



DIVERSITY IN THE MEDIA: REPRESENTING THE EU'S INCLUSION AGENDA

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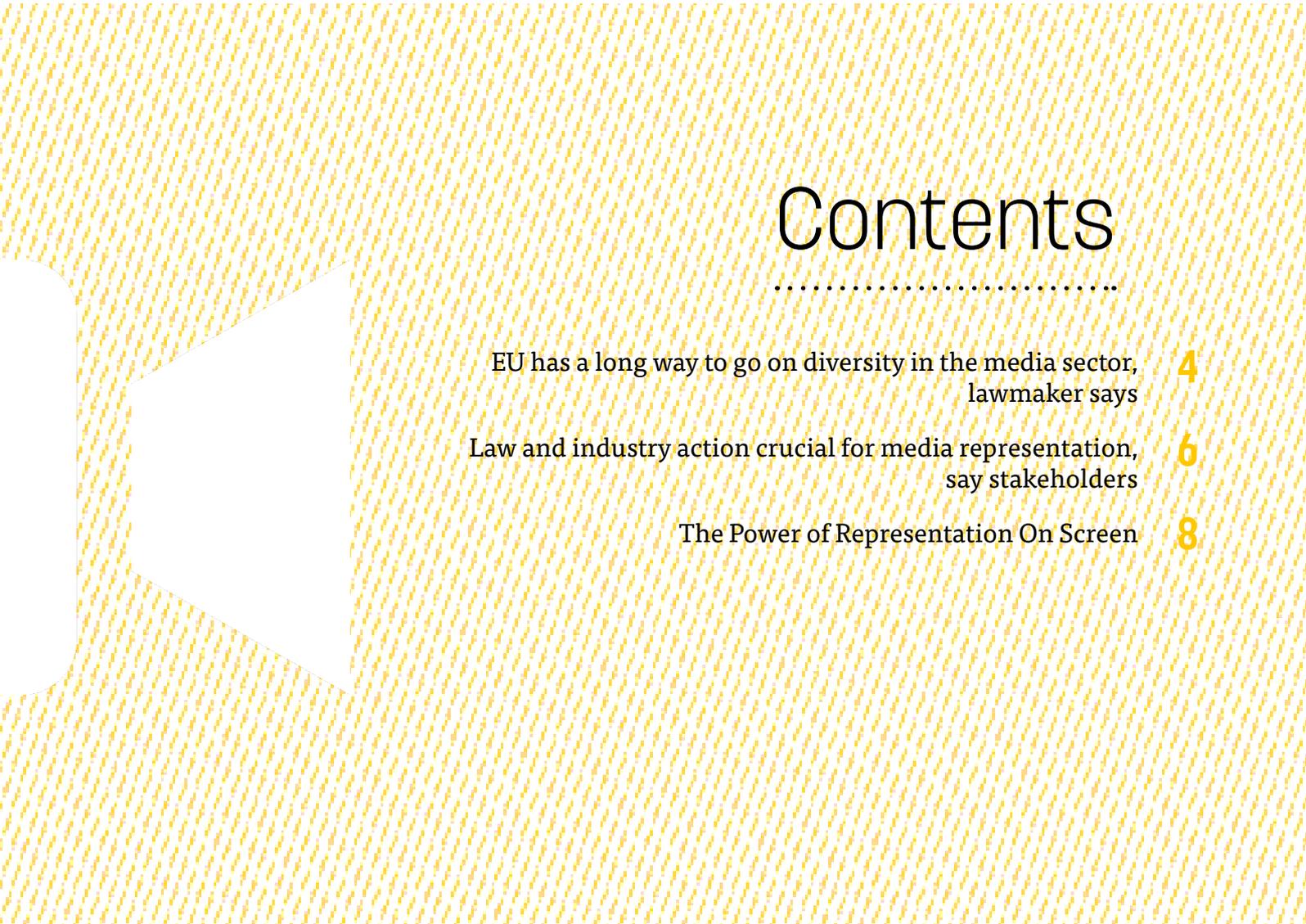
EVENT REPORT

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The value of diverse representation throughout the media is widely recognised but is often not reflected on or off-screen.

