EUROPEANA SOUNDS

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MS18 External distribution channels brief

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Abstract

This milestone document provides an overview of Spotify and SoundCloud from the perspective of using the two services to reach a larger audience for the audio content provided by Europeana Sounds. Based on an analysis of the two services an action plan is outlined.

Dissemination level		
P	Public	X
C	Confidential, only for the members of the Consortium and Commission Services	
I	Internal, only for the members of the Consortium	

I. COPYRIGHT NOTICE

II. REVISIONS

Version	Status	Author	Partner	Date	Changes
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	Name	Partner/WP	Date
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V.   APPLICATION AREA

This document is a formal output for the European Commission, applicable to all members of the Europeana Sounds project and beneficiaries. This document reflects only the author's views and the European Union is not liable for any use that might be made of information contained therein.

VI.   DOCUMENT AMENDMENT PROCEDURE

Amendments, comments and suggestions should be sent to the authors named in the Delivery Slip.

VII.   TERMINOLOGY

A complete project glossary is provided at the following page: http://pro.europeana.eu/web/guest/glossary

Further terms are defined below as required:

TERM	DEFINITION
AB	Advisory Board
APEX	Archives Portal Europe network of excellence
EC-GA	Grant Agreement (including Annex I, the Description of Work) signed with the European Commission
GA	General Assembly
PC	Project Coordinator
PI	Performance Indicator
PM	Project Manager
PMB	Project Management Board
PSO	Project Support Officer
TEL	The European Library
TD	Technical Director
UAP	User Advisory Panel
WP	Work Package

VIII.   PROJECT SUMMARY

Europeana Sounds is Europeana's 'missing' fifth domain aggregator, joining APEX (Archives), EUscreen (television), the Europeana film Gateway (film) and TEL (libraries). It will increase the opportunities for access to and creative re-use of Europeana's audio and audio-related content and will build a sustainable best practice network of stakeholders in the content value chain to aggregate, enrich and share a critical mass of audio that meets the needs of public audiences, the creative industries (notably publishers) and researchers. The consortium of 24 partners will:

- Double the number of audio items accessible through Europeana to over 1 million and improve geographical and thematic coverage by aggregating items with widespread popular appeal such as contemporary and classical music, traditional and folk music, the natural world, oral memory and languages and dialects.

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- Add meaningful contextual knowledge and medium-specific metadata to 2 million items in Europeana's audio and audio-related collections, developing techniques for cross-media and cross-collection linking.
- Develop and validate audience specific sound channels and a distributed crowd-sourcing infrastructure for end-users that will improve Europeana's search facility, navigation and user experience. These can then be used for other communities and other media.
- Engage music publishers and rights holders in efforts to make more material accessible online through Europeana by resolving domain constraints and lack of access to commercially unviable (i.e. out-of-commerce) content.

These outcomes will be achieved through a network of leading sound archives working with specialists in audiovisual technology, rights issues, and software development. The network will expand to include other data-providers and mainstream distribution platforms (Historypin, Spotify, SoundCloud) to ensure the widest possible availability of their content.

For more information, visit http://pro.europeana.eu/web/europeana-sounds and http://www.europeanasounds.eu.

IX.   STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This document contains original unpublished work except where clearly indicated otherwise. Acknowledgement of previously published material and of the work of others has been made through appropriate citation, quotation or both.

X. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: EXTERNAL DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS BRIEF

This milestone document provides an overview of Spotify and SoundCloud from the perspective of using the two services to reach a larger audience for the audio content provided by Europeana Sounds. Based on an analysis of the two services an action plan is outlined.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Europeana Sounds project represents a number of Europe's foremost libraries, archives and other memory institutions with holdings of digitised music, ambient recordings, animal recordings and other audio content. One of the goals of the project is to make that content available to as wide audiences and as many users as possible. To reach this goal the project is investigating Spotify and SoundCloud as platforms on which to re-publish whole or parts of their collections. This document will describe and analyse these two platforms and provide recommendations on how to move forward with using them.

