

NPLD-Coppieters Campus 2025 LEEWARDEN

Audiovisual Production on Regional and Minority Languages

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INTRODUCTION

Many scholars from a wide range of disciplines — including sociology, anthropology and political science — have described contemporary society as a "communication society". The process of globalisation that took shape in the second half of the twentieth century has transformed the planet into a single economic space, but also into a shared communicative one.

At the same time, technological innovations — particularly digitalisation and the explosive growth of the internet — have enabled the immediate and global exchange and circulation of audiovisual content. Patterns of consumption have changed substantially. During the twentieth century, cinema became the dominant audiovisual language, and movie theatres turned into key centres of social life. Today, however, the range of content available on television, computers, tablets and mobile phones is vast. We have moved from collective consumption to individual viewing, and from the social experience of the big screen to the personal experience of small screens.

This context of constant transformation has had a structural impact on our societies. Despite the apparent plurality offered by the digital environment, the reality is that a small number of large platforms now control content distribution on a global scale.

This situation is particularly complex for speakers of so-called regional or minority languages. As is well known, communities whose languages have undergone historical and political processes of marginalisation have been compelled to understand and use another language in their daily lives: the dominant, officially supported language. It is in this dominant language — which allows content to reach wider audiences — that audiovisual production companies tend to operate.

If regional or minority languages have historically been excluded from key areas such as culture, education or public services, they now face the risk of disappearing from screens altogether. This leads to an unavoidable question: **can a language survive in the twenty-first century without access to the audiovisual universe?**

Other questions seem essential to us:

How can the different actors working towards the normalisation of minority languages in the audiovisual field be organised?

What experiences can serve as examples?

What regulatory tools can ensure access for minority languages to platforms and other distributors of audiovisual content?

On 6 and 7 November 2025, a Campus organised in the Frisian city of Leeuwarden by NPLD-Coppieters, in collaboration with the Noordelijk Film Festival and the Government of the Province of Fryslân, addressed these issues during a series of working sessions entitled "Audiovisual Production in Regional and Minority Languages".

Producers, distributors, creators and public authorities shared their perspectives and debated the difficulties faced by minority languages in accessing the audiovisual market, as well as the strategies and needs required to achieve a stronger presence within it. The objective of the campus was not only to assess the situation in different parts of Europe, but also to present inspiring examples and propose solutions to a reality that limits millions of people's access to audiovisual content in their own language.

Held in Friesland, the campus paid particular attention to the situation of the Frisian language within the communicative and cinematic landscape, while also addressing the folklorised and often manipulated images of regional communities frequently portrayed in commercial audiovisual productions.

This report summarises the rich discussions that took place in Leeuwarden on 6 and 7 November 2025.

FIRST SESSION

Welcome: a matter of survival and legislation

The first day of the campus was moderated by **Dorien van de Pas, a member of the European Film Academy** with extensive experience supporting creators in the development and production of films. Her professional background at organisations such as the Netherlands Film Fund, Eurimages and the Dutch Media Fund underscored her expertise.

The opening remarks served as a roadmap for the discussions that followed. Beyond the customary words of welcome, they highlighted the key issues addressed throughout the Campus.

Iñaki Irazabalbeitia, a member of the board of the Coppieters Foundation — co-organisator of the campus — asserted that defining the place of regional and minority languages within the audiovisual landscape is a crucial element for their revitalisation and future sustainability. He noted that the current situation is particularly challenging, as the audiovisual sector has undergone profound changes over the past 10 to 15 years, making it difficult to anticipate developments over the next two decades. Minority languages face new risks, the most significant being the invisibility of audiovisual content in these languages within a global ecosystem dominated by international and state languages.

Irazabalbeitia illustrated this transformation through his personal experience. Fifty years ago, when he was a university student, audiovisual offerings in Spain were extremely limited: only two public television channels and thousands of cinemas, all operating exclusively in Spanish. This changed in 1983 with the launch of Basque Public Television, which revealed that even cowboys and Native Americans could speak Basque. A milestone in the normalisation of the language. However, the emergence of three private television channels in 1990, broadcasting solely in Spanish, reversed this progress. Content in Basque dropped from one third of total programming to just one sixth: a step backwards.

With the start of the new century, the situation deteriorated rapidly. Audiovisual content in Basque, limited to public broadcasters and a handful of local stations, became almost invisible amid the global content offered by major international platforms. Optimism, he concluded, was difficult to sustain.

According to **Irazabalbeitia**, two key factors are essential to improving the presence of minority languages in the audiovisual sector: **funding and legislation**. A strong legal framework at European, national, and regional levels is indispensable to guarantee the use of these languages in audiovisual production.

He recalled that during the approval process of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive, the European Parliament attempted to introduce quotas for minority languages. Although this proposal was initially included, it was ultimately rejected during final negotiations due to opposition from several Member States. Had such quotas been adopted, the starting point for the discussions at this campus would have been considerably more favourable.

Supported by video presentations, the remaining speakers in the opening session stressed the critical importance of ensuring the presence of regional and minority languages on screens. Anna Jungner-Nordgren, Chair of the Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity (NPLD), introduced the concept of "being visibly alive" within the media ecosystem and underlined the need for audiovisual productions in minority languages to be present on major distribution platforms. Eke Folkerts, an official representative of the Government of the Province of Fryslân, remarked on the importance of reflecting linguistic plurality in films, which is often obscured in international-language versions. He also emphasised the value of collaboration and alliances among regional-language producers to strengthen their position internationally. Henriëtte Poelman, representing the Noordelijk Film Festival, concluded the opening remarks by encouraging participants to generate concrete ideas that could enhance the dissemination of films in minority languages and help producers identify potential funding and promotional opportunities. She noted that one section of the festival is specifically dedicated to this aim, granting audiences access to high-quality films that are often difficult to encounter elsewhere.

