Audiovisual Strategies and the *Unity in Diversity* Principle of the EU: A Cultural Dimensions Perspective on European and Turkish Cinema

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Abstract

The question of the study is, what the kind of impactss of the EU's audiovisual strategy and its corresponding policies —rooted in the principle of *unity in diversity*—on the European and Turkish cinema there are. So, introducing a comprehensive answer requires handling culture, European cultures, almost all completely different from each other, which has historical roots. Within this framework, comparing the European cultural paradigm with Turkish cultural dynamics offers valuable insight into the study's central theme. Study applies Hofstede's *cultural dimensions theory*—a widely used framework for analyzing cultural diversities—to explore and evaluate the differences between European and Turkish cultural influences in the context of cinema and the audiovisual sector. Drawing on the insights gained, the study presents concrete insights on both the European and Turkish film industries and proposes recommendations to support the development and internationalization of both sectors.
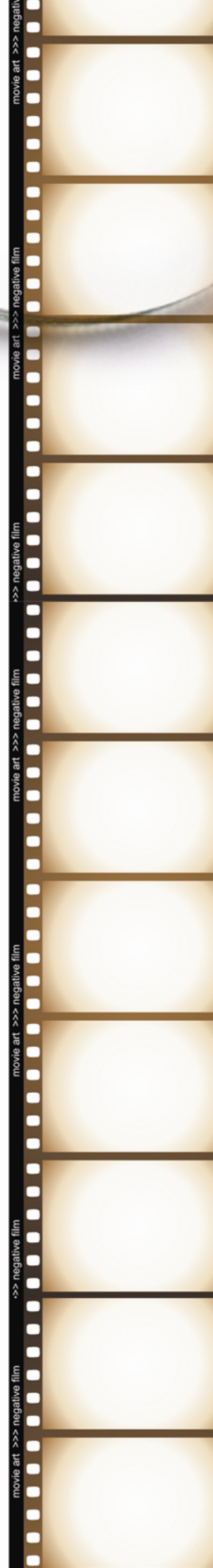
Keywords: audiovisual strategies; unity in diversity; The Media and Audiovisual Action Plan; European cinema; Turkish cinema; MEDIA sub-programme; EU culture policy

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Introduction

Cinema holds significant importance for all. While it may appear as a simple, few-hour experience on a piece of white fabric, it spans a vast domain with far-reaching impacts, including political, social, cultural, and economic effects (Kubrak, 2020). This study specifically focuses on the cultural dimension of cinema and European and Turkish audiovisual sector. This study specifically focuses on the cultural dimension of cinema, with a particular emphasis on the European and Turkish audiovisual sectors, while intentionally disregarding other aspects. This does not imply that these aspects are unimportant or negligible but rather reflects the scope limitations of the study.

The EU has long recognized the strategic importance of cinema and the audiovisual sector as both cultural and economic assets. Through initiatives like the Creative Europe programme, particularly its MEDIA sub-programme (Primorac, et.al, 2017), the EU supports film production, distribution, and training across member and associated countries, including

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Türkiye. These strategies aim to promote cultural diversity, enhance competitiveness, and strengthen the transnational circulation of audiovisual works.

In Europe, EU audiovisual strategies have contributed to building a more integrated and collaborative industry. By providing funding for co-productions, training schemes, film festivals, and market access, the EU has facilitated greater cross-border cooperation among European filmmakers. Tools such as the EU Audiovisual Observatory, Eurimages, and MEDIA Desk (Romero and Palma, 2019; Crusafon, 2015) have offered both financial and logistical support, helping European cinema maintain a strong presence in the global market (Elsaesser, 2015; Hill, et.al; Dyer and Vincendeau, 2013) while reflecting the region's diverse cultural narratives.

Türkiye, though not an EU member, has participated in various EU cultural and audiovisual initiatives as an associated country. Since joining the Creative Europe programme in 2016, Turkish cinema has benefited from co-productions, access to European funding mechanisms (Harrod and Timoshkina, 2014), and increased exposure in European markets. This has fostered greater collaboration between Turkish and European filmmakers, improved the technical and narrative quality of Turkish films, and contributed to the international recognition of Turkish cinema (Yılmazok, 2012).

Moreover, EU strategies have influenced policy development in Türkiye by encouraging the alignment of national audiovisual legislation with European standards, particularly in areas like copyright, media pluralism, and digital innovation. This alignment has helped modernize Türkiye's film industry and improve its infrastructure for production and distribution.

However, challenges remain, particularly regarding political tensions, freedom of expression, and the sustainability of funding. Despite these hurdles, the EU's audiovisual tools continue to serve as vital connectors, enabling Turkish and European cinema to engage in meaningful cultural exchange and joint innovation. EU audiovisual strategies and tools have significantly shaped the development of cinema in both Europe and Türkiye. By fostering cross-border collaboration, improving industry standards, and enhancing international visibility, these strategies have strengthened the cultural and economic dimensions of the European and Turkish audiovisual sectors (Keser, 2016; Aksoy and Robins, 1997). Given the cultural richness and diversity throughout Europe, the EU's cultural policy avoids assimilating these unique identities into a singular European culture. Rather, it upholds the principle of *unity in diversity* (Bieber and Bieber, 2020; Keskin, 2019; Pantel, 2005; Mair, P. and Zielonka, 2012) prioritizing the protection and maintenance of all cultural expressions in their original forms.

