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# Public sector strategies for promoting minoritised language digital creators

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## ABSTRACT

This article compares four minoritised linguistic spheres and the strategies of the public sector on promoting digital content in Catalan, Basque, Welsh and Scottish Gaelic. Based on expert interviews with public service media managers as well as policymakers in language departments of regional governments, the authors concentrate on analysing the objectives pursued in relation to digital content creators. A particular focus is placed on content for young people, and actions the stakeholders have taken to reach them. This concerns the public service broadcasters in each sphere – CCMA, EITB, S4C and BBC Alba –, but also other actors the language planning departments have engaged with. We first address literature on minority language media and public service media – including past research in the four contexts. The methodology is then detailed, discussing the justification for each chosen interviewee. Finally, we present results from the interviews and discuss how this may inform future public policy recommendations.

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## KEYWORDS

Public service media; language policy; digital content; content creators; platformisation

## Introduction

The rise and pervasive consolidation of social media platforms have fundamentally reshaped the media ecosystem, significantly impacting the visibility and vitality of minority and minoritised languages. Within this evolving digital landscape, the digital content creator emerges as a pivotal agent in the ongoing efforts towards linguistic promotion and revitalisation. This article addresses a critical juncture by analysing the interplay between content creators' activities and the strategic frameworks implemented by the public sector.

Our study provides a comparative analysis of this reality by matching two essential perspectives: the mandate of Public Service Media (PSM) and the institutional mechanisms of language policy. A key distinguishing feature and scholarly contribution of this research is its comparative scope, which addresses a notable gap in the literature. This work systematically contrasts public sector intervention and digital content production from a dual perspective across different study cases (Catalan, Basque, Welsh and Scottish Gaelic), thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of effective language maintenance strategies in the digital age.

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These cases were selected because they represent minority or minoritised languages (ML)<sup>1</sup> in Western Europe that exist in different institutional, political, and sociolinguistic contexts. These four languages differ in legal recognition, number of speakers, and level of institutional support, which makes them useful for comparison. Therefore, they illustrate different models of language policy and vitality, ranging from relatively strong institutionalisation (Catalan, Basque, Welsh) to more endangered situations with limited domains of use (Scottish Gaelic).

## Theoretical framework

### *Minority and minoritised languages in the digital environment*

#### *The status of Catalan, Basque, Welsh, and Scottish Gaelic*

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML) defines regional and minority languages as those: ‘traditionally used within a given territory of a State by nationals of that State who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the State’s population; and different from the official language(s) of that State’ (Council of Europe 1992, 2).

The Catalan language shares features with minority languages: the near absence of monolingual speakers, a bilingualised population, a linguistic area that belongs to a larger state with a majoritarian language; and the scarce presence in certain spheres of social life (Generalitat de Catalunya, n. d.). However, it is also considered a unique case in Europe, differing from other minority languages, linked to the demography, the sociolinguistic situation and the linguistic infrastructure that allows both scholars and institutions to consider Catalan a medium-sized language. Following Casesnoves, Mas, and Tudela (2018) and Vila (2013), a linguistic community can be considered medium-sized according to the socio-economic development and the degree of sociolinguistic vitality, and also the demographic weight (spanning territories with a total population between 1 and 25 million, which allows us to compare the Catalan case with the Estonian or Danish, among other examples). The medium-sized consideration goes beyond the rigid majority/minority labelling established on quantitative criteria (Casesnoves, Mas, and Tudela, 2018). Moreover, there is consensus that Catalan is a minoritised language without full recognition, as it appears in the National Agreement on Language (Pacte Nacional per la Llengua) (Generalitat de Catalunya 2025a). Catalan is spoken across a territory with a total population of approximately 13,740,000 inhabitants (Generalitat de Catalunya n.d.). While it is the national language of Andorra, it also maintains co-official status in Catalonia, the Balearic Islands, and the Valencian Community within Spain.<sup>2</sup> The language is also actively used in Aragon – where it lacks official status but enjoys a degree of legal protection, although recent reports denounce that the Regional Government of Aragon has cut funding for the promotion of Catalan since 2023 (Council of Europe 2024a) – as well as in Alghero (Italy) and Northern Catalonia (France). Regarding linguistic competence and practice within the Autonomous Community of Catalonia, 80.4% of the population reports being able to speak Catalan; however, habitual usage stands at 32.6% for monolingual Catalan speakers and 9.4% for bilingual users who habitually use both Catalan and Spanish (Generalitat de Catalunya 2025b).

