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Finally beyond the status quo? An analysis of steps taken to improve gender equality in the European audiovisual sector.

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More than a decade ago, the #MeToo movement started. #MeToo got a new momentum in 2017, after shocking revelations of incidences of sexual harassment against women. The discussions rapidly focused on general inequalities women face in the audiovisual sector in Europe. The impact can be seen in the uprise of many new initiatives and reports on gender issues. We argue that it is now time to look back on initiatives taken in Europe and to see what we can learn from it to move forward. Following up on Policy Brief #31 on gender equality in the Flemish film sector, Dilara Asardag and Marlen Komorowski of imec-SMIT-VUB conducted a study on gender equality in the audiovisual sector in Europe. Their research is part of a wider report for the European Expert Network on Culture and Audiovisual (EENCA). The study is based on an analysis of a substantial range of reports and interviews with experts. The findings offer an entry point for those who seek specific support in designing and implementing interventions regarding the situation of women and aim to foster debate about rationales, intervention logics and the opportunities and limits of reports and initiatives.

The current state of women in the audiovisual sector in Europe

Our analysis found that the audiovisual industry is quite unique compared to other industries in Europe in availability of data and studies. The analysis shows that there is still a clear gender disparity. The share of women in the audiovisual sector in Europe can be broadly estimated at 20-30%. This disparity has been reported on all levels, including gender pay gaps, labour conditions, salaries, leadership positions, funding, career paths and so on. For example, in a report from the European Women's Audiovisual Network (EWA), published in 2016, it was found that only one in five films are directed by a woman.[1]

However, there are important differences among countries, sub-sectors, audiovisual genres and occupations that need to be taken into account. For example, women are less represented in jobs in the video game sector (compared to TV)[2] and Northern European countries do better than Eastern and Southern European countries.[3] Also, women work more often on certain film genres (this is the case for documentaries for example)[4] and in certain occupations (women

[1] EWA (2016) "Where are the Women Directors?", Report by the EWA [online], available at: https://www.ewawomen.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Complete-report_compressed.pdf
[2] European Parliament (2018) "Gender Equality in the Media Sector", [online], available at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/596839/IPOL_STU(2018)596839_EN.pdf
[3] Slovenian Film Centre (2018) "Facts & Figures: Gender Equality", Study by Slovenian Film Fund [online], available at: https://issuu.com/sfilmc/docs/sfc_2018_facts___figures_gender_equ_27512fe95c5704
[4] European AV Observatory (2019) "Female Directors in European Cinema: Key Figures", Report by the European AV Observatory [online], available at: https://rm.coe.int/female-directors-in-european-cinema-key-figures-2019/16809842b9

are less often employed in senior positions for example).[5] This shows that even after the #MeToo movement, which brought about a new wave of consciousness-raising and some changes in the last decade, there are still areas in which women in the audiovisual sector are under-represented and suffer from inequalities.

Figure 1: Results of the analysis of reports on women in the audiovisual sector in Europe and its members states.
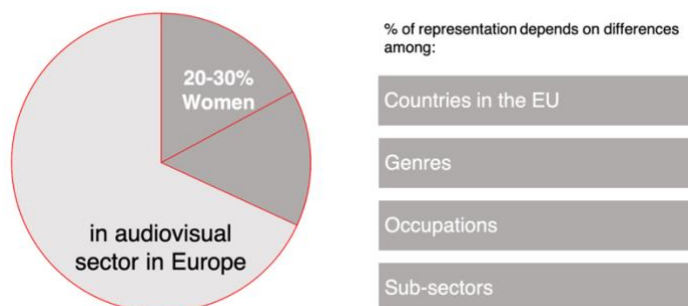
Initiatives and actions taken to support women in the audiovisual sector in Europe

Looking at the different initiatives that have been set up in the past years, our analysis found that women in Europe have the opportunity to benefit from various local and international initiatives. Our analysis shows that these initiatives have similar goals and actions that are taken and are built on certain kind of organisations.

What do initiatives try to achieve?

Initiatives and actions aim to support women in the audiovisual sector in Europe by different means. These include the goal to reach equality in the labour market, tackling sexual harassment, tackling discrimination and creating visibility of women issues. Initiatives focus on one or several goals at the same time:

Table 1: Overview of goals of initiatives to support women in the audiovisual sector in Europe.