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Within this framework, contrasting the European cultural paradigm with Turkish cultural dynamics provides meaningful input to the examination of the study's central theme. To respond to the primary research question, the Cultural Dimensions Theory, which is used to undestand cultural diversities for varied reasons, is employed to uncover and assess the differences between European and Turkish cultural influences. Based on the insights obtained, the study delivers tangible findings regarding the effects of EU audiovisual policies on both European and Turkish cinema industries and subsequently puts forward recommendations aimed at supporting the development of both sectors.

Methodology

Purpose; The central theme of this study is cinema. Below are the research question and hypothes:

> **RQ:** What types of impacts does the EU's audiovisual strategy, and its corresponding policies have impacts on Europe on Turkish cinema?
>
> **RH:** Audiovisual strategy of the EU and its corresponding policies has varied impacts on Europe on Turkish cinema.

The central question focuses on the impact of the EU's audiovisual strategy—grounded in the principle of "unity in diversity"—on European and Turkish cinema. Addressing this requires a cultural analysis, as European cultures are historically diverse and often distinct. In this context, comparing the European cultural paradigm with Turkish cultural dynamics provides meaningful insight. The study utilizes Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory to

examine and evaluate these cultural differences as they relate to cinema and the audiovisual sector. Based on the findings, the research offers concrete observations about both industries and proposes recommendations to foster their development and global integration.

Design; The methodological framework underpinning this study is illustrated in Figure 1.
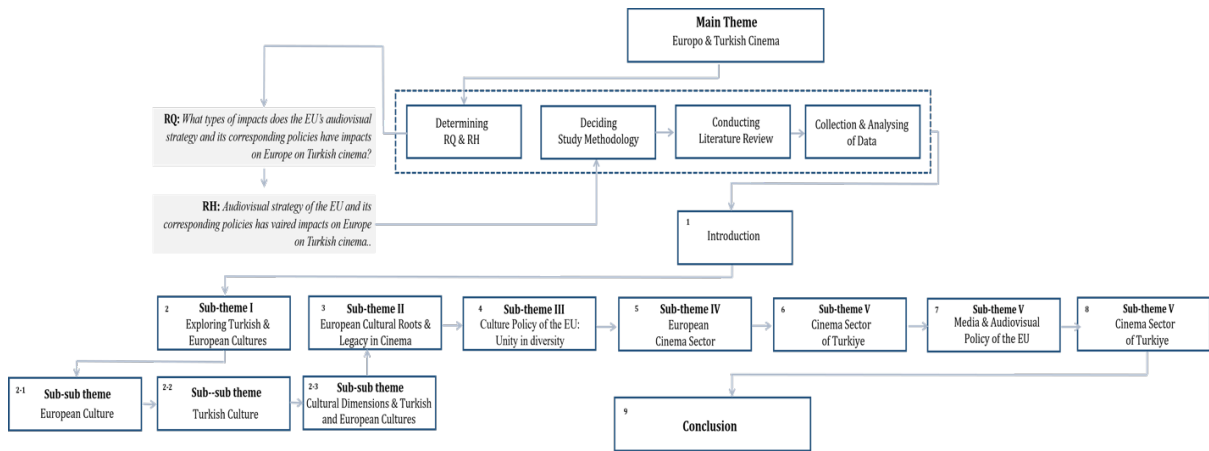

Figure 1: Research Design.

Research limitations; Considering that the cinema has huge domain featured with far-reaching political, social, cultural and economic effects, this study engages the cultural aspects of cinema, with a focus on the European and Turkish audiovisual sectors. The deliberate exclusion of other dimensions in this study does not imply they are unimportant but highlights the research's scope limitations.

Originality and Findings; This study offers originality through its unique findings and approach. One of its key contributions is the comparative analysis of the cinema and cultural spheres in both Europe and Türkiye, highlighting their distinct dynamics. A second

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distinguishing aspect is the application of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory to evaluate cultural influences on the audiovisual sectors of both regions—an approach that has been underexplored in existing literature. Finally, the study sets itself apart by critically assessing the effectiveness of the EU's audiovisual policies, offering a nuanced evaluation of their impact on both the European and Turkish cinema industries.

Practical implications; By analyzing European and Turkish cinema through a cultural lens, this study delivers practical insights for policymakers and stakeholders of EU and Turkish audiovisual. Furthermore, it offers a valuable foundation for academics and researchers seeking to conduct further studies in the field.

Literature review; To address the study's research questions, a preliminary literature review was conducted, focusing on foundational and recent scholarly works related to the topic. In order to apply Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory effectively, the review also included sources exploring the historical and structural foundations of both Turkish and European cultures. To identify the cultural roots of Europe and their influence on cinema, the research first examined the cultural policy framework of the EU, followed by an analysis of academic and sectoral literature on both European and Turkish cinema. Finally, a review of official EU documents was undertaken to outline the guiding principles of the EU's Media and Audiovisual

Policy.