As well as for Catalan, the Basque (Euskara) language is also protected under Part III of the ECRML, following Spain’s ratification of the Charter in 2001, although the scope of commitments varies across the Basque Autonomous Community and Navarre. By contrast, in the French Basque Country the Charter does not apply, as France has signed but not ratified the treaty. The language is Basque is considered a minority and minorised language and widely regarded as a language isolate with no established genealogical relationship to other languages – remaining typologically distinct from the surrounding Romance languages (Trask 1997). According to the latest Sociolinguistic Survey, there are nearly 810,000 Basque speakers aged 16 or over across the Basque Country, accounting for 30.2% of the population. Basque speakers are defined as those who are able to understand and speak Basque well or fairly well. A further 431,092 people (16.1%) are classified as receptive Basque speakers (i.e. individuals who cannot speak Basque well or fairly well but have some

knowledge of the language, either being able to understand and speak it to some extent or to understand it well or fairly well). Taken together, Basque speakers and receptive Basque speakers account for 46.3% of the population aged 16 or over. In terms of actual language use, 17.5% of the population (467,725 people) use Basque as much as or more than another language, 10.2% use Basque less frequently than another language, and 5% use it very rarely. Taken together, these categories account for 32.7% of the population aged 16 or over in the Basque Country (Eusko Jaurlaritza 2024). However, its official status is limited to Spain, where it is co-official in the Basque Autonomous Community and parts of Navarre. Language policy has played a central role in Basque revitalisation efforts, particularly through interventions in education, public administration and the media, contributing to the expansion in the number of speakers and the broader social normalisation of the language. Nevertheless, access barriers persist in certain regions; for instance, the Council of Europe (2024a) continues to urge measures ensuring public broadcasting access (such as ETB3) in the Basque-speaking zone of Navarre. Despite the achievements of revitalisation efforts over recent decades, several indicators point to a weakening of the language's social use, leading civil society organisations such as Euskalgintzaren Kontseilua to describe the current situation as a 'linguistic emergency' (European Language Equality Network 2024; Kontseilua 2024).

The situation of Welsh in Wales is akin to the Basque case; it is also protected under the ECRML Part III by the UK ratification and has a considerable linguistic distance from English. It is spoken by 17–29% of the population of Wales – between 538,000 and 828,500 individuals (ONS 2022; Welsh Government 2026). Moreover, its status has been supported by several legislative acts in 1967, 1993 and most recently 2025. These statutes primarily concern language rights in public administration and education, but not media. Public broadcasting remains a UK (Westminster) competence and was not devolved with the post-1997 devolution process to the constituent nations of the UK. As such, the public broadcaster, S4C, remains under the competence of the Department of Cultural, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the regulation of OfCom. This centralised model has prompted calls for the devolution of broadcasting rights (Council of Europe 2024b). Furthermore, funding cuts have led to a high rate of repeat broadcasts on S4C (over 67%) and reduced Welsh-language provision in private media, leading the Council of Europe (2024b) to recommend that the UK's Media Act and the BBC Royal Charter revision explicitly ensure the promotion of Welsh.

Scottish Gaelic is also protected under Part III of the ECRML. The first dedicated piece of legislation for the language was the The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, but most recently the Scottish Government passed the Scottish Languages Act in summer 2025. McLeod (2025) detailed the main differences between the two acts. In terms of speaker numbers, Scottish Gaelic is spoken by 69,701 – which equates to less than 1.5% of the population of Scotland (Scottish Government 2025). However, 130,161 state they have some Gaelic skills (ibid.). With regard to media, broadcasting is again not a devolved competence in Scotland. However, the creation of a full channel, BBC Alba, was a partnership between the BBC and MG Alba – with the latter being funded by, and responsible to, the Scottish Government (see Dunbar 2012, for further details). Despite this dedicated output, BBC Alba faces major challenges due to content repetition and limited genre variety, which negatively affects viewership; consequently, the Council of Europe (2024b) similarly recommends integrating the protection of Scottish Gaelic into the UK Media Act and the BBC Charter.

Although these four languages differ significantly in demographic weight, legal recognition, and sociolinguistic vitality, they share a common challenge: ensuring their presence and usability in contemporary digital communication environments, including online media, platforms, and language technologies.

### **Minority language media**

ML debates are linked to power and culture, with Cormack (2005) positing that minority language media (MLM) can provide an economic stimulus, foster social cohesion, ensure public participation, and promote cultural and linguistic diversity. Legacy media have traditionally had an important role in the normalisation of minority and minorised languages, together with other social

institutions such as education or culture. In Catalonia and the Basque Country, for example, regional and local media had an important role in normalising the Catalan and the Basque languages after almost four decades of Franco's dictatorship. The building of communication spaces was linked to the notion of identity and the existence of a language of one's own, in addition to other elements such as territory, media rituals and their own references (Gifreu and Corominas 1991). As Gifreu (2014) later pointed out, a communication space is understood as the existence of a territory with a particular historicity, a cultural and linguistic community, the presence of a specific political power and communicative institutions that supply the area. Therefore, the presence of a particular language and a linguistic community is an important element in building a communicative space. The role of the media in using these languages is crucial to promote its normalisation among citizens.

