKET CONDITIONS. IN ORDER TO STAY RELEVANT IN A GLOBAL, COMPETITIVE ONLINE-FIRST MARKET, THE EUROPEAN AUDIOVISUAL INDUSTRY NEEDS ALLIANCE AND COLLABORATION TO COMPETE WITH GLOBAL PLATFORMS ON SCALE, (LOCAL) QUALITATIVE CONTENT AND DISTRIBUTION MODELS. IN THIS SESSION BOTH PUBLIC AND COMMERCIAL BROADCASTERS DISCUSSED HOW THEY CAN BENEFIT BY WORKING TOGETHER ON DIGITAL PLATFORMS, TECHNOLOGY, INNOVATION AND NEW FORMS OF CONTENT?

Ezra Eeman started the session with a keynote on the evolving media landscape, emphasizing the shift to digital distribution and the dominance of global tech and content giants. European broadcasters must innovate and produce locally for global reach. Capturing value in a fragmented media landscape requires balancing personalization with connection and exploring new business models in which collaboration and partnerships are essential. Adaptation, innovation, and collaboration are crucial for media companies to thrive in the digital age.

Based on this interesting keynote, the panel further addressed the complex dynamics of the media industry and the importance of collaboration, innovation, and audience engagement in staying competitive in a rapidly evolving digital landscape. The main takeaways are:

- › **NEED FOR COLLABORATION:** Broadcasters need to adapt to new market conditions to remain relevant. Collaboration is essential to compete with global players effectively. Competition in the media industry has become global, with tech and content giants like Netflix and Amazon Prime dominating the market in Europe. European broadcasters face challenges due to their comparatively lower revenues and spending power. Collaboration among broadcasters, both public and commercial, is crucial for innovation and efficiency. Collaborative efforts can range from standardizing technology to joint content creation initiatives or common investments in general.
- › **DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION:** The media environment has shifted dramatically, with almost everything becoming streams of bits and bytes. This transformation is not just about adopting digital technologies but also about transforming the digital landscape itself. Furthermore, innovation should not only focus on technological advancements but also on content creation and audience engagement.
- › **IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL CONTENT:** To provide a sense of proximity and trust to their audiences, local content remains important for broadcasters. Efforts to promote local content visibility need to be supported by regulations and industry initiatives. AI can help support localization efforts (e.g. translation).
- › **GOVERNMENT SUPPORT:** Government policies and subsidies play a significant role in fostering collaboration and innovation within the media industry. However, broadcasters also need to explore innovation independently of government support. Broadcasters need to make strategic choices in resource allocation, considering the shifting media landscape and audience preferences.



“**Stimulating collaboration between local media actors, which often are competitors, is the only way forward to achieve sizeable scale and impact.**”

Rafaël Huybrechts



MODERATOR: Sofie Hvitved
(Futurologist at the Copenhagen Institute for Future Studies)

PANELISTS:

- › Rafaël Huybrechts (Senior Policy Advisor and Program Manager at the Flemish Department of Culture, Youth and Media)
- › Diego Agundez (Head of Multimedia and News Media Sector of DG CONNECT at the European Commission)
- › Kristers Pļešakovs (Head of Media Policy Division at the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia)