Exploring Turkish and European Cultures Through Cultural Dimensions

It is, in fact, not entirely accurate to compare Turkish culture (Sak, 2020) directly with European culture, as the latter is not a singular, uniform entity. A more appropriate comparison would be between Turkish culture and the distinct national cultures of countries (Minkov and Hofstede, 2012; Hofstede, 1984) such as Germany, France, or the United Kingdom. However, this study does not aim to conduct a direct cultural comparison at the national level. Rather, it offers a general overview based on prominent cultural characteristics, without delving into deeper specifics. In this regard, one of the few meaningful commonalities between Turkish and European cultures is their inherent complexity and richness. Both represent multifaceted cultural paradigms shaped by centuries of historical transformation, diverse influences, and regional variation. This shared complexity makes it possible to identify patterns and contrasts that contribute to a broader understanding of their respective audiovisual sectors and how culture shapes content production and consumption across borders

European Culture

Although the term "European culture" is often used in the literature, there is no singular cultural structure that encompasses all the societies living on this continent. Instead, Europe is characterized by a highly diverse and complex cultural paradigm. The complexity of Europe's

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cultural divisions arises from various historical, linguistic, religious, and geographical factors. These divisions reflect the continent's rich diversity and have been shaped over centuries through interactions among different peoples, empires, and nations. One of the key components of culture is language. In Europe, five major language families are spoken: Romance languages derived from Latin (in France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Romania), Germanic languages (including German, English, Dutch, and the Nordic languages), Slavic languages (such as Russian, Polish, Czech, and Serbian), Celtic languages (including Gaelic and Welsh), and Baltic and Finno-Ugric languages (spoken in the Baltic states, Finland, and Hungary).

Another key determinant of culture is religion. Europe has deep-rooted Christian traditions, yet significant divisions exist within the faith. Catholicism is predominantly practiced in Southern and Central Europe, particularly in Italy, Spain, France, and Poland. Orthodoxy is prevalent in Greece, Russia, Serbia, Bulgaria, and parts of Eastern Europe and the Balkans. Protestantism is most common in the UK, Germany, the Netherlands, and Scandinavia in Northern and Western Europe. Rather than collaboration, historical challenges rooted in these religious divisions have often marked relations between these sects. Despite Europe being historically defined by Christianity, it is home to a significant Muslim population, particularly in France, Germany, the Balkans (Bosnia, Albania), and parts of Eastern Europe. Following the

9/11 attacks, religious-based divisions have intensified, with Islamophobia becoming a cultural issue in Europe, leading to political, social, and economic ramifications.

This division continues to influence Europe's cultural identity today, particularly along religious and political lines, often described as the East-West divide. The roots of this separation trace back to ancient times. Following the fall and fragmentation of the Roman Empire, Europe was divided into two distinct regions, with Bosnia often cited as marking a symbolic boundary. This division was primarily based on religious differences. In the West, Catholics dominated, while in the East, Orthodox Christians remained the majority. The second major division occurred during the Cold War period. In Western Europe, democratic, market-oriented countries such as France, Germany, and the UK flourished, while Eastern Europe was home to communist countries like the Soviet Union, Poland, and Hungary.

In addition, European cultures are deeply influenced by nationalism. National identities continue to be strong across the continent, with distinct cultural traditions, languages, and customs shaped by nationalist movements. Notable examples of this include the Basques in Spain and France, the Catalans in Spain, the Scots in the UK, and the Flemings and Walloons in Belgium. Europe's culture can also be categorized through other classifications such as Mediterranean Europe vs. Northern Europe, or Urban Europe vs. Rural Europe. However, due

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to the scope limitations of this study, these classifications are not discussed in detail. Nevertheless, the divisions addressed here are sufficient to demonstrate that Europe's cultural distinctions are deeply rooted in its history and geography. In recognition of this cultural richness, the EU has adopted the motto *Unity in Diversity* as a guiding principle of its cultural policy. From the EU's perspective, the diversity that shapes cultural identities, values, and political dynamics across the continent is seen not as a problem to be overcome, but as a strength to be embraced and preserved.

Turkish Culture

Turkish culture is a rich and multifaceted blend shaped by centuries of interaction between East and West. Based on the heritage of the Central Asian Turkish tribes, this culture was significantly transformed by the Seljuk and Ottoman Empires, which left a deep mark on the country's language, architecture, cuisine, religion and social values.

Türkiye's strategic location connecting Europe and Asia has further contributed to this cultural synthesis, creating a society that embodies both Eastern and Western elements. At the core of Turkish culture are family ties, hospitality, social values and a deep respect for traditions and elders. Islam plays an important role in shaping traditions and social norms, but secularism, modernity and liberal lifestyles also influence contemporary urban life, especially in major cities such as Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir. Turkish cuisine, with its diverse regional specialties,

reflects both Mediterranean and Central Asian influences. Art, music and literature are also central to the cultural identity, and classical Turkish music, folk dances and epic poems are widely appreciated. Turkish, written in the Latin alphabet since 1928, is a great unifying force, and cultural expressions such as proverbs, idioms, and storytelling are an integral part of everyday communication. In the modern era, Turkish television and cinema have gained both regional and international attention, playing a role in cultural diplomacy and soft power. Today, Turkish culture reflects a dynamic blend of tradition and innovation, where historical depth and contemporary expression coexist and constantly evolve in a rapidly globalizing world. The Turkish language, cuisine, music and arts reflect this cultural synthesis, and practices such as Turkish tea rituals, folk dances and calligraphy reveal its unique identity. Islam remains the dominant religion, but Turkish society also embraces secular and diverse lifestyles. Urbanization, globalization and digital media have created modern dynamics, creating a contrast between traditional and contemporary values. Despite regional differences, national pride, a strong sense of community and a shared history bind the Turkish people together. This cultural complexity continues to evolve, making Turkish culture both historically grounded and vibrantly current.