MLM have been rising in importance as a field of study since the early 2000s (Cormack 2005), located at the intersection of language studies, sociolinguistics and media studies. Furthermore, authors have suggested that 'the academic focus on minority language media is a process of several decades of scholarship accompanying the growth in provision of media in minority languages since the 1980s' (Willis, Manias-Muñoz, and Bober 2025, 2). Between 1985 and 1995, academic focus remained largely on community media, with a notable paucity of research specifically dedicated to MLM; however, scholarly interest in the field expanded significantly from the mid-1990s onwards (Browne and Uribe-Jongbloed 2013). During this period, literature was focused on the purpose of MLM, linked to language maintenance and revitalisation, with audiovisual media as the main concern (Willis 2024a). This included Browne (1996) proposing a list of purposes related to indigenous language media, which Cormack (2007) later suggested could also be applied to minority language media. Similarly, Riggins (1992) discussed the conditions for long-term success, emphasising aspects such as symbolic status but also financial stability and reaching a significant viewership. Regarding television specifically, Jones (2007, 190) posited five functions: communicative, cultural, economic, status and linguistic.

Willis (2024a) then identifies a second wave of MLM research, from the early 2010s, in which articles touched on the topic of either traditional or social media, as well as the effects of digitalisation on media and social media usage in minority languages. In the context of platformisation, Willis points out that in recent years a third wave emerged – in which this work is fitted –, more focused on actions of traditional MLM on social media. According to Ramallo (2017), it is crucial to analyse the role of the media in contexts of language minorisation as well as their relevance in protecting and promoting minority language, and this study takes into account the new dynamics for communication, especially young people, through content creators.

### *Minority and minorised languages in the digital space*

Technological advances and digitalisation have introduced challenges for MLM in their minoritised context in a fragmented mediascape (Willis, Manias-Muñoz, and Bober 2025). Following the idea that the need of a minority community is linked to cultural and entertainment needs (Cormack 2007), digital ML communities through social media are currently necessary in terms of satisfying core goals traditionally provided by media. This shift reflects the transition from traditional analogue broadcasting to digital, converged environments driven by user participation and on-demand consumption, though experts warn of risks such as a demographic digital divide and the reduced visibility of minoritised languages within spaces dominated by global platforms and social networks (Jones et al. 2019). The role of MLM as a form of receptive language use (Amezaga Albizu et al. 2026) and in creating a public sphere for the community and helping to normalise the language use and grow self-respect (Cormack 2013) must also be ensured by ML digital creators (MLDC).

The digital communication dynamics of minoritised languages are being affected by the dynamics of platformisation, understood as the rise and expansion of platforms as a phenomenon that modifies the communication ecosystems and penetrates into cultural industries (Helmond 2015; Nieborg and Poell 2018; Pérez Tornero 2017; Poell, Nieborg, and Duffy 2022). The rise of

content consumption through platforms and social networks is affecting the field of research of MLM, more linked to sociolinguistics than media studies (Cormack 2013) but with strong implications in the media landscapes (Willis 2024b). In the digital era, communication spaces must be reinterpreted due to their increasingly borderless nature (Prado and Marin 2020), which complicates the design and application of communication policies. This challenge is particularly acute for ML, whose protection in digital environments is more difficult than in the analogue era. However, these difficulties do not reduce the persistent demand for local content produced by citizens in their own languages.

While the globalisation of communication (Mattelart 2002) promotes global interconnection, it does not override the enduring relationship between communication practices, national political spaces, and collective identities (Schlesinger 2007). Cultural proximity remains a key factor, as audiences seek content linked to their everyday local and regional contexts (Straubhaar 2021). Consequently, the demand for content related to local cultures – and often to ML – persists within globalised media systems. Exclusive content and cultural proximity are central to attracting audiences to MLM, including non-speakers (Willis 2024b). Ensuring the presence of ML content on digital platforms is therefore crucial, both to serve local communities and to promote linguistic diversity. Recent studies have documented the use of ML on platforms such as TikTok, including Catalan (Tudela-Isanta and Milà-Garcia 2022), Welsh (Cunliffe 2024), and Basque (Urionaguena, Flores, and Bidegain 2023), as well as the uneven adoption and success of these platforms by traditional media outlets (Willis 2024c).

The vulnerability of ML in the current ecosystem is exacerbated by the overwhelming volume of content in majority languages, the frictionless access to global media, and the lack of territorial borders that once facilitated protective communication policies (Martori 2024). Despite the growing relevance of these digital environments, the digital cartography of ML remains largely underexplored (Mimenza-Castillo 2025). This gap is further complicated by the role of recommendation algorithms; in platformised environments, these systems prioritise scale and engagement, often marginalising ML content and placing it at a structural disadvantage regarding discoverability and long-term survival.