Already during the opening session, the core themes of the campus became clear:

- The vital importance of minority languages' presence in the audiovisual landscape.
- The need to design legal and financial strategies that support production and distribution in these languages.
- The necessity of collaboration among institutions promoting minority languages, treating audiovisual production as a strategic priority.

1 | The impact of regional film on tourism

The first session of the day focused on the impact of films on tourism, particularly on the locations used as settings and on the communities that inhabit them.

Deborah Castro, a researcher at the University of Groningen and the Erasmus Knowledge Centre for Film, Heritage and Tourism (FIHETO), began by stressing that a film location is not merely a physical space. Films generate culture and economic value, and the communities living in these locations are often concerned about the image projected of them and how audiences will perceive their way of life.

Among other examples, she referred to *Braveheart*, which continues to attract thousands of visitors to Scotland, and to the Catalan film *Alcarràs*, shot in a small rural community. The inhabitants of *Alcarràs* identify strongly with the image conveyed by the film and believe it helps to enhance the value of rural life. However, Castro noted that places like *Alcarràs* — characterised by rural settings and the use of a regional language (Catalan) — remain underrepresented in cinema. In Spain, as she demonstrated through a map, most audiovisual productions are concentrated in Madrid.

In her presentation entitled "Cinematic places, lived meanings," the Galician researcher invited the audience to reflect on the relationship between film and place, and on the way cinema shapes our perceptions of locations. Her aim was to raise awareness of this issue among filmmakers, researchers, and policymakers alike.

Films do far more than tell stories: they shape how we imagine cities, regions, and nations. These representations affect both local and international audiences and influence population movements, tourism flows, investment decisions, and residents' sense of belonging. Research shows that what appears on screen has tangible and intangible consequences for the territories portrayed.

Research conducted by the Geocine group in Madrid approaches cinema not only as a form of representation, but as an active instrument in the construction of place-based identities. By mapping film locations across urban areas in Spain — and, in an ongoing project, in rural areas and natural spaces — researchers can identify patterns of cinematic visibility, as well as their opposite: invisibility. These patterns raise critical questions about which spaces are shown, which are excluded, and what implications these choices have for local communities and for the construction of place imagery.

Three aspects are particularly relevant when analysing how creative decisions shape the way real spaces are imagined, visited, or even abandoned.

What (and who) the camera sees

What types of places tend to appear on screen, and which rarely do? While logistical considerations — such as infrastructure, accessibility, and local incentives — play a role, narrative preferences and cultural hierarchies are equally decisive. Filmmakers are encouraged to ask what makes a place "filmable" and why certain communities and landscapes are afforded more opportunities than others. For policymakers, these choices highlight how incentives, funding schemes and marketing strategies influence production flows and shape how a country or region presents itself to the world. Recognising these dynamics is essential in order to diversify the cinematic map and work towards a broader range of represented spaces and stories.

Through local eyes

Cinematic visibility does not only affect external audiences; it also shapes how local communities perceive their own places of residence. People interpret these representations with pride, scepticism or even discomfort. **Deborah Castro** recalled a study she conducted on residents' perceptions of how Seville is portrayed on screen, in which many participants felt that cinema had harmed the region by reinforcing clichés and stereotypes.

This example illustrates the powerful influence of media representations. Understanding how communities interpret their media portrayals can help avoid tensions and support the creation of more respectful narratives. The camera's gaze is never neutral: it is shaped by creative decisions, production logistics and legal frameworks such as tax incentives. Together, these factors influence how a place is seen, valued, and remembered.

From film location to tourism destination

Research shows that films can directly influence travel behaviour, a phenomenon often referred to as *film* or *screen tourism*. Audiences may visit locations driven by curiosity, nostalgia, or a sense of belonging. According to **Deborah Castro**, while this can generate economic benefits, it also creates challenges, including cultural transformation, overcrowding and environmental stress. A frequently cited example is the closure of Maya Bay following the success of *The Beach*. The potential for such consequences arises early in the process: from the moment a filmmaker selects a location, the way that place will later be visited, experienced and inhabited is already being shaped.

In short, the relationship between film and place is reciprocal. Films can provide visibility and meaning to places, while places, in turn, can offer authenticity to films. Acknowledging this exchange can foster more thoughtful public policies, more responsible creative decisions, and stronger collaboration with local communities.

Kjelda Glimmerveen, also a researcher at the University of Groningen and the Erasmus Knowledge Centre for Film, Heritage and Tourism (FIHETO), focused her contribution on the identity of the Frisian region — where the campus was held — and on how filmmakers depict the north of the Netherlands, including not only Friesland but also the regions of Drenthe and Groningen.

Glimmerveen referred to previous research on other regions with comparable dynamics, such as the work of **Gunhild Agger** on Nordic Noir¹ and **Rosa Schiavone's**² research on Scotland. **Agger** argues that the idea of "the North" is often constructed through dark narratives set in open, wild landscapes, with the sea as a central element and a clear opposition between centre and periphery. Films tend to reproduce these stereotypes. **Schiavone**, for her part, shows how most films portray Scotland through images of vast, untamed landscapes, drawing a contrast between the beauty of nature and cities, which are frequently depicted as dangerous.

How, then, do filmmakers portray the north of the Netherlands? First of all, Glimmerveen noted that the region remains underrepresented in cinema. When it does appear on screen, the most common images depict beaches, open areas and spaces associated with peace and tranquillity. However, interviews with local residents reveal widespread dissatisfaction with these portrayals. Many feel that the stories being told are not their own.

Creators from the northern regions seek to give voice to local inhabitants and tell their stories, but they often face structural obstacles, particularly a lack of adequate infrastructure to carry out their projects. Another recurring issue in Glimmerveen's research concerns language. While there is clear sensitivity among filmmakers towards producing films in Drents, Gronings or Frisian, these languages are frequently abandoned in favour of reaching a broader audience, as they are perceived to pose challenges for distribution.