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Cultural dimensions theory having six dimensions to explain cultural differences across countries and organizations, can be used as a tool created by Dutch social psychologist Hofstede (Vinken, et. al, 2004; Hofstede, 1984; Mechi, 2010), to explore how culture influences values, especially in the workplace. The first dimension, Power Distance Index (PDI), identifies how much inequality in power people are willing to accept.

In high power distance cultures, hierarchy is accepted, and authority is rarely questioned. In contrast, low power distance cultures value equality, and individuals are more likely to challenge authority. Individualism vs. Collectivism (IDV) (Darwish, and Huber, 2003) examines whether people see themselves primarily as individuals or as part of a group. Individualistic cultures, emphasizing independence, personal goals, and individual rights, whereas collectivist cultures prioritize group loyalty, strong family ties, and shared responsibility.

Masculinity vs. Femininity (MAS) relates to the values a culture places on achievement versus care (Stets and Burke, 2000). Masculine cultures emphasize competitiveness, success, and assertiveness, while feminine cultures focus on quality of life, cooperation, and nurturing behavior. Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI) shows how comfortable a culture is with ambiguity and uncertainty. While high uncertainty avoidance cultures prefer structure, rules,

and clear expectations on the other hand low uncertainty avoidance cultures are more open to

change and tolerant of ambiguity.

cultural dimensions	*European Cultural Features*	*Turkish Cultural Features*
Power Distance Index (PDI)	many European cultures—particularly in Northern and Western Europe—tend to score lower, reflecting a preference for egalitarianism and participative decision-making	Turkish culture tends to exhibit higher power distance, indicating a greater acceptance of hierarchical structures
Individualism vs. Collectivism (IDV)	Many European cultures, particularly in Western and Northern Europe, tend to be more individualistic, valuing personal autonomy and self-expression.	Turkish culture generally leans toward collectivism, emphasizing group loyalty, family ties, and social cohesion
Masculinity vs. Femininity (MAS)	European cultures vary considerably—some, like those in Northern Europe (e.g., Sweden and the Netherlands), score lower on masculinity, favoring values associated with care, cooperation, and quality of life.	Turkish culture tends to reflect more masculine values, such as achievement, assertiveness, and material success, whereas
Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI)	European cultures show greater variability—while Southern European countries like Greece and Portugal also score high, Northern European countries such as Denmark and Sweden tend to display lower uncertainty avoidance, indicating greater openness to change and ambiguity.	"According to the Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI), Turkish culture exhibits a relatively high level of uncertainty avoidance, reflecting a preference for structured environments, clear rules, and a resistance to ambiguity.
Long-Term vs. Short-Term Orientation (LTO)	Many European cultures—particularly those in Northern and Eastern Europe—tend to adopt a more long-term orientation, prioritizing perseverance, future planning, and pragmatic problem-solving.	Turkish culture generally leans toward short-term orientation, emphasizing respect for tradition, fulfilling social obligations, and maintaining personal stability.
Indulgence vs. Restraint (IVR)	Many Western European cultures exhibit higher levels of indulgence, reflecting a greater emphasis on personal enjoyment, leisure, and freedom of expression.	Turkish culture tends to align more with restraint, emphasizing social norms, controlled gratification, and a sense of duty.

Table 1: Applying Hofstede's Theory to European and Turkish Cultural Profiles. (It should be noted that the characteristics attributed to European culture in this table represent general trends across Europe, which encompasses a diverse range of national and regional cultures.)

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Long-Term vs. Short-Term Orientation (LTO) reflects how a culture approaches time and tradition (Bearden, et.al, 2006). In this regard long-term oriented cultures value perseverance, planning, and future rewards. However, short-term oriented cultures emphasize tradition, present-day concerns, and quick results.

Indulgence vs. Restraint (IVR) indicates how freely a society allows the expression of desires and enjoyment (Chudnovskaya and O'Hara, 2022). In these dimension indulgent cultures is supposed to encourage people to enjoy life and satisfy their impulses. Whereas restrained cultures place more emphasis on social norms and self-discipline.

Cultural dimensions may be used as a tool to analyze the cultural paradigms of Türkiye and Europe, as illustrated in Table 2. Türkiye and Europe share a long and complex history of interaction, shaped notably by the Ottoman Empire's presence in Southeastern Europe, as mentioned above. This historical legacy has facilitated enduring cultural exchanges, particularly in areas such as cuisine, architecture, and the arts. Following its establishment in 1923, Türkiye undertook a broad modernization effort, heavily influenced by Western models. Reforms in education, the legal system, and governance were central to this process, reflecting Türkiye's alignment with European norms and values.