## **Public sector and minority/minoritised languages**

### ***Institutions and language protection***

Language planning refers to ‘deliberate efforts to affect the structure (usage, corpus) or function (use, status) of languages’ (Tollefson and Pérez-Milans 2018, 3), as well as intentional actions aimed at influencing how individuals acquire, use, or perceive the status of languages. Language policy and planning (LPP) is a consolidated field within sociolinguistic research that analyses decision-making in relation to language problems (Fishman 1974).

As Escoriza-Morera (2021) points out, one might expect to find language policies in multilingual territories designed to actively defend the linguistic systems within those spaces and protect them from extinction. Larreula (2023) provides a comprehensive analysis of the structural inequalities faced by speakers of minority languages, detailing the constant effort required for linguistic survival:

One of the main differences between speakers of a state language – with all the linguistic promotion infrastructures that states generally have at their disposal – and speakers of a minority language or a stateless nation – with all the difficulties, including legal ones, that these situations usually entail – is that the latter, in order to survive linguistically differentiated and resist the competitiveness of state languages, often have to endure permanent linguistic tension and have to make continuous efforts to maintain and promote the use of their language, which the former do not have to do. (Larreula 2023, 104)

In fact, language policies are easy to establish when territories have enough political power, as in the case of some medium-sized communities, which are part of a federal or quasi-federal state, or are an independent state (Casesnoves, Mas, and Tudela 2018).

### *The role of PSM in promoting ML*

In the current media landscape, Public Service Media (PSM) are deeply integrated into the dynamics of platformisation. This influence extends across both the production and distribution of content, occurring through their own proprietary digital platforms and third-party commercial services (Bengesser and Sørensen 2024; Bruun and Lassen 2023; Cañedo, Campos, and Centellas 2023). For regional broadcasters operating in territories with distinct linguistic identities, this digital shift is particularly critical. These entities must adapt their roles within the platformisation scenario by ensuring content availability across diverse digital ecosystems to remain visible and relevant.

The core mission of PSM – centred on the value of diversity – is intrinsically linked to the use of ML (Cañedo, Rodríguez-Castro, and López-Cepeda 2022). Historically, as Guyot (2007) argues, PSM have shifted from supporting monolingual nation-state building towards providing a public sphere for minority language communities, reflecting a broader commitment to multicultural accommodation. In many regions, ML broadcasters are the sole media outlets whose primary objective is the specific linguistic territory. Consequently, they serve as more than mere instruments for linguistic normalisation; they are essential for constructing a cohesive public sphere that encompasses the entire population of a given territory (Amezaga et al. 2013). As Willis and Uribe-Jongbloed (2024) note, PSM in minority languages remains a vital area of study due to its capacity to foster public debate and collective consciousness (92).

According to the European Broadcasting Union (2014), PSM is defined by the values of universality, independence, excellence, accountability, innovation, and diversity. Scholars such as Cañedo, Rodríguez-Castro, and López-Cepeda (2022) and Túnuez-López, Campos Freire, and Rodríguez-Castro (2021) consider diversity a cornerstone of PSM, inextricably linked to territorial identity, culture, and the specific needs of citizens in linguistically unique regions. Indeed, maintaining such cultural and linguistic diversity is not merely an option but a necessity (Cormack 2005). However, despite its importance, scholarly work specifically linking PSM diversity to linguistic diversity remains scarce (Junguitu-Angulo and Osuna-Acedo 2023; Navarro 2016). While recent work on language branding points to the urgent need to study youth consumption of majority and minoritised language digital content (Martori et al. 2026), alongside research on public media adaptation (McElroy and Noonan 2018; Freire Braña 2025), key questions remain unanswered. Specifically, there is a notable lack of research addressing how PSM can effectively promote ML in the digital era, particularly concerning the emerging role of digital content creators and their potential for synergy with traditional public broadcasters.

### *Research questions*

To achieve the primary objective of this study, which is to analyse how the public sector (encompassing both policymakers and PSM entities) promotes minoritised languages in the digital space through a cross-case comparison, we address the following research questions:

RQ1: What goals do public service media (PSM) and media policymakers pursue when supporting digital content creators?

RQ2: How does the public sector foster minoritized language media in the digital environment, particularly regarding youth-oriented content?

### *Methodology*

A qualitative methodology is used in this research, based on semi-structured interviews of policymakers and PSM managers. We chose to use interviews as our methodological approach for two core reasons: time and expertise. On the first element, policy documents often take time to develop and, in the case of our topic, are not necessarily developed formally yet. Therefore, access to government officers allows for an easier and quicker overview of policy priorities. Similarly, in the case of broadcasters, perspectives might not become full-fledged commitments in written documents or

white papers before further discussions. This also implies a limitation of this research. Officers and broadcaster employees might avoid addressing the more complex issues, or their perspectives might not necessarily become the official policy published at a later date. However, their views and opinions are clearly fundamental to understanding the main direction of their respective offices.

