eEurope
Digitising content together

EUROPEAN CONTENT IN GLOBAL NETWORKS
COORDINATION MECHANISMS FOR DIGITISATION PROGRAMMES

THE LUND PRINCIPLES:

CONCLUSIONS OF EXPERTS MEETING, LUND, SWEDEN, 4 APRIL 2001

The eEurope 2002 Action Plan was endorsed by EU Member States at the Feira European Council in June 2000. Objective 3(d) of the Action Plan is to **stimulate European content in global networks** in order fully to exploit the opportunities created by the advent of the digital technologies.

Within that objective there is a specific action for Member States and the Commission jointly to:

> *Create a coordination mechanism for digitisation programmes across Member States.*

On 4 April 2001, representatives and experts from Member States met at Lund in Sweden to discuss the issues involved and to make recommendations for actions that support coordination and add value to digitisation activities in ways that would be sustainable over time.

> *Europe's cultural and scientific knowledge resources are a unique public asset forming the collective and evolving memory of our diverse societies and providing a solid basis for the development of our digital content industries in a sustainable knowledge society.*

The experts endorsed the findings of a preparatory meeting held in Luxembourg on 15/16 November 2000. They highlighted the value and importance of Europe's digitised cultural and scientific content which provides:

An accessible and sustainable heritage: Europe has unique and significant wealth in its cultural and scientific heritage. Digitisation of its resources is a vital activity for providing improved access for the citizen and for preserving Europe's collective cultural heritage (both past and future).

Support for cultural diversity, education and content industries: Digitised cultural assets are crucial in sustaining and promoting cultural diversity in a global environment. They are also a key resource for education and for the tourism and media industries.

Digitised resources of great variety and richness: Member States have invested significantly in programmes and projects for digitising cultural and scientific content. Such digitisation activities cover a diversity of domains and content types, such as museum artefacts, public records, archaeological sites, audio-visual archives, maps, historical documents and manuscripts.

However, there are a number of key problems which risk limiting realising the potential of these resources, whether culturally, socially or economically. The main barriers identified are:

Fragmentation of approach. Though widespread, the digitisation activities to date are highly fragmented, depending on the policy instruments and mechanisms in the different Member States. Moreover, the absence of a coherent European view of what cultural content has been digitised or of how this content is selected for digitisation results in the potential duplication of resources, effort and investment.

Obsolescence. Digitisation is a costly exercise requiring high investments usually from public funds. There are significant risks to these investments due to the adoption of inappropriate technologies and standards. This can result in creating resources which are quickly obsolete and unusable or which require the investment to be repeated within a short time frame.

Lack of simple, common forms of access for the citizen. Access by the citizen to the different resources, at national and at EU level, is compromised by the lack of common approaches and technical standards as well as by lack of support and systems for multilingual access.

Intellectual property rights (IPR). The various stakeholders in the digitised content (eg original owners, intermediaries, and end-users) have different legitimate interests. These needs must be recognised and balanced. Solutions for handling and managing rights need to be understood and applied by the cultural sector if the economic value of the content is to be realised in a sustainable way.

Lack of synergies between cultural and new technologies programmes. There is an increasing need for improved linkages between cultural and new technologies programmes at national and EU level in order to identify priorities and where there is European added value to be gained.

Institutional investment and commitment. Digitisation requires a commitment from individual organisations, frequently the memory organisations such as archives, libraries and museums, to long-term, expensive and technically demanding actions. The use of digitisation technologies and tools requires the adoption of new skills and practices by the cultural institutions.

In order to address these issues, it would be desirable if the Member States could commit themselves to:

Creating an ongoing forum for coordination, by establishing a coordinating group representative of each Member State. This group should develop frameworks to support ongoing discussions and exchanges, and establish procedures for reporting to the Member States, both at European level and at national level.

Supporting and developing a European view of policies and programmes by establishing Web sites with current, publicly accessible and easily understandable information on their policies and programmes in line with an agreed baseline common profile, to which a central site should link.

Promoting and supporting good practice and its harmonisation and optimisation within Member States and across the EU, by continuing work on a qualitative benchmarking framework aiming at its adoption and implementation through appropriate national coordinating bodies and networks, and by working through a nominated group of experts to develop quantitative approaches to benchmarking processes. This requires also identifying mechanisms for the definition and collection of core indicators, and specifically the relevant *e*Europe indicator, and for liaison with national standards/statistical bodies.

Accelerating take-up of good practice and of appropriate skills by disseminating across Europe examples of good practice, identified according to agreed features (typology). This should support issues such as consistency of practice and process, assets and rights management, and lead to new definitions of the skills required.

Making visible and accessible European cultural and scientific content by setting up national inventories (of projects, or of selected content). These inventories should be aligned with the European infrastructure for digitised content by complying with standards and technologies which support quality and usability of the content, unified access for citizens, affordability and openness of software tools, and long-term accessibility and availability.

For these initial actions to be realised as fast as possible and to ensure that the solutions adopted can lead towards sustainable organisational and technical infrastructures, the European Commission, in the context of its current IST activities and other ongoing programmes, should work with Member States to:

Support practical coordination activities, by creating a secretariat or facilitating agency to support the activities of the coordinating group. The secretariat should manage any ad hoc technical advisory groups which may be required.

Advance the dissemination of good practice by promoting <u>centres of competence</u> which can provide leadership and support for stakeholders on key issues and technologies. Whilst current domains include metadata, multilingual support, imaging technologies and digital preservation technologies, the establishment of competence centres must be open to emerging topics.

Foster the development of benchmarking for digitisation practices, by creating guidelines for data collection and by continuing development of qualitative and quantifiable indicators.

Optimise the value and develop shared visions of European content, by developing criteria and a framework for an EU collaboration plan for digital cultural and scientific content, together with an appropriate implementation means (Charter, MoU etc). The plan should aim at establishing an eCulture infrastructure for access to digitised cultural and scientific heritage, through identifying added value conditions for European content (eg selection criteria) and establishing technical standards for conformance to interoperability requirements. This work should be carried out through the coordinating group and its secretariat.

Improve quality/usability of content, promote unified access for citizens and increase awareness of long-term preservation issues, through developing: agreements on interoperability standards; guidelines for digital preservation and content longevity; and coherent models and good practices for rights and asset

management together with the development of associated *e*culture business models.

In order for Member States to identify and implement strategies and agreements on content production, quality, discovery and use, a number of current and emerging technical issues need to be addressed through short and longer term RTD initiatives. The Commission should:

Advance the development of quantitative benchmarking, through background studies and ground clearing work on indicators and statistics.

Launch **studies into digitisation in Europe** and supporting technical and organisational infrastructures, and on promoting European cultural content, identity and diversity in support of accessibility to all citizens.

Support interoperability and the persistent discovery of resources, by launching work on metadata, registries and schemas.

Counter the risks of creating a 'digital dark ages', by developing advanced research agendas into: digital technologies and preservation of content; improved applications of advanced technologies for digitisation of cultural and scientific content (eg multi spectral imaging), adding value to the significance of the content over time.   This work should be carried out in close collaboration with industry.

Investigate opportunities under the IST Programme for **pilot projects** reflecting the above research foci.