

ONLINE PARTICIPATION IN CULTURE AND POLITICS: TOWARDS MORE DEMOCRATIC SOCIETIES?



Second thematic
report based on the
Indicator Framework
on Culture and Democracy

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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based on the Indicator Framework
on Culture and Democracy
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Europeans online

Europeans don't go online so much anymore; they *are* online. They stream music and swap playlists with their friends. They read newspapers and scroll social media on their smartphones, tablets and home computers. They use novel tools and techniques and collaborate with others online to make new creations. They click to sign online petitions and respond to hashtags to gather and demonstrate on the streets. In other words, they engage increasingly in cultural and political life online.

”The internet is of critical value for democracy.

In general, access to and use of the internet have increased tremendously in recent years. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU 2017a) estimates that more than 3.5 billion individuals were using the internet in 2017, about half of the world's population and three times more than in 2005. Some 501 million of these users were in Europe. In 2016, 85% of households in the European Union (EU-28) had internet access at home (up from 55% in 2007), more than in any other ITU region, and 83% had broadband access (up from 42% in 2007) (Eurostat 2017). Unsurprisingly, 71% of individuals in EU-28 countries use the internet every day or almost every day (up from 38% in 2007). Increasingly, people are taking the internet with them wherever they go: in 2016, 59% of individuals in EU-28 countries between the ages of 16 and 74 were using mobile devices to access the internet (up from 36% in 2012) (ibid.). Clearly, Europe is fully engaged in the digital age.

Great hopes have been pinned on the internet. In the Council of Europe's 2016-2019 internet governance strategy document (Council of Europe 2016a), the internet is seen as:

an invaluable space for the exercise of fundamental rights such as freedom of expression and information ... of critical value for democracy. Its capacity to allow people to impart and exchange ideas ... offers the potential to promote understanding and tolerance between people ... [and] connecting their voices to the Internet ... is important for pluralism and diversity in dialogue, and for bridging gaps between States and citizens.

” Opportunities arising from the new digital environment should be used to reinforce access to and participation in open culture, thereby strengthening democracy.

In its recommendations on the internet of citizens (2016)¹ and on big data for culture, literacy and democracy (2017),² the Council of Europe’s Committee of Ministers goes further to consider the expectations arising from digitalisation as it relates to culture and, ultimately, democracy. Noting that “the Internet has impacted culture by providing an unprecedented means for people ... to access and generate culture in different ways”, the recommendation on the internet of citizens reminds member states that these “opportunities arising from the new digital environment should be used to reinforce access to and participation in open culture, thereby strengthening democracy”. Indeed, the importance of the digital revolution for the “viability of [artistic] creation and cultural diversity” was already highlighted in the Final Statement of the 10th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers of Culture.³

The Council of Europe is not alone in identifying the promise the internet holds. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression has declared that “by acting as a catalyst for individuals to exercise their right to freedom of opinion and expression, the Internet also facilitates the realisation of a range of other human rights” (La Rue 2011: 7) including cultural and civil rights. In line with this thinking, countries such as Estonia and France have recognised internet access as a right, whereas Finland went even further in 2009 with a decree bestowing on every citizen the legal right to have access to a broadband connection of at least one megabit per second (ITU 2010). Furthermore, the Council of Europe’s recommendation on a guide to human rights for internet

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1. Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the Internet of citizens, adopted 10 February 2016 at the 1247th meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies, available at https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805c20f4, accessed 12 May 2018.
 2. Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)8 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on Big Data for culture, literacy and democracy, adopted 27 September 2017 at the 1295th meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies, available at https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=0900001680750d68, accessed 12 May 2018.
 3. Available at <http://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016806a2de>, accessed 12 May 2018.

users (2014)⁴ calls on member states to “ensure that existing human rights and fundamental freedoms apply equally offline and online”.

As described in more detail below, the internet is being used by individuals and groups to develop and share ideas, connect with others, access and generate culture, and engage in political life, among other things. Especially with the advent of platforms such as Facebook, VK (Facebook’s Russian equivalent) and YouTube that facilitate the flow of information and collaboration in content creation, the lines between producer and consumer and between speaker and listener have blurred, making everyone potential participants. Digitisation has also enhanced the supply of and access to diverse cultural and political expressions and more channels for engagement.

Nevertheless, the internet’s potential to promote understanding and tolerance, connect those who may feel or be marginalised, reinforce access to culture and strengthen democracy is mediated by many challenges. Such challenges include the creation of echo chambers; concerns about privacy, ownership, piracy, misinformation and interference by governments; and anonymity that may provide useful cover for both activists and criminals, as well as an apparent license for incivility. In addition, though some 85% of European households have access to the internet, not everyone has equal access or the capacity to participate equally in online cultural and political life.

Drawing on data collected within the Indicator Framework on Culture and Democracy (IFCD),⁵ developed by the Council of Europe and the Hertie School of Governance, the results of a new survey of internet users conducted by Dalia Research,⁶ and information drawn from other reliable sources, we explore some of the ways Europeans are engaging in and with culture and politics online. In addition to providing facts and figures, we examine many of the opportunities afforded by the digital age that have been highlighted by the Council of Europe in its strategies and recommendations as they relate to cultural and political life, as well as a number of accompanying challenges. In particular, we focus on how online cultural and political participation may be related to attitudes of tolerance and respect for others as well as those associated with populist tendencies. We conclude that support for online participation in culture and politics could make a positive contribution to building and maintaining inclusive, democratic societies.

4. Recommendation CM/Rec(2014)6 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on a Guide to human rights for Internet users, adopted 16 April 2014 at the 1197th meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies, available at <http://bit.ly/2jnot2m>, accessed 12 May 2018.

5. See Appendix 1 for an overview of the IFCD.

6. See Appendix 2 for an overview of the Dalia survey methodology and a list of the 28 European Union countries in which the survey was conducted.

How digitisation affects cultural participation

Box 1. Cultural participation in the Indicator Framework on Culture and Democracy

Cultural participation aggregates measures of various kinds of participation in cultural life.

Online creativity refers to people's usage of digital media in order to distribute their own cultural creations. This indicator takes into account the share of people who put their cultural content online or have created a website or blog, and other variables such as monthly Wikipedia edits, video uploads on YouTube, and top-level domains owned or managed by them.

Online cultural participation refers to individual online engagement with cultural creations. This indicator takes into account variables such as visits to museum websites and cultural blogs, online purchases of cultural products and online consumption of various content.

Passive cultural participation takes into account people's (offline) engagement with different cultural creations, institutions, events and sites.

Artistic expression and creation assesses the vibrancy of a country's cultural life according to the share of people engaged actively in a broad variety of artistic forms.

Cultural life is quite different in the digital age. More than anything, the availability of the internet and the ever growing variety of digital platforms and tools have enabled individuals and groups alike to produce, consume and even engage in the collaborative creation of cultural, artistic and other content.

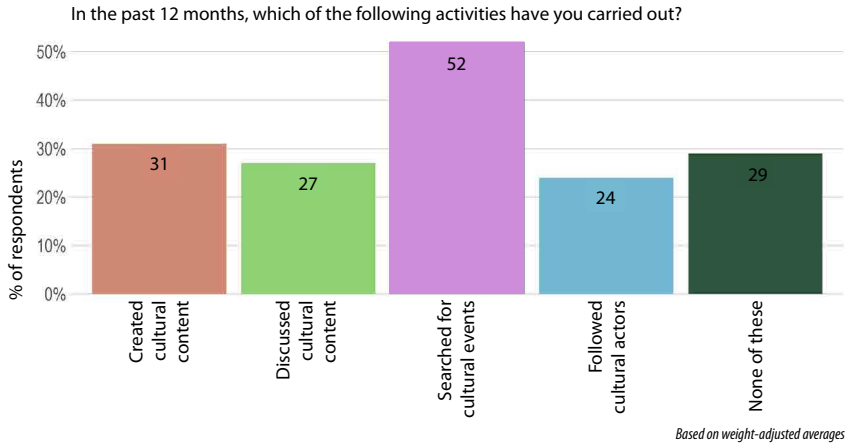
Today, people engage in and with culture online in myriad ways, such as: reading newspaper articles, searching for cultural information, purchasing cultural products, listening to music or uploading videos. In 2013, more than half of EU-28 residents surveyed had used the internet for a cultural purpose, 30% at least once a week (Directorate General Education and Culture/TNS Opinion & Social 2013). A similar proportion of EU-28 residents surveyed in 2017 reported having used the internet for cultural heritage purposes (Directorate General Education, Youth, Sport and Culture/TNS Opinion & Social 2017). Though in general more people engage with culture online than do not, national variations are considerable. Within the EU-28, the share of people claiming to participate in culture via the internet at least once a week ranges from as little as 18% to as high as 48% (Directorate General Education and Culture/TNS Opinion & Social 2013). Across the 43 Council of Europe member states covered by the IFCD, the range is at least as wide.

How Europeans engage in and with culture online

Most Europeans who participate in culture online do so as consumers. The most frequent uses mentioned by respondents to the Special Eurobarometer in 2013 (*ibid.*) were reading newspaper articles (53%), searching for cultural information (44%), and listening to radio or music (42%). One in three respondents downloaded music, while one in four streamed or downloaded TV programmes and movies; bought books, CDs or tickets; played computer games; or visited a museum or library website (*ibid.*: 57). When asked about a somewhat different set of cultural activities, just over 50% of respondents to the 2017 Dalia survey of internet users in the EU-28 reported having searched online for cultural events, and about one in four had followed cultural actors and/or discussed cultural content online (see Figure 1).