Across the four study cases – Catalonia, Basque Country, Wales and Scotland – we interviewed a manager from the PSM and a policymaker from the regional government. With this selection of cases, we have 2 regions of Spain and 2 of the UK (different media systems according to Humprecht, Castro Herrero, and Blassnig 2022). The analysis of each study case (Yin 2003) allows comparison between them. All interviews (N = 8) were conducted either face-to-face (n = 7) or by video call (n = 1) between October 2024 and March 2025 (Table 1).

The interviews were recorded and transcribed to identify the main topics of analysis. The procedure conducted by extracting and classifying the information followed the steps identified by Braun and Clarke (2021): familiarising with the data, generating initial codes, generating initial themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming the themes and writing up.

Finally, some methodological and scope considerations should be noted. Given the institutional focus of this research, the sample of eight interviews consists of targeted expert interviews with key decision-makers (one regional policymaker and one PSM manager per territory). While this purposive sampling provides high-level insights into public sector strategies, it does not aim for statistical generalisability across all micro-level actors within these linguistic spheres. Furthermore, the analysis of Catalan and Basque focuses on the administrative frameworks of Catalonia and the Basque Country, where official language planning and PSM structures (CCMA and EITB) are centred, rather than the entirety of their broader geolinguistic areas. Rather than seeking exhaustive geographic coverage, the four-case comparative design (Catalonia, Basque Country, Wales, and Scotland) serves to contrast policy directions across two different national media systems.

## Results

### *Diagnosis: linguistic representation and digital content dynamics*

The findings, derived from qualitative interviews, consistently point to a perceived pattern of under-representation for minoritised languages – specifically Catalan, Basque, Welsh, and Scottish Gaelic – on digital platforms and social networks. This perceived deficit, both by policy makers and PSM managers, is noted in comparison to the extensive content offerings in the hegemonic languages of Spanish and English, framing the current digital environment as significantly imbalanced.

A key finding is the low level of content availability and offer for these minoritised languages:

From 2021 onwards, there is a decline of the Catalan presence in digital platforms and social networks, because the availability of Spanish-language content was increasing, and there was no corresponding response in terms of Catalan-language offer (Catalan Government officer, 2024, personal interview)

**Table 1.** Profile of interview participants.

| Case of analysis | Role                           | Date of Interview |
|------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Catalonia        | Government officer             | 11.10.2024        |
| Catalonia        | PSM representative (CCMA-3Cat) | 01.10.2024        |
| Basque Country   | Government officer             | 02.21.2025        |
| Basque Country   | PSM representative (EITB)      | 02.12.2025        |
| Wales            | Government officer             | 19.12.2024        |
| Wales            | PSM representative (S4C)       | 17.12.2024        |
| Scotland         | Government officer             | 12.03.2025        |
| Scotland         | PSM representative (BBC Alba)  | 05.02.2025        |

The primary obstacle is that Spanish is very attractive to Catalan-speaking content-creators, who are also Spanish speakers'. 'To compete with such a powerful language like Spanish makes it more difficult' 'There was a clear alarming deficit of content that we are trying to fill, particularly for younger audiences. (Catalan PSM representative, 2024, personal interview)

I wish we had influencers – Basque speakers or people from the Basque Country – who, instead of choosing Spanish, would choose to create in Basque. (Basque PSM representative, 2025, personal interview)

It is difficult to retain or to have exclusivity around talent if they start working bilingually (Welsh PSM representative, 2024, personal interview)

For Scottish Gaelic, the scarcity of digital content is directly linked to the limited speaker population. While there are some recognised content creators, their total number is inherently small: 'There are some famous content creators in Scottish Gaelic but it is a low number given the total speakers is only ca. 60,000' (Scottish Government officer, 2025, personal interview).

Furthermore, in Scotland, institutional constraints exacerbate the content deficit. For example, the broadcasting service BBC Alba is limited by the wider BBC organisational policies, preventing it from establishing its own dedicated channels on popular social platforms, such as TikTok. This regulatory limitation hinders the potential for high-quality, institutionally-backed content to reach digital audiences.

There can only be one BBC Alba TikTok that services Gaelic and if it's not there then none of the other BBC TikTok services are going to service this. (Scottish PSM representative, 2025, personal interview)

Here, differences have been identified in being a fully independent corporation (Basque and Catalan cases) or being part of a State corporation (BBC): as they need approval to open their own social network profiles.

Despite current low availability, the data indicates a strong potential to enhance language usage through increased content production. The core principle identified is: if quality content is accessible, consumers will engage with it. This highlights a significant supply-demand gap for minority and minoritised languages, such as Catalan, Basque, Scottish Gaelic and Welsh, in the digital sphere. The current volume of available digital content does not meet the latent or active demand from consumers, creating a critical vulnerability for the health and vitality of the language. To ensure linguistic sustainability, there is an urgent need to dramatically increase the digital content offer.

Linked with the low volume of content availability in those languages, there are very few people who can make a living from creating content, because the market is small and private actors investing in it are not enough. There are creators and fresh narratives in ML, but in niches/sectors where ML creators do not penetrate, such as the gaming sector, scientific divulgation, news or King's League, as pointed out in the Catalan Case (Catalan PSM representative, 2024, personal interview).