The issue of the lack of diversity and inclusion in the media is not just in the most high-profile roles either, and attention is also increasingly turning to the ways in which access to less visible but equally important behind-the-scenes positions can be expanded.

Recent initiatives out of Brussels, such as the European Commission's 2020-25 Anti-racism Action Plan, and its Gender Equality Strategy, have touched on the importance of the media sector, but there are still calls for further action at the industry and national level, as well as for the EU to do more to drive progress in this area.



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INTERVIEW

EU has a long way to go on diversity in the media sector, lawmaker says

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By Molly Killeen | EURACTIV.com



MEP Evin Incir. [Fred MARVAUX / European Parliament]

When it comes to progress on diversity and inclusion (D&I) both on and off-screen, MEP Evin Incir told EURACTIV, the EU has a long way to go before its words, contained in a number of strategies and action plans, turn into action.

She said the biggest obstacle for progress is often in the EU Council, where member states block more decisive action, but acknowledged

that EU institutions are not leading by example as they still lag behind in diverse representation.

Swedish MEP Evin Incir is the co-president of the European Parliament's Anti-Racism and Diversity intergroup and member of the LGBTI intergroup and a member of EU40.

What are your thoughts on the current state of D&I in Europe and the part that the EU can play in making

improvements moving forwards? Why is the role of the media sector so important in this?

The lack of diversity and inclusion in media is a portrait of society as a whole. It is a symptom of a lack of progress in society. Still in 2022, we have a power order that shuts us out because of race, gender, colour, sexuality, sexual belonging and disability.

Society as a whole and the media sector, in particular, must take responsibility to not reproduce a power structure that benefits the few and oppresses the many. Each and every person in our union must be able to fulfil their dreams. We therefore need to break down visible barriers, such as discrimination, and invisible barriers, such as lack of representation. They are both in the end connected to each other.

I am glad that we are seeing more of an intersectional approach in different strategies and action plans – Gender Equality Strategy, LGBTIQ-strategy, Anti-racism Action Plan, etc., but we still have a long way left to go beyond our words and turn them into action, especially in the current time of backlash.

Often there's a focus on on-screen representation, but there's also a significant D&I gap off-screen, particularly in less-visible roles in the media sector. What role do you see the EU playing here when it comes to ensuring wider access to jobs in the industry?

Off and on-screening representation goes hand in hand. When it is a challenge to assume a less visible role, a more visible role becomes even harder to get. The EU and its member states can and must encourage diversity and all our citizens' possibility to get a job based on their talent by increasing skills among unrepresented groups as well as supporting industries that take responsibility for greater inclusion.

There has been a lot of focus on awareness-raising in current and past initiatives. Do you think this is being sufficiently complemented with substantive actions?

Many times the media sector is unfortunately forgotten when talking about diversity. We need to address it more and with concrete goals, for both traditional and social media.

It is especially worrying in those EU member states where we see a backlash. That backlash includes a stone-age mentality of what is "normal" and attacks on already vulnerable groups in our society as well as the politicization of media. Free and independent media is essential, including state-owned media and support, to ensure that all institutions in society mirror the population.

Do you see a lack of action when it comes to the EU's response to national-level developments, such as the recent Hungarian media law targeting LGBTQ+ rights?

The EU contains mainly three different institutions. Among them, I am disappointed at the EU Council the most; it constitutes a barrier for the EU to be even harder against governments such as the ones in Hungary and Poland. It is time to use the new rule of law mechanism, but because of the deal done in the Council, still one year after the mechanism was introduced, it has not been implemented. We are still waiting for the judgement of the Court of Justice of the European Union.

How does this, and the lack of diverse representation within the EU institutions themselves, fit with commitments to promote and protect the rights of different groups in the media or other sectors?

It is of course a part of the same struggle. However, it is crucial that the EU institutions themselves live up to what they preach- domestically

and in external actions, otherwise, they will not become trustworthy. And to be frank, the EU institutions are still lagging behind, like the rest of the society.