For some filmmakers, this work resembles that of documentary makers, preserving stories for the future and recording distinctive landscapes and landmarks through cinema. The vast open spaces of the northern Netherlands also influence the themes explored in films shot there and the emotional lens through which the region is portrayed. Themes such as loneliness appear repeatedly.

To conclude this section, both researchers responded to questions from the audience regarding whether portraying social problems in these areas could be harmful to local communities. Deborah Castro argued that it was not only appropriate but necessary, citing as an example a film starring Mario Casas set in Las 1000 Viviendas, a marginalised neighbourhood in Seville. Residents reportedly expressed satisfaction with the film, stating that they wanted more stories like this to show audiences their real lives and challenges.

1 Nordic Noir - Location, Identity and Emotion | SpringerLink

2 Worlds of Imagination | Reel vs. Real space: Film, Heritage and Tourism and Their Engagements with Place in Scotland

2 | Frysk Film Fund

The second panel of the first day focused on the projects selected by the recently established Frisian Film Fund and on explaining how this initiative operates. Its main objective is to support audiovisual creators working in the Frisian language.

Lysbeth Jongbloed, Chair of the Fund's Selection Committee, explained that the initiative emerged from an agreement between the national and regional governments. In order to increase investment in Frisian-language culture, the authorities decided to support filmmakers producing films in Frisian, enabling audiences to see themselves represented on screen and to do so in their own language. The Frysk Film Fund is part of the regional film support network Cineregio³.

The fund does not exclusively support local creators, but also welcomes filmmakers from elsewhere who wish to work in Friesland. Funding is structured around three categories: Short, supporting the production of short films (fiction, documentary, animation and experimental); Development, aimed at ambitious film and series projects; and Production Incentive, designed specifically to support films produced in Frisian.

Joris Hoebe, one of the founders of New Noardic Wave, described how, after being born in Friesland and studying film directing in Amsterdam, he returned to his home region and discovered a highly stimulating environment for audiovisual creation. In 2018, he became involved in the creation of New Noardic Wave, a collective of Frisian audiovisual creators. According to **Hoebe**, filmmakers in the region lacked sufficient funding and were poorly connected to the national funding system.

A total of eleven projects were selected to receive funding from the Frysk Film Fund. Taking advantage of the campus setting, the session was used to present the creators and their projects to the press. Several of the selected filmmakers were present. Johanneke Dijkstra, a Frisian filmmaker who received funding, expressed her gratitude, and announced that she would begin production of her film in 2026. The session also included a discussion of her most recent film, *Kriich*⁴, with selected excerpts screened.

Kriich offers a portrait of the diversity of contemporary Frisian society, challenging stereotypes and prejudices. Through three characters — a woman with a mental illness living alone in an old fisherman's hut, a drag queen, and an elderly former boxer who now trains young women — the film reflects on life and on the importance of the Frisian language as a means of genuine connection with one's environment, friends, and community. Dijkstra affirmed that using Frisian in her storytelling was essential for her, as it allowed her to connect with her grandmother and her ancestors.

³ about CineRegio - Cine regio

⁴ (20+) Video | Facebook

3 | Best practices panel: Minority languages in Europe

The third panel of the session was designed as an open dialogue with the audience, following an initial intervention by each speaker. From their respective professional perspectives, the panellists shared insights into the production and distribution of films and series within their linguistic communities.

Josu Amezaga, from the University of the Basque Country, expressed concern about the growing dominance of streaming platforms, which have become the most influential players in the audiovisual sector. He is a member of the Observatory of the Basque Media (Behategia) and part of a research team commissioned by the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament to analyse the presence of languages and accessibility resources on video streaming platforms across Europe. The aim of the study was to encourage the European Audiovisual Observatory to systematically monitor linguistic and accessibility diversity in the audiovisual sector. The study is accessible in the web page from MEP Diana Riba and was introduced in the Intergroup on Traditional Minorities, National Communities and Languages in the European Parliament.

The research examined the catalogues of the three main global platforms — Netflix, Amazon Prime Video and Disney+ — across 17 countries, with data collected in October 2023. Although no equally comprehensive update has since been conducted, a recent sample check suggested that the situation has not significantly improved.

Four main conclusions emerged from the study.

1. Very few minority languages are represented on major platforms. Data for Irish could not be fully collected, but its presence is known to be extremely limited. Only Catalan, Basque and Galician show some degree of representation, albeit minimal, while Luxembourgish and Welsh are even less visible.
2. The issue appears to be political rather than a matter of limited resources or lack of content. The languages with the strongest presence are those spoken in Spain, where they enjoy official status, benefit from robust public audiovisual sectors and are supported by strong grassroots movements advocating for linguistic rights. **Amezaga** pointed out that other platforms — both public (such as 3Cat and EITB's platforms) and private (such as Filmin) — offer significantly more content in Basque and Catalan. The content exists, but it is largely absent from the catalogues of major global platforms. Political borders also play a role: in the case of Basque and Catalan, which are spoken across state borders, their presence is notably stronger on the Spanish side than on the French side.
3. Limited diversity is not exclusively a problem for minority languages. English dominates all countries and platforms, and even some official state languages have a much smaller presence when compared to English-language content.
4. Systematic monitoring is urgently needed. For decades, European audiovisual policy has aimed to protect the continent's audiovisual industry and promote European culture. While the European Audiovisual Observatory monitors the origin of audiovisual content through the Lumière Database⁵, a comparable mechanism focusing on language use and accessibility resources is lacking. Establishing such monitoring would support more effective diversity and accessibility policies.

Tore Cubeddu, writer, journalist and filmmaker, and a member of the Babel Film Festival Sardinia, explained that around fifteen years ago he realised that public institutions were failing to respond to the needs of those seeking to develop a Sardinian-language film industry. Faced with this lack of institutional support, he decided to create his own Sardinian-language web TV platform⁶, an initiative that was initially dismissed by many as unnecessary or unrealistic. Today, however, the platform employs fourteen people and operates with a budget of two million euros.