### ***Institutional actions and support mechanisms***

Interviews with government and institutional representatives reveal distinct and varied approaches to promoting minoritised language presence in the digital sphere across the four regions, highlighting differences in strategy, focus, and implementation maturity.

In the Catalan case, institutional actions are concrete and aim directly at bolstering the presence of Catalan in the digital space, particularly through direct support for content creators. Conversely, the Basque case relies on creativity and intent, recognising the need for structured action:

We haven't yet developed a strategy to systematically support people like them [TikTok creators]. (Basque Government officer, 2025, personal interview)

We don't have an official strategy like that [the one in Catalonia to support digital creators]. (Basque Government officer, 2025, personal interview)

This indicates that while the Basque government acknowledges the importance of digital promotion – such as the need for publicity campaigns to engage audiences with high-quality Basque podcasts and the provision of financial support – its current system of support is less structured, with funding programmes often involving small, scattered grants, making it easier to fund media than individual digital creators. In fact, the Basque government representative, viewing Catalans as pioneers in digital language initiatives, emphasised the need for their own evolving strategy.

The Welsh case presents a different model. Institutional effort does not involve direct financial support to digital creators under the language policy. Instead, support is provided indirectly through the provision of technical and digital tools, focusing heavily on technological development and literacy, especially for students and school children, who are considered the main digital content creators. While not explicitly linguistic in nature, support for creative content innovation is offered via Creative Wales, the economic development agency of the Welsh Government, which provides support for the creative sectors more generally.

In Scotland, efforts are concentrated on the Speak Gaelic campaign, a multi-body initiative (including the Scottish Government and MG Alba/BBC Alba) that follows the earlier *Learn Gaelic* campaign. ‘I would say their outstanding success has been from the digital short-form point of view creating communities on each of the digital platforms’ (Scottish PSM representative, 2025, personal interview). Additionally, specific grants, such as the FilmG awards – a long-running funded programme for young people to create short-form content – provide an important source of digital material suitable for social media distribution.

A key strategic difference emerged regarding digital content distribution:

- Basque Strategy: Focused on the need for creating local platforms dedicated to Basque-language content.
- Catalan Strategy: Focused on ensuring the Catalan language is present in every platform, aiming to make the language ‘enter the distribution circuit’. (Catalan Government officer, 2024, personal interview). For this reason, subsidies for dubbing into Catalan for platforms have interested, and are distributed to all platforms.<sup>3</sup>

A common institutional limitation was noted concerning the UK’s devolution settlement: broadcasting is not a devolved matter, which restricts the capacity of the devolved governments to directly finance and support digital content production in a minority language. Their role then is indirect and via partnerships and support for the PSM, rather than direct sponsorship. The interviewees from Catalonia and the Basque Country agreed on the necessity of direct financial support for digital creators as a means to benefit the language community and the overall health of the language.

The Catalan approach is focused on building a sustainable market or industry of digital creators. Actions include hiring content creators for institutional advertising and providing direct aids to professionalise them and expand the Catalan-language market. In contrast, the Welsh approach views the role of government differently, prioritising the promotion of digital literacy tools for young people over direct funding for content creation. Across all cases, there is an agreement regarding the existence of quality content in the respective minoritised languages that could be effectively promoted, reinforcing the view that supply-side interventions are warranted.

Finally, there is a common agreement across regions on the challenges posed by the rapid pace of change in the digital sector and the importance of building community among language-creators. Furthermore, the necessity of collaborating with other societal actors to safeguard the language is widely accepted. For example, in the Welsh context, institutions work with partners such as Bangor University and Microsoft for the development of digital tools and datasets.

## **Public service media interventions**

The analysis of PSM initiatives across the ML cases reveals shared strategic priorities, primarily focused on increasing content supply and rejuvenating the production ecosystem, though implementation maturity varies significantly. A common foundation across all four cases is the government's explicit recognition of the PSM's crucial role in supporting and sustaining the ML. A clear trend across all regions is the proactive effort by PSM to expand their pool of content creators and production partners, often through a dedicated pivot towards the digital space. They agree with the challenges of connecting with a new generation with new habits, with an older workforce and managers, and that creators have power because they are brands themselves able to directly connect with audiences.

Both the Catalan and Welsh PSM are actively pursuing strategies to identify and integrate emerging digital talent, particularly creators originating from social media platforms. The Catalan case stands out as a pioneer in this approach, formalising outreach to non-traditional media actors by actively identifying digital talent for the purpose of proposing and developing new production projects.

