



STATEMENT ABOUT THE PROTECTION AND PROMOTION OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE DIGITAL ERA

Getafe (Spain), Friday, October 4th, 2013

The international workshop “Protection and promotion of audiovisual diversity in the digital era” took place on October 3rd and 4th, 2013 at the Getafe campus of the Universidad Carlos III of Madrid. It was coordinated by Professor Luis A. Albornoz and Professor Ana I. Segovia and organized by the participants in the Project “Cultural diversity and the audiovisual sectors: good practices and indicators” (ref. CSO2011-26241), which is part of the National Plan of Scientific Research, Development and Technological Innovation in Spain.

The event was supported by the Faculty of Humanities, Communication and Documentation of the Universidad Carlos III of Madrid, the international scientific association “Unión Latina de Economía Política de la Información la Comunicación y la Cultura” (ULEPICC) and the research group “Televisión-cine: memoria, representación e industria” (Tecmerin).

The gathered experts analysed how to boost diversity within the cultural industries in the digital context in a variety of ways, taking into consideration the international and national work that is been developed as a result of the implementation of the *Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions* (Unesco, 2005).

It is worth noting that the organizers of this international workshop took into consideration the invitation to “the Parties that so wish as well as civil society to report to the Secretariat on aspects of the development of digital technologies that have an impact on the Convention and proposals for future action for examination of the Committee during its seventh session, and requests the Committee to transmit the results of its work to its fifth ordinary session”, formulated in the last meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the 2005 Convention (Resolution 4.CP 13, Paris, June 14th, 2013).

As a result of their encounter, the gathered experts would like to share the following considerations, recommendations and verifications:



The *Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions* (Unesco, 2005) must reach its development and application in the landscape drawn by digital networks and supports.

The report written by the *International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems* (MacBride report, 1980) and the *Mexico City Declaration on Cultural Policies* (Unesco, 1982) are two direct precedents of both the *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* (Unesco, 2001) and the *Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions* (Unesco, 2005).

Cultural diversity cannot be understood as a goal in itself but as a principle that contributes to recognize the other, the distinct and the different. Consequently, it is necessary to fight against the possible invocation of this principle in projects that work on the exclusion of the other by creating a diversity of barriers.

It is necessary to implement public policies—both national and international—that protect and promote the diversity of digital contents within the digital landscape.

It is essential to guarantee the worldwide access to digital infrastructure, avoiding a new gap between those who have access and those who do not. Avoiding the “digital fracture” must be a constitutive part of cultural policies. In this sense, it is suggested to supply broadband Internet as a universal service delivered internationally (guaranteed for all users, independently of their geographic location, with a specific quality and at an affordable price). This supply would guarantee the right to digital equality.

The access and participation of individuals and social groups are the conditions for cultural diversity within the digital environment and must be the guiding principles of contemporary cultural policies.

While recognizing that digital technologies offer a myriad of possibilities (in terms of production, distribution, promotion and consumption) for the circulation of audiovisual content, the lack of visibility of a great amount of cultural content continues to be a pressing issue.

In the new digital networks and supports, there is a process of re-mediation by new agents—such as Google, YouTube, Facebook, Spotify etc. The alliances between these agents and traditional media and cultural conglomerates question the diversity of the digital networks. The activity of these intermediaries or *gatekeepers* within



the digital arena constitutes a sort of “bottleneck” that grants visibility and promotes specific contents (“those that are more sellable”) in detriment of others. The postulated “long queue”, a metaphor that refers to the great availability of contents through digital networks, works, in actuality, as a “long invisible queue”.

It is necessary to do further research about the strategies developed by these intermediaries within the digital landscape in sensitive topics such as the alliances between the large culture-communication groups, the labelling of contents or the secret algorithms deployed in the search engines that guide the visibility of contents.

Taking into consideration the important role of audiovisual contents in the new digital networks and supports, it is necessary to create portals and search engines that favour the emergence of new creators, paying special attention to the development of initiatives in countries with hard economic conditions and/or difficulties of access to the means of production and distribution in the international markets.

The difficulty to adapt traditional instruments of intervention to protect and promote cultural contents—such as the broadcasting quotas of specific symbolic contents—within the digital environment opens a new field of analysis. In that regard, it is necessary to account for the complexity of content circulation in the digital networks and supports, and the respect for the basic rights of men and women.

Start a series of conversations with other Parties of the 2005 Convention to address the diversity of cultural expressions within the on-going commercial negotiations—and those yet to come—with special attention to the treatment of digital cultural services. The creation of an interministerial cultural forum—that includes also experts and representatives of civil society and international organizations—would be extremely useful to come up with common perspectives about the problematic “commerce-culture-digital”.

Policies devoted to the defence of *copyright* mostly favour the large culture and communication global groups and some commercially successful creators-authors, in detriment of the author’s rights and the strengthening of public domain within the digital landscape. The staunch defence of *copyright* and the relationship between publishing companies with rights management institutions goes against the micro, small and mid-size companies, and the majority of creators are not part of the media-cultural *star system*.



Following article 21 of the 2005 Convention, it is necessary for Unesco to be alert on the debates and negotiations regarding the digital challenge that happen in other international forums such as the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and the World Bank. Unesco must, on the one hand, evaluate the impact of these debates on the 2005 Convention, and, on the other hand, dynamically promote the goals of the Convention in the above-mentioned forums.

Cultural cooperation at an international level, both within the digital and analogue environments, is a key factor in the protection and promotion of cultural diversity. It is necessary to confront the national interests championed by the representatives of the Nation-States since they obstruct cultural cooperation and re-launch initiatives such as the articulation of geo-linguistic areas.

The digital environment offers an opportunity to implement diversity in the scenarios drawn by original and ancestral cultures, immigrant groups and minorities.

It is indispensable to put in motion a multilateral debate about the rights of creators and artists within the new digital scenario. In cooperation with the WIPO, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and professional institutions devoted to culture, the Unesco is the suitable organization to lead a reflection about the social and economic conditions of creators within the digital world. In this context, it is worth remembering the *Recommendation concerning the Status of the Artist* (Unesco, 1980), the creation of the World Observatory on the Social Condition of the Artist (Unesco, 1997), and the report by UN Special Rapporteur in the field of Cultural Rights devoted to “the Right to Freedom of Artistic Expression and Creation” (ONU, 2013).

Understanding that the mobility of creators and cultural analysts is a necessary condition for diversity, it is necessary to develop the international instruments to increase such mobility.

There is a need for a greater degree of organization and prominence of civil society in the defence of cultural diversity, through organizations committed to the democratization of information, communication and culture. In this sense, it is worth noting the role of public universities and their researchers.

Considering the multiple dimensions that the term cultural diversity encompasses, it is necessary to have indicators that contribute to the evaluation of cultural policies. However, such evaluations must be necessarily subordinate to the previously



established political goals in a given a society, operating within specific spatial and temporal frameworks, and must also take into consideration their context of development and implementation.

It is essential that the cultural policies of diversity within the digital environment rely on indicators that account for the social sustainability they may catalyse, attempt to capture the intangible benefits of the diversity of expressions within the arts and culture, and contribute to legitimate the development of these policies.

It is necessary to recognize and promote “good practices”—through catalogues—that inspire actions, which contribute to promote cultural diversity within the digital audiovisual environment, in particular, and within the cultural industries, in general.

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