A good, and likely growing, number of Europeans also use the internet to produce and disseminate their own creations. Not only bloggers and cultural website operators, but also people who post images on Instagram, edit Wikipedia articles, or upload their own mixes to Soundcloud, are actively increasing the supply of culture online. In 2013, only 11% of respondents to the Eurobarometer survey reported publishing their own content on social media sites, while even fewer (7%) reported creating their own culture blog or website (*ibid.*). In 2017, one in three internet users responding to the Dalia survey reported having uploaded their own creative content (music, video, images) to the internet (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Online cultural participation and creativity of internet users, 2017, EU-28

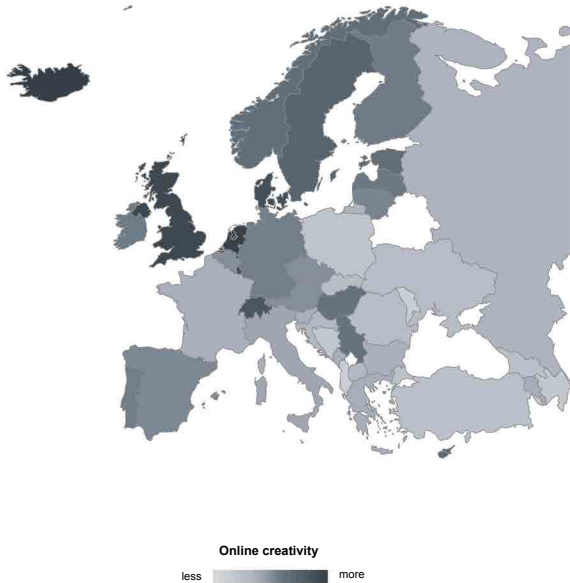


Source: Dalia Research survey

Looking at online creativity more broadly, IFCD data reveal considerable variation among Council of Europe member states (see Figure 2). Though the IFCD indicator might not capture all types of online creative and artistic activities, available measures⁷ suggest that more people in certain countries such as Iceland and the United Kingdom (darker shading) are uploading creative content and creating websites or blogs and the like than in other countries.

7. See Box 1 for the kinds of variables the IFCD uses to measure online creativity.

Figure 2: Online creativity in Council of Europe member states (N = 43)



Source: IFCD v2.0 (www.governancereport.org/ifcd)

What might be underestimated in these figures, however, is the phenomenon of “prosumption”, in which consumers are involved in the design of or significantly benefit from a creation, thus taking on more active and creative roles. In fact, many of the most popular websites, including Wikipedia, Facebook, Twitter and Vimeo, already rely on user, or more specifically, prosumer collaboration, input and digital (cultural) content (Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010).

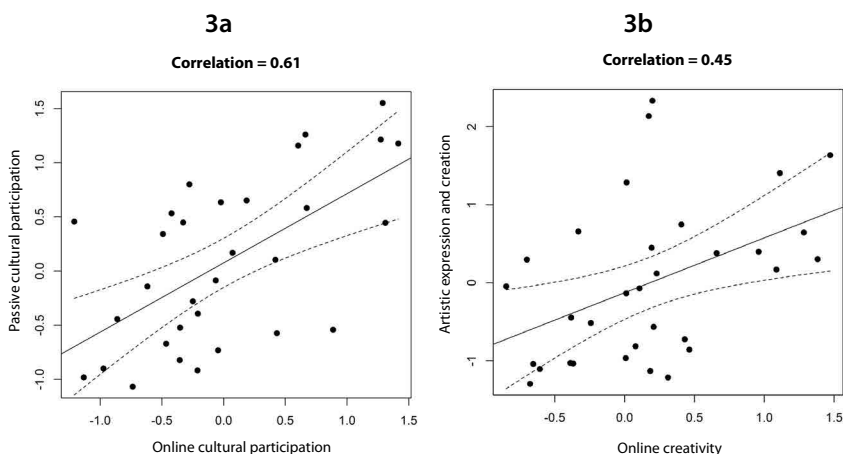
” Offline and online (cultural) activity are complementary.

If people are increasingly turning to the internet for cultural activity, are they abandoning offline engagement with culture entirely? Such an effect has not been detected as yet. On the contrary, evidence suggests that only 1% of people who participate in culture online do so without any real-world participation (Museums, Libraries and Archives Council 2011). Indeed, it seems that offline and online activity are complementary: those who participate more in any type of cultural activity are more likely to also use the internet for cultural purposes, with a few exceptions.⁸

8. For example, while respondents in Italy have a relatively low rate of participation in cultural activity overall, they use the internet for cultural purposes more than the average European (Directorate General Education and Culture/TNS Opinion & Social 2013: 55).

There even exists a positive relation between online and offline ways to participate in cultural life, at least as measured by the IFCD and for the Council of Europe member states it covers (see Figure 3). Though such a relation with relatively few points of observation does not indicate definitively what causes which outcome, it is nevertheless notable that, when associating IFCD indicators for online cultural participation and passive cultural participation (see Figure 3a), in countries where people inform themselves via the internet about cultural events, they are also likely to attend them. Conversely, it appears that people who attend live events or visit museums are likely motivated to engage with similar content online. Though the relation between online creativity and artistic expression is weaker (see Figure 3b), it is still positive.

Figure 3: Online and offline cultural participation in Europe



Source: IFCD v2.0 (www.governancereport.org/ifcd)

3a: N = 31: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, United Kingdom.

3b: N = 32: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, United Kingdom.

However, while online cultural activity may be increasing, access to and usage of the internet overall are still distributed unequally, both between and within countries around the world. The offline population remains

almost everywhere disproportionately female, elderly, lower income and rural (ITU 2016: 181). In Europe, this trend is generally confirmed, although the disparities are not quite as large as in most other world regions. In 2017, men are still more likely than women to use the internet (83% of the male population versus 77% of the female population), despite a slight narrowing of the gender gap since 2013 (ITU 2017b: 18 ff.). The young in Europe remain most likely to use the internet (96% of 15- to 24-year-olds, compared to 80% of the population) (ibid.: 20 ff.). Lastly, locale also matters: urbanised populations are more likely to have access to, and use, the internet than rural populations (ibid.: 21).

” Female internet users were slightly more likely to have engaged in at least one cultural activity online.

The same patterns are not as evident when it comes to internet use for cultural purposes (see Figure 4). European males might be more likely than females to use the internet at all, but females responding to the Dalia Research survey of internet users in 2017 were slightly more likely than males to have engaged in at least one cultural activity online (73% v. 70%). Indeed, females reported somewhat more engagement than males in all four categories of online culture, especially in seeking information on cultural events. Other studies have shown that men and women use the internet for rather different cultural purposes: men were more likely than women to use the internet for entertainment purposes such as downloading and listening to music or playing computer games, while women were slightly more likely to use the internet to buy cultural products and to search for information on cultural products or events (Directorate General Education and Culture/TNS Opinion & Social 2013: 59).

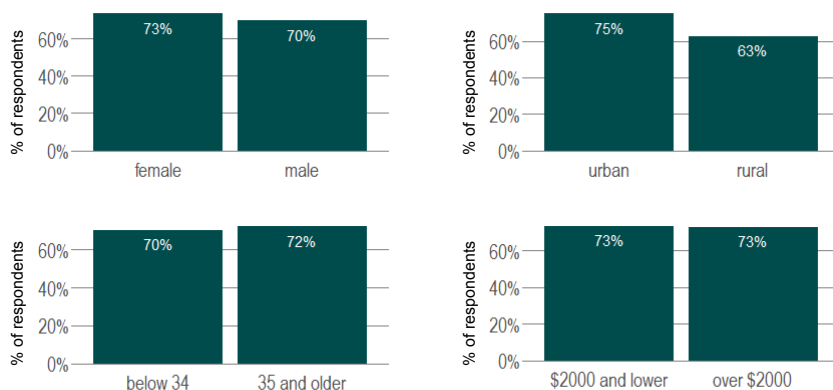
Differences in participation rates among age groups also fail to fit the overall pattern when it comes to online cultural participation. While younger people tend to use the internet more in general, approximately the same proportion of internet users 34 years old and younger participate in at least one online cultural activity as those who are 35 and older (see Figure 4). The age group differences are then found in the individual activities. Older people tend to engage more than younger people do in the most frequently mentioned activity – searching online for information about culture – while younger people are more involved in less commonly mentioned activities such as uploading or discussing creative content online. According to a 2013 population survey in the EU, far more people aged 15 to 24 than people aged 55 and up downloaded games, images, films and music, while the latter were more likely than

younger people to visit a museum or specialist website or read newspapers and articles online (ibid.).

A location-based disparity, however, is mirrored in internet use for cultural purposes. Those respondents who live in urban areas are considerably more likely to engage in at least one of the four online cultural activities covered by the Dalia survey than those who live in rural areas. The same holds true for the individual activities, with the largest difference in reported participation rates relating to seeking cultural information online: 55% of urban dwellers versus only 44% of rural dwellers.

Interestingly, the Dalia survey finds no major income-based disparity in internet use for cultural purposes overall. As shown in Figure 4, those in the lower quartile of the income distribution of all survey respondents, that is those with a monthly household income of US\$2 000 or less, are as active online culturally as those respondents with a household income over US\$2 000. The main difference lies in how the various income groups engage with culture on the internet. Those internet users who are better off are also those who are more likely to search for cultural events and information online, the most cited activity overall, and upload their creative content.

Figure 4: Differences in online cultural activity of internet users, 2017, EU-28⁹



Based on weight-adjusted averages

Source: Dalia Research survey

9. To simplify presentation, the respondents' age groups are divided into those below 34 years of age (roughly corresponding to the "millennials" group) and those 35 and older. The respondents' income groups are divided into those with monthly household incomes of US\$2 000 and less (the bottom quartile of all survey respondents) and those with monthly household incomes above US\$2 000.

Despite these differences in use patterns, it is safe to say that a large portion of Europeans are not only on the internet but also consuming, producing and sharing cultural life online. This matters because many hopes and expectations, like those highlighted in Council of Europe recommendations, are pinned on cultural participation, especially via digital channels.