In the eye of the Washington Institute (Jimenez, 2008), despite these perceptions, Turks

share many core values with Europeans. In the 2006 Eurobarometer survey, participants from both EU member states and candidate countries were asked to select the three societal values they considered most important from a list including rule of law, human dignity, democracy, peace, tolerance, and others. The results indicate that Türkiye aligns closely with the EU average on most of these values. When comparing Türkiye to the EU15—that time there were 15 members—Türkiye appears no more culturally distant than some of the countries that joined in the 2004 and 2007 enlargements, such as Hungary, Lithuania, and Romania. Among the twelve surveyed values, only two—religion and peace—show significant variation. For the remaining values, Türkiye's alignment is comparable, and in some cases even stronger than the EU15 average.

European Cultural Roots and Their Legacy in Cinema

Due to its historical roots, the European continent has hosted many civilizations, therefore it has many cultures that are almost completely different from each other. The effects of this cultural richness that transcends national borders have been seen not only in Europe but in all regions of the world.

Roman and Greek cultures (Woolf, 1994) have played foundational roles in shaping European civilization, influencing various aspects of European society, politics, art, philosophy, and language. While distinct in many ways, both cultures share a significant legacy that

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continues to impact Europe today. Greek culture, dating back 5ᵗʰ century BC, laid the intellectual and philosophical groundwork for much of Western civilization (Tsetskhladze, 1994). The ideas on ethics and politics of the ancient philosophers, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle laid the foundation for modern philosophy and political theory.

The dramatic works of classical playwrights such as Sophocles, Euripides, and Aeschylus (Davidson, 2012) laid the foundations for the genre of drama, significantly shaping the trajectory of European theatre and, by extension, cinema. Roman culture (O'Sullivan, 2011), which rose to prominence following the founding of the Roman Republic in the 6ᵗʰ century BC and expanded through the conquest of Greece in 146 BC, assimilated and reinterpreted many elements of Greek artistic and intellectual traditions (Scullard and Cornell, 2012). This fusion, commonly referred to as Greco-Roman culture (Chancey, 2005), formed the bedrock of Western civilization. Greek tragedy and comedy introduced fundamental characters and dramatic structures—such as the hero's journey and catharsis—that continue to shape modern cinematic storytelling. Similarly, Roman culture contributed significantly through its emphasis on spectacle, public entertainment, and visual grandeur, as seen in amphitheater performances and early visual art. These classical legacies inform contemporary cinema's thematic depth, character development, and use of dramatic tension. The influence is also evident in modern

adaptations of classical myths and historical epics, which reflect ongoing engagement with

Greco-Roman cultural heritage in both European and global film industries.

Culture Policy of the EU: *Unity in Diversity*

While often labeled under the umbrella of *European culture* (Clark, 2007; Kaelble, 2004;

Mosse, 2023), the continent does not possess a singular, unified cultural identity. Instead, it

represents a rich tapestry of distinct and intricate cultural traditions. This variety arises from a

long and complex history marked by linguistic, religious, geographic, and political influences,

shaped by centuries of interaction among diverse peoples and empires (Marks, 2012).

Recognizing this richness, the EU adopted the motto *Unity in Diversity* (Majone, 2008;

Brie, 2010; McDonald, 1996), reflecting its commitment to celebrating cultural plurality as a

unifying strength rather than a divisive weakness. In parallel with these insights, the European

Commission's priorities for the 2019–2024 period are highly pertinent to cultural policymaking

at the EU level and align closely with the core themes of European cultural cooperation. These

priorities are embedded within the broader political strategy of the European Union and

continue to guide efforts to shape a cultural agenda that aligns with the EU's strategic vision.

These priorities encompass ambitions such as achieving climate neutrality, fostering digital

innovation, supporting a fair and inclusive economy, enhancing the EU's role globally,

promoting European values and lifestyle, and strengthening democratic institutions. Cultural

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and creative sectors play a crucial role in advancing these goals, given their importance to both European economies and societies. In 2018, the European Commission adopted the New European Agenda for Culture, building on the 2007 European Agenda for Culture. The new framework reflects changes in the cultural landscape and highlights the vital contribution of culture to society, the economy, and international relations. It also introduces enhanced methods for cooperation between Member States, civil society, and international partners. Policy collaboration is shaped by the Council of the European Union through multiannual Work Plans for Culture, which define key themes and working methods. The New Agenda outlines three strategic areas: social, economic, and external. In the social dimension, the agenda promotes cultural diversity and aims to strengthen social cohesion and well-being by expanding access to cultural activities, supporting the mobility of cultural professionals, and protecting Europe's cultural heritage. In the economic dimension, it seeks to promote culture-based creativity in education and innovation, support the growth of cultural and creative industries, and develop essential skills, including digital and entrepreneurial competencies. In the external dimension, the agenda focuses on enhancing the EU's international cultural relations by promoting intercultural dialogue, supporting sustainable development through culture, and increasing cooperation on cultural heritage. The current Work Plan for Culture, covering the period from 2023 to 2026, defines four key priorities: empowering artists and cultural professionals,

increasing cultural participation and the societal role of culture, leveraging culture for environmental sustainability, and enhancing culture's contribution to EU external relations. A total of 21 actions has been set for the European Commission, Member States, and the rotating Council presidencies, supported by defined methods such as the Open Method of Coordination and targeted outputs. This plan continues earlier EU efforts in cultural heritage, including addressing climate change, protecting against disasters and trafficking, improving artists' working conditions, promoting culture for health and well-being, and supporting digital and green transitions. It also emphasizes inclusive access to culture, the role of libraries, quality in the built environment, and international cultural cooperation, including engagement with Ukraine. This is the EU's fourth such work plan, building on those adopted for the periods 2011–2014, 2015–2018, and 2019–2022. To ensure long-term impact from the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018, the Commission introduced the European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage. Adopted in December 2018, the Framework aims to consolidate and expand on the initiatives and achievements from that year. In 2016, the EU also advanced its external cultural agenda through the Joint Communication "Towards an EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations," presented by High Representative Federica Mogherini and Commissioner Tibor Navracsics. This strategy seeks to place cultural cooperation at the heart of the EU's

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global diplomatic engagement, highlighting the role of culture as a vital instrument of international partnership.

