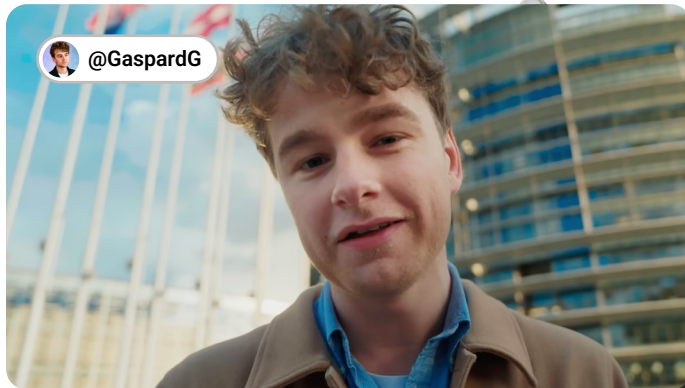


Creative Capital

A proposal for unlocking
the EU Creator Economy



Foreword

Over twenty years ago, YouTube began with a simple, powerful idea: that everyone, everywhere, deserved a global stage. Today, YouTube enables European creators to turn audiences into businesses.

Creators aren't just stars – they are entrepreneurs. They are green-lighting their own shows and building the media companies of the future. They are investing in studios and in teams. Our revenue-sharing model, the YouTube Partner Program, pays eligible creators more than half of the revenue generated from their channels, and in turn, creators contribute billions to EU GDP every year.

But too often they are isolated from having a say in their own future. So we asked them directly.

Creators in all 27 Member States told us what is working and what is not, with over 20,000 creators responding to the survey as well as twenty in-depth interviews.

What struck me was how they talk about their work.

They talk about hiring, cash flow and contracts. They describe barriers that slow their growth down and stop them from reinvesting: A funding scheme written before this kind of business existed. A training programme that does not recognise the job title 'content creator'. An awards shortlist with no relevant category.

Systems that were not built with creators in mind, and are currently excluding them, and all the economic growth and opportunity they bring. But they don't have to.

That is what makes this an opportunity. Europe does not need to build new institutions for its creators. It needs to open the ones it already has.

And it can start now.

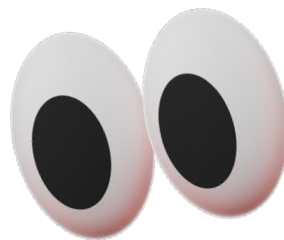
We are committed to building an economy for creators that is as diverse and impactful as their own creativity. YouTube will keep investing in tools, support and training for creators and for audiences.

But truly capturing this opportunity will require Europe's governments and creative industries to work with us. This report is where we would start.

— **Pedro Pina**
Vice President
YouTube Europe, Middle East and Africa



Boosting



the EU's creative capital



**What could boost
Europe's creator
economy?**

Public First and YouTube put that question to European creators this summer. **More than 20,000 creators across all 27 Member States answered**, from entrepreneurs creating content for a few thousand subscribers to some of the most watched channels on the planet.

Gathered together, their responses draw a clear picture: A fast-growing creative industry eager to compete on the world stage. But one that is limited by rule books that were drawn up without an opportunity to have a say; official data sets that don't recognise them; and as a result, restrictions on accessing finance and support.



Creators are powering their **local** economies

When creators succeed, so does Europe. Creators hire editors, producers and camera operators. They build modern newsrooms, manage writers' rooms, and run successful businesses. They are dynamic entrepreneurs and media companies. In 2025, YouTube's creative ecosystem contributed over **€8.4 billion to the EU's GDP** and supported more than **220,000 full-time equivalent jobs**.¹ Their success powers their local economy and in return builds higher quality content, and more engaged and informed audiences.

This unprecedented consultation provides insights into what it is like to be a creator in Europe today. Where they feel empowered and where they feel held back. Whether they feel recognised, and what they need to grow. We asked what they do with the income gained from their channel, and whether they feel they are treated equally to other parts of the creative industries.

By understanding how they see the opportunities and challenges around them, we can develop policy recommendations that give them the tools and support that they need to succeed in turn, powering Europe's creator economy.

66%

66% of survey respondents who earn revenue from their content said that they typically **reinvest this revenue into improving content quality**.²

Making Europe the **creative capital**

Creators want to build their businesses, reach new audiences and reinvest in their local economies. Most of what would help them is already available. This report sets out five practical ways to make it happen.

01 Government Recognition

02 Industry Representation

03 Training and Skills

04 Support with Content Creation

05 Open Discovery

¹ According to research by Oxford Economics.