Opportunities and challenges for cultural participation online

The internet is often hailed as a sort of public sphere, offering potentially innumerable venues for cultural participation with endless possibilities to consume, collaborate and create. By mitigating the most pressing barriers to culture, it was supposed to close longstanding gaps in cultural participation, enable underprivileged and marginalised voices to express themselves, and thus contribute to cultural diversity and, ultimately, appreciation and respect for that diversity. Though much progress has been made in all these directions, some barriers have proven hard to break, and others have emerged.

Reinforcing access to and participation in culture and heritage

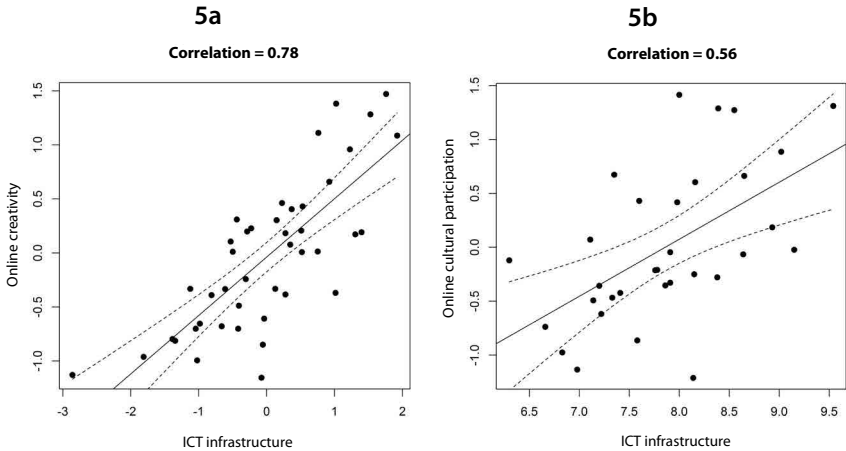
The internet undoubtedly offers the opportunity to democratise cultural participation. It offers the possibility to access culture from anywhere at any time and often lowers the financial costs of participation. However, as the data above indicates, these possibilities are by no means guarantees.

Access in terms of physical devices and connectivity would seem to be a necessary precondition for online cultural engagement and certainly facilitates production and consumption (and prosumption). As it turns out, in countries where information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure is most developed, online creativity as measured by the IFCD is more vibrant (see Figure 5a). Although online cultural consumption (represented by the IFCD online cultural participation indicator) is also more prevalent where such infrastructure is advanced (see Figure 5b), the relationship is not quite as pronounced.

Adequate, widespread connectivity, however, is not sufficient. Other barriers, such as high prices for internet access and poor quality of service, can keep people from going online (ITU 2016: 179). And online cultural participation faces additional and unique barriers. Brake (2014) considers that digital divides also manifest themselves in terms of “motivational access”, representing the desire to use digital tools; “material access”, considering if and under which conditions access is available; “skills access”, concerning the level of skill people

have to make effective use of digital tools; and “usage access”, indicating the scope of people’s use of digital tools in general. An even broader consideration concerns technological differences between countries and what effects those differences may have on the provision and flow of cultural content online. Such disparities can impede a balanced exchange and thus reinforce culturally dominant positions (Kulesz 2016: 4).

Figure 5: ICT infrastructure and cultural participation online in Europe



Sources: IFCD v2.0 (www.governancereport.org/ifcd) and ITU (2017a)¹⁰

5a: N = 43: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom.

5b: N = 32: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Turkey, United Kingdom.

In recent years, both cultural and political institutions in Europe have made strides in undertaking and supporting digitisation of cultural heritage, providing larger and possibly more diverse audiences with opportunities to consume culture. This can help mitigate the underservicing of populations that would

10. The ICT Development Index (IDI) access sub-index includes five infrastructure and access indicators: fixed-telephone subscriptions, mobile cellular telephone subscriptions, international internet bandwidth per user, households with a computer, and households with internet access.

incur high costs for offline participation. Living far away from a museum, for example, can hinder engagement with culture, but visiting the museum's internet site is possible from anywhere with an internet connection. At least in theory, people who do not have the time or financial resources to physically visit exhibitions, concerts and the like should be able to do so via their digital devices.

A 2015 survey of over 1 000 cultural institutions in 31 European countries found the most relevant motivations for the digitisation of their collections to be for academic and education purposes. Importantly, creative reuse/remix (providing raw material for online creativity on the part of website visitors) was determined to be far more important than ideological or religious use, or sales and licensing considerations (Nauta and van den Heuvel 2015). While documenting the use of digital content is hard to measure, a 2009 study estimated 43 million requests for access from the premises of European cultural institutions alone (CIPFA 2009). The overall number of requests is expected to be significantly higher and, as digitisation efforts continue, will grow.

As part of its Digital Single Market Strategy, the European Commission is encouraging and measuring the digitisation of cultural heritage in order to preserve and make available more cultural items. Supporting digitisation can take various forms. From public–private partnerships to national sponsorship or lottery funding, open data policies and licensing, or the creation of portals, projects and other strategies, public authorities have many ways to encourage digitised public domain material (European Commission 2016).

EU member states have shown much enthusiasm for the digitisation of cultural heritage. Estonia, for example, has established five digitisation competence centres for different types of cultural objects, from printed heritage to video material. As of January 2016, the online portal Europeana featured almost 49 million objects. This significantly exceeded the initial target of 30 million items by 2016, indicating the overall high, albeit varying, dedication of member states to contribute to the online availability of cultural heritage (ibid.). Action can also take place on the local level. The Rijksmuseum in the Netherlands, for instance, has opened up its public domain material for free reuse.

There is also evidence from the United States that mobile cultural participation can help overcome the gap in cultural participation for disenfranchised groups such as certain ethnic minorities and rural residents (Chen 2015). However, the question of how digitisation interacts with divides in cultural participation has not been conclusively addressed, and some studies argue that the internet is reinforcing real-world inequalities, rather than mitigating them (ITU 2016: 181).

Ensuring the viability of artistic creation and expression, as well as generation of culture

Digitisation has had and will certainly continue to have a transformative impact on the economics of artistic creation and expression. Not only does it offer unlimited space for exhibiting one's creative work, it also provides innovative tools and reduces the costs of production and dissemination – all of which entails changes affecting creators, and within the creative industries and value chains of production.

In general, value chains are becoming more complex. New digital tools, such as 3D printing and digital design software, have significantly decreased production costs, especially for individual creators and smaller collectives. In addition, the digital world offers not only lower production costs, but also new options for funding. One especially prominent, and often successful, new funding option is crowdfunding (see Box 2).

For these reasons and more, traditional intermediaries are losing market share and thus influence on which cultural creations are presented to the public. In essence, as entities such as record labels and publishing houses lose their function as the gatekeepers of cultural supply (de Voldere et al. 2017), online platforms have emerged in their stead as important venues for the dissemination and consumption of culture. Online, creators can promote their work and communicate directly with consumers, who in turn become part of the promotional machinery through liking, following and sharing content. Although not all cultural sectors are impacted equally by digitisation, all of these trends point to previously non-existent, game-changing possibilities for creators.¹¹

As digitalisation fundamentally alters the business models of the creative industries, traditional players, while shifting to digital service provision themselves, now compete with a host of new entities and production models. In the music industry, for example, revenue from recorded music sales is down but has been offset by increases in licensing fees aimed at internet-based services such as Spotify or Apple Music. Such shifts inevitably affect the employment structure in the creative industries as a whole (Acker et al. 2015). In 2014, an estimated 6.3 million people were employed in creative industries in the EU-28, constituting about 3% of the total labour force. However, national

11. The extent to which cultural sectors are affected by digitisation is dependent on two dimensions: the marginal cost of reproduction and the decrease of value from reproduction. Works that are not easily reproduced, such as theatre performances, or that lose significant value due to reproduction, such as cultural heritage items, are less affected by digitalisation (de Voldere et al. 2017).

differences are considerable, with creative industry employees making up anywhere between 1% and 5% of the total labour force in EU-28 countries (Eurostat 2016).

Box 2. Crowdfunding for cultural operations and creation

Crowdfunding is a way of raising money from a large number of people, essentially via online platforms, to finance projects or businesses. By collectivising risk, crowdfunding allows for investments that would otherwise not happen. Digitisation has facilitated crowdfunding operations by lowering communication costs and increasing reach. Crowdfunding, in turn, has benefited the cultural and creative sectors by bridging funding gaps created by budget cuts (following the 2008-09 financial crisis) and exacerbated by traditional financial institutions that are often sceptical of financing cultural projects. Since 2013, 75 000 crowdfunding campaigns have been launched in the EU-28 alone, about half of which reached their funding goals, leveraging a total investment of €247 million. The prevalence of crowdfunding still differs greatly in terms of location and cultural sector, with France and the UK making up 66% of campaigns and 63% of transaction volume. In terms of sectors, the most funds have been raised for film and audiovisual projects (29% of transaction volume) and for music (17%).

Source: de Voldere and Zeqo 2017

Within the creative industries, jobs have tended to follow the shifts in market shares produced by digitisation. As a consequence, employment opportunities in the digital creative industries feature more independence (and less security), and a new generation of contractors and freelancers has emerged (Acker et al. 2015). While the overall number of creative industry jobs remained stable between 2003 and 2013, the film, TV and gaming sectors saw an increase in employment, while others, such as music, print media and book publishing, witnessed considerable job losses (ibid.).