I am happy though that Commissioner for Equality Helena Dalli has intensified the struggle for inclusion during this mandate. But for true inclusion, the whole Commission must take its share of responsibility and ensure that the member states and private sector do the same.

Is enough attention being paid to long-term progress, or vice-versa: are current initiatives failing to address the need for action in the short term?

There are both long-term and short-term goals in place, even though the long-term ones are harder to achieve and are much more dependent on the member states also doing their share. Among the short-term goals, I welcome last year's appointment of the first-ever anti-racism coordinator. One of the most important next steps would be that the EU Council helped out by unblocking the horizontal anti-discrimination directive which encompasses more discrimination grounds than today and includes a bigger part of society.

Law and industry action crucial for media representation, say stakeholders

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By Molly Killeen | EURACTIV.com



"As legislators we have a huge responsibility to ensure that all the population is represented", said MEP Evin Incir. "Representation is a matter of democracy, it is a matter of human rights." [Shutterstock / gnepphoto]

Action to improve diversity and inclusion (D&I) in the European media and audiovisual sector needs to come from all, not just a select few, of the stakeholders involved, the EU's first Anti-Racism Coordinator has said.

"It's not just the responsibility of one or two actors, it's the responsibility of all of us: the institutions, the private sector, the entertainment industry," said Michaela Moua, who in 2021 became the EU's first Anti-Racism Coordinator, a position created to oversee the implementation of the

Commission's 2020-2025 Anti-Racism Action Plan.

Her message was echoed by fellow speakers from each of these areas, all of whom emphasised the importance of D&I in the media, not just in terms of improving the sector itself but also, given its role in shaping societal perceptions and conversation, when it comes driving much broader change.

Moua also emphasised the significance of data in bringing about this change, both in demonstrating the necessity of it and in tracking

progress.

A recent study conducted by ViacomCBS showed just how high the desire for wider and more accurate representation amongst global audiences is. If anything, said German producer Nataly Kudiabor, this means that the entertainment industry should also be focusing on D&I from a business perspective, given that the demand for diverse storytelling is so great.

However, she said, it is the sector's powerful gatekeepers that often

prove a key barrier to ensuring this shift, meaning what is needed is a reexamination of who, for example, is commissioning TV programmes.

As the speakers pointed out, a proactive approach can be taken at the industry level.

Susanne Schildknecht, vice president of brands at ViacomCBS noted that the company had instituted a “no diversity, no commission” policy last year, meaning that the companies contracted to work on their programming have to follow guidelines designed to ensure both on and offscreen representation.

In part, she said, this was to challenge the fact that the people doing the commissioning and hiring in these kind of organisations often fall back on their existing networks of directors and producers by default, rather than devoting time and money to ensuring that new voices are included.

It is therefore important, she said, that industry sets clear goals when it comes to D&I, so that progress can be both pledged and achieved. She also

noted, however, that diversity can mean different things in different countries and contexts, and that the work being done to improve it should not, therefore, be based on blanket targets or assumptions.

Kudiabor also pointed to this as a key factor for those on the artistic side of the entertainment sector to consider, stressing the importance of ensuring that the people working behind the camera – writing, directing, producing – are from the communities they are seeking to depict, in order to ensure representation that is authentic and nuanced and that avoids reproducing harmful stereotypes.

While awareness and discussion are the most important components of pushing for change in D&I, Evin Incir, a Swedish MEP and member of the EU40 group of young MEPs said, the EU institutions also have a more concrete role to play.