2   PLATFORMS UNDER CONSIDERATION

2.1   Spotify

Spotify is a commercial streaming music service, providing content from record labels. Music can be browsed or searched by artist, album, genre, playlist, or record label. Paid "Premium" subscriptions remove advertisements and allow users to download music to listen offline. In May 2014 the service had 40 million users with 10 million users paying for a premium subscription. Labels and artists receive royalties based on the number of plays of their content.

Spotify offers an application that must be downloaded and installed[1] and users must register to the service in order to access the content. Free applications are available for all major operating systems, both desktop and mobile.

The Spotify Web API allows developers to create applications that fetch data from the Spotify music catalogue and manage user's playlists and saved music. Combined with the Spotify Play Button widget it allows the development of applications that can play music. There are beta version SDKs available for iOS and Android, but these are available only for limited use during the beta phase. Apps developed for iOS and Android are available only to paying Spotify users. These restrictions put quite a limit to Spotify as a platform for app development.

2.2   SoundCloud

SoundCloud is an online audio distribution platform that enables its users to upload, record, promote and share sounds they hold the rights to[2]. In July 2013, it had 40 million registered users and 200 million listeners. Users with a premium account can upload larger amounts of content and also get access to a statistics dashboard providing details about how their uploaded sounds are used. Users can add buy buttons to their uploaded audio files, but SoundCloud offers no integrated payment mechanism.

SoundCloud can be accessed directly in the web browser and does not require registration in order to listen to uploaded sounds (registration is required to be able to upload, annotate and collaborate).

A key feature of SoundCloud is that all uploaded sounds are potentially shareable and embeddable outside of SoundCloud itself[3]. This allows the platform to act as an outreach multiplier for its users who are also able to in various ways collaborate with each other on the

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[1] A beta version for accessing Spotify in the browser has been available for 2 years.

[2] Users can also upload any audio for which they have the permission from the copyright holder to upload (which is what allow GLAMs to upload their content).

[3] This has made it possible for Europeana to dynamically embed the SoundCloud player in our portal.

platform. Another key feature is its open API that allows developers to create applications that can both upload to and retrieve sounds from SoundCloud.

2.3 Other platforms

Other commercial platforms that could be considered for distribution of Europeana Sounds content are inter alia: Deezer, YouTube, iTunes, Last.fm, Rdio, Amazon MP3 and Google Play Music. There are also niched services like Classics Online. Due to time constraints investigating the potential of these services to Europeana Sounds is out of scope for this document.

2.3.1 Commercial aggregators

Due to the large amount of consumer oriented platforms for distribution of music a market has emerged for music aggregators who on behalf of content holders distribute content to the consumer platforms. The advantage content holders gain by this, is that they need develop a distribution mechanism only to their commercial aggregator of choice, with the aggregator taking on the burden, technical and operational, of distributing the content onwards to consumer platforms. Most aggregators also provide services in regards to usage statistics, rights clearance and management of royalties.

This type of service of course comes at a price with aggregators typically either charging a share of royalties or a flat fee per file. Many aggregators also enforce exclusive deals with content holders. The exclusivity means that content holder X, having a contract with aggregator Y, would not have the right to distribute its content directly to consumer platform Z without the consent of aggregator Y.

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3   DESCRIPTIONS AND ANALYSES

3.1   *Spotify*

In this section I will reference Spotify specifications and policy documents. While the Europeana Sounds Project Management Board has access to these documents they are confidential and thus are not included in full in this milestone report.

3.1.1   Partner process

Spotify has a standard partner agreement for any entity[4] that wishes to become a provider (in Spotify terms: a label) of audio to Spotify. The Europeana Sounds provided music and other audio content on Spotify would become available to their users through all their services, both consumer applications and, gradually, also via their API.

Another way to deliver music to Spotify would be to do so via an existing aggregator (see above). These aggregators also commonly distribute to other platforms like Google Play, Amazon, etc. which is an added benefit. In this case the legal agreement[5] would be with the aggregator in question; there would be no formal relationship with Spotify as such.

3.1.2   Requirements on metadata and content

Metadata is provided to Spotify via FTP in XML with links to the files of the sound recordings themselves and must conform to the Spotify Metadata Specification.