Despite, or perhaps due to, these shifts between the digital and more traditional sectors, growth in the creative industries overall shows no sign of slowing down in Europe. The creative industries demonstrated considerable resilience in the face of the financial crisis, growing employment by 0.7% between 2008 and 2010, and featuring growth of 4% annually between 2011 and 2014 (Eurostat 2016). Digitisation certainly played a strong role. Total creative industry revenue in the EU-28 grew from €176.3 billion to €197.7 billion between 2003 and 2013 – a difference owed entirely to the digital sector, which grew by a total of €36 billion, while its non-digital counterpart shrank by €14 billion. Hence, the digital sector increased its market share from 12.3% to 29.3% (Acker et al. 2015).

With the changes in the creative industries brought on by digitisation comes the need to adjust or develop policies and regulations that balance the right of individual creators to free expression with other rights. Today, artists and prosumers take advantage of seemingly unlimited opportunities to express and promote themselves online, often sharing, reusing or remixing existing cultural content. Indeed, the Council of Europe's recommendation on big data for culture, literacy and democracy encourages its member states to promote the use of digital means "to unlock the potential of heritage for the creative 're-purposing' of cultural content". Yet copyright, ownership, piracy and other legal issues have yet to be resolved such that creators' rights are protected. One possible path to remedy this tension, and one encouraged by the Council of Europe's recommendation on the internet of citizens, is the use of creative commons licensing, which allows for the copying, distribution and reuse of cultural works – at least non-commercially – without impinging on the original copyright.¹² Increasingly, European countries support licensing solutions, including collective licensing, to make their cultural heritage, public domain material and orphan works available to the public (European Commission 2016). Greater certainty regarding what is legally possible might well serve the dual purpose of ensuring the viability of artistic creation and generating culture.

Promoting cultural diversity

” Online interaction can contribute to acknowledgment of different perspectives, thereby not only enriching one's own understanding of identity, but also encouraging respect for diversity.

Digitisation has undoubtedly increased the supply of diverse cultural content. The internet's unlimited "shelf space" enables producers of less traditional or even fringe cultural content to display their work and intrigue populations that feel underserved by mainstream cultural output. Musicians that in previous times might have laboured in obscurity for years are now being "discovered" through channels such as YouTube. Many digital platforms and spaces also provide opportunities for contributors to re-examine and reinvent perspectives. Wiki-driven online encyclopaedias, for example, permit traditional and dominant narratives about history and thus identity to be challenged and rewritten by decentralised editors. Such interaction can contribute to the acknowledgment of different perspectives and worldviews, thereby not only enriching one's own understanding of identity but also encouraging respect for diversity.

12. See <https://creativecommons.org/licenses>, accessed 12 May 2018.

Increased supply, however, does not automatically translate into increased diversity of the content we consume. Just because content is “out there” does not mean it is necessarily visible or easy for us to consume. Paradoxically, the sheer amount of content being supplied from across the globe, especially from powerful hubs of the entertainment industry and the art market, risks drowning out local or niche markets, as well as support for up-and-coming artists (Kulesz 2016: 12).

The question is whether diversity is being enhanced by the “long tail” or quelled by the “superstar effect”.¹³ On one hand, according to the long tail view, digitisation increases the diversity of the supply of culture by levelling the playing field for creators and reducing the costs of production and distribution while allowing sufficiently large markets, also for fringe products, to be established. Moreover, the opportunity costs of locating lesser-known content are reduced, and the relative importance shifts from the most popular goods, services and content (the “head”) to less familiar or niche ones (the “tail”) (de Voldere et al. 2017: 282). On the other hand, the superstar effect, by which some artists attract significantly more attention (and, therefore, income) than others, might be reinforced, especially by aggregator platforms, and thus result in narrowing the range of cultural content. Consumers tend to choose the most popular options in order to save time that would be spent gathering information about the (likely many) variations available. “Most viewed” and “top rated” filters, for example, are easy guides through a myriad of online content, but they also make less mainstream products and content practically invisible unless the user specifically looks for them. A pertinent question then becomes: what do we see when we open our Facebook pages? What videos are autoplayed to us on YouTube? Which books are recommended to us by Amazon, and which films are suggested to us on Netflix?

Moreover, aggregator sites take on an important role in this context as their recommendation algorithms can have a considerable impact on our consumption, not to mention our general awareness of cultural content and views. By analysing our personal data and predicting what we might like, these algorithms trim down the visible choice for easy consumption, and thus have the potential to reduce variety rather than enhance it. Furthermore, the concentration of the supply of cultural content across a relatively small number of aggregators could pose a threat not only to local industries but also to cultural diversity online (Kulesz 2016: 17). An important question then is to what extent platforms are willing to guarantee visibility of diverse cultural content, and promote the consumption of marginal works. The answer is still unclear, and empirical research about both long tail and superstar effects in Europe has thus far offered mixed results (de Voldere et al. 2017; Ranaivoson 2016).

13. A detailed examination of these concepts is offered by Ranaivoson (2016).

How digitisation affects political participation

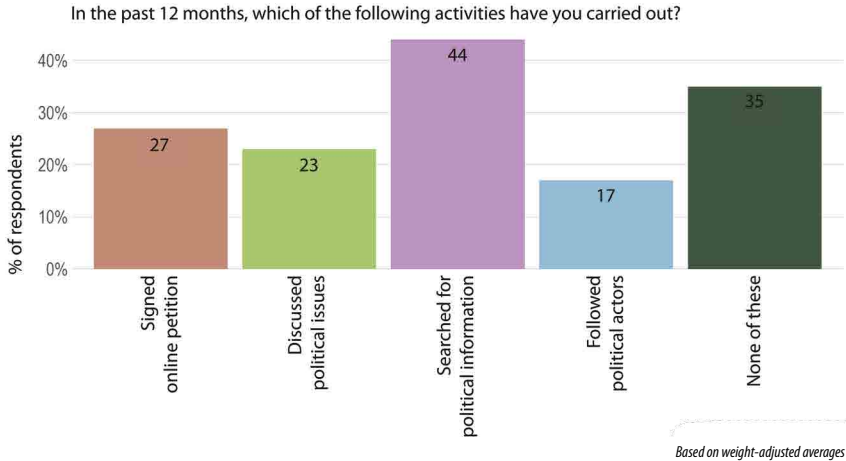
Widespread availability of the internet and digital tools has certainly had an impact on the ways many people participate in political life, whether in voting for candidates for political office, signing petitions, joining demonstrations or gathering information on public policy issues. The rapid spread of smartphones and near-constant internet connectivity have opened up space for new forms of political communication, participation and decision making. Engaging in politics is in many ways easier and certainly more immediate than before. And, much like for cultural activity, the advent of digital repertoires for political action has enabled new actors, from grassroots citizens' groups to upstart political parties, to take their places on the political stage, with the lines between roles blurring.

How Europeans engage in and with politics online

Europeans engage in political life individually and collectively using a variety of digital tools and channels. Of the nearly 11 000 internet users in EU-28 countries responding to the Dalia Research survey, two thirds reported having engaged in at least one type of political activity online in 2017. Forty-four per cent of the respondents had searched for information about political or social issues on online news websites in the past year (see Figure 6). Another study found similar results for using the internet as a source of political information: roughly half of internet users had used it as a source of political information (Vowe 2014: 34), though only a small proportion did so on a regular basis.

One in four Dalia survey respondents had signed an online petition relating to social or political issues. In 8 of the 28 countries covered, 30% to 40% had done so, but in 9 countries this was only 10% to 20%. Almost as many respondents had voiced their opinions about one or more political or social issues online, a figure that roughly corresponds to a finding from a Eurobarometer survey in 2013 (Directorate General for Communication/TNS Opinion & Social 2013) that indicated 28% of the general population had expressed their views online. Following a political figure on a social networking site was the least frequently reported activity, reported by 17% of all internet users responding to the Dalia survey.

Figure 6: Online political participation and activism of internet users, 2017, EU-28



Source: Dalia Research survey

In terms of who uses the internet for engaging in political life and how, the Dalia survey results show that slightly more males than females engaged in at least one of the four political activities in 2017 (see Figure 7), but among these activities the gender balance differs. For example, while a higher percentage of males expressed their political opinions online than females,¹⁴ more female respondents reported having signed an online petition. With regard to searching for political information and following political figures, the difference is minimal, with males only slightly more likely to do both than females.

With regard to age, internet users 35 years of age and older were more likely to engage in online political life than their younger counterparts (68% v. 61%; see Figure 7). Though millennial internet users (16 to 34 years old) more often reported following a political figure on a micro-blogging service such as Twitter, older internet users were more likely to discuss political issues online.¹⁵ Older users had also searched for political information, the most cited activity, and signed online petitions more than millennials, in general engaging more actively than their more passive, younger counterparts.

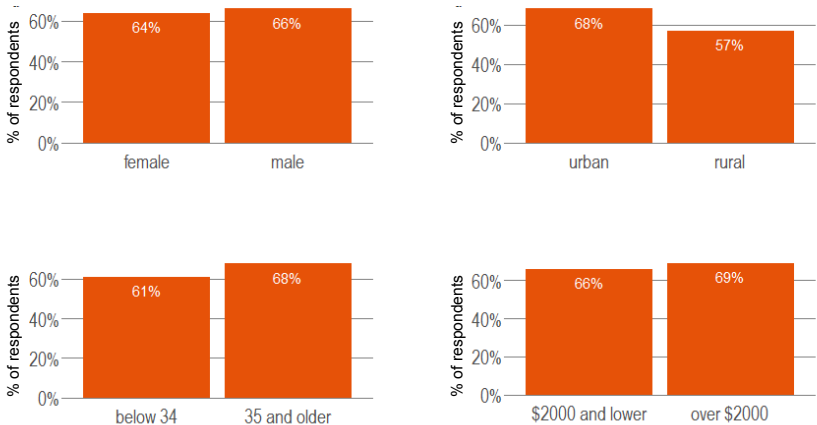
14. Directorate General for Communication/TNS Opinion & Social (2013: 30) found that the difference between males and females who shared their political views online was considerable: 32% of males said they had done so, while only 25% of females did.

