A technological vision for the European media sector

Imagine broadcasters, media production companies and content creators all across Europe working together to transform the European media sector as we know it. This ambitious dream is becoming a reality thanks to efforts under the MediaRoad project.

Europe's audiovisual and radio sector is reputed for its capacity to innovate and produce original content. But it also has a major weakness: it is heavily fragmented. This fragmentation poses serious challenges in a context of accelerating digitalisation and unprecedented rise of global players who are not always playing by the same rules.

According to Agata Patecka, coordinator of the MediaRoad (European Media Ecosystem for Innovation) project on behalf of the EBU, the answer to these
problems lies in sharing and scaling research and development initiatives already abounding across Europe. This calls for a strong network that is strengthening the European audiovisual sector’s approach to collaboration and innovation and bringing all stakeholders – from start-ups to R&D institutes, broadcasters, production companies and content creators – around the same table.

“We want the European media sector to have a greater impact. To reach this objective, we have created three interconnected and cross-fertilising project hubs respectively covering innovation, policy and network-building,” Patecka explains.

**Introducing the Sandbox Hub**

To accelerate innovation, the consortium has created a Sandbox Hub for local start-ups and SMEs to scale up their projects internationally and exchange experience, with the support of media organisations.

“The Sandbox Hub has enabled numerous collaborations between broadcasters and start-ups, at both national and European level. Over 60 projects have been conducted so far and there are more to come,” Patecka enthuses. The projects cover the likes of VR storytelling, an AI-based search engine for sound, 4D image technology, a tool to analyse consumer satisfaction through cognitive science, and a blockchain-based system to pay for intellectual property.

The resonance of the Sandbox Hub largely exceeded the project consortium’s expectations. Whilst they initially hoped to be able to set up four media innovation accelerators, a total of 18 media organisations have already signed up to become a part of the European network.

**Towards stronger European policy and collaboration**

On the legislative front, the consortium has developed a long-term policy vision to promote European media innovation. The project Policy Hub developed two vision documents focusing respectively on opportunities and challenges facing the media sector with regards to digital transformation; policy recommendations to support media innovation; and an analysis of the potential impact of emerging technological trends for the media sector. These cover AI, immersive technologies, blockchain, 5G, Internet of Things and convergence.

The project consortium has also responded to a total of seven public consultations on the likes of fake news and Horizon Europe.

The third and last project hub is the Network Hub. “Together we created a forum aiming to strengthen collaboration, joint research and policy positioning, information sharing on technology advances and project initiation between all participants. The overall aim was to raise innovation potential amongst the representatives of the various media sectors stakeholders,” says Patecka. The team notably organised a total of 15 events on key issues for the media sector.

Patecka insists that the challenges faced by media organisations locally are, in most cases, very similar. “This further highlights the importance of focusing on and strengthening European collaboration with
regards to policy recommendations, appropriate frameworks to support media innovation and ensuring a strong position for Europe in the digital market. We will continue to work on this in the future, and more specifically on the Sandbox Hub. This particular initiative will be further scaled up to promote and give visibility to projects and collaborations between start-ups and media organisations,” Patecka concludes.

**Keywords**

MediaRoad, European media sector, audiovisual, radio, Sandbox Hub, policy, networking

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