Spotify's requirements on the metadata include also how values are formatted. For example Artist must be included, the role of the Artist must follow the roles defined by Spotify and the name of the Artist must be expressed in its well-known popular form - e.g. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart not Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus. These particular requirements are documented in the Spotify Metadata Styleguide.

In regards to file formats and encoding of sound recordings Spotify accept only non-lossy file formats with [FLAC](#) being their preferred format. Other supported formats are WMA and WAV, in that order of preference. Note that the MP3-format, the most commonly used for distribution among Europeana Sounds partners, is not supported. Recordings must be full-length, shortened tracks are not allowed. Spotify are interested not only in music but other types of audio as well - radio recordings, interviews, etc.

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[4] The signatories must be legal persons.

[5] See previous footnote on who should be signatory to any agreement with Spotify. It comes with the same complexity.

3.1.3 Requirements on copyright and licensing

A Licensing Agreement must be signed with either Spotify (if you provide directly to them) or with any Spotify aggregator through we would provide to Spotify. The agreement also regulates royalties.

Individual tracks (sounds files) must be tagged with the country codes for which you have the right to publish them. This includes also Public Domain tracks as the definition of Public Domain varies between jurisdictions. Spotify does not support Creative Commons licenses and their internal policy on Public Domain is *Life+90* (not the standard in Europe Life+70).

Infringements against Spotify's copyright and trademark policy are managed according to their Content Infringement Guidelines.

3.1.4 Content marketing and community collaboration

Spotify in and of itself does not support many content marketing or collaboration features on its own platform. The marketing features offered are centred around the creation of playlists, both by labels, but even more so by users. Created playlists are easily [shared and embedded](#)[6] on other websites and social platforms like e.g. Facebook. Many organisations also develop their own applications on top of the Spotify platform to market their own brand and content.

3.1.5 Branding

There are two options and the choice is down to branding strategy:

- A: Europeana Sounds (or simply Europeana) as a consortium would be a "label"
- B: Europeana Sounds partners participating in Spotify all act as individual "labels".

3.1.6 Outline of a technical solution

To deliver the XML and files to Spotify according to it specifications and guidelines Europeana would develop an export script which can convert metadata from EDM to Spotify's XML-schema and fetch the linked media files for subsequent upload to Spotify. The export would either be pushed directly to Spotify or temporarily stored locally and then uploaded to Spotify in a second step.

Any Europeana Sounds objects to include in the export must be tagged or otherwise carry a metadata marker explicitly marking it for export to Spotify. This is in order for the export script to be able to filter out content not intended for Spotify publication.

Europeana Sounds objects to deliver to Spotify *must* have files available as links in edm:IsShownBy or edm:HasView leading to full-length audio files in the formats required by Spotify.

The outlined solution is premised on Europeana Sounds not having a central file storage. If the sound files would be available in the Europeana Cloud, any technical solution would be less

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[6] See also the [Terms of Use](#) for this widget.

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complex and more durable. It would also open up the possibility of developing a shared solution for transforming sound files from formats suitable for master files to compressed formats suitable for accessing over the web[7]. This is something that the Europeana Sounds project will need to discuss and decide on as it goes beyond commitments made in the project's description of work.

Aggregators

While the solution outlined above is for Spotify, any solution to instead provide to a Music Aggregator who in turn would distribute to Spotify would be largely the same with the requirements on file formats being exactly the same. Each aggregator would have its own specifics in regards to upload protocol and metadata format.

3.2 SoundCloud

3.2.1 Partner process

Simply put: there is no partner process. Any organisation can sign-up to become a SoundCloud user, the only choice is in which type of account one wishes to have. Depending on the account certain features and capabilities are unlocked and become available to the user.

Recommendation:

For most Europeana Sounds partner a *Pro* or *Unlimited* account would be suitable. If the Europeana Sounds consortium wants a specific and collectively held user account under that brand/name it can be created. Such an account should be an *Unlimited* account. See 3.2.5 below for the relationship between accounts and branding.