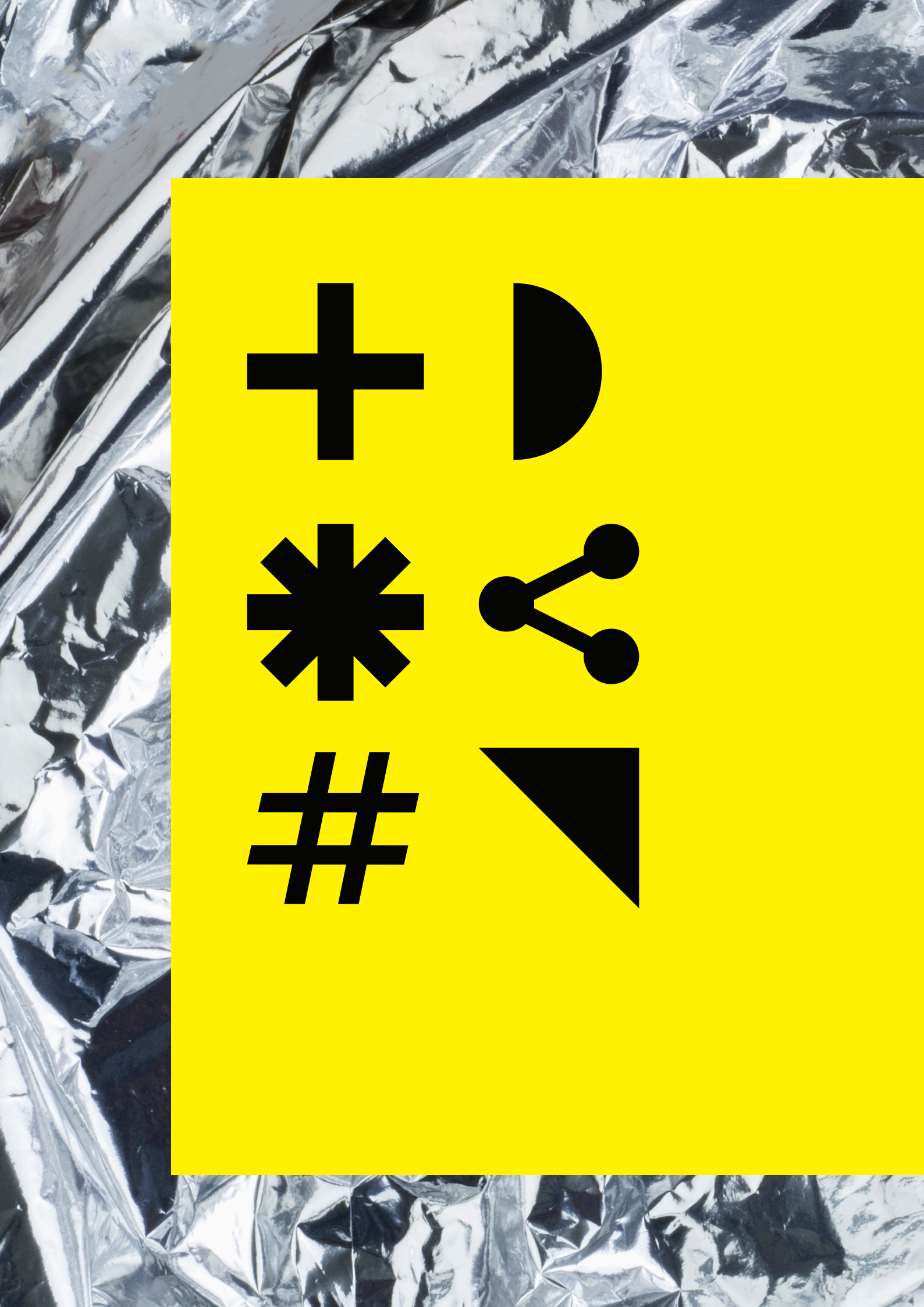
POLICY INITIATIVES STIMULATING INNOVATION AND COLLABORATION

POLICY CAN STIMULATE AND SUPPORT COLLABORATIONS WITHIN INNOVATION AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE MEDIA SECTOR. IN THIS SESSION, POLICY INITIATIVES FROM THE EU AND MEMBER STATES WERE DISCUSSED. THE PANELISTS HIGHLIGHTED GOOD PRACTICES ON HOW POLICYMAKERS CAN COLLABORATE WITH THE INDUSTRY ON A MEDIA INNOVATION PROGRAM AND HOW THEY CAN STIMULATE COLLABORATIONS WITHIN THE MEDIA ECOSYSTEM. THE SESSION ALSO LOOKED AT FUTURE NEEDS AND CHALLENGES OF THE BROAD MEDIA SECTOR FROM A POLICY PERSPECTIVE.