'The future of digital content is tied to the future of Catalan'. 'Our fundamental mission is to create content in Catalan', 'We do the same work as before but now in digital formats'. (Catalan PSM representative, 2024, personal interview)

Similarly, the Welsh PSM is focused on engaging digital talent, either to participate in formal productions or to serve as commentators, thereby ensuring content relevance and resonance among younger, digitally-native audiences. They recognise the need to move to platforms where users are. The new S4C policy of 2025 on a digital strategy comes after the Media Act 2024 that allows the channel to create digital-first content on third-party platforms.

S4C has got this unique remit in that we are here to service and ensure that the Welsh language has prominence and survives, and [that it] has the platforms to do that (Welsh PSM representative, 2024, personal interview)

This imperative for more digitally oriented productions has fundamentally altered the PSM's relationship with external partners. The recognised need for integrating digital expertise has opened the door for new types of actors – including emerging digital companies and individuals with non-traditional media profiles – to collaborate with PSM, consequently injecting new perspectives and skills into the traditional production chain.

The findings also highlight two distinct, underlying models concerning the structure of production partnerships. In the Catalan case, the public service media is adopting a public service role in leading the Catalan creators market to give more power to these new actors. The goal is, once the market is more stable in the near future, to shift the role and adopt a more innovative one.

In the Basque case, the strategy is characterised – as pointed out by the PSM representative – by an internal commitment to language preservation achieved by giving priority to projects developed specifically in the Basque language. This represents a direct, supply-side intervention designed to guarantee a robust and consistent output of ML content.

In contrast, the Scottish Gaelic PSM currently relies primarily on established production companies as content creation partners. However, the stated strategic goal is to evolve this model. The aim is to move towards directly engaging with and developing individual creators (referred to as micro-partners). This transition is intended to foster a more granular, diverse, and responsive content flow for the language ecosystem. In the case of the Scottish government, it accepts the limitations of the broadcasting system in the UK, and the difficulties of asking the broadcaster to do more for the Gaelic language without more resources.

While government funding is crucial for PSM operations aimed at ML support, the effectiveness of these investments is not always supported by a fully integrated strategic framework. Notably, in the Catalan and Basque cases, the relationship between the PSM corporations and the respective

Language Policy Departments is not yet formalised at a strategic level. In contrast, the Scottish and Welsh cases demonstrate more integrated collaboration models. For instance, in the Scottish case, the *Speak Gaelic* campaign is officially supported by both the Scottish Government and the BBC Alba (PSM) acting as key partners. Similarly, the Welsh PSM exhibits established institutional liaison with the Welsh Government's language strategy, which is formally outlined in strategic documents. Furthermore, the Welsh PSM actively engages with external actors, demonstrating a multi-sectoral approach to talent development.

A separate, yet universally agreed-upon, strategic element across the PSM is the recognition of the need to adapt linguistic output to contemporary audiences. This consensus prioritises the use of 'fresh language' relevant to young people, acknowledging that maximising engagement necessitates favouring current youth vernacular over strict adherence to prescriptive linguistic correction.

## Discussion

This article underscores a crucial transition in the landscape of minoritised language promotion. The change highlights the media ecosystem transition from mass-media national and regional outlets to a diverse scenario which offers different media ecosystems, with content being produced and distributed by traditional media outlets, at the same time as individuals, media and non-media institutions alike share content via digital platforms. Concurrently, there is a move from a scenario where MLM and educational institutions served as the primary custodians of linguistic vitality, to a complex, hybrid environment where MLDCs are now equally vital. For medium- and small-sized language communities, MLDCs represent a critical new vector for engaging young audiences and ensuring the sustained, contemporary usage of the language. This dual dependency – on established MLM and emergent MLDCs – must form the basis of future language policy planning. To this end, a recent initiative in Catalonia to provide a central database for MLDCs, called La Llista, identifies and ranks influencers in the Catalan language (Crusafon 2026), which provides a model for other minority languages.

The data clearly supports the idea that the increasing dominance of hegemonic languages actively erodes the visibility of minoritised languages. To counteract this, a proactive, sustained strategy for content creation and supply is indispensable. There is a broad consensus that promoting ML content – both in volume and quality – will improve the overall situation of the language. The consensus among stakeholders is that financial support for creators is essential to benefit the language community and the overall health of the language. The aim is clearly similar for all interviewees, that is, to provide mechanisms and resources for the creation of content in the minority language, answering RQ1.

However, stark strategic differences exist: the Catalan case is characterised by institutionalised, formalised aid aimed at building an industry; the Basque case relies on less structured and more punctual assistance (with the Catalans viewed as pioneers); and the Welsh case focuses on indirect support through the provision of technical and digital literacy tools, while both the Scottish and Welsh cases focus on partnerships or different internal agencies to provide that support. These differences address RQ2 and highlight, on the one hand, the recognition of developing an industry, and, on the other, that the relationship between PSM and government defines the strategy.