For **Cubeddu**, the central challenge facing audiovisual production in minority languages is distribution. His platform's catalogue includes more than 5,000 titles. "We cannot wait for Netflix," he stated pointedly. In his view, minority language communities must develop their own solutions, which requires collective action. With the exception of Catalan, most minority language communities represent relatively small markets individually, but together — through cooperation — they amount to more than fifteen million potential viewers. At that scale, he argued, the dynamics change entirely.

Alan Esslemont, former Director General of the Irish-language broadcaster TG4 and former Head of Content at BBC Alba in Scotland, currently Director of the Celtic Media Festival, shared his personal and professional trajectory. Born in Scotland, he studied at the University of Edinburgh and subsequently worked across several European countries. It was during his time in Brittany that he learned Gaelic. Thirty years ago, he helped to launch the first Irish-language radio station, marking the beginning of a career dedicated to expanding Irish-language audiovisual production across all formats.

Esslemont pointed out how the situation of Gaelic — in its various forms — has changed significantly over recent decades. Its presence in cinema has increased substantially, contributing to enhanced social prestige. As a notable success story, he cited *Kneecap*⁷, a film about the Northern Irish rap group of the same name, which performs in Irish. The film has won multiple awards and was nominated for the Academy Award for Best International Feature Film.

Guido Franken, filmmaker and Chair of the CineSud Foundation in Limburg, examined the structural barriers faced by minority-language productions in the Netherlands. Film production in the country remains highly centralised, with decision-making concentrated in a limited number of hubs that determine which stories are told and by whom. As a result, regional creators, identities, and languages are often excluded.

Franken argued for structural reform at both policy and industry levels. First, the sector must acknowledge the existence of multiple creative centres beyond those defined by the mainstream. He advocated for the development of regional film hubs — ecosystems in which education, talent development, and production, including funding, are rooted in specific geographic areas.

He cited *Het Beloofde Land* as a successful example: a project developed collaboratively by hubs and creators from Brabant, Friesland, Drenthe and Groningen. The initiative resulted in short and feature films deeply anchored in their regions, with local producers, at least 70% regional cast and crew, regional narratives and regional languages forming integral components of the productions.

Heledd Wyn Hardy, from the Department of Theatre, Film and Television Studies at Aberystwyth University (Wales), reviewed key historical developments that have strengthened the use of Welsh in audiovisual media. In 1982, the launch of the Welsh-language public broadcaster S4C marked a turning point, achieving strong audience figures and producing high-quality content. This progress was reinforced in 1993 with the Welsh Language Act, which granted Welsh equal legal status with English. More recently, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act of 2015 has continued to promote Welsh, including its presence in culture and the audiovisual sector.

⁶ EJATV

⁷ KNEECAP | Official Trailer (2024)

Hardy noted that Welsh production companies are increasingly involved in international co-productions, with Welsh landscapes, cultural values, and the Welsh language itself becoming sources of attraction. Regarding exhibition, some Welsh-language films are subtitled while others are not, prompting ongoing debate about the best approach. Subtitles can broaden audiences, but they also raise questions about linguistic competence and authenticity.

Debate and shared conclusions

The subsequent debate was lively, with strong participation from both panellists and the audience. Several shared concerns emerged, including the need to build collaborative networks and to engage in institutional lobbying. A more controversial issue concerned the role of major streaming platforms.

Alan Esslemont emphasised that each minority language exists within a distinct sociolinguistic context. In the case of Irish, many people claim proficiency despite it not being their first language. For decades, Ireland told its stories primarily in English, with Irish reserved for symbolic functions. Only from the nineteenth century onwards did Irish begin to be reclaimed as a fully functional language across domains. "There is no reason to remain bilingual," he stated. Since the 1960s, building linguistic prestige has been understood as essential, hence the strategic decision to aim for excellence, including Academy Award recognition.

Over the past twenty years, Ireland's media commission has supported Irish-language projects, including in Northern Ireland. However, Esslemont acknowledged the lack of Irish-language content on Netflix, noting that the platform has no legal obligation to support minority languages. "But we do not need Netflix," he concluded. "We do not need them."

Tore Cubeddu pointed out that in recent years, four million euros in public funding had been invested in films in Sardinia, half of which supported Sardinian-language productions. Yet these films largely remain confined to the region. While some have been submitted to European distribution structures, these cases are exceptional. He proposed that the campus could serve as a starting point for collaboration: each linguistic community could select one representative film, and these selections could be distributed across all communities.

Guido Franken reiterated that, for him, language is not an end in itself but a core component of regional identity. Strengthening that identity — with language as a natural element — requires more than simply producing films in different languages. In Limburg, fifteen years of work have gone into building a regional production infrastructure. The Limburg Film Fund now includes language as a selection criterion, and the CineSud talent development hub actively promotes regional language and culture.

Heledd Wyn Hardy agreed on the importance of linguistic prestige, both for language maintenance and for attracting new speakers. While Welsh-language cinema has enjoyed notable successes, she stressed that visibility must extend beyond the screen: authors and actors should also use the language publicly, demonstrating that it is not confined to fictional contexts.

Josu Amezaga returned to the key question raised earlier: **can minority languages afford to ignore major distribution platforms?** From a research perspective, not a producer one, he argued that presence on these platforms remains crucial, given their extensive subscriber bases and household penetration.

The debate ultimately converged on a balanced position: both strategies are necessary. While efforts continue to push major platforms to engage with minority languages, parallel work on building independent distribution networks must proceed.