² Unless otherwise stated, all survey findings are according to an online survey of YouTube Creators conducted by Public First in the EU, June 1 – July 8 2026.



Giving creators a voice to power Europe's creative capital



It all starts with an idea. For nearly two decades, YouTube has helped European creators turn ideas into videos, channels, communities and businesses – businesses that contribute **€8.4 billion to the EU's GDP** and support more than **220,000 full-time equivalent jobs**.³

Creators know their industry better than anyone, yet often they are shut out of decisions that affect them. Europe can put this expertise to work by giving them a seat at the table: Include them in official data, celebrate their contributions and, most importantly, invite them into the rooms where decisions are made.

64%

of survey respondents said that **greater acknowledgment** of the cultural and economic contributions of creators **by Government and policymakers** would help them feel more integrated into, or supported by, the broader creative industry in the EU.

63%

of survey respondents said they think creators receive **too little or no support with representation when talking to Government**.



"I wish creators were generally more recognised and supported, and that they felt they were getting help. In Germany, creators are often looked down upon. It would be great to receive more recognition for the hard work we do every day."

🌐 Creator, Germany
👤 100–500k subscribers/followers



"European policymakers would benefit from fully recognising these professions and offering them a fairer framework, with rights, protection and representation comparable to those of other creative professions."

🌐 Creator, France
👤 Over 1 million subscribers/followers



“There is an opportunity to strengthen the way these regulations are developed by involving people with real first-hand experience of the industry. Including creators in the dialogue could help ensure that the rules are practical, balanced, and fair. This would also increase transparency and contribute to greater trust and credibility overall.”

Rasmus Brohave

@RasmusBrohave, 292K subscribers, Denmark



01

Develop a dedicated NACE sub-classification for digital creators within Eurostat, enabling consistent data collection across Member States and ensuring the creator economy is visible in EU employment, business and economic statistics.

02

Establish a European Year of Creators to recognise creators' contribution to Europe's economy and culture, and raise awareness of the opportunities and challenges facing the sector. This could include holding a festival of creators across Europe.

03

Formalise and coordinate the engagement EU institutions have with creators. The European Parliament, European Commission and Council of the European Union should build on existing initiatives in all three institutions. This should create structured opportunities for creators from different Member States and language communities to engage with policymakers through briefings, summits, ministerial meetings and Council Presidency activities.

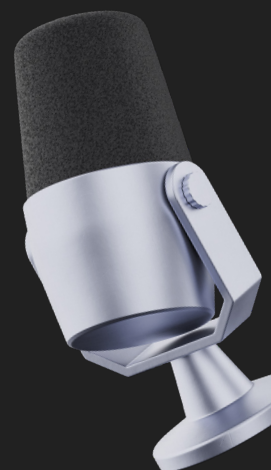
04

Include creators in relevant international delegations and trade missions. A transparent selection process should identify creators who can promote European culture, businesses and destinations to international audiences.

05

Establish a cross-party intergroup focused on the creator economy within the European Parliament, providing a regular forum for creators, platforms and industry representatives to inform debates on the policies affecting their work.

Representation can help Europe grow its creative economy



Europe proudly boasts historic creative institutions and programmes with a long history of supporting and exporting European culture and entertainment globally. But these institutions that represent the sector were not built with creators in mind, and most remain outside of them. By evolving and opening their doors to creators, Europe will be better able to promote its full spectrum of creative talent to the world's audiences.

64%

of survey respondents said they think **more recognition for creators from industry** would help them thrive as a creator.

60%

of survey respondents said that **more representation of creators at creative industry awards** would help them feel more integrated into, or supported by, the broader creative industry in the EU.



"I think creators in the EU are starting to be taken more seriously, but they are still not fully respected like actors, musicians or traditional media professionals. Many people still see content creation as a hobby, even though creators build real audiences, communities and businesses."

🌐 Creator, Romania
👤 100–500k subscribers/followers



"We are absolutely not taken seriously [by the creative industries] no matter how much bigger our audience is. We are seen as scrappy upstarts, newcomers that know nothing whose opinion isn't to be taken seriously [...] They have no idea what goes into running a YouTube Channel."

🌐 Creator, Germany
👤 100–500k subscribers/followers





“In Austria, I don’t even think the word ‘creator’ is a thing. If you say ‘I’m a creator’, people just think you have a hobby. I don’t think anyone sees this as an official business. Being a creator is probably more recognised in the UK and the US than it is in Austria.”

Leila Gharani

@LeilaGharani, 3.1M subscribers, Austria



01

Launch a “Creators of Europe” strand within the Creative Europe programme. This should support cross-border creator projects, promote European creative talent internationally and make creators eligible for relevant initiatives such as Culture Moves Europe.