Identified goals:	Description:	Example of initiatives:
Equality in the labour market	This includes impacting access to leadership and management positions, payment inequalities, as well as diversity in the workspace.	BBC Expert Women Program[6] (campaign to increase the number of expert women presenters and contributors appearing on BBC)
Tackling sexual harassment & violence	Such goals include helping and supporting victims of sexual harassment and violence in the sector and to provide a support structure for women who face such problems.	Cannes Film Festival[7] (established a sexual harrassement hotline in 2019)
Fighting gender stereotyping & discrimination	This includes the combating of bias and enhancing positive and equal representation of women.	Womenize![8] (platform with programs for women who seek to build a career in tech, digital business and media)
Creating visibility for women's issues	This includes consciousness raising, creating wider public debate, creating knowledge about women's issues and making voices heard.	EWA[9] (publishes regular reports on women in the audiovisual sector in Europe)

What actions exist to achieve these goals?

In order to achieve the outlined goals various concrete actions have been developed to support women in the audiovisual sector in Europe.

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[5] CNC (2014) "La place des femmes dans l'industrie cinématographique et audiovisuelle", Report by CNC [online], available at: https://www.cnc.fr/cinema/etudes-et-rapports/etudes-prospectives/la-place-des-femmes-dans-lindustrie-cinematographique-et-audiovisuelle_224715
[6] https://www.globecast.com/blogpost/5-initiatives-for-women-in-media-and-technology/
[7] https://www.theguardian.com/film/2019/may/10/cannes-festival-adapts-metoo-era-gender-issues-remain &
https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/15/movies/cannes-women-metoo.html
[8] Information about Womenize! have been provided by Ruth Lemmen in an interview that took place in 2019.
[9] EWA (2016) "Where are the Women Directors?", Report by the EWA [online], available at: https://www.ewawomen.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Complete-report_compressed.pdf

These include provision of networking opportunities, mentoring & training, regulatory measures, provision of legal and psychological support, as well as data gathering & provision:

Table 2: Overview of actions and activities of initiatives to support women in the audiovisual sector in Europe.

Identified actions:	Description:	Example of initiatives:
Provision of networking opportunities	This includes organisation of events, debates, workshops, conferences, etc.	Women in Games[10] (organises a yearly conference for networking)
Mentoring & training	This includes for example advocacy, achievement programs in schools, workshops, coaching programs, mentoring and training.	ARD[11] (mentoring programme where experienced executives mentor young female talent)
Regulatory measures	This includes official quotas, parity in selection committees of film funding bodies, and soft quotas promoting the financing of realized films by women.	EURIMAGES[12] (commits to achieve 50/50 funding of film)
Provision of legal & psychological support	This includes for example services and support for women suffering from sexual harassment.	THEMIS[13] (provides legal and psychological support for women)
Data gathering & provision	This includes carrying out gender-based data collection and publishing of reports.	European AV Observatory[14] (develops a strategy to streamline gender data collection in Europe and builds a European-wide data platform)

What type of initiatives and organisations exist?

What actions are taken and how successful initiatives are can depend on the organisational and funding structure/public support. Most initiatives involve NGOs, PSB, film festivals, public institutions and film funding bodies:

Table 3: Overview initiative and organisation types to support women in the audiovisual sector in Europe.

Type:	Description:	Examples of initiatives:
NGOs	Such NGOs are often independent bodies that are driven by single women who are engaged in this work besides having another full time job.	Women in Film & Television International (WIFTI)[15] / WAVE Women in AV[16] / EWA[17] / Le Boostcamp[18]
PSBs	PSBs have often strategies in place and can take actions based on public financial support such as licence fees.	BBC (UK)[19] / ARD (Germany)[20] / YLE (Finland)[21]
Film festivals	As film festivals get a lot of public attention, actions have been taken to support the visibility of women at such festivals. Also specific feminist film festivals exist all over Europe.	Cannes Film Festival[22] / Films de Femmes (France) / Tricky Women (Austria)[23]
Political bodies	This includes political bodies like ministries and public sector organisations. On a European-level the European Commission (EC) and other official European bodies are involved in women initaitives.	EC's Voices of Culture[24] (organisation that has as theme gender equality)
Film funding bodies	Film funding bodies in Europe often have specific quotas or report on the funding that was given to women film makers.	Swedish Film Institute[25] / EURIMAGES Gender Equality Strategy