From the audience, **Lysbeth Jongbloed, Chair of the Frisian Film Fund's Selection Committee**, posed a fundamental question: **How can we reach large audiences?**

Heledd Wyn Hardy responded immediately, emphasising that compelling storytelling is key. Films must be entertaining, appealing, and attractive — audiences must want to seek them out. Cubed-du went further, arguing that minority-language producers must outperform the mainstream, as there is no room for mediocrity. **Amezaga** added that Basque-language audiences often describe their audiovisual content as particularly attractive. **Esslemont** highlighted a structural challenge: minority language speakers are typically bilingual, reducing commercial incentives for major platforms. This reality demands an approach that goes beyond market logic. Public authorities, he argued, have a clear responsibility: *how are you going to empower us to be attractive?*

The key elements of the panel can be summarised as follows:

- The EU must monitor the use of minority languages on distribution platforms.
- Audiovisual production needs to be decentralised and brought closer to regional hubs.
- Initiatives to promote and distribute audiovisual products in minority languages must be coordinated in order to gain greater support and market share.

The session concluded with a shared critique that set the tone for the next panel: **Europe has not treated minority languages well.**

4 | Regional or Minority Languages and EU Policies in Audiovisual Production: An Overview

The final session of the first day aimed to provide an overview of European Union policies in the audiovisual sector, with a particular focus on how regional or minority languages are addressed within these frameworks. The session explored funding opportunities, policy trends and the challenges faced by minority language communities in the audiovisual field.

Raquel García Hermida-Van der Walle, Member of the European Parliament, opened the session by sharing her personal and family experience with linguistic diversity. Her mother tongue is Spanish, while the language of her childhood was Dutch. Frisian, however, is the language of her husband and children and has therefore become a central element of her own life. According to the MEP, it is essential to engage speakers of majority languages — such as herself — in understanding the situation of minority language communities and encouraging their active support.

She argued that the EU's rejection of the Minority Safepack Initiative had been a setback for minority languages. If the Union genuinely seeks to promote linguistic diversity, it must also include minority languages, as this is fundamentally a matter of human rights. Their use must be guaranteed across all domains. **García Hermida-Van der Walle** stressed that national governments often pose greater obstacles than the EU itself. Even when they receive European funds intended to promote linguistic diversity, these resources are not always used for that purpose.

She underlined the existence of three interconnected governance levels: regional authorities, national governments, and the EU. In some Member States, such as France, cultural industries are a political priority, yet linguistic diversity receives little attention. Nevertheless, opportunities exist within the EU budget. Members of the European Parliament, she noted, need concrete ideas on how support for minority languages can be meaningfully reflected in budgetary allocations. She also described how various groups — including non-speakers of minority languages — have approached her to express support for linguistic diversity. In her view, cinema represents a particularly effective channel for mobilising this support.

Andrea Postuma, representing the Creative Europe Desk in the Netherlands, explained that the Creative Europe MEDIA programme is not designed exclusively for widely spoken languages. The programme offers specific support for production and festivals, with an overall budget of up to €1.4 billion, which is also accessible to projects in regional and minority languages. She recalled that several films produced in Basque and Catalan have achieved significant success through this programme.

Postuma emphasised that Creative Europe aims to remain accessible and close to creators, including independent producers and those telling regional stories. She concluded by underlining the importance of collective action and institutional lobbying. Minority-language creators, she argued, must organise and advocate for their interests in the same way that large production companies do.

Craig Willis, from the European Centre for Minority Issues and the PLURILINGMEDIA network, pointed out the growing scope of his organisation, which now includes 300 members. He noted that linguistic situations vary considerably across Europe: some languages are losing speakers, while others are experiencing growth. **Willis** drew attention to digital platforms such as TikTok and YouTube, where young people spend an average of three hours per day.

The European Union is increasingly strengthening its legislative framework in relation to media and the digital sphere, particularly regarding the distribution of and access to media content. The Audiovisual Media Services Directive was an early example, followed more recently by the Digital Services Act, the AI Act, and the European Media Freedom Act. Willis stressed the importance for activists, practitioners and academics working on regional or minority languages to familiarise themselves with these legal instruments.

Willis also noted that media pluralism is an important concern for the EU and that the Centre for Media Pluralism monitors this area. However, only one of the approximately 200 indicators it tracks relates directly to regional or minority languages.

During the discussion with the audience, several issues were raised, including the difficulty faced by independent producers in accessing Creative Europe funding and the need for co-productions to secure more ambitious budgets. Questions were also asked about the situation of minority languages in countries that are not yet EU members but have applied for accession. **García Hermida-Van der Walle** responded clearly, stating that the promotion of linguistic diversity should be a key criterion in EU enlargement processes.

The key elements of the discussion were:

- The Creative Europe project must be more accessible to creators in minority languages.
- European legislation on digital platforms and social media should also address access for regional languages.
- European protection of linguistic diversity as a human right is neither complete nor real if it does not take minority languages into account.

SECOND SESSION

The second session was moderated by **Mariia Ponomarova, a filmmaker and industry speaker from Ukraine currently based in the Netherlands**. Her dual perspective as a creator and an active industry professional brought a highly practical approach to the discussions.

1 | Round table: Public initiatives to stimulate audiovisual production in regional or minority languages

The first round table aimed to present three public initiatives from different parts of the EU that actively support audiovisual production and content distribution in the minority languages spoken by their citizens.

Rónan Ó Domhnaill, Media Development Commissioner at Coimisiún na Meán (Ireland), opened the session by outlining the role of the Commission within the Irish audiovisual landscape. The organisation is responsible for developing and regulating the sector with the aim of fostering a creative, attractive, diverse, and safe media environment. In his role, **Ó Domhnaill** also oversees policies related to the promotion and support of the Irish language in the media.

Drawing on his background as a journalist, he recalled his time as a university student in Galway, where he participated in the Irish-language theatre group Cumann Dramaíochta, performing and attending festivals across the country. Coimisiún na Meán monitors the use of public funds allocated by the Irish government to audiovisual production, with approximately 25% of this budget earmarked specifically for Irish-language content. The Commission is also responsible for online safety and for overseeing compliance with European regulations. Notably, 13 of Europe's 20 largest online platforms have their European headquarters in Ireland, making the country a key regulatory hub.