European Cinema Sector

The European cinema sector (Crusafon, 2015) is a vital component of the continent's cultural and creative industries. It includes film production, distribution, exhibition, and preservation, and is recognized for its cultural diversity, creative talent, and commitment to storytelling that reflects Europe's varied identities and histories. Europe is home to a wide array of national film industries (Jäckel, 2019), each with its own language, funding systems, and regulatory frameworks. Countries like France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the UK, and the Nordic nations have particularly active production sectors. While Hollywood dominates the global box office, European cinema is more decentralized, with a strong tradition of independent filmmaking and public support. European cinema is supported through national film institutes and public broadcasters, as well as at the EU level through initiatives like Creative Europe MEDIA (Bruell, 2013), which funds development, distribution, training, and promotion of European audiovisual content. Additionally, Eurimages, a cultural support fund of the Council of Europe, co-finances European co-productions. Key Trends are:

- Co-Productions: European films often involve international co-productions, helping overcome financial and market limitations while promoting cultural exchange.
- Diversity of Content: The sector is known for its range of genres and thematic depth, often tackling

social, historical, and philosophical topics.

- Festivals and Recognition: Events such as the Cannes, Berlin, and Venice film festivals provide visibility to European cinema and serve as important platforms for launching films internationally.

- Digital Transformation: The rise of streaming platforms has significantly changed distribution and audience behavior. European policymakers are working to ensure that local content remains accessible and visible in the digital space.

The European cinema sector is a dynamic and diverse landscape, characterized by a rich tapestry of national industries, each with its unique strengths and challenges (Jäckel, 2019). Here's an overview of key developments across several European countries:

France boasts one of Europe's most robust film industries. In 2024, French films captured 44.4% of the national box office, the highest in 15 years. This success is attributed to a state-organized subsidy system that redistributes ticket revenues to support domestic productions, as well as funding from streaming platforms and regional councils. The diversity of French cinema, ranging from historical dramas to social comedies, continues to attract audiences (Messerlin and Parc, (2014).

Germany's film industry is known for its strong infrastructure and international co-productions. While specific 2024 data is limited, Germany has historically maintained a significant presence in European cinema, with a focus on both artistic and commercial productions (Halle, 2010).

Italy has a storied cinematic history and continues to produce a substantial number of

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films annually (Ellwood, 2021). In 2022, Italy produced 273 feature films, reflecting its ongoing commitment to cinema

The Spanish film industry (Fuentes-Luque, 2019) benefits from a combination of public funding and a growing international audience for Spanish-language content. Spain remains a prolific film-producing country, with 320 feature films produced in 2022, ranking it fifth globally.

The UK's film and TV production sector is one of the significant European film sectors (Blair, 2003). It experienced significant growth in 2024, with production spending increasing by nearly a third to over £5.6 billion. This surge is largely driven by inward investment and co-productions with Hollywood studios, bolstered by enhanced tax credits and a strong reputation as a production hub.

Smaller European Countries like Czechia and Finland have also demonstrated significant support for national cinema, with local films achieving 31% of admissions in both countries in 2024. This reflects a healthy appetite for domestic content and effective national film policies.

Overall, the European cinema sector continues to thrive, with each country contributing uniquely to the continent's rich cinematic tapestry.

Dividing the history of Turkish cinema into three distinct periods—pre-1980, post-1980, and the post-2000 era— enables a more systematic examination of the industry, which began to take shape in the 1950s as a studio-driven production model marked by high output and low budgets. This periodization reflects the significant structural and ideological transformations driven by diverse economic, political, and technological factors.

Turkish cinema prior to 1980 (Dönmez-Colin, 2017; Alici, B. (2019) was largely shaped by the Yeşilçam system. This period, often referred to as the "Golden Age" of Turkish cinema, witnessed the production of hundreds of films annually, spanning genres such as melodrama, comedy, historical epics, and socially realist narratives. Yeşilçam catered to popular tastes while simultaneously engaging with pressing social issues such as rural-to-urban migration, class disparity, and gender roles. Despite state censorship, filmmakers frequently employed symbolic or indirect methods to address political and societal concerns. A star-driven system dominated the industry, with iconic figures like Türkan Şoray, Kadir İnanır, Kemal Sunal, and Cüneyt Arkın achieving widespread public acclaim. Prominent directors such as Yılmaz Güney, Lütfi Akad, and Metin Erksan advanced the aesthetics of socially engaged cinema, crafting narratives that reflected the complex socio-economic realities of the time. The era also witnessed notable international recognition. Metin Erksan's Dry Summer (Susuz Yaz, 1964)

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received the Golden Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival, marking a milestone in Turkish cinema's global visibility. Yılmaz Güney's Hope (Umut, 1970) was selected for screening at the Cannes Film Festival, sparking discourse across European audiences. By the late 1970s, the proliferation of television and worsening economic conditions led to the decline of the Yeşilçam model. Nevertheless, this period remains foundational in the development of Turkish cinema, offering both a prolific cultural output and a legacy of artistic and social engagement that continues to influence contemporary filmmakers.