3.2.2 Requirements on metadata and content

SoundCloud requires very little metadata per sound recording (called *track* in SoundCloud). Basically, just a title and a tag. However it allows quite rich descriptions (including structured metadata) of the sound recordings, but this is optional. There is a structured track type metadata field with the following supported values: original, remix, live, recording, spoken, podcast, demo, in progress, stem, loop, sound effect, sample, other.

The following file formats for sounds are supported: AIFF, WAVE (WAV), FLAC, ALAC, OGG, MP2, MP3, AAC, AMR, and WMA files. Maximum file size is 5GB and recordings cannot be longer than 6 hours 45 minutes (longer recordings will be blocked from upload).

Recommendation:

While mandatory metadata elements for SoundCloud uploads are few, Europeana Sounds

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[7] In essence, what Spotify does with the uploaded FLACs: using it as a master file, offering it as HD sound but also using it as the original to create copies in compressed formats suitable for the web (e.g. MP3).

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partners should set a high standard for themselves and provide the richest possible metadata per sound recording. This is both for reason of provenance and user experience.

High quality uncompressed or lightly compressed file formats[8] should be chosen to support the best possible user (listening) experience.

3.2.3 Requirements on copyright and licensing

SoundCloud requires no licensing agreements or other types of contracts to be signed between Europeana Sounds, Europeana Sounds partners, the Europeana Foundation and SoundCloud. Accepting, and thus binding oneself to their Terms of Use when signing up, is the only requirement. This means that any Europeana Sounds partner, or someone they have empowered to act on their behalf, themselves decide what they can upload to SoundCloud based on their own internal policies and the SoundCloud Terms of Use.

SoundCloud supports the basic six Creative Commons licenses, but does not support CC0 or the Public Domain mark. Apart from the six CC- licenses one can also set the values "All rights reserved" and "No rights reserved".

While not strictly connected to copyright, it is also possible to configure uploaded sound files to be impossible to download[9] or embed from SoundCloud. It is also possible to configure sounds as 'private only' to the uploader and to any other SoundCloud users specified.

3.2.4 Content marketing and community collaboration

As described in 2.2, SoundCloud has features that make content marketing easier, with features for social sharing and embedding with major social platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Pinterest automatically embedding the SoundCloud player when SoundCloud links are posted through these services.

Having grown from a community platform for independent musicians SoundCloud has many features allowing its users to interact with each other and build sub-communities centred around commons interests or genres of music in the form of groups. There are also special features, supports and apps in place to use SoundCloud for promotional contests.

SoundCloud employs business developers and community managers whose tasks include liaising with specific industries[10].

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[8] The Europeana Content Re-use Framework defines uncompressed formats, like FLAC, and lightly compressed formats like 16bit MP3s as High Quality.

[9] For any law-abiding users. As with everything on the internet, anything published on it can be downloaded by a technically skilled and persistent user.

[10] The Europeana Sounds Advisory Panel includes Ben Fawkes, SoundCloud's Audio Content Manager, as a member.

3.2.5 Branding

There are three options:

- A: Each Europeana Sounds consortium member has their own account and all content is uploaded to the respective accounts.

- B: An account Europeana Sounds is created for which all (or appointed) Europeana Sounds members have access and all content is uploaded to that account. Alternatively the already existing Europeana account on SoundCloud continues to be used.

- C: A SoundCloud group (or groups that could be thematically segmented) for Europeana Sounds is created. The individual Europeana Sounds institutions who have their own accounts can contribute to the group. The consortium selects/elects one or more members to become the group moderator.

The options can theoretically all be combined with each other, but are likely best combined in either A+C or choose only B.

3.2.6 Outline of a technical solution

A technical solution would be necessary if Europeana Sounds partners wish to upload large amounts of sounds, larger than what is practically feasible for individuals.

A batch upload solution would in essence be an application that would allow its user to select a Europeana dataset or search result and then via the SoundCloud API upload it to that platform. Such a batch upload must be connected to and uploaded to the pages of a specific Europeana Sounds account (see branding above). Depending on the vision and ambition of the application this could be anything from a script, which can be executed by a developer on demand by a curator, or a fully-fledged application with a user interface allowing curators themselves to perform the batch upload. The ambition level will be governed by the level of demand from Europeana Sounds content holders to share large parts of or complete collections on SoundCloud.