Regarding language promotion, **Ó Domhnaill** highlighted initiatives such as journalist training in Irish and continued support for TG4, the Irish-language public broadcaster. He stressed that the Irish-language audiovisual sector is now highly dynamic and that its sustainability and visibility must be ensured. While Irish is Ireland's first official language, he indicated the need for its presence beyond Irish-only media, suggesting that commitments to language use should be included in the allocation of new radio and television licences.

Unai Iparragirre Torres, Director General of EITB, the Basque public broadcasting group, focused on the role of a public media organisation from a small European country operating in a globalised and digitalised media environment. EITB's mission, he explained, is to preserve local culture and a minority language.

With an annual budget of approximately €200 million, EITB structures its mission around four pillars: Basque identity, public service, cultural protection and promotion, and the Basque language. The group operates four free-to-air television channels, two of which broadcast entirely in Basque. EITB 1 offers a broad range of content, including news, sports and entertainment, while EITB 3 is dedicated exclusively to children's programming. EITB 1 also serves as a learning tool for non-speakers of Basque, while the Spanish-language channels include Basque-language content to familiarise audiences with the language.

To strengthen Basque-language production, EITB has expanded the concept of event television, drawing inspiration from models such as MTV. The COVID-19 pandemic provided an opportunity to broaden its community of followers. Collaboration with major cultural events, such as Korrika — a month-long relay race supporting the Basque language — has been crucial in building audience engagement. During the most recent edition, over one million people followed the event online. The Durango Basque Book Fair represents another key collaborative space.

Iparragirre Torres stressed the importance of local production, stating that "a country without local production has no narrative." In the previous year, €9.4 million was invested in supporting Basque film production, 70% of which went to projects in Basque. EITB also promotes festivals and concerts in Basque, noting that "music is the most eloquent ambassador of culture". Addressing digital challenges and connecting with younger audiences are further priorities. EITB has therefore developed several digital platforms specifically targeting younger demographics, ensuring the availability of Basque-language content across both traditional broadcasting and digital media.

Ingrid Spijkers, Editor-in-Chief of Omrop Fryslân, the Frisian public broadcaster, presented the organisation's structure and mission. Those attending the campus were able to visit the facilities during the afternoon activities and learn more about the work of its journalists and technicians. Omrop Fryslân began broadcasting in 1994 and operates primarily in Frisian, while also producing content in Dutch. Around 50 professionals work to deliver news and programming to the audience. Recruiting journalists capable of writing in Frisian remains a challenge, and translation tools are occasionally used. As part of the national public broadcasting system, Omrop Fryslân benefits from collaboration and shared resources.

Like EITB, Omrop Fryslân prioritises engagement with younger audiences. To this end, it collaborates with the youth organisation Young Frysk and actively promotes Frisian on platforms such as Instagram. Dedicated children's programming plays a key role in fostering early connections between young audiences and Frisian-language audiovisual content.

Discussion

In the subsequent discussion, speakers and audience members remarked the difficulty of competing with major broadcasters and international platforms.

Ó Domhnaill summarised three essential elements:

- **funding**, as production is costly.
- **audience**, which depends on quality.
- **legal regulation**, which is necessary to protect minority languages. He asserted that regulation is the most crucial factor and remembered the words said before by Iñaki Irazabalbeitia. In Ireland, 25% of public audiovisual funding must be allocated to Irish-language productions.

Spijkers raised once again a central question of the campus, asking whether EITB prioritises its own platforms or major global ones. **Iparragirre Torres** responded that while EITB operates its own platforms, visibility on widely used platforms such as Facebook and Instagram remains essential to reach broader audiences.

The use of subtitles was also debated. **Ó Domhnaill** noted that subtitling Irish-language programmes is increasingly common, though the issue remains complex, requiring a balance between maintaining core audiences and attracting new viewers. **Iparragirre Torres** stated that EITB does not subtitle Basque-language productions.

All speakers agreed on the importance of engaging children and young people to ensure the future of minority languages. **Spijkers** noted that Omrop Fryslân's success in this area is largely due to young people creating content for their peers. **Iparragirre Torres** highlighted the challenges of children's programming and described how EITB removed its logo from a children's platform because it was perceived as "old." One strategy involves offering free Basque-language content that would otherwise require payment on commercial platforms, offered in Spanish. Audience size, he argued, should not be the sole measure of success; trust, prestige and public value are equally vital.

Mariia Ponomarova concluded the round table by highlighting key themes: the need for a robust legal framework, the importance of quality, public trust in public broadcasters, and the urgency of capturing young audiences. She also echoed a proposal from the audience, launched by **Lysbeth Jongbloed**: establishing an alliance among minority-language broadcasters to share children's content.

All panel members emphasised that:

- An effective legal framework is absolutely necessary to protect minority languages
- Public support is basic for successful projects.
- Attracting children and young audiences is crucial for minority languages

2 | Best practices panel: Streaming films in regional languages

The second panel of the session addressed a critical issue: the presence of films produced in regional languages on streaming platforms. Perspectives differed sharply between representatives of major commercial platforms and those developing alternative distribution models.

Alessandro Pisu, Head of Distribution at MyCulture+⁸, a platform founded in Sardinia in 2023, explained that the platform exclusively hosts films produced in minority languages, with its catalogue expanding annually.

Kaja Wolffers, representing Amazon Prime Video in the Benelux region, stated that the platform's primary objective is to meet audience demand. While Amazon serves a diverse audience, content decisions are guided by commercial viability. She noted that minority languages do not necessarily represent a barrier, citing a romantic comedy partially filmed in a Zeeland dialect that achieved significant success.

Jasmijn Touw, representing Netflix in the Benelux and Nordic countries, explained that entertainment is the platform's core mission. Since becoming globally accessible in 2016, Netflix has shifted from a predominantly US and English-centric catalogue towards greater diversity. Today, cultural diversity is a key element of its brand, although not all content is designed for global circulation.