15. Directorate General for Communication/TNS Opinion & Social (2013: 30) found, however, that those between the ages of 15 and 24 expressed their views on public issues online more than those over 55 years of age (42% v. 17%).

Among Dalia survey respondents, those living in cities were more likely to engage in any and all four types of online political activities considered. Nevertheless, the difference is only considerable with regard to using the internet to seek information about social or political issues (47% urban v. 38% rural).

The Dalia survey also revealed that those living in households with a monthly income above US\$2 000 were slightly more likely to engage in at least one of the four online political activities. In general, this advantage holds for all four activities, but the difference is starker in relation to searching for social or political information, posting a political opinion online and signing an online petition. When it comes to following political figures, those in lower income households appear to be just as active.

Figure 7: Differences in online political activity of internet users, 2017, EU-28¹⁶



Based on weight-adjusted averages

Source: Dalia Research survey

Not only individuals and households but also social movements and civil society organisations (not to mention politicians and political parties) in Europe are participating in political life online. Nowadays, they rely increasingly heavily on digital tools, especially social networking services, to inform and mobilise people more quickly, more broadly, and at a lower cost than ever before. Some observers point to the rise of a digital civil society (Merkel 2017) that is capable of monitoring more effectively and in real time politicians and institutions, holding them accountable in a way that was not possible before,

16. The respondents' income groups are divided into those with monthly household incomes of US\$2 000 or less (the bottom quartile of all survey respondents) and those with monthly household incomes above US\$2 000.

and reacting by mobilising public pressure. A case in point is the 15-M or *Indignados* movement in Spain protesting against austerity measures taken by the government during the euro crisis. In May 2011, a week before municipal and regional elections, people in 50 Spanish cities took to the streets to demand “real democracy now” primarily in response to calls spread by grassroots citizens’ organisations through social networks. Whereas traditional large-scale collective action usually depends on well-equipped organisations to mobilise resources towards a cause, in the digital age, “connective action” (Bennett and Segerberg 2012) networks foster the self-organisation of social movements without central organisational actors and, in some cases, across entire countries or even regions.

Digital tools have enabled the emergence of another new type of civil society organisation – digital advocacy organisations. Unlike digitally empowered social movements such as 15-M, they are permanent organisations that are member-driven, member-funded, and working on several issues at once. During the refugee crisis in Europe in 2015-16, for example, digital advocacy organisations in many European countries, including Austria, Germany, Ireland and the UK, combined offline tactics (vigils and demonstrations) and online ones (online petitions and emails to government officials) as well as both mainstream and social media to lobby for refugee rights and increase political awareness and activism (Hall 2017).

The expansion of internet access has enabled some governments, parliaments and even the European Commission to experiment with digital tools in order to create channels for citizen participation in policy and lawmaking. In Finland, several ministries have incorporated crowdsourcing techniques in the lawmaking process by establishing online platforms to facilitate input and feedback. At the European Union level, many of the Commission’s Directorates-General not only conduct online public consultations on policies, legislation and projects but also share details of previous public consultations, including information about the responses received and follow-up. Even so, only 8% of the population in the EU-28 reported having used the internet to take part in online consultations or voting¹⁷ in 2015 (with similar results for Norway). In only 9 of the 28 countries was the share 10% or higher; in 13 of them, 5% or less of the population had participated in these forms of online political activity (Eurostat 2017).

To sum up the overview presented here, use of the internet and social media for engaging in political life by the general population and even internet users

17. Few Council of Europe member states offer e-voting options. As of 2016, only four (Armenia, Estonia, France and Switzerland) had established internet-based voting systems that allowed at least some citizens to vote online (see Haber 2017).

in Europe is not pervasive, but it seems to be on the rise. Those individuals who do use these channels do so more for seeking information about political and social issues than for engaging in political discussion or other activities. Yet social movements and civil society organisations are using digital tools to advocate for policy issues and even mobilise audiences to act, and some governments and other political bodies are employing such instruments to solicit input from citizens during many, if not all, stages of policy making. And while European politicians and political parties have yet to engage in online communication to quite the extent of their counterparts in, for example, the United States, they are increasingly turning to digital platforms to complement offline campaigning and attempts to set agendas. But despite all this activity, does the picture live up to the hopes pinned on the internet for enhancing political participation?

Opportunities and challenges for political life online

The combination of digitisation and politics has often been associated with concepts of participatory or direct democracy, with technology seen as a catalyst for democratic practices such as exchanging views and engaging in informed dialogue. The hope has been that the internet and digital tools will help bridge the gap between citizens and institutions and bring people typically outside of the political debate into it. While some degree of progress has been made in these directions, there is still plenty more to consider and do.

Promoting understanding and tolerance through exchange of ideas and opinions

Though political discussion still seems to take place more offline than online, the opening up of digital space indeed appears to provide new channels for exchanging political ideas and opinions. The extent to which these channels promote greater understanding and tolerance is the topic of lively debate.

” Dissemination of messages that are not based on fact or personal knowledge could constitute an exchange of ideas, but does not necessarily lead to informed discussion of the issues or enhanced understanding.

Online deliberations often involve more actors, reinforcing communities despite physical distance between members. When anonymity is permitted, however, democratic communication is often accompanied by an increase in uncivil behaviour, including aggression, attacks and hate speech, rather than (only) understanding and tolerance. This tendency depends in part on

the media format. For example, research has shown that comment threads on newspaper websites tend to be coarser and ruder than Facebook debates (Rowe 2014), since the relative anonymity provided by many of the former diminishes the accountability of users with regard to their opinions. Indeed, many media companies have moved their comment sections to other platforms as a way to increase accountability, a step that suggests a somewhat positive effect of social networking sites in civilising the debate.

However, other characteristics of social networking sites can potentially hinder the goal of promoting understanding and tolerance, such as the reinforcement of ideological positions built by the algorithms that define the content that we are exposed to, also discussed below. When backed up by a community of like-minded supporters, users may increase their tendency towards incivility, despite the fact that one's identity may be visible, at least to some extent, on platforms as diverse as Reddit, Instagram and VK, among many others. Furthermore, by sharing posts and other media created by third-party authors, people may disseminate messages that appeal to their perspective, but this content is not necessarily based on fact or personal knowledge and expertise. Indeed, this could constitute an exchange of ideas, but it most often does not lead to informed discussion of the issues or enhanced understanding.

Many efforts have emerged across Europe to deal with the rapid online spread of what some call "information disorder" or "information pollution" (Wardle and Derakhshan 2017).¹⁸ In 2016, more than 30 fact-checking entities were operating on a continuous, rather than intermittent, basis in 20 European countries. These include units linked to traditional media outlets such as *Les décodeurs* in France and *swissinfo.ch* in Switzerland, as well as others, mainly set up as independent non-profit organisations, such as *Istinomer* in Serbia, *Pagella Politica* in Italy, and *Full Fact* in the UK (Graves and Cherubini 2016). Other initiatives, such as the International Fact-Checking Network and *First Draft*, promote best practices and exchanges in this field of work that has emerged over the last two decades. However, as Wardle and Derakhshan suggest in their report, commissioned by the Council of Europe, while fact-checking has been shown to have some positive impact, checking the sources of information is at least as important. Furthermore, those responding to the urgent calls for news literacy education need to bear in mind that healthy scepticism can turn into distrust in the media more generally, unless educational programmes focus on critical thinking, source evaluation, and emotional manipulation as well (Wardle and Derakhshan 2017: 69).

18. The authors caution against using the term "fake news" for two reasons. Firstly, the phenomenon is much more complex than what is conveyed by that simple term. Secondly, politicians have increasingly appropriated the term to refer to news organisations whose coverage they find disagreeable.

Many European actors are also taking action to counter online hate speech and reduce intolerance. For example, on 1 January 2018, Germany's Network Enforcement Law (NetzDG) on hate speech in social media went into force (The Economist 2018). The law requires social media firms to check and quickly remove posts flagged by users as containing illegal content or face a large fine. However, concerns being voiced from many corners highlight the need to monitor measures such as this to ensure a balance between the right to self-expression and protection against hate speech. Other actors are developing programmes to counter hate speech using the same media in which it is often propagated. For instance, Somos Más (We Are More), a collaboration between Spanish government ministries, non-governmental organisations and YouTube, combines classroom teaching with the production and dissemination of videos to increase tolerance, reduce hate speech and prevent radicalisation. The Council of Europe youth sector's No Hate Speech Movement, begun in 2012, launched Hate Speech Watch to enable users to trace and discuss online expressions that spread, incite, promote or justify hatred based on intolerance. Just as important, the Hate Speech Watch website also provides clear instructions on how to report hate speech to the authorities.

Including everyone, without discrimination, in the democratic process

If the promise of the internet is to be fulfilled, digitisation should enable everyone to participate in the democratic process by providing new channels and new tools that facilitate engagement. In principle, the internet should level the playing field, reducing at least some of the traditional barriers to participation as voters, activist, advocates or even candidates for political office.

As we have seen, some Europeans are indeed using the internet to inform themselves about political issues (though just as many are not doing so). A small portion of European residents are even taking part in online consultations or voting where this is possible online. And tens to hundreds of thousands of people have responded to calls via social networking sites and other channels to sign petitions or demonstrate in the streets in regard to the policies or actions of their governments and others.

Much as with cultural participation, including everyone in political life online is a goal hindered in the first place by unequal access to ICT infrastructure. Fifteen percent of EU-28 residents do not even have access to such infrastructure, and in many European countries, the proportion without access

is even larger (Eurostat 2017). Even where there is access, many do not have the skills to do more than search for information on political or social issues (which in itself is, arguably, an important step in becoming politically active). And many Europeans are simply not going online to engage in politics: some 35% of internet users in the EU-28 responding to the Dalia survey reported that they had not used the internet for any of the listed political purposes. In short, disparities in access, skills and interest indicate some potential limits, or at least challenges, to achieving the goal of including everyone in the democratic process via digitisation.