During the 1980s, Turkiye underwent significant political, social, and economic transformations, and the film industry likewise experienced radical changes in response to these shifts. Until 1987, Turkish cinema operated without state support, relying instead on a self-financing production model (Lüleci, 2023). During the 1980s, the industry experienced a deep crisis marked by the closure of numerous cinemas and significant financial losses. In response, legislative efforts such as Law No. 3257 on "Cinema, Video, and Music Works" (1986) and the subsequent "Regulation on the Support Fund for the Cinema and Music Arts" were introduced to strengthen the sector, although these measures proved insufficient. A critical development occurred in 1990 when Turkey became a member of Eurimages—The European Fund for the Co-Production and Distribution of Creative Cinematographic and Audiovisual Works—paving

the way for international cooperation.

From the early 2000s onward, Turkish cinema entered a notable period of transformation, marked by a substantial increase in content production. This growth was underpinned by sectoral restructuring and legal reforms that facilitated international collaborations. Notably, the ratification of the *European Convention on Cinematographic Co-production* in 2004 and the 2005 *Regulation on Cinematographic Co-productions and Filming for Commercial Purposes in Turkey* institutionalized Turkey's integration into European co-production frameworks. These developments enhanced domestic producers' access to technical infrastructure and financial resources. Simultaneously, globalization significantly impacted cultural production, increasing cross-national interaction in the cinema industry. In this context, the European Union developed a range of strategies aimed not only at preserving cultural diversity but also at enhancing the competitiveness of the European audiovisual sector. Key tools such as the Creative Europe – MEDIA program, the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD), and various international co-production funds function as the EU's principal mechanisms for implementing its cultural policy (Yıldız, 2019). Turkiye's interaction with these frameworks has transformed its cinema industry both economically and aesthetically, driving the internationalization of domestic cinema. Though not a full participant, Turkiye joined the Creative Europe program in 2016 at a collaborative level, granting Turkish producers access to

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specific funds, some of which have supported feature films and documentaries (Turkish Cinema Foundation, 2022). This support has expanded content diversity and increased Turkish cinema's visibility in global distribution networks and film festivals. The economic impact is also evident. While annual box office revenue in Turkey was around 50 million TL in the early 2000s, it approached 1 billion TL by 2019 (Box Office Turkey, 2020, 3). In that year, 62% of total ticket sales were attributed to domestic films, reflecting the sector's growth in relation to the policy support it received (Kaya, 2022). Regulations aligned with AVMSD—such as the 2019 "Regulation on the Internet Broadcasting of Radio, Television, and On-Demand Media Services" — further clarified content responsibilities for platforms like Netflix (RTÜK, 2020), helping Turkish cinema converge with EU content standards. As a result, Turkish producers have been better positioned to enter the European market through co-productions. For example, several projects by Nuri Bilge Ceylan received support from MEDIA funds, enhancing the artistic quality of Turkish cinema and increasing its presence at European festivals (Gürbüz, 2021). EU audiovisual strategies and instruments have thus played a transformative role in both the content creation and structural organization of Turkish cinema, particularly in relation to production support, legislative alignment, and international co-productions.

In the contemporary Turkish cinema industry, emerging platforms such as Netflix,

BluTV, and Exxen have become significant drivers of change by introducing alternative production and distribution models. These platforms enable producers to reach global audiences, diversify revenue streams, and experiment with content outside the traditional studio system. The international popularity of certain Turkish productions on such platforms, in particular, has increased the global visibility and financial viability of Turkish audiovisual content. The rise of these digital platforms has further redefined production and distribution processes. Traditional producers have adapted to new business models that include collaborations with digital content providers, direct audience engagement, and hybrid financing structures based on multiple revenue streams. Digitalization has fundamentally altered the economic structure of the film sector. Platforms have invested directly in Turkish productions, diversifying content and reducing reliance on box office revenue. These developments have improved the financial sustainability of independent productions and contributed to a more resilient, globally connected film industry. In parallel, EU audiovisual strategies and polices have played a transformative role in shaping both the structural and creative dimensions of the industry. By encouraging co-productions, fostering regulatory alignment, and supporting the internationalization of local content, these strategies have contributed to the ongoing evolution and global integration of Turkish cinema. So, in 2024 Türkiye's film industry has shown remarkable strength, with national films accounting for 57% of admissions, the highest share

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among European countries.