Daphné De Weirt, Coordinator of Avila Films⁹, described Avila as a Brussels-based non-profit organisation dedicated to distributing Belgian auteur cinema in theatres and online. Founded by filmmakers, the platform curates contemporary and classic films across fiction, documentary, and experimental genres. Avila focuses on providing visibility and contextualisation for each title, ensuring that smaller or less commercial works are not overlooked.

Mariia Ponomarova asked all the speakers an initial question:
How do you choose your content?

Alessandro Pisu responded quickly, stating that MyCulture+ has two criteria: quality and the fact that the film is shot in a minority language. They consider themselves fortunate because they are based in Sardinia, where there is a festival for films in minority languages every two years. They realised that these films were not being distributed, yet they were of high quality, so they used them to make the first selection for their catalogue. With regard to the concept of 'minority language', it should be noted that it is very flexible, and he gave the example of German, which is a minority language in a country like Slovenia.

The coordinator of Avila Films stated that their selection process is also based on quality. Their platform aims to help Belgian filmmakers, in all languages, reach their audience. Belgium produces many exceptional and significant films that often struggle to reach their intended audience. Avila bridges the gap between these films and their public, supporting a sustainable Belgian film culture on multiple levels.

Kaja Wolffers pointed out that Amazon Prime is a commercial company and could not finance just anything. They needed the products to be guaranteed to generate significant initial interest, but in that sense, minority languages did not have to be an obstacle. She mentioned the case of a romantic comedy that had been filmed 40% in the Zeeland dialect and had been a huge success.

The Netflix representative indicated that their case was very similar. The ability to win over a wide audience was a key element of their products. In this regard, she stressed that regional representation, not only in language, can be interesting for everyone. Cultural and gender diversity are attractive. The quality must be high, similar to that of any other product, and it must be borne in mind that not all films travel globally. There is also national production for domestic consumption, and it must be credible for that audience, because otherwise it will not be well received.

The moderator asked the speakers if they had any strategies for supporting productions in minority languages.

Jasmijn Touw said that her platform also tried to show 'different' content and that, on certain occasions, the use of a minority language was very important in creating the atmosphere that the audience was looking for. **Kaja Wolffers** pointed out that films in minority languages needed ambassadors, popular filmmakers who were enthusiastic about their productions, well-known influencers who would empower that content and help it achieve primary attraction.

Before opening the floor to the audience, **Mariia Ponomarova** raised the question of how independent platforms could survive financially.

Alessandro Pisu replied that MyCulture+ was not a charitable organisation but a business, and that it had to be very creative because this was crucial for the survival of a small platform like theirs. Daphné De Weirt explained that Avila is a non-profit organisation that receives funding from various Belgian institutions. In this sense, Belgium was their workspace, but they were planning to expand to other countries in the future. She pointed out that they have a very good working relationship with libraries, which distribute their catalogue free of charge in exchange for a fee, allowing them to reach a large audience.

Among the comments from the audience, both **Iñaki Irazabalbeitia**, representative of the Coppieters Foundation, and **Roger Serra, Director General of Language Policy for the Government of Catalonia**, who attended the Campus, asked the representatives of the distributors about the presence or absence of films in minority languages in their catalogues. Roger Serra also stated that only 4% of Netflix's catalogue was in Catalan and that the company was missing out on a very important potential market. **Jasmijn Touw** replied that she was sure that Netflix representatives in Spain were aware of the issue and must be working on it. She added that they had received similar requests from other governments, such as Flanders, and that it was complicated because they worked with thousands of languages. For his part, the Amazon Prime representative acknowledged that this issue was outside his area of work but that he knew it was a concern for his colleagues. **Alessandro Pisu** pointed out that his platform first used genre categories to classify its offerings: comedy, drama, etc., and then language. He then commented on the risk of classifying films by language or region. He explained this with the example of a category such as "Sardinian movies" launched by major Italian production companies, which reduced all Sardinian cinema to a single category based on clichés of the landscape, rural or coastal, tradition, gastronomy, and archaeology. This simplification gave a false image of the island and reduced the distribution possibilities for Sardinian films, as distributors allocated a quota to Sardinian movies and rejected films that did not fit these clichés. He gave the example of the film *La vita va così*¹⁰, shot in Sardinia, whose promotional poster features all the clichés that AI shows you when you ask about Sardinia: the coast, rural life, archaeological sites, traditions...

The final contribution to this panel's debate came from the audience, who asked about the importance of short films on the respective platforms. There was unanimous agreement that they are important. **Alessandro Pisu** pointed out that they play a prominent role on MyCulture+. They are easy to obtain and do not have good distribution, so they are good for their platform. At festivals, they come into contact with their directors and producers because otherwise it is difficult to do so. He believes that in times like these, when attention spans are short, short films are the films of the moment. **Daphné De Weirt** also replied that the Avila platform includes short films that allow them to offer more experimental products and that the audience appreciates them. From the perspective of the major platforms, **Kaja Wolffers** explained that short films are better viewed on other platforms, such as YouTube, but that her customers still demanded them, especially for viewing at times such as on a train journey. **Jasmijn Touw** said that Netflix included short films, that they had taken a first step and that they had discovered that both filmmakers and audiences were interested in them.

Some conclusions:

- The majority of platforms do not have a policy dedicated to offering content in minority languages, and their offering is very limited.
- Without legal pressure, access to large-scale distribution for minority languages is very difficult.
- Alternative distribution initiatives offer an initial response to this lack of offering.

3 | Panel: Minority language filmmakers

The last session of the day and of the Campus gave voice to three creators who have made films in minority languages. Their creations could be seen in the Memmetal section, within the Noordelijk Film Festival¹¹, which was held on the same dates as the Campus. This section, which has been running for three years, is dedicated to screening films shot in minority languages and also organises debates and sessions on filming in these languages and cinema as a cultural expression.

