

Podcast listening gains popularity in the former EU-5, influenced by availability of local-language content

Article

Podcast listening is gaining popularity in Europe. Almost 70 million people in the pre-Brexit EU-5 (France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the UK) will listen to podcasts this year, per our estimates. However, the combined number of listeners in those countries is still much lower than the total number in the US (117.8 million).

Looking at the individual countries in the former EU-5, podcast listening is significantly more popular in Spain than among the other countries in the group. With 30.0% of internet users listening to podcasts this year, Spain will have the No. 6 highest penetration rate among the 18 countries we forecast.

Podcast Listeners in Western Europe, by Country, 2021

% of internet users



Note: internet users of any age who listen to a podcast via digital stream or direct download on any device at least once per month
Source: eMarketer, Aug 2021

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Among the former EU-5, Spain has the highest podcast listener penetration, but it also shares first place for strongest growth this year (tying with France at 15.9% growth each). In fact, all five countries will show double-digit growth by the end of 2021 except for Germany (9.6%). Continued, but decreasing, growth in all five countries will last throughout our forecast period ending in 2025.

Spain's podcast adoption can, at least in part, be attributed to language. On one hand, several local players are important to Spain's podcast market, such as PRISA's Cadena SER, iVoox, as well as European podcast company Podigee and Denmark-based Podimo. And Spain's national public radio service Radio Nacional de España (RNE) realized an opportunity and has begun creating podcast-exclusive content, reaching a distribution agreement with Spotify. But on the other hand, people in Spain can access a vast amount of Spanish-language content, including programs created in Latin America, where podcast listening is also gaining popularity.

Most people in Germany listen to podcasts in German, but English-language content is also picking up there given the country's rather high proficiency in English. What further attributes

to podcast growth in Germany is its strong traditional radio market, much of which has been converted to podcast format.

Like Germany, radio has a substantial audience in France. “The popularity of catch-up, or time-shifted, radio is an interesting nuance in France's podcast market,” said Peter Vahle, eMarketer senior forecasting analyst at Insider Intelligence. "This indicates a lack of maturity and investment in France's native podcast market."

A large majority of podcasts in France have actually come out in the form of time-shifted radio, according to a 2019 Reuters article. This helps explain the lack of market maturity and why France has the lowest podcast adoption rate among internet users in the former EU-5 this year, at only 22.9%.

With podcast listeners accounting for 25.0% of internet users this year, Italy is behind Spain and the UK but ahead of Germany and France. The number of podcast listeners in Italy (another country where local-language podcasts are much more popular than those in English) will increase by 14.9% in 2021 and will continue growing through 2025, resulting in over 30% of internet users in Italy listening to podcasts by then.

Next year, at least one in four internet users in each of the former EU-5 countries will listen to podcasts. By 2025, penetration rates are expected to be more than 30% in all countries except for France (29.9%). Spain again will be the top country in the region, with 36.5%.