02

Include creators in the Culture Compass for Europe. The European Commission should ensure digital creators are represented in the development of the EU Artists Charter, so it reflects the distinctive working conditions and support needs of the creator economy.

03

Support partnerships between creators and established broadcasters. Participating creators could provide expertise on digital audiences and platform distribution, while broadcasters offer access to studios, equipment, professional networks and production facilities.



04

Ensure digital creators are eligible for major European creative awards. Award organisers should review eligibility criteria so digital-first work can compete alongside film, television and other established formats, while also considering dedicated creator categories and representation on judging panels.

Europe's creative future starts with investing in talent



Every high-quality video has expertise behind it: Lighting, sound engineering, editing and storytelling are all skills needed to deliver the best possible final product. But a historic under-appreciation of these skills means that Europe is falling behind in how it prepares the next generation of creatives and their teams.

60%

of survey respondents said they think creators receive too little or no support with **training and skills** (for creators and/or employees).



"I would like more support for creators through training, mentorship programs and clearer guidance. This would help creators build sustainable careers and continue producing high-quality content."

🌐 Creator, Portugal

👤 Less than 10k subscribers/followers



"I would like to see better support for small creators through faster access to training and more opportunities to build sustainable digital businesses. This would make it easier for more people to create jobs, develop their skills and contribute to the economy."

🌐 Creator, Germany

👤 100–500k subscribers/followers



“People that come and work for me, I have to train them to work the way I work. The hiring part, and being able to surround myself with people that can actually help me, is the hardest part.”

Grégoire

@MajorMouvement, 1.54M subscribers, France



01

Establish an Erasmus+ Creator Exchange pilot, funding cross-border mentorships, production residencies and collaborative projects between creators from different Member States.

02

Establish a European Creator Campus, jointly funded through Creative Europe and the European Regional Development Fund. A physical and digital campus should offer accredited short courses in production, business and platform skills, creating a focal point for creator training and collaboration across Europe.

03

Launch EU-funded Creator Apprenticeships. The scheme should operate through the reinforced Youth Guarantee and European Social Fund Plus and support 12-month placements with established creator businesses, co-funding employment and training costs while creating a clearer route into the creator economy.

04

Build a Creator Economy strand within EIT Culture & Creativity, working through its existing network of universities across Member States to deliver postgraduate and executive education in the commercial, legal and financial skills that Creator businesses need to scale.

05

Fund dedicated Creator Scholarships through the EU-supported FilmEU alliance, giving emerging creators access to short courses, micro-credentials and intensive professional training across its network of leading European film and media arts institutions.



Making Europe's creative foundations work for creators



The platform of Europe's cultural strength is built on a support network consisting of finance, partnership and creative infrastructure. But too many creators cannot access any of it. Opening up access to existing programmes, studios and funding will give more creators the resources they need to grow.

65%

of survey respondents said they think creators receive too little or no support with **access to funds/grants** from government agencies.

65%

of survey respondents who are professional creators said they think creators receive too little or no support with **access to recording spaces and studios**.



"Independent creators often operate like small businesses but have fewer resources and less protection when facing income instability [...] Providing access to funding programs, tax incentives, business training and stronger protection of intellectual property would help creators build sustainable careers."

🌐 Creator, Cyprus

👤 Over 1 million subscribers/followers



"Providing affordable, municipal workspaces — studios and co-working — plus local funding and networking programs to keep value creation and culture directly within the local community."

🌐 Creator, Germany

👤 Less than 10k subscribers/followers



“We were looking for financial support to expand the YouTube channel and develop series formats. In the USA there was much more choice, but it was difficult for us to get anything because we are based in the EU.”

Dani Verdari

@daniverdari, 2.3M subscribers, Germany



01

The European Investment Fund should **open InvestEU guarantees to lenders developing financial products for creator businesses**. These products should reflect the irregular and fluctuating income patterns common across the sector and help viable creator businesses access finance.

02

While Creative Europe transitions towards fuller inclusion of creators, the European Commission should **immediately open the Creative Europe MEDIA programme to digital-native creator productions**. Adapted eligibility criteria should allow creator-led projects to access relevant development funding, distribution support and international market opportunities.

03

Member States should be encouraged to **allocate a proportion of European Regional Development Fund cultural infrastructure spending to shared Creator Hubs in every NUTS-2 region**. These hubs should provide subsidised access to studios, sound booths, equipment pools and flexible workspace, helping creators outside major capital cities access the infrastructure they need to grow.