Rafaël Huybrechts kicked off the session with a presentation on the digital transformation program for the Flemish media sector, a government initiative to strengthen the economic viability of the local media-ecosystem and foster digital transformation. He discussed the overarching strategic goal of the program and its multiple initiatives which were all tailored to the specific challenges and common needs of the media sector. Collaboration was the guiding principle of the entire program: stimulating collaboration between local media actors, which are often competitors, is the only way forward to achieve sizeable scale and impact. The program served the interest of the entire ecosystem: by investing in media-innovation and digital transformation the foundation is laid for the further development of quality local content and new business models, which both ensure the diversity, relevance and independence of media in general. A better and more visible media content offering for the local audience can generate more revenue, which in turn can be used for further private investments in innovation and new content. This continuous cycle leads to a stronger position of the local sector in the global media ecosystem. This presentation laid the foundation for a fruitful policy discussion. It emphasized the need for substantial funding

to allow projects to develop freely and for cooperation between multiple stakeholders. Key takeaways to take in mind are:

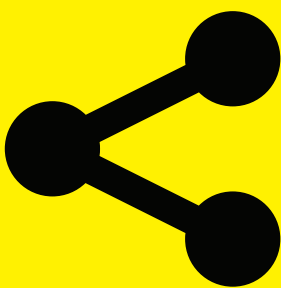
- › **SUBSTANTIAL FUNDING:** Adequate funding is essential for projects to progress freely and achieve their goals. Funding also needs to be continuous, it is not only necessary for project initiation but also for project development and the implementation of results. It is not only necessary for project initiation but also for project development and the implementation of results. In contexts of stretched resources, good prioritization is key.
- › **COLLABORATION KEY TO SUCCESS:** Cooperation among multiple stakeholders is crucial for generating fruitful outcomes in the media ecosystem. There is not one single entity that has the solution, so different levels should work together to define needs and challenges.
- › **GOVERNMENT RISK-TAKING:** Governments need to understand that not all projects will yield groundbreaking results, but will still offer valuable lessons. Policy must be willing to take risks in order to learn and understand challenges.



+




*



#





CLOSING DEBATE



“ We really need to think big and cross-sectoral. It’s of huge importance for cultural diversity and our democracy, but it’s also of huge economic value.

Renate Nikolay



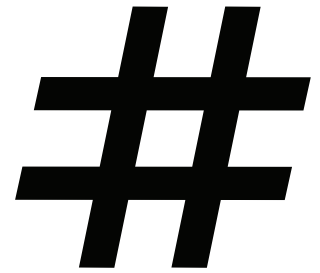
MODERATOR AND KEYNOTE:

Sofie Hvitved (Futurologist at the Copenhagen Institute for Future Studies)

PANELISTS:

- › Renate Nikolay (Deputy Director-General for DG CONNECT)
- › Flemish minister of Media
- › Jean-Philip De Tender (Deputy Director-General and Director of Media at EBU)