The Media and Audiovisual Policy of the EU

The EU's policies regarding the cinema sector are addressed within the broader framework of its media and audiovisual policy. A central focus of these policies is digital transformation, a priority made explicit through the EU's strategic initiative entitled Europe's Digital Decade. With a human-centered and sustainable vision for a digital society, the EU seeks to empower both citizens and businesses by fostering new forms of learning, entertainment, work, and social engagement through digital technologies. At the same time, it aims to uphold and promote individual freedoms and rights in the digital realm. Recognizing the challenges inherent in digital transformation, the EU aspires to establish a digital environment grounded in core European values. Accordingly, the Union's approach to audiovisual policy reflects not only economic objectives but also broader cultural, social, and civic considerations. This highlights the EU's ongoing commitment to inclusivity, active participation, and cultural diversity within the context of the digital age. Within this framework, one of the key initiatives developed by the EU in the field of cinema is the *European Media and Audiovisual Action Plan*. This initiative stands alongside several other major policies and instruments, including the Audiovisual Media Services Directive, the European Media Freedom Act, the Recommendation on the Protection, Safety and Empowerment of Journalists, the 2022

Code of Practice on Disinformation, the European Digital Media Observatory, the Media Pluralism Monitor, the European Film Forum, and Europeana (Commission of the EU, 2025a).

In this context, one of the seven coordination priorities identified by the EU is *creating a level playing field for emerging audiovisual media* (Commission of the EU, 2025b). This objective reflects the Union's commitment to ensuring fair competition, innovation, and equal opportunities for new actors in the rapidly evolving audiovisual landscape.

The Media and Audiovisual Action Plan

The media and audiovisual action plan plan addresses both the news media sector—which includes printed and online press, radio, and audiovisual services—and the audiovisual entertainment industry, encompassing cinema, television, video streaming, video games, and innovative formats like virtual reality. These sectors face ongoing challenges, many of which have intensified due to the COVID-19 crisis (Vlassis, 2021). In this context, the European Commission aims to support the resilience and global competitiveness of Europe's media landscape through a combination of investment and targeted policy initiatives. To achieve this, the plan focuses on three overarching goals: recovery, transformation, and empowerment. Recovery efforts aim to support audiovisual and media companies by improving access to EU funding through an interactive tool, increasing investment in European audiovisual production and distribution, and launching a dedicated NEWS initiative to support the news media

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industry. Transformation involves helping the sector navigate the green and digital transitions in a globally competitive environment. This includes creating a European media data space for innovation, forming a virtual and augmented reality coalition to promote immersive media, and encouraging climate-neutral practices within the industry, with a strong emphasis on environmental sustainability. Finally, the plan seeks to enable innovation and empower citizens. This includes fostering a more equitable media environment, improving access to audiovisual content across EU member states, and supporting European media talent through training, mentoring, and startup support. Media literacy is also a core priority, with new guidelines and toolkits to help member states implement the latest audiovisual media regulations. Additionally, the plan aims to promote the development of independent news aggregation platforms and enhance coordination among national regulators through the European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (Commission of the EU, 2025c).

Conclusion

Main theme of the study, cinema is a powerful tool having influence extends far beyond the screen. This study narrows its focus to the cultural dimension of cinema, specifically examining the European and Turkish audiovisual sectors. The exclusion of other aspects, such as economic or political considerations, is a deliberate methodological choice reflecting the study's scope, not a dismissal of their relevance. The EU has long regarded cinema and

audiovisual media as strategic assets. Through programs such as Creative Europe, particularly its MEDIA sub-programme, the EU promotes cultural diversity, competitiveness, and the cross-border circulation of audiovisual works. Funding mechanisms, training initiatives, and support tools—like Eurimages, the EU Audiovisual Observatory, and MEDIA Desks—have fostered cooperation among European filmmakers and reinforced the global presence of European cinema. Although not an EU member, Türkiye has participated in Creative Europe since 2016, benefiting from co-productions, funding access, and greater visibility in European markets (Harrod & Timoshkina, 2014). This engagement has improved both the quality and international reach of Turkish cinema and has encouraged alignment with EU standards in areas such as copyright, media pluralism, and digital innovation. Despite ongoing challenges—such as political constraints and limited funding—the EU's audiovisual policies have significantly supported Turkish-European cinematic collaboration and innovation.

A cornerstone of the EU's cultural strategy is its commitment to preserving cultural diversity rather than promoting a singular, homogenized identity. This guiding principle, encapsulated in the EU's motto *"unity in diversity,"* reflects the understanding that Europe's strength lies in its multiplicity of languages, traditions, and historical experiences. Rather than seeking to erase these differences, EU cultural policy actively supports the protection and promotion of distinct national and regional identities, ensuring their representation and visibility

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in cultural and creative sectors.

Within this conceptual framework, a comparative analysis of the European cultural paradigm and Turkish cultural dynamics provides meaningful insight into broader questions of identity, representation, and cultural exchange. While Europe is marked by a plurality of interconnected yet distinct cultures, Türkiye embodies a rich historical synthesis of Eastern and Western influences. Exploring how these cultural characteristics are expressed and negotiated within cinema offers a nuanced perspective on transnational cultural flows and the implications of EU audiovisual policy.

To systematically explore these differences, this study applies Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory—a widely utilized framework for understanding cross-cultural variations in values, behaviors, and institutional norms. By analyzing how these cultural dimensions manifest in cinematic narratives, production practices, and industry structures in both Europe and Türkiye, the study identifies both convergences and divergences in cultural influence.

Based on the empirical and theoretical insights obtained, the research presents concrete findings regarding the cultural impact of EU audiovisual strategies and concludes with policy-oriented recommendations. These aim to foster the continued development, cooperation, and international integration of the European and Turkish audiovisual sectors in a manner that

respects and reinforces cultural diversity.

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