04

Develop a common European framework for small-scale creator filming. Solo creators and small crews filming without traffic disruption or specialist equipment should benefit from simple, consistent rules, supported by single-point digital application systems where permits remain necessary.

05

The European Commission should work with creator representatives, advertisers and industry bodies to **develop a verification framework for companies commissioning creator partnerships**. The framework should help creators assess potential partners and promote clear contracts, transparent terms and timely payment.



Creators need open discovery not prominence mandates

For nearly 20 years, Europe's creator economy has been a success story because of one simple rule: On YouTube, viewers get to decide what they want to watch. Audiences expect to be connected with content they love, recommended based on their interests and hobbies. Every channel gets a fair shot. Videos become popular because they connect with their audience, not because anyone gets special treatment. This level playing field works: YouTube's creative ecosystem contributes **over €8.4 billion to the EU's GDP** and supports **more than 220,000 full-time equivalent jobs**.⁴

Any new prominence rules mandating that certain media must be shown first threatens this model, harming Europe's creator economy, taking away audiences' freedom of choice, and threatening European competitiveness.

83%

of survey respondents said that YouTube's recommendation and discovery algorithms are important for their channel's growth and revenue.

71%

of survey respondents with over 100,000 subscribers/followers said that **reduced visibility from changes to recommendation systems** would affect their income and ability to grow.

“

“[Policymakers] should not interfere with the platform algorithm, and they should not impose their own prominence rules that will destroy creators and user satisfaction.”

🌐 Creator, Spain

👤 500k–1 million subscribers/followers

“

“Please give smaller creators a fair opportunity to grow. Many talented creators make high-quality videos, but without YouTube recommendations, it's very difficult for them to reach a wider audience and grow their channels.”

🌐 Creator, Bulgaria

👤 Over 1 million subscribers/followers



Protecting fair discovery for Europe's creators

YouTube has long been a platform where anyone with a creative idea can find a global audience. It's how European creators from all walks of life have built sustainable careers, and why they are now so central to the Europe's creative industries.

But new "prominence" mandates being discussed in the EU could change this. These rules could force YouTube to give special treatment to a small group of organisations hand-picked by a government. For European creators and media companies that are not chosen, the risk is real.

By forcing these "hand-picked" channels to the front of the line, everyone else gets pushed back, regardless of what viewers actually want to see. This makes it harder for most creators to grow an audience and earn a living. If governments start picking the winners, independent creators and next-generation newsrooms become the losers.

A better way forward

At YouTube, we believe viewers should decide what they want to watch. We will keep advocating for a fair system where any creator can succeed based on their hard work and the quality of their content.

At the same time, we're committed to helping public service broadcasters and a wide range of traditional media to make the most of YouTube, find bigger audiences, and new revenue streams. The best way to achieve prominence on YouTube is to make content that audiences want to watch.

Any new mandates in this area should avoid harming independent creators. Instead we should focus on encouraging more digital innovation, enabling broadcasters and news organisations to expand their digital reach and access new revenue streams like YouTube's Partner Program.

The best way to build an audience today is to focus on meeting viewers where they are. European creators and European talent are well-placed to do exactly that.

Viewers should decide what they want to watch and European creators deserve a fair chance to build their audience.

 @VisualPolitik



"The intention of changes to the Audiovisual Services Media Directive may be to create pluralism but the most likely effect will be the killing off of small European creators. Only the bigger fish in the pond will benefit, with increased layers of bureaucracy and new hidden costs for smaller creators reducing media pluralism in the EU instead."

Alberto

@VisualPolitik, 3.8M subscribers, Spain

“

“Our institutions and Parliament should be helping to level the playing field between creators and legacy media. Changes to the algorithm are just going to help media channels owned by billionaires to become even more powerful. It would be a shame to lose editorial freedom and the right of the people to have access to alternative voices. We have to protect that.”

Gaspard G

@GaspardG, 1.6M subscribers, France

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Thank you

We are grateful to the creators and experts who contributed to this report and shaped its findings, as well as the advocates and industry partners who shared their time, ideas and feedback. Your voices have shaped this manifesto and helped us make the case for stronger support for the EU's creator economy.

About the consultation

Public First ran an anonymous online survey of creators between 1st June 2026 – 8th July 2026. In total, 20,617 creators completed the survey. We also conducted 20 one-to-one interviews with creators across the EU.

About Public First

Public First is an independent consultancy that works to help companies and organisations develop new policy proposals, better understand public opinion and model their economic and social impact. Public First is a member of the Market Research Society and the British Polling Council, and we abide by their rules and guidelines.