FUTURE NEEDS REGARDING THE UPCOMING EUROPEAN POLICY AGENDA



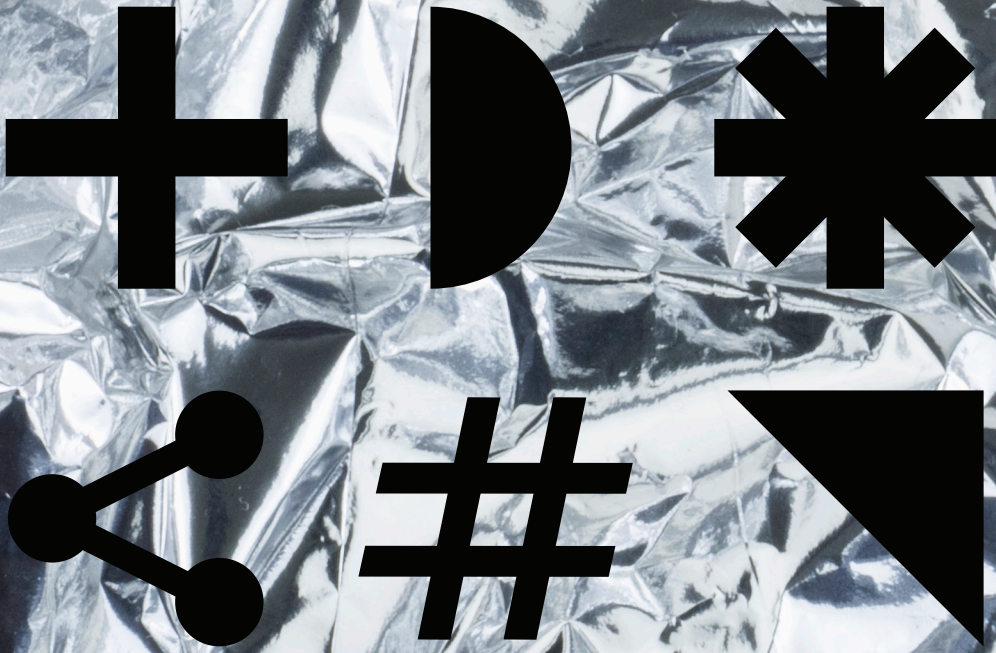
SOFIE HVITVED, A FUTURIST AND SENIOR ADVISOR AND HEAD OF MEDIA AT THE COPENHAGEN INSTITUTE FOR FUTURE STUDIES, SUMMARIZED THE MAIN TAKEAWAYS FROM ALL PREVIOUS SESSIONS. WHAT ARE THE LESSONS POLICYMAKERS SHOULD DRAW FROM THIS CONFERENCE? HOW CAN COLLABORATION BE STIMULATED? AFTER HER KEYNOTE, THE PANEL DISCUSSES FUTURE NEEDS REGARDING THE UPCOMING EUROPEAN POLICY AGENDA.

Sofie Hvitved's primary message underscored the imperative to break down existing silos and foster collaboration to drive media innovation. She outlined 11 compelling needs within the media sector. In order to fully foster digital transformation and innovation of the media sector, there is:

1. A need to truly grasp the changing audience needs
2. A need to not just address what big tech should do better and instead see what we can do better in Europe in a collaborated effort
3. A need to tear down the silos and understand that everything merges
4. A need for a human in the loop
5. A need for equal access to new technologies and tools
6. A need to build trust in a digital landscape
7. A need for shared standards – especially navigating AI
8. A need for more flexibility in order to act and build capabilities faster exploring next business models
9. A need to support (hug) the innovators – not fight them (the burden of innovation)
10. A need for the policymakers to acknowledge that we can't predict the future, but we can prepare for it
11. A need for future driven human-centered radical innovation

The panelists gave a clear and urgent message to all policymakers and media professionals. Following elements are key to drive media innovation forward:

- › **COLLABORATION:** The media sector needs to collaborate openly, tear down silos, and foster innovation across sectors like gaming, film, and television to stay competitive globally. Collaboration and cross-sectoral innovation are highlighted as crucial for future ambitions.
- › **THE EXPLOITATION OF THE EUROPEAN INTERNAL MARKET:** the industry remains mostly national, but it has room to grow beyond borders, in compliance with competition rules.
- › **PROTECT LOCAL MEDIA:** Scale is deemed crucial to compete on a global level, requiring better collaboration and connection across Europe. However, a parallel exercise is needed to protect local media. Efforts should be directed towards strengthening local media, acknowledging their importance in communities and cultural diversity and focusing on funding models that blend public and private support.
- › **SEIZE TECHNOLOGICAL MOMENTUM:** Instead of being reactive or responsive to change, we need to drive it and become leaders. Now, there is a momentum of technological revolution and we need to grasp this momentum and use it in the benefit of the European Union.



Co-funded by
the European Union