But has digitisation activated people who were not already active in the first place or were previously unable to participate? The evidence is not overwhelming, but there are at least some indications. In the case of the 15-M movement, for example, the approximately 130 000 demonstrators protesting austerity programmes in Spain in 2011 are said to have mainly consisted of younger people who traditionally did not participate in political activities (Anduiza, Cristancho and Sabucedo 2013). Online experience with more institutionalised forms of political participation such as voting has had quite mixed results, where it has been tried. In the UK and in Norway, for example, pilot tests of internet voting did not lead to a rise in voter turnout. In Estonia, however, where internet voting has been available since the mid-2000s, there is some evidence that the convenience of completing the task online has enhanced the turnout of marginal voters (Hall 2012: 164).

” The promise to turn political participation into effortless action [online] has not been fulfilled because the costs of participation are less related to ease and more to socio-economic factors and political interest.

Ultimately, everyone who has unfettered access to the internet and minimal skills can participate in political life online, at least theoretically. However, the promise to turn political participation into effortless action has not been fulfilled, mainly because the costs of participating in politics are less related to the relative ease of voting or signing a petition, and more related to socio-economic factors and political interest. As Smith noted more than a decade ago with regard to the perhaps most universal form of institutionalised political participation, “technology can increase the convenience of voting, but inconvenience is not the major reason why people do not vote.” (2005: 21)

Enabling pluralism and diversity in dialogue

The internet has by and large enabled more, and likely even new, actors to disseminate an increasing amount of political information (but also disinformation). The question is whether this information is encouraging pluralism and diversity in dialogue, with emphasis on the aspect of dialogue.

A recurring debate regarding online political behaviour is whether social media builds walls or bridges between opposing perspectives. The debate most often centres on the algorithms employed by social media platforms (as well as search engines, online retailers and almost everything else on the internet) that filter the content a user will be exposed to. Through the user's reactions, including likes, comments and shares, algorithms identify and then present to the user the type of content most likely to appeal to them.

” Filtering may help sort through the information available online, but algorithms may also create walls that can separate us from the rest.

Filtering may help sort through the overwhelming quantity of information available online, but by tailoring the flow of information to our tastes, algorithms may also create walls that separate us from the rest. Especially when it comes to politics, closing the doors to content that does not appeal to a user's political beliefs or interests may be harmful. If you were politically conservative, content in support of gay marriage rights would most likely not be displayed on, for example, your Facebook feed. Being exposed to content from people of a similar disposition creates a homogenous environment but also a breeding ground for radical positions.

This leads to what is commonly known as “filter bubbles” (Pariser 2012), an effect of seemingly innocuous filtering that groups like-minded people together rather than confronting users with different points of view. In the words of Pariser, “democracy requires citizens to see things from one another's point of view, but instead we're more and more enclosed in our own bubbles. Democracy requires a reliance on shared facts; instead we're being offered parallel but separate universes” (ibid.: 5). At its extreme, this process creates echo chambers (Sunstein 2001) in which ideas and beliefs are amplified or reinforced through communication and repetition, clustering people with similar perspectives into increasingly homogenous groups. Hence, online political debate often tends to move away from a deliberative environment towards a polarised one. Yet, no one is compelled to confine themselves to their bubbles, and several initiatives and tools seek to nudge internet users towards a broader spectrum of content (see Box 3).

Box 3. Avoiding and bursting filter bubbles

Echo chambers and filter bubbles can be avoided and even burst, providing user interest and will exists. Those using the internet to obtain information on political or social issues need to be aware of the choices available to them and take control of their “information diet” (World Forum for Democracy 2017). Several tools have been developed recently to help internet users do just this. On the Nupinion website, for example, readers are presented stories related to their topic of interest from a variety of news sources rated according to their bias and credibility. Read Across the Aisle is an app that helps users monitor their media diets, tracking the news sources they read most frequently and offering alternative sources to provide balance. For those relying on Twitter, the FlipFeed extension allows users to view the feed of someone of different political leanings.

The internet provides tools and information that can empower citizens who think critically about the content they access, but social networks and other platforms can also be used to misinform or even manipulate the public debate. With so many voices online, the boundaries between reliable, well-grounded information and opinion become blurred, and this fuzziness is amplified by “alternative facts” and “information pollution” – occurring far more easily and rapidly online than in print publications or on television broadcasts. With quality control minimised and the greater danger of manipulation at play, the role of online platforms in diversifying and increasing the supply of information does not automatically lead to greater political awareness among the general population (Merkel 2017).

Bridging gaps between states, politicians and citizens

Another hope for digitisation is that it might serve to bridge gaps between the state and its citizens, perhaps even between increasingly derided political elites and citizens. In an ideal world, digitisation would make the state and politicians more responsive to the citizens they represent, and make citizens more aware of the workings of government and politics.

If making government services more accessible is intended to bridge the gap, then some progress is being made. Increasingly, European governments are placing information, forms and administrative processes online. Whether citizens take advantage of these services is, of course, dependent on their access to the internet and their interest in doing so. In 2017, some 49% of people in EU-28 countries reported having used e-government services to obtain

information from a public authority's website or to download or submit official forms in the previous year, up from 35% in 2008 (Eurostat 2017). Variation between European countries is high, from participation rates above 80% in Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden to rates below 50% in half of the other countries in the EU-28.

” Enhancing involvement in political processes requires far more than digitising aspects of public administration and service delivery.

However, enhancing involvement in actual political processes requires far more than digitising aspects of public administration and service delivery. As noted above, several governments and even the European Commission are opening up the policy-making process to citizen involvement on a larger scale, most often through online consultation but also through crowdsourcing via online platforms. Such initiatives, usually intended to gather experience- and expertise-based input from a wider range of stakeholders and beneficiaries, are sometimes even framed as an initial stage of “co-creating” public policies and services alongside citizens. To the extent that they are open to anyone, government-led opportunities for e-participation might encourage greater interest and involvement. However, the design of the platform and its ease of use will influence whether anyone other than those who are already actively involved in, or are very vocal on the issue put up for discussion will make the effort and have the skills to participate.

Bridging the gap between politicians and citizens is a different matter altogether. Digitisation has in many countries enabled the public to demand immediate responses from politicians, thereby accelerating the pace of political communication (Roemmele 2017). Yet it works the other way as well. By taking the reins of social networking sites and micro-blogging services, politicians are able to dictate their own content and address the electorate almost instantaneously and around the clock while bypassing media outlets that might have distilled their messages or put them in a different context (Gainous and Wagner 2014; Gerbaudo 2015).

In light of this brief overview of how people participate in political life online and assessment of whether the promises pinned to it have been fulfilled, we can conclude that digitisation has indeed changed many aspects of political participation. However, it has not necessarily made things more or less democratic (Roemmele 2017).

Digitised cultural and political participation and its impact on inclusive democracies

As noted at the outset, Europeans are online and, as shown throughout the report, engaging in various ways and to various extents in cultural and political life via online media and tools. What, then, does online engagement mean for inclusive democracies? This section highlights some previously reported findings and links the discussion to the goal of building inclusive, democratic societies.

Europeans engaging online

Thus far, we have shown that a growing share of Europeans are taking advantage of the new channels and tools afforded by digitisation to participate in cultural and political life (see Box 4 for basic facts and figures). The internet and digital tools and platforms have increased the amount and, arguably, the diversity of available content and channels for consuming, producing, disseminating and otherwise engaging online individually and collectively. This digital repertoire has also afforded individuals, organisations, businesses and governments a host of means to become active, mobilise and collaborate. In both cultural and political online spaces, the lines are blurring between consumer and producer, the roles of traditional gatekeepers and institutions have shifted, and new types of individual and collective forms of action have emerged.

Box 4. Europeans engaging online: facts and figures

In 2017, 501 million Europeans were using the internet.

In 2016, 71% of individuals in the EU-28 used the internet every day.

Cultural participation

According to a Special Eurobarometer conducted in 2013, more than 50% of individuals in the EU-28 used the internet for cultural purposes, 30% at least once a week.

According to the 2017 Dalia Research survey of internet users in EU-28 countries, 71% had used the internet for at least one cultural purpose in the past year.

Most Europeans who participate in culture online do so as consumers. Of Dalia survey respondents, 52% had searched for cultural information, 27% had discussed cultural content, 24% had followed a cultural group, and 31% had posted their own cultural content.

Offline and online cultural activity are complementary: Indicator Framework on Culture and Democracy (IFCD) measures indicate that there is a positive relation between online and offline ways to participate in cultural life.

Internet users who engage in online cultural life tend to be female, 35 years of age or older, and urban, though the differences are slight. Those living in households with monthly earnings above and below US\$2 000 seem to be equally involved. Some differences are more evident at the activity level.

Political participation

According to the 2017 Dalia Research survey of internet users, 65% of respondents had used the internet for at least one political purpose in the past year: 44% of respondents had searched for information about political or social issues on online news websites in the past year, 27% had signed an online petition, 23% had discussed political issues online and 17% had followed a political actor.

Internet users who engage in online political life tend to be male, better off economically, urban and older (35 years and above), though more significant differences appear at the activity level.

Digital tools have enhanced the mobilisation capability of social movements and enabled the emergence of a new type of civil society organisation: digital advocacy organisations.

Some governments, parliaments and the European Commission are experimenting with digital tools in order to create channels for citizen participation in policy and lawmaking.

European politicians and political parties are increasingly turning to digital platforms to complement offline campaigning and to try and set agendas.

Opportunities and challenges for online participation

If many of these changes were expected, why do we even need to look at how digitisation affects both cultural and political participation? Looking more closely at the changes is important because, as with every new technology, initial euphoria is eventually confronted by reality. Technology and infrastructure are simply tools and means; it is how they are used, by whom, and to what effect that makes the difference.