A prerequisite to be able to use the tool is that the content to upload is explicitly cleared, and in metadata marked, for publication on SoundCloud and that direct media links in edm:isShownBy leading to sound files compliant with SoundCloud requirements are available.

3.2.7 Statistics of use

SoundCloud Pro and Unlimited users have access to usage statistics for the content they share through SoundCloud. Statistics provided include which audio files have been played and how many times, from which countries and cities users playing the audio come from, total number of plays, which users play your audio the most, which sites and apps your music is played from and the total number of likes, comments, reposts and downloads. These statistics can be provided for any period of time.

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Fig 1. Screenshot from a statistics report from the account of Netherlands Institute for Sounds and Vision.

Stats

73K	146	11	51	7.2K	Last 12 months
▶ Plays	♥ Likes	💬 Comments	↻ Reposts	⬇ Downloads	Sep, 2013 - Aug, 2014 ▾

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4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Below are recommendations on how to proceed with both platforms. It should be noted that there are no formal constraints that would make it impossible to utilise both platforms. For both services the first, and most important step, is to create an inventory of suitable content. This activity should begin immediately.

4.1 Spotify

In order to move forward with Spotify we would need to do a lot of preparatory work:

1. Create an inventory of content that is rights cleared for Spotify and per country/jurisdiction
   a. Identify content that is not only in the Public Domain but where the creator died more than 90 years ago
   b. Identify in-copyright content where Sounds partners have the right to distribute them to Spotify and whether that would also mean paying out royalties
2. Having done 1a and 1b, check that the content can be made available to Europeana in edm:isshownby and in a file format that meets the Spotify requirements
3. Decide whether to provide content to Spotify directly or via an aggregator and sign the deals
   a. If via an aggregator find the budget to pay the aggregator for their services
   b. Investigate and prototype a compliant mapping between EDM and the Spotify or Aggregator metadata schema
4. Decide on the on Spotify branding strategy
5. Plan post-project sustainability of the Spotify presence

Due to these challenges (legal, technical, and financial) in becoming as large-scale provider to Spotify, we suggest that Europeana Sounds should consider Spotify to be secondary in comparison to SoundCloud.

We should however immediately move forward with steps 1 and 2 in order to get precise numbers on the amounts of content we can realistically publish via Spotify. If the number is small (roughly in the low thousands or smaller) investing in Spotify should be reconsidered (as not worth the investment).

4.2 SoundCloud

We should move forward with SoundCloud in two distinct phases, the first where we manually upload carefully selected and curated content and a second phase where we batch upload the content from the Europeana Sounds partners who wishes to do so. The second phase would require technical development in order to create the necessary batch upload application.

As for Spotify there would be preparatory steps to take prior to performing any large scale upload:

1. Inventory which Europeana Sounds partners want to contribute large parts or entire collections to SoundCloud
    a. check which one meet the technical criteria: presence in edm:isShownBy and format of the sound files
2. Agree on branding on the SoundCloud platform (see above).
3. Document a rights policy that documents the copyright considerations to take before uploading files to SoundCloud.
    a. Liaise with SoundCloud with the goal of them adding support for the Creative Commons Public Domain mark.
4. Create a mapping from EDM to the SoundCloud metadata format.
5. Develop the batch upload script or tool and an application
    a. And investigate the feasibility of automatically pulling in SoundCloud statistics to the Europeana Statistics Dashboard
6. After testing and trial uploads perform the large scale uploads
7. If it is desired that uploads, and community engagement, continue post-project, a sustainability plan needs to be created and implemented

If after step 1 it is discovered that there are eligible files only in the low thousands, then investing in developing a batch upload tool should be reconsidered. Manual uploads would be more economical.

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5   REFERENCES

Ref 1	MS32 Social Media Communities in Place http://pro.europeana.eu/web/europeana-sounds/documents

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