Interviewees across regions consistently articulated the need to move beyond mere subsidy towards the creation of a self-sustaining digital industry. This notion aligns closely with Cormack's (2005) argument regarding the role of MLM in stimulating the economy. This principle is equally applicable to the digital sphere: by supporting MLDCs, governments can foster job creation and cultivate a robust production sector within the creative industries, thereby contributing directly to regional economic viability. The linkage between economic support and the survival of minoritised language communication is well-documented in the context of traditional MLM (Browne and Uribe-Jongbloed 2013). Consequently, it is an expected and justifiable outcome that this emerging

industry of digital creators requires public support to establish a viable market and ensure the financial sustainability of their projects.

The independence of regional PSM, particularly regarding structure and decision-making, emerges as a crucial factor in the ability to effectively address current digital challenges. The constraints observed in the Scottish Gaelic PSM (i.e. BBC Alba's dependence on the BBC for opening new social network accounts) highlight the limitations imposed when broadcasting is not fully devolved to the national government. Furthermore, in the Catalan and Basque cases, the opportunity for a formalised, strategic synergy between the PSM corporations and the respective Language Policy Departments has yet to be fully realised. While both PSM managers are conscious of the importance of digital promotion initiatives, the actions in the Catalan case appear more systematically organised. This lack of full realisation points to a broader need for systematic, cross-sectoral collaboration with external stakeholders, particularly the third-party production sector, to maximise linguistic impact.

Traditional outlets, specifically PSM, do not merely compete with content creators (Willis 2024a); they also identify talent and foster collaborative synergies. For instance, the 2030 strategy published by S4C in September 2025 (S4C 2025) paved the way for content to be created directly into platforms such as YouTube and TikTok following a digital-first approach with a commissioning budget set aside for it. This step forward highlights the importance given to digital content creation and platform distribution as well as the changing remit of PSM in general. This shift facilitates new dynamics for promoting audiovisual content in minoritised languages, where creators serve as essential drivers of language revitalisation in both digital and social spheres.

### ***Limitations, implications, and suggestions for further research***

While this study offers valuable insights into the strategies of Catalonia, the Basque Country, Wales, and Scotland, it is not without limitations. The rapidly evolving nature of digital platforms and recommendation algorithms means that policy effectiveness can shift quickly, and this analysis is constrained by the specific timeline of the gathered empirical data. Additionally, the study focuses primarily on institutional and policymaker perspectives; thus, the direct, lived experiences of individual MLDCs within these systems remain partially outside the scope of this paper.

In terms of implications, these findings demonstrate that language policy can no longer treat digital content creators as peripheral actors. Media policymakers must design integrated frameworks where PSMs and independent creators coexist and reinforce each other.

Consequently, as this work focuses on mapping and comparing the structural design of these strategic programmes, a crucial avenue for future scholarly inquiry is to evaluate their actual outcomes and measure the concrete effects of these policies on both language revitalisation and audience behaviour. Furthermore, subsequent investigations should include longitudinal analyses tracking the long-term financial viability of MLDCs under different regional funding models. Further academic work also benefits from investigating audience reception, specifically how minoritised-language youth interact with institutional versus independent digital content, and exploring how emerging artificial intelligence systems might either exacerbate algorithmic bias against minoritised languages or, conversely, offer new tools for automatic translation, subtitling, and discoverability.

### **Conclusion**

This study demonstrates that the survival and vitality of minoritised languages in the digital age depend on a paradigm shift in media policy. The transition from a traditional mass-media model to a hybrid ecosystem requires a dual approach that integrates established public service media with the emerging creative sector of minoritised-language digital creators. By examining the distinct strategies of Catalonia, the Basque Country, Wales, and Scotland, this article highlights

that while goals of language revitalisation are shared, execution varies significantly based on institutional structures, funding mechanisms, and the degree of political devolution. Ultimately, normalising minoritised languages in digital spaces is not merely a matter of cultural preservation, but a structural necessity. To secure intergenerational transmission and elevate the prestige of these languages among young audiences, governments and public broadcasters must move beyond temporary subsidies. They must foster a self-sustaining, robust digital creative industry that ensures minoritised languages are actively produced, easily discovered, and voluntarily consumed in the social media spaces where youth daily reside.

## Notes

1. The concept of minority language is used in accordance with the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (Council of Europe 1992), which recognises the four languages studied in this article. This concept refers to the number of speakers: a language is a minority language when its linguistic community is numerically smaller than the rest of the population of a territory or state. This research also employs the sociolinguistic term minoritised language to emphasise a process of restriction of its uses or subordination to another language.
2. In the Valencian Community, the Council of Europe (2024a) has denounced the absence of regional private radio and television broadcasting in Valencian (the variety of Catalan spoken in the region) as a key structural deficit.
3. This policy shift represents a transition from 3Cat's historical practice of hoarding Catalan-dubbed content (criticised as contributing to the language's 'marginalization', Catalan Government officer, 2024) to a new strategy of sharing this content with external streaming platforms. The goal is to ensure the Catalan language enters the wider digital distribution circuit, adapting to modern consumption habits.

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