In the media and in less visible discussion forums, there is much being said about intolerance, populism and threats to democracy as we know it. The same medium of the internet, new media forms and digital tools that were supposed to democratise culture and governance are now being used (and even abused) by people and organisations spreading “fake news”, intolerance and incivility (not to mention businesses seeking tremendous profit). The same technologies are being used to manipulate and twist information and messages in directions that are potentially undemocratic and intolerant.

What we have seen in this report is that great opportunities have indeed presented themselves, and some of the hopes and expectations highlighted in Council of Europe strategies and recommendations are being partly fulfilled (see Table 1 for highlights). More people – and not just artists and political activists – are discovering new ways to express themselves creatively and share their perspectives with broader, perhaps wholly unexpected audiences. The internet also enables more affordable and far faster communication between far-flung individuals as well as groups that may have been unable to connect, let alone collaborate, before widespread use of the internet.

Table 1: Opportunities and challenges for online participation

Cultural participation		
Hopes/expectations	Opportunities	Challenges
<i>Reinforcing access to and participation in culture and heritage</i>	Digitisation of cultural works reduces some barriers to access (especially distance) Mobile tools help overcome gaps for disenfranchised groups	Access in terms of devices and connectivity necessary, but not sufficient

Cultural participation		
Hopes/expectations	Opportunities	Challenges
<i>Ensuring the viability of artistic creation and expression, as well as generation of culture</i>	Digital tools reduce costs of production and dissemination New business models, new intermediaries Employment opportunities in digital creative industries feature more independence	More employment independence also means less security
<i>Promoting cultural diversity</i>	Supply of diverse content increased	Increased supply does not mean enhanced diversity of what is seen

Political participation		
Hopes/expectations	Opportunities	Challenges
<i>Promoting understanding and tolerance through exchange of ideas and opinions</i>	New channels of expression created	Anonymity protects expression, but often breeds incivility Sharing of messages not based in fact or experience does not lead to informed discussion or enhanced understanding
<i>Including everyone, without discrimination, in the democratic process</i>	Ideally reduces some traditional barriers to participation	Continuing disparities in ICT infrastructure access and skills Costs to participate more related to socio-economic factors and level of political interest
<i>Enabling pluralism and diversity in dialogue</i>	Communities and sense of belonging built through social networking and other platforms	Filtering and algorithms can lead to echo chambers and filter bubbles that narrow perspectives Platforms can be used to deliberately misinform and manipulate public debate
<i>Bridging gaps between states, politicians and citizens</i>	Responsiveness of governments and politicians enhanced Citizens more aware of workings of government and politics	Enhancing actual involvement requires more than digitising public administration and services

We have also seen that the actual impact of these changes is ambiguous. A greater supply of cultural works and political information does not necessarily translate into greater diversity in what we view and contemplate. Filters used by online platforms are, in principle, helpful for sorting through the massive supply of content but in many cases also serve and can be manipulated to narrow perspectives. Similarly, while especially politically oriented communities formed via social networking and other forums may generate a sense of belonging and facilitate collaboration, they are not always benign. In recent years, several extreme-right online communities with primarily European users have been investigated –with some members even prosecuted – for racism and other punishable offences.¹⁹

Towards inclusive, democratic societies?

Amid this ambiguity regarding the actual impact of digitisation on cultural and political life, it is hard to ascertain what implications online participation might have for building and maintaining inclusive, democratic societies. Reports and revelations of manipulation, misinformation and disinformation, and incivility might lead to the conclusion that the digital age poses as much a threat to democracy as it offers opportunities to strengthen and broaden it, despite early hopes.

” Internet users who have uploaded creative content, searched for cultural events or discussed cultural content online are more likely to have positive attitudes towards immigrants and are less likely to have strong populist attitudes.

To obtain a better grasp of a possible relationship between online cultural and political participation and inclusive, democratic attitudes, respondents to the Dalia Research survey commissioned in 2017 for this report were also asked questions relating to their opinion on immigration’s effect on their country’s culture²⁰ (a proxy for tolerance); whether politicians were interested in people like them; and whether politicians or the people should decide on policy²¹ (both indicators of populist tendencies) (Schulz et al. 2017). The results suggest there is cause for cautious optimism that the digital age can lead towards more

19. Some examples are mentioned in the following: Freedom House (2017); Kawesa 2012; nu.nl (2009).

20. Q3 of the Dalia Research survey: “In your opinion, does immigration in your country have a positive or negative effect on your country’s culture?” See Appendix 2.

21. Q4, “How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: ‘The people, not the politicians, should make our most important policy decisions.’?” and Q5, “How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: ‘Politicians are not really interested in what people like me think.’?” of the Dalia Research survey. See Appendix 2.

inclusive, democratic societies. Among the nearly 11 000 EU-28 internet users surveyed, participation in both cultural and political activities online seems to influence individual attitudes towards immigration and populism for the better. Respondents who have uploaded creative content, searched for cultural events, or discussed cultural content online in the past year are more likely to think that immigration has a positive effect on their country's culture and are less likely to have strong populist attitudes. The same is true for those internet users who have signed an online petition or searched for information about political or social issues online in the past year. (See table in Appendix 2 for results of linear regression models using ordinary least squares.) In other words, those internet users who engage in some aspects of online cultural and political life appear to be more tolerant and less prone to populist ideas than those internet users who do not engage.

Supporting these findings – at least those relating to online cultural activity – are analyses of IFCD data that show a moderate but positive correlation at the country level between engagement in online creativity and other forms of online cultural participation and attitudes towards migrants as measured by Gallup's Migrant Acceptance Index ($r = .54$ and $r = .51$, respectively). Furthermore, these IFCD indicators of online creativity and online cultural participation are also positively and strongly correlated with a more encompassing concept of tolerance, based on World Values Survey questions about who is acceptable as a neighbour. Although the relatively small number of observations within the IFCD database prevents us from proving that cultural participation online is directly responsible for tolerant attitudes, these analyses underpin the idea that online participation and respect for and tolerance of diversity go hand in hand.

In sum, the evidence presented here and throughout this report indicates that online engagement in cultural and political life can have a positive impact in terms of more tolerant and democratic attitudes, but we cannot take it for granted.

Implications for action

If engaging in culture and politics online contributes to greater tolerance and less populist attitudes, among other things, then it would seem worth encouraging its further development as a means to strengthen inclusive and democratic societies. The broad-brush overview provided in this report provides a few general hints about areas that might lend themselves to policy or programme intervention, most of them already highlighted in Council of Europe policy guidelines and recommendations, including the recommendations on big data for culture, literacy and democracy, on the internet of citizens, and on a guide to human rights for internet users.

” If engaging in culture and politics online contributes to greater tolerance and less populist attitudes, then it would seem worth encouraging its further development as a means to strengthen inclusive and democratic societies.

Among key areas to be promoted, one can highlight the following:

- ▶ access to the internet and other ICT infrastructure: most Council of Europe member states have made strides in providing ICT infrastructure. Many are considering making access to the internet a right of all citizens; several, including Estonia, Finland and France, have already done so to one extent or another. Such efforts, especially in less wealthy countries where access is more limited, seem most promising;
- ▶ socio-economic barriers hindering participation: while enhancing physical access to digital spaces, additional efforts need to be made to determine what other barriers exist and how they can be best addressed;
- ▶ other barriers, including government-imposed ones, that limit access or free expression: within democratic societies, there must be a balance between people’s right to express themselves freely – whether artistically or politically – and other rights such as protection against hate speech or other attacks and the right to privacy. Finding such a balance is a matter of solutions that reflect standards debated and set through multinational entities such as the Council of Europe, but also take into account specific contexts;

- ▶ **digital and media skills:** to enable people to engage more actively online, basic digital skills are essential. Moreover, in light of filtering, misinformation and even manipulation, digital media and information literacy skills are as important as basic technical skills so that users are equipped to make informed decisions about the content they see and to seek more diverse content.

Some caution about the promises of digital cultural and political participation is also warranted. Given that a good portion of the population is not interested in participating online, attention should not necessarily be shifted to policies or programmes that focus solely on digital forms and channels of participation. Some people simply do not want to be online, and being offline should not become a new reason for exclusion.

Enabling participation in cultural and political life, whether online or offline, individually or collectively, opens up opportunities and encourages citizens to exercise their right to self-expression, to be active, and to play a role in society and in governance. Furthermore, those who engage online tend to have more tolerant attitudes (at least towards migrants) and less populist leanings. Participating in this way is certainly not the only path towards inclusive, democratic societies, but it is undoubtedly a crucial one.

Appendix 1

The Indicator Framework on Culture and Democracy

The Indicator Framework on Culture and Democracy (IFCD), a project undertaken by the Council of Europe, in collaboration with the Hertie School of Governance (Germany) and with support from the European Cultural Foundation and member states, is part of the process initiated by the ministers participating in the 2013 Council of Europe Conference of Ministers of Culture on the theme “Governance of culture – promoting access to culture”:

To launch a medium-term working process that should include work on indicators of the impact of cultural activities on democracy as well as the economic efficiency of financing culture in order to improve the effectiveness of cultural policies, to map related trends and developments at a pan-European level with special regard to access to and participation in culture and help generate harmonised national and European surveys.

The IFCD sees culture and democracy as separate domains or systems that shape society both independently and in concert, akin to the workings of the circulatory and nervous systems in the human body. In other words, culture has an independent and dependent (via democracy) effect on how society works, just as democracy has an independent and dependent (via culture) effect on the workings of societies.

