



# Modernising copyright for the digital age

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**O**f the issues people encounter online, few seem to be as visible or irritating as copyright<sup>1</sup>. A system that started as a way to support artists and other creators to do what they do best, has become something complicated that many people don't understand and don't respect.

That's a problem for creators, for companies that help share their work and for you and me as users and consumers. I hear about problems all the time: from citizens unsure if they can upload their own wedding video to social networks, to scientists unable to carry out life-saving research using text-mining. It seems clear to me that there is a great opportunity from modernising the EU copyright framework to make it fit for an ever-changing digital world.

The EU has already acted in this area, agreeing two new important laws: a Directive on so-called Orphan Works<sup>2</sup>, and one on Collective Rights Management<sup>3</sup> to support cross-border access to online music.

But we need to go further to remove the current obstacles, promote rapid digital developments and make copyright fit for the online age. We are completing a consultation in February 2014 that will help us take the next legal steps.

An effective, modern copyright system could play a significant role ensuring a vibrant single market for online content in Europe: not to mention supporting education, science and our economy. It also needs to stimulate innovation, and promote the production of new creative content.

That is one of the reasons why we developed the Licences for Europe<sup>4</sup> process in 2013. It is one track of our approach on copyright<sup>5</sup>; covering a number of issues, from audiovisual heritage, to text and data mining for research, to online TV and film. Some of which groups had great success; others less so.

The point behind these initiatives is for copyright to be an enabler, not an obstacle, to the selling and sharing of content.

For example, agreement was found on how to ensure European film heritage remains the envy of the world. This cooperation showed that different groups can come together, and unite around a common objective and a common way forward. Even though they would have preferred legislative exceptions, which we still don't exclude for the future.

Every day scientists find they can't conduct life-saving research. People can't yet watch their favourite TV or films across borders, when they have paid for it. Not legally anyway. Meanwhile people aren't even sure if they are allowed to upload their own wedding video online!

And all because of dated copyright rules. Come on. Let's move with the times.

Now that we have spent a year considering non-legislative ways to achieve progress, it is time to consider new legislation.

Copyright needs to reform for the digital age. This is important for our future economy.

Every day we don't reform viewers lose out, science loses out, artists lose out, our shared culture loses out.

So where we have not delivered sufficient results, we must look elsewhere. Like reviewing the legal framework. And looking at legislative exceptions.

We need a copyright system fit for the digital age. For scientists, for artists, for film and TV lovers, for our culture. Copyright should not be a tool of obstruction and control, but something that enables. Delivering for every European. ■

1. [http://ec.europa.eu/internal\\_market/consultations/2013/copyright-rules/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/consultations/2013/copyright-rules/index_en.htm)  
2. [http://ec.europa.eu/internal\\_market/copyright/orphan\\_works/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/copyright/orphan_works/index_en.htm)  
3. [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_MEMO-13-955\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-955_en.htm)  
4. <http://ec.europa.eu/licences-for-europe-dialogue/>  
5. [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_MEMO-12-950\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-12-950_en.htm)