



EPC CONTRIBUTION TO THE GEO-BLOCKING CONSULTATION

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Background

The European Producers Club (EPC) is an association representing nearly 200 independent European producers from 35 countries, highly specialized in international co-productions.

In the last 30 years, EPC has been actively following the policies that affect the business of independent producers all over Europe. This includes the Geo-blocking Regulation that was adopted in 2018. In 2021 and 2022, the EPC took an active part in the European Commission stakeholders' dialogue on access to and availability of audiovisual content across the EU¹. The EPC used this opportunity to advocate strongly for maintaining the Geo-blocking exception for the audiovisual sector and made recommendations on how to improve online access as well as the circulation of the visibility of European films online².

Why do territorial exclusivities matter so much to the European audiovisual sector?

Removing geo-blocking would certainly not benefit European citizens in the long run and would significantly harm the European audiovisual value chain, ultimately leading to less investment in new creative works, reduced cultural diversity, fewer distribution channels and higher prices for the citizens.

Territorial exclusivities, enabled by the technical solution of **geo-blocking**, are the very heart of the financing and distribution models for European audiovisual works (see case study of FLOW below). To dismantle this system by including audiovisual services within the scope of the general Geo-blocking Regulation would have severe and irreversible consequences:

- **It would jeopardise the financing of European films and TV series.** Unlike major US studios, our producers rely heavily on pre-financing from a variety of sources, including audiovisual media service providers (TV channels, online services), public funders, and other investors (sales agents, distributors...). These financiers demand exclusivity within specific geographical areas for a defined period as a condition of their investment, allowing them to mitigate risks and maximise potential returns. Without this assurance, the willingness to invest in inherently risky cultural assets will drastically diminish, threatening the very existence of a diverse range of European productions.
- **It would undermine effective distribution and promotion.** Distributing films and TV dramas country by country allows for tailored strategies to optimise audience reach, selecting the right release moments, platforms, and targeted marketing campaigns. Local distributors, whose business models rely on territorial exclusivity, are crucial in this process. If content were universally available online without territorial boundaries, there would be little incentive for these distributors to invest in the necessary promotion and marketing, leading to reduced visibility and ultimately less access for audiences.

¹ [Access to and availability of audiovisual content across the EU | Shaping Europe's digital future](#)

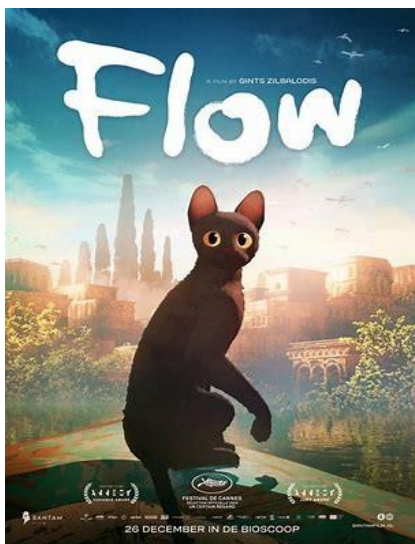
² [EPC Contribution](#)

- **It will affect all European and national public support policies.** This importance of territorial licensing is acknowledged in all European funding programmes for cinema and audiovisual (content such as Creative Europe, Eurimages, Ibermedia and national support schemes). They all are all intrinsically based on territorial exclusivity as a pillar of the European financing and distribution model for films and series, to extract value from single territories (whether needed as a prefinancing funding for making the films, or as a financial return for rights holders for their investment). These programmes are all aimed at improving and extending the producers' capability to build effective coproductions schemes, as well as improving distribution across Europe and worldwide. All these programmes are therefore based on territorial exclusivity and on the assumption that unrestricted cross-border availability could disrupt national financing models rather than improve consumers' accessibility to works. Removing geo-blocking will also endanger these support schemes that have been instrumental for the European audiovisual sector.
- **It would negatively impact cultural diversity.** The strength of European audiovisual production lies in its diversity of stories, languages, and cultural backgrounds. The current system, underpinned by territorial exclusivity, supports this rich tapestry by allowing works to be financed and distributed in a way that respects and caters to different linguistic and regional markets. Removing geo-blocking risks pushing towards a more homogenised offering, potentially reducing the variety of content available to European citizens. The market will become concentrated in the hands of a few large companies that can afford production and distribution, probably in dominant languages, ultimately leading to a loss of European audiovisual identity and diversity.

Case study -- No geo-blocking: No FLOW

Without geo-blocking, a film like **FLOW**, a dialogue-free **Latvian animation feature**, a masterpiece that just won the **Oscar for Best Animated Feature** after winning a Golden Globe and the **European Film Awards** - and is nominated for the [Lux Audience Award 2025](#) of the European Parliament - would never have been made nor released in so many countries with the success we know.

To date, Flow has been distributed in more than 60 countries in the world and in **26 European countries (22 EU countries)**. The releases were scheduled at **different dates**, to cater to the local audience contexts, started in August 2024 and are still ongoing.



Flow is a co-production with Latvia, Belgium and France. A film driven by the vision of a talented author, it is a pure marvel, which - to everyone's surprise - has been a huge success in cinemas for the last few months.

To make it, the film obtained public and private funding in various countries. In each of these territories, sales agents, distributors and channels invested money in the project. These include various distributors and TV channels (RTBF, ARTE). In exchange for this investment, these financiers ask to be able to exploit the works exclusively in their respective territories. Basically, this allows them to limit the risks by being the only ones for a certain period of time in a certain audience pool. They then invest even more in advertising and promotion to maximize this use.

What would have happened without geo-blocking?

- If Flow were easily available online from another country (cross border access), what would be the point of a cinema showing it? Which distributor will be ready to invest in promoting it in a local market? Flow being dialogue-free, it has no natural linguistic barrier; the end of geo-blocking would have **totally jeopardized its cinema exhibition potential and the revenues it generates for the entire value chain.**
- The film simply **would not have existed.** If it had been available online from another country, it would have completely altered the landscape for investors. Their contributions to pre-financing would have been significantly different—either they would have invested less, declined the project altogether, or chosen not to acquire the exploitation rights. For a risky project like this—and indeed, for much of our European films, which lacks a massive marketing machine, features multilingual storytelling, and follows a less standardized approach—such a scenario **threatens its financial viability.**

The way forward

EPC fully supports the objective of making more European films widely available online. Indeed, progress has already been made in this regard through existing legislation such as the Portability Regulation, the AVMS Directive with its minimum 30% European works quota, and the Satellite and Cable Directive that allows access across the EU to certain in-house programming made available on a simultaneous basis. These regulations facilitate online availability without dismantling the fundamental economic model that sustains the European audiovisual sector.

EPC will continue to propose all possible initiatives to improve access and visibility of European works online³. It stands ready to engage further in constructive dialogue to ensure that policies support a vibrant, diverse, and sustainable future for European audiovisual production.

SOURCES:

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³ Ibid., [EPC](#) Contribution