The framework employs the following working definitions:

- ▶ Culture, in a narrow sense, is defined as cultural activity that is based on cultural values emphasising cultural freedom, equality and pluralism. Cultural activity includes cultural action, products, services and intellectual property, as well as market and non-market activities carried out by any type of individual or collective actor. Furthermore, cultural activity is generated in the policy, civic and economic dimensions, and as an aspect of freedom and equality;
- ▶ Democracy is a form of government where citizens have opportunities to choose the representatives who reflect their values and opinions, and influence decisions via direct democratic participation; where party competition is institutionalised and executive power is controlled; and where basic civil rights and liberties are protected by an independent and impartial judiciary.

To enable closer examination of these relationships and to systematise data collection and analysis, the IFCD identifies for each domain a set of dimensions, or analytical lenses, which are further broken down into one or more components, each comprising a number of indicators, as shown in the table below.

Appendix Table 1.1. IFCD Dimensions, components and indicators

CULTURE		DEMOCRACY	
DIMENSION	COMPONENTS/ INDICATORS	DIMENSION	COMPONENTS/ INDICATORS
Civic	Cultural participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Artistic expression and creation ▶ Interest in foreign cultures ▶ Non-partisan involvement ▶ Online creativity ▶ Online cultural participation ▶ Passive cultural participation ▶ Students in the arts 	Civic	Political participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Institutionalised participation ▶ Non-institutionalised participation
Policy	Cultural funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Cultural expenditures and incentives Cultural openness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Support and promotion of cultural diversity Cultural education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Arts education ▶ Intercultural education 	Policy	Government capability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Confidence in political institutions ▶ Political independence Political competition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Political competitiveness ▶ Rules for contestation and competition Safeguards and checks and balances <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Constraints on government powers Transparency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Absence of corruption ▶ Informational openness

CULTURE		DEMOCRACY	
DIMENSION	COMPONENTS/ INDICATORS	DIMENSION	COMPONENTS/ INDICATORS
Economic	Cultural industries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Cultural industry outputs ▶ Intangible assets ▶ Size of the cultural industry Cultural infrastructure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Size of the cultural infrastructure 	Rule of law	Equality before the law <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Judicial impartiality ▶ Judicial independence Quality of the legal system <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Confidence in the justice system ▶ Judicial efficiency and professionalism
Freedom and equality	Cultural access and representation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Access to cultural sites and events ▶ Public measures for equality 	Freedom and equality	Individual freedoms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Freedom and neutrality of the press ▶ Freedom of association ▶ Freedom of expression Individual liberties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Free conduct of life ▶ Security and physical integrity Political representation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Equality of participation ▶ Equality of representation

The IFCD has been designed to take into account a diversity of concepts and approaches. Key features include the incorporation of different units of analysis (institutions, organisations and individuals) into each main element; consideration of three phases (inputs, throughputs and outputs) of the process unfolding within each of the two domains; and aggregation to the nation state or country. The scores for each of the variables are calculated using z-score transformation, which assigns all variables a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one. This makes it easy to identify countries that perform above (positive scores) and below (negative scores) the average for the entire set of

countries in the framework. All individual variables are aggregated into single indicators, which are in turn aggregated to components, and which are finally aggregated to the level of the four dimensions for both culture and democracy. The different scores are aggregated by taking the simple, even-weighted average of each data point.

As of December 2017, the IFCD contained 144 variables, combined into 37 indicators, 17 components and 8 dimensions, covering a wide range of issue areas and concerns for Council of Europe member states, though data coverage varies between countries. To avoid significant bias in the aggregated scores for domains, components and indicators, the framework currently covers those 43 Council of Europe member states for which data is available on at least 45% of the variables.

Data are available for further individualised analyses, and accessible via a user interface (www.governancereport.org/ifcd, accessed 14 May 2018).

For more information, see Council of Europe (2016b).

Appendix 2

Dalia Research survey

In 2017, the Hertie School of Governance commissioned Dalia Research to add to its EuroPulse omnibus survey five questions related to online cultural and political participation and its links to attitudes towards migrants and populist leanings. The results of the survey, conducted between 29 November and 8 December 2017, contribute to the IFCD thematic report on digitisation, culture and democracy.

Methodology

Dalia Research's EuroPulse survey is structured as an omnibus survey, meaning that questions can be submitted by a variety of clients. Dalia Research turns all individual questions into a questionnaire with randomised question order and translates it into local languages.

Within the constraints of available resources, the Hertie School chose to use Dalia's EuroPulse survey, despite the fact that it would not cover all Council of Europe member states. The EuroPulse survey is administered online across the EU-28 through a network of over 40 000 apps and websites, agnostic to device, meaning that users can respond via desktop computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone. The respondents to the EuroPulse survey are already internet users, thus the survey results cannot be generalised to the entire population.

The sample (N = 10 827) was drawn from all 28 EU member states, taking into account current population distributions with regard to age (14-65 years), gender and region/country. In order to obtain census representative results, the data were weighted according to the most recent Eurostat statistics. The target weighting variables were age, gender, level of education (as defined by the 2011 International Standard Classification of Education levels 0-2, 3-4 and 5-8), and degree of urbanisation (rural and urban). An iterative algorithm was used to identify the optimal combination of weighting variables based on sample composition within each country. An estimation of the overall design effect based on the distribution of weights was calculated at 1.45 at the global level. Calculated for a sample of this size and considering the design effect, the margin of error would be +/-1.1% at a confidence level of 95%.

Read more about Dalia's EuroPulse on their website: <https://daliaresearch.com/europulse> (accessed 14 May 2018).

Survey questions

Q1 In the past 12 months, which of the following activities have you carried out?

Select all that apply

Uploaded my own creative content (e.g. videos, images, music) to the internet

Posted my opinion about creative content (e.g. music, videos, literature, games, paintings or performances) online

Searched for information online about cultural events (e.g. concerts, plays, museum exhibits)

Followed a cultural group (e.g. museums, art organisations, performers, individual artists) on a social networking site

None of these

Q2 In the past 12 months, which of the following activities have you carried out?

Select all that apply

Signed an online petition about a political or social issue

Posted my opinion about political or social issues online

Searched for information on online news websites about political or social issues

Followed a political figure on a social networking site

None of these

Q3 In your opinion, does immigration in your country have a positive or negative effect on your country's culture?

Slider [0 Negative effect; 10 Positive effect]

Q4 How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The people, not the politicians, should make our most important policy decisions."

Strongly agree

Somewhat agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Somewhat disagree

Strongly disagree

**Q5 How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement:
“Politicians are not really interested in what people like me think.”**

Strongly agree

Somewhat agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Somewhat disagree

Strongly disagree

Regression table

To find out whether online cultural or political activities impact individual attitudes towards immigration and populism, we tested three linear regression models using ordinary least squares (OLS). The dependent variables in each of the three models are immigration’s effect on culture (Survey Q3: “In your opinion, does immigration in your country have a positive or negative effect on your country’s culture?”), who should make policy decisions (Survey Q4: “How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: ‘The people, not the politicians, should make our most important policy decisions.’”), and are politicians interested in public opinion (Survey Q5: “How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: ‘Politicians are not really interested in what people like me think.’”). We use the four modes of online cultural activities (Survey Q1) and political activities (Survey Q2) as independent variables and age as a control variable.

As shown in Appendix Table 2.1, participation in both cultural and political activities generally seems to affect individual attitudes towards immigration and populism. Respondents who have uploaded creative content online, searched for cultural events online, and discussed creative content online in the last twelve months are more likely to support immigration (model 1) and are less likely to have populist attitudes (models 2 and 3). Similar results emerge for those respondents who in the last twelve months have signed an online petition and searched for information about political or social issues online. The results for the other modes of online activities are mixed and less significant.

Appendix Table 2.1. Table of linear regression coefficients (standard errors)

	Dependent variable		
	Immigration's effect on culture (1)	Who should make policy decisions (2)	Politicians' interest in public opinion (3)
Uploaded own creative content	0.594*** (0.076)	0.378*** (0.032)	0.389*** (0.029)
Posted opinion about creative content	0.346*** (0.089)	0.233*** (0.037)	0.232*** (0.034)
Searched for information about cultural events	1.260*** (0.072)	0.629*** (0.030)	0.550*** (0.028)
Followed a cultural group	0.025 (0.091)	-0.100*** (0.038)	-0.138*** (0.035)
Signed online petition	1.012*** (0.079)	0.229*** (0.033)	0.119*** (0.030)
Posted opinion about political or social issues	0.384*** (0.091)	-0.047 (0.038)	-0.012 (0.035)
Searched for information about political or social issues	0.726*** (0.074)	0.356*** (0.031)	0.387*** (0.028)
Followed political figure	-0.026 (0.097)	0.060 (0.041)	0.141*** (0.037)
Age	0.017*** (0.003)	0.014*** (0.001)	0.004*** (0.001)
Constant	2.202*** (0.127)	0.948*** (0.053)	1.158*** (0.049)
<i>Model Statistics</i>			
Observations	10 827	10 827	10 827
R ²	0.155	0.168	0.170
Adjusted R ²	0.154	0.168	0.170
Residual Standard Error (df = 10817)	4.162	1.747	1.593
F Statistic (df = 9; 10817)	220.273***	243.043***	246.686***

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

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Europeans do not *go* online anymore: they are online. And they engage increasingly in cultural and political life via the internet and digital tools.

The beginning of the digital age brought great expectations for the internet's potential to promote understanding and tolerance, stimulate creativity, enhance diversity and democratise cultural and political activity, among others. This second Council of Europe thematic report on culture and democracy explores the impact digitisation and the internet are having on cultural and political participation in Europe, examining the opportunities and challenges this creates.

Drawing on data collected within the Indicator Framework on Culture and Democracy (IFCD), the results of a novel survey of internet users conducted by Dalia Research and other reliable sources, this report concludes that targeted support for online participation in culture and politics could make a positive contribution to building and maintaining inclusive, democratic societies.



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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

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