

# Collective

## ECF 2020/2021

### Overview

Since September 2020—as a result of our Summer of Solidarity project—Collective envisioned multiple ways to continue the work we have done, funnelling it into a new project that will still retain the same core value: to encourage collaboration and connectedness in the European media sphere, as well as foster solidarity, curiosity and sharing across the continent.

Initially, the idea was to emulate “Federal Project Number One” (FPNO), a series of cultural projects enacted under Roosevelt’s New Deal programs from the 1930s. The FPNO aimed to create a self-portrait of the United States by employing up to 40,000 creatives that would help Americans discover their own human stories. FPNO catalysed some of the most enduring works of the period, including John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath* and Dorothea Lange’s renowned Dust Bowl photographs. In this sense, we wanted to create a project that could establish a self-portrait of Europe as a whole during this new era heralded by a global pandemic and the ensuing economic recession.

Many hours of work were put into tailoring this concept into a viable project that we could launch in order to make a notable contribution to the European media sphere. Through our research, we arrived at the natural conclusion that the self-portrait of Europe is to a degree already being written, illustrated, filmed and photographed. However, there were limitations to their scope and reach as many larger European media outfits are constrained by the national landscapes. This, coupled with the Anglo-American bias within the majority of legacy media, means stories such as Brexit or Trump have dominated focus. This bias leaves behind a large swath of European storytelling. We aimed to support independent media creators, as well as championing new ways of engaging with young Europeans – who are less likely to trust legacy media organisations than older generations (Source: [Nieman Lab](#)).

We also paid close attention to how personalisation is used in media content to better engage with readers. Trust is built one person at a time, by nurturing a relationship - it’s the opposite of click bait.

During our 3 month Research & Development phase, our concept was refined and took on many iterations until we arrived at the project that we are currently preparing to launch.

## So, what is Collective today?

Though we have seen an increase in proposed solutions to address the evolving issue of a disjointed European media sphere, we are still seeing young people and new media formats getting left behind.

It is time for a **new kind of media** within the European media landscape. Collective curates the best under reported stories from around Europe, adding a personal touch. Curators at Collective will be “that friend” you turn to for everything from food in the Balkans to new tech in Berlin. From newsletters to podcasts to videos and beyond, Collective brings you the right stories, right where you want them. Collective leverages a cross national, diversity-driven network of curators and creators dedicated to building up personalised reader engagement.

Our kick-off output will take the form of a small collection of curated newsletters. This will be merged with our own original audio and video content. The first newsletter could be a general weekly roundup of the best storytelling in Europe, but will later become thematic with each issue revolving around one of the following topics:

- Art, Music & Culture
- Inclusive Society
- Nature, Health & Science
- Urbanism, Ruralism
- Money & Power

The audio/video content will serve to personalise our curators, and to highlight the ‘behind-the-scenes’ aspect of our work. Each newsletter will have a ‘read-out’ by the curator who shapes the editorial content for that issue. In addition, a video interview conducted with one of the featured creators of the newsletter. This method will stimulate more engagement through multimedia formats, while also rendering the content more widely accessible.

We are starting with a curation model, keeping our overhead low and allowing us to mine the metadata from our newsletter(s) in order to conduct research that will help us create original storytelling content. Through mining this metadata, we will be able to test out various options and see which formats, content, stories do best where.

Curation is a model that attracts people: 31% of readers prefer to get their news from an aggregator rather than a specific site (source: [Toulouse School of Economics](#)). A consequential percentage of news readers prefer to have their reading lists curated for them - instead of filtering through the masses of content themselves. The curation model also allows an audience to build trust in someone else’s taste and preferences.

The purpose of highlighting the curators through our social media channels and audio/video content is that personality-based storytelling is something we want to explore further. We will use this to connect and build a relationship with our audience. Our inspiration lies with

personality-based content production which is taking off among young people in digital media, such as Vice in the UK/US, Bon Appétit and Vox in the US, as well as Kitchen Stories in Germany. These media form a direct relationship between a creator and their audience, encouraging creators to develop their own voice and style. A common feature across these media is that they take a fun, entertaining perspective on often serious topics. The audience looks forward not only to the content they're provided with, but also to the way it's presented by the personality they have come to know and appreciate.

A second type of newsletter we plan to launch would take the form of a “relay race” of rotating guests from all over Europe. We will be reaching out to experts in various fields from across the continent, who would each in turn take on the newsletter for a defined period of time and provide weekly insight into their area of specialisation. Examples of this could be a series of three short weekly pieces written by an upcoming European author, accompanied by their favourite cultural or journalistic pieces that week. Another example would be a five-week-long segment written by a European thinker, expanding their thoughts on diversity in the creative and cultural sectors. Each would pass the baton to the next, with the audience getting access to a plurality of voices serving them great European content week by week.