Aislinn is the director of the Irish horror film *Fréwaka*. The film tells the story of a woman scarred by her mother's suicide. She goes to a remote village to care for an elderly woman who is obsessed with the idea that the "Na Sidhé", beings from Irish mythology, kidnapped her on her wedding night. The film has had a huge impact at festivals and with audiences. Aislinn explained that English words were not enough to tell this story. The producer suggested using Irish, and she thought about it, not answering immediately because it was a very emotional challenge for her. Finally, she accepted, drew on her experience and set the script aside. According to her, the Irish are connected to horror and traditions and have an emotional relationship with their language. She worked to use traditions but avoided folklore clichés.

Murk-Jaep van der Schaal is the director of the Frisian documentary *Yn myn dreamen hear ik dy (In my dreams I hear you)*. The Dutch documentary maker travelled to Leeuwarden, Brest and Storslett in 2024. Together with theatre makers Wessel de Vries, Christophe le Menn and Inger Birkelund, he explored their landscapes, their languages and their work. Van der Schaal also followed their mutual exchanges, creative processes and especially their growing shared love for language and environment. Murk-Jaep van der Schaal and his collaborators learned a lot about minority languages during this work. None of them had the three languages covered: Frisian, Breton and Kveens, as their mother tongue. They discovered the strong link between culture and language and the struggle for the survival of these languages, hand in hand with their speakers and their environment.

Pål Jackman is one of the directors of the Norwegian series *A Sami Wedding*¹², alongside Ase Kathrin Vuolab. It is an eight-part series filmed in Sami that humorously recounts the organisation of a wedding between members of two rival families. The organisers try to ensure that everything goes smoothly and that the ritual respects traditions that are sometimes difficult to reconcile with today's reality. **Pål Jackman** explained that he is not Sami and that he is not quite sure how he ended up directing the series. He liked it as soon as he read the story and researched the reality of Sami culture. The language is spoken by some 30,000 people in very different varieties, and for years Sami identity was persecuted. The language was not taught, and many people who speak it cannot read it. A language is also an expression of an environment, which is why Sami has so many words to describe snow or family relationships, as family is very important in that culture. A Sami director was sought for the series, and **Åse Kathrin Vuolab** was found, who was a great help. For Pål Jackman, the result was a series that respects Sami culture, shows its reality and avoids clichés.

The moderator asked about the impact of these films and how the fact that they were shot in minority languages had influenced them.

Aislinn Clarke explained that her goal was to make a good horror film and that she also wanted to give a universal image of Ireland. Irish was the ideal language for this. They tried to use a standard model to avoid localisms and make it easier to understand. People who speak Irish want to see films in their language, and for others, the fact that it is shot in the language of the environment adds a lot of authenticity.

¹¹ Homepage - Noordelijk Film Festival

¹² A Sami Wedding | Trailer | Mer Film

Murk-Jaep van der Schaal said that the experience of filming in three very different locations, Friesland, Brittany and northern Norway, was fantastic and he realised that he had to share everything he had discovered. There were very different situations: while in Norway the government apologises for not having protected the Kveens, in France it remains determined to impose a single language. This linguistic diversity was not an obstacle, but rather an essential value of his work, which was nominated for a Prix Europa.

Finally, **Pål Jackman** explained that the series had been a success. It was important that the Sami liked it, and they did, and from there it spread to the rest of the world. It is not a documentary; it is a true story about tradition and the modern world. The language lent it greater credibility. With humour, the Norwegian director explained that there were problems during filming, of course, but that they were not serious. They worked with more than 300 Sami extras, who had their own particular view of life, and the culture clash, such as the custom of not knocking on doors, caused some misunderstandings, but nothing that overshadowed the great experience that this work represented.

Some conclusions:

- Minority languages add authenticity to film productions.
- The use of these languages does not prevent them from being well received by audiences and successful in the market.
- Producing in minority languages is no more difficult or expensive than in other languages, and the product has the same quality standards.

This concluded the second day and the Campus.

CONCLUSIONS

The two-day campus on *Audiovisual Production in Regional and Minority Languages* provided an in-depth overview of diverse European realities. The following key conclusions can be drawn:

- The presence of minority languages in audiovisual media is essential for their survival.
- Without self-representation, regional realities are often portrayed through external, stereotyped perspectives.
- The use of minority languages in audiovisual productions is not an obstacle to reaching broad audiences; rather, it is increasingly perceived as a marker of diversity and authenticity.
- The marginalisation of minority languages on global platforms is not a technical or cultural issue, but a governance failure.

Strategic recommendations:

- Dedicated platforms for minority-language productions are important, but access to major platforms must also be pursued.
- High-quality content and effective strategies to engage young audiences are crucial.
- Alliances among institutions promoting minority languages are essential to exert effective institutional influence.

Policy implications:

- Strong legal frameworks at regional, national, and European levels are required to protect and promote minority languages in the audiovisual sector. Establishing mandatory quotas on platforms and other distributors can be a useful tool.
- It is necessary to establish EU-level monitoring of language diversity on platforms.
- Minority languages must be explicitly integrated into Creative Europe evaluation criteria.
- The inclusion of minority languages in platform discoverability obligations is necessary to ensure the right of their speakers.

Organisation and partnerships:

- The **NPLD-Coppieters Campus** in Leeuwarden was a clear example of the possibilities of a private/public collaboration in order to promote audiovisual production in minority languages in Europe. The campus illustrated how the **Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity (NPLD)** as a European network of regional governments and public institutions, can act as a bridge between language policy, audiovisual creators and cultural practice.
- The collaboration with the **Coppieters Foundation, the Province of Fryslân and the Noordelijk Film Festival (NoFF)** demonstrated the added value of combining policy reflection with concrete cultural initiatives rooted in regional and minority language communities.
- Such partnerships are essential to strengthening the visibility, sustainability and transmission of regional and minority languages within the European audiovisual ecosystem.

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