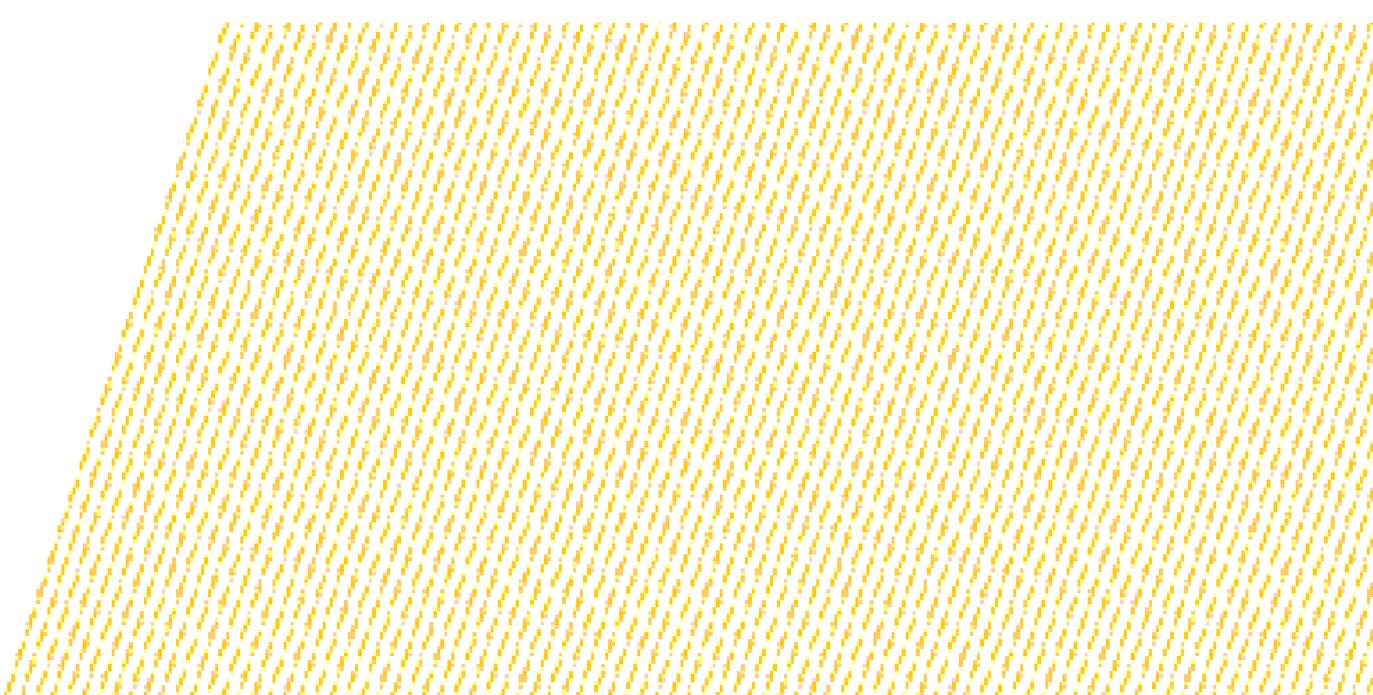
Crucially, she said, this should be in the translation of existing initiatives such as the Commission’s Anti-Racism, Gender Equality and LGBTQI Equality Strategies into real

policies, which, she added she sees “a huge lack of today”.

The EU should be using legislation as both carrot and stick, Incir said, ensuring that the media and the audiovisual sector is taking responsibility, but also that it is supported in doing so.

It is the European Council, she noted, that often proves to be the sticking point when it comes to legislating for change in this area. The EU’s Anti-Discrimination Directive, for example – a 2008 proposal that would horizontally extend the protections from discrimination that currently exist in the labour market to cover a greater number of areas – remains blocked by the Council to this day.

“As legislators, we have a huge responsibility to ensure that all the population is represented”, said Incir. “Representation is a matter of democracy, it is a matter of human rights.”



PROMOTED CONTENT

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The Power of Representation On Screen

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[EU40](#) and [ViacomCBS](#)



[ViacomCBS]

ViacomCBS's new global research study on representation in TV shows and movies reveals a desire for authentic representation – and the importance of getting it right.

How do audiences around the world feel about how people like themselves are depicted in TV shows and movies and why does it matter?

As part of our commitment to reflect, celebrate and elevate the

diversity of our audiences, ViacomCBS carried out a new research study, [Reflecting Me: Global Representation on Screen](#), to develop a deeper understanding of this topic.

