



14.1.2025

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Subject: Petition No 0919/2024 by A. N. (Polish) on linguistic diversity and accessibility on streaming platforms in the EU

1. Summary of petition

The petitioner says that streaming platforms should have to provide access to Polish versions of streaming materials across the European Union. According to the petitioner, platforms such as Netflix do not offer Polish language streaming in Germany despite the same materials being available in Poland, in Polish. The petitioner claims that this limits Polish children living abroad who are unable to view materials in their native language: this in turn infringes on their cultural identity and the parents' ability to educate. The petitioner calls for the introduction of regulations to require streaming platforms to make materials available in all languages of the European Union. According to the petitioner, this change would align with the ethos of both EU and UN law, which it currently contradicts with regard to equal access to media and culture.

2. Admissibility

Declared admissible on 15 November 2024. Information requested from Commission under Rule 233(6).

3. Commission reply, received on 14 January 2025

This petition highlights concerns regarding the availability of language versions of streaming content provided by streaming platforms in the EU. According to the petitioner, EU citizens, particularly children, are prevented from accessing content in their own language – in Polish, in the case at stake - when residing in another EU country, even if a linguistic version of this content is already available in another country. The petitioner calls for regulatory action to oblige streaming platforms to make their content available in all EU languages across all Member States.

Under EU law, streaming service providers are not required to offer their content in all languages across all territories. Streaming services may adapt their catalogue on a territorial basis for a variety of reasons, including for reasons related to copyright and licensing practices. In this regard, if streaming service providers wish to make their content available across borders, including in each linguistic version, they need to have the required rights for the relevant Member States territories.

While there is no obligation to provide content in all linguistic versions in the EU, the Commission has been actively working in recent years to promote and enhance the discoverability of European works, including in their national language, so EU citizens can enjoy a broader access to EU cultural content.

The revised Audiovisual and Media Services Directive EU 2018/1808 ('AVMSD') expressly upholds the objectives of protecting cultural and linguistic diversity, media pluralism, consumer protection and accessibility. Overall, the AVMSD guarantees the freedom to provide services and the reception of audiovisual content. In this context, the 'country-of-origin' principle has facilitated the cross-border transmission of television channels and video-on-demand (VOD) services. While AVMSD does not explicitly impose language-specific obligations on service providers, including streaming platforms, AVMSD includes rules to promote the production and distribution of European works and thus contribute actively to the promotion of cultural diversity. These rules include the obligation for on-demand services to include at least 30% of European works in their catalogues, which have contributed actively to the objective of promoting cultural and linguistic diversity within the Union. AVMSD also allows Member States to extend their financial obligations schemes for the promotion of European works to cross-border providers, including streamers. In this context, Member States benefit from a margin of manoeuvre and have introduced specific sub-quotas for European works in the national language.

The Commission is also actively supporting the advancement of language technology tools to promote multilingualism across Europe, particularly within the digital domain. To facilitate the development of such tools in all EU languages, the Commission is currently developing the Language Data Space (LDS), a marketplace for language data necessary for the development of multilingual tools. The Commission has also initiated the creation of the Alliance for Language Technologies (ALT-EDIC), a multi-country consortium that brings Member States together to develop language technologies. As part of its efforts to enhance multilingual accessibility of online content, the Commission is currently developing, through a contractor, an open-source Automated Speech Recognition tool.

Conclusion

While streaming service providers are not obliged to make all content available in all EU languages across all Member States, the AVMSD includes rules to promote the production and distribution of European works across the EU. In addition, the Commission continues pursuing efforts, through the development of specific tools, to enhance multilingualism in the digital environment.'