10 Information about WIGJ has been provided by Marie Claire Isaaman in an interview that took place in 2019.
11 Information about initiatives of the ARD / ZDF in Germany has been provided by Sandra David in an interview that took place in 2019.
12 EURIMAGES (2017) "EURIMAGES Gender Equality Strategy (2018-2020): Aiming for 50/50 by 2020", Report by the EURIMAGES [online], available at: https://rm.coe.int/eurimages-gender-equality-strategy-2018-2020-aiming-for-50-50-by-2020/1680760bff
13 https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/women-move-overview-good-practices-audiovisual-industry-and-policy-makers-eu
14 European AV Observatory (2019) "Female Directors in European Cinema: Key Figures", Report by the European AV Observatory [online], available at: https://rm.coe.int/female-directors-in-european-cinema-key-figures-2019/16809842b9
15 https://www.wifti.net/
16 http://womeninav.com/ & http://womeninavuk.com/
17 https://www.ewawomen.com/
18 http://leboostcamp.com/
19 https://www.bbc.com/aboutthebbc/reports/policies/5050
20 Information about initiatives of the ARD / ZDF in Germany has been provided by Sandra David in an interview that took place in 2019.
21 RAI (2017) "Financial Statements" Report by RAI [online], available at: https://www.rai.it/dl/doc/1536229057967_Bilancio%20Rai%202017%20-%20Inglese%205.09.2018.pdf
22 https://www.theguardian.com/film/2019/may/10/cannes-festival-adapts-metoo-era-gender-issues-remain & https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/15/movies/cannes-women-metoo.html
23 https://www.ktpress.co.uk/feminist-film-festivals.asp
24 Voices of Culture (2018) "Gender equality: Gender Balance in the Cultural and Creative Sectors", Report by Voices of Culture [online], available at: https://voicesofculture.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/VoC-Brainstorming-Report-Gender-Balance-in-the-Cultural-and-Creative-Sectors.pdf
25 The Swedish Film Institute (2018) "The Money Issue – Gender Equality Report 2018", [online], available at: https://www.filminstitutet.se/globalassets/_dokument/sfi-gender-equality-report-2018---lowres.pdf

Discussion and conclusion

Based on the analysis and insights gathered, we can conclude that much can be learned from the initiatives and actions that have been implemented in the audiovisual sector in Europe:

1. **We found that data collection remains a cornerstone of any sustainable gender equality agenda.**

Yet, there are still wide-ranging gaps, imparity and inconsistencies in existing studies. Although the actions of the European AV Observatory will provide improvement in this regard (see above), there is still work to be done.

2. **Even though much has changed and improved in the audiovisual sector in the face of #MeToo, we identified 20-30% gender gap in representation of women which is still a significant problem.**

This is especially relevant in women's lack of representation in leadership and management positions as well as access to employment and funding.

3. **We need to go beyond the visible and most-talked about issues of women in the audiovisual sector (celebrities and highly visible positions like film directors) and adopt an intersectional approach instead.**

An intersectional lens should be an overarching key line, because the overlap of various social identities (age, race, sexual orientation, disability etc.) actively contribute to systemic discrimination on grounds of gender.[26]

4. **Having an impact on the gender gap due to its systematic grounding, can take a long time. Therefore, sustainable and long-lasting actions and initiatives should be implemented.**

Clearly, forward-looking systematic evaluation of initiatives on a long-term basis is necessary for the longevity of consciousness raising and the robust analysis of initiatives' impact.

Want to know more?
The full report "Gender gaps in the cultural and creative sectors" by the European Expert Network on Culture and Audiovisual (EENCA) including the results of the full study on women in the audiovisual sector in Europe presented here, will be published in Spring 2020. You can find it - when it is published - here:
http://www.eenca.com/index.cfm/publications/gender-gaps-in-the-cultural-and-creative-sectors/

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*The **Media Programme** of SMIT, a research group at imec and VUB, consists of 45 junior and senior researchers. The researchers are specialist in various policy, market, and user research methods. Their work spans the fields of national and European media and competition policy, cultural diversity, public broadcasting, the sustainability of creative industries, immersive media, data and valorisation, privacy, media literacy, and digital inclusion. The programme is headed by Prof. Dr. Karen Donders (karen.donders@vub.be). The programme is also in charge of **Mediahub Brussel**, that is investing in education, innovation and collaboration in the Flemish and Brussels media sectors. The Mediahub Brussel is supported by the Flemish Government.*

[26] Voices of Culture (2018) "Gender equality: Gender Balance in the Cultural and Creative Sectors", Report by Voices of Culture [online], available at:
https://voicesofculture.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/VoC-Brainstorming-Report-Gender-Balance-in-the-Cultural-and-Creative-Sectors.pdf