Our research revealed that in all countries there is a hunger not just for better representation, but *authentic* representation. The findings also show that the consequences of getting representation wrong – and right – have powerful implications for how people see themselves, and how they

are seen by others.

These findings are a clear call for action: “We know representation done right can aid in improving the lives of people globally” said Christian Kurz, Senior Vice President, Global Streaming and Corporate Insights at ViacomCBS. “We have the responsibility not only to continue to drive change within our industry but also serve as a catalyst for positive social change around the world.”

This call to action is the starting point for an [online discussion on what's happening on and off screen in the EU and who needs to be part of driving change for better, more authentic representation](#), being organised by ViacomCBS and EU40 from 16h-17h CET on Thursday 10 February.

As Alessandro Da Rold, MD of EU40 explains, *"our work centers around amplifying young voices in Europe and connecting communities and stakeholders. We have learnt that making sure people are seen and heard leads to inspiration and change. The report shows that diversity and representation on screen and off is a big part of this and should be part of the conversation."*

REFLECTING ME: GLOBAL REPRESENTATION ON SCREEN

We surveyed over 15,000 people aged 13 to 49 in 15 countries, including Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Poland. The project explored multiple aspects of diversity, encompassing ethnicity/race, gender identity, sexuality, disability, and more.

REPRESENTATION MATTERS TO AUDIENCES EVERYWHERE

Our research clearly showed that people value representation both on- and off-screen. Almost 8 in 10 people globally (78%) believe it is important that TV shows and movies offer diverse representation of lots of different groups and identities. This sentiment is even stronger among people with mixed heritage (85%), marginalized ethnic groups (86%), and among Black people (91%).

However, many do not see lives like their own reflected in

entertainment. Among those who feel poorly represented, 69% attribute this at least in part to their appearance – their body type, physical demeanour, or dress. People of Colour are four times more likely to feel poorly represented because they don't see enough people with their skin colour or tone. Two in five people who feel poorly represented and have a physical disability say they don't see enough people with their body type; a similar percentage of gender-nonconforming people share this sentiment.

Yet while outward appearance is important on screen, good representation is more complex. Among those who feel poorly represented in TV shows and movies, 52% think that people like them are represented inaccurately. They attribute this in part to not seeing enough people who behave like them (33%), come from the same economic level (29%), speak with the same accents or dialects (22%), have a family like theirs (21%), or live in a home like theirs (21%).

ON SCREEN REPRESENTATION HAS AN IMPACT ON PERCEPTIONS IN THE REAL WORLD

Most of our global respondents (85%) believe that the way groups and identities are portrayed in TV shows and movies influences how they are perceived in the real world. Showing that representation has the power to do harm – and to do good.

Poor representation leaves people feeling defeated and distanced. In fact, almost two in five of those who feel poorly represented say it makes them feel unimportant, ignored, or disappointed. This sense of alienation takes a profound toll, affecting their

self-esteem and confidence, sense of belonging, and opportunities in life.

Good representation, on the other hand, can incite positive change. Among those who say they've become more positive towards a certain group compared to five years ago, more said that media representation and celebrity acceptance contributed the most to this change – than news coverage, laws, or the opinions of friends and family.

THE NEED FOR CHANGE

Globally, 79% agree that there needs to be more diversity in TV shows and movies. This rises to 83% among people who consider themselves part of an underrepresented group. Only half are satisfied with current levels of on-screen representation.

Whilst over one in three people surveyed felt they had seen a positive difference in representation over the last five years, slightly under one in five felt that things have got worse. Audiences are also calling for more to be done to improve diversity off-screen, recognizing that this in turn has a positive impact on what they see on-screen.

The time for positive change is now. Join us from 16h-17h CET on Thursday 10 February to discuss how we can drive better, more authentic representation on screen and off with a panel of legislators and industry experts who are passionate about diversity, equity, and inclusion ([more info here.](#))

Find out more about ViacomCBS's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion [here.](#)



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