

PRESS RELEASE on the European Commission's strategy for a Digital Single Market

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Representing more than 10,000 literary translators in 29 European countries, CEATL (Conseil européen des associations de traducteurs littéraires) has read with interest the communication published by the European Commission on May 6th 2015 regarding its strategy for a Digital Single Market. CEATL welcomes the fact that the Commission acknowledges the economic and cultural importance of copyright and the necessity to enforce it better via an improved follow-the-money strategy against internet piracy.

CEATL would like to stress, however, that copyright as such does not have a direct bearing on the development of the Digital Single Market. On the other hand, limiting copyright, broadening exceptions and rashly harmonising nationally distinct but pragmatically meaningful copyright frameworks will risk destroying the very infrastructure that is capable of supplying future markets with digital content.

The Commission's desire to de-diversify existing national and regional standards for exceptions to copyright within education is a cause of particular concern to European translators, whose work constitutes an essential basis of whatever cross-border culture Europe will have in the future. CEATL recognize the importance of facilitating further cross-border use of educational materials but not by a global levelling of the details of national exceptions. This will surely disturb the finely-tuned collective licensing agreements that have been established in different ways in almost all member states in accordance with the variety of cultures, languages and markets in the EU. CEATL appeal, therefore, to carefully assess the consequences of any change in this area and to improve – and not to weaken – the way the national and regional rights management organisations work together.

In full accordance with the document, CEATL finally wishes to reassert that “Measures to safeguard fair remuneration of creators also need to be considered in order to encourage the future generation of content” – which applies to traditional media as well as the digital environment.

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Any European copyright framework should seek to remedy the strong imbalance of power between creators and exploiters. Currently, the bargaining position of authors is so weak that they are routinely barred from any meaningful share of the commercial value of the exploitation of their own works. This weak bargaining position of authors was documented in last year's report to the European Parliament: "Contractual Arrangements Applicable to Creators," which proposed essential measures to secure a fair remuneration for authors. If the EU wants to level the playing field for those who use digital content, the EU should also level the playing field for those who create it.

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