

REGIONAL MEETING ON DIGITISATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE OHRID, 17-20 MARCH 2005

Background: MINERVA in South Eastern Europe

During the year 2004, MINERVA project was invited to take part to several events in South Eastern Europe, on which occasions it was able to present its main activities and the results of its actions:

- the International Conference *New Technologies and Standards: Digitisation of National Heritage 2004* Belgrade, June 3rd-5th, 2004 (<http://www.ncd.matf.bg.ac.yu/?page=conferences&lang=en&file=radniskup2004.html>);
- the International Seminar *Digitisation of Cultural and Scientific Heritage*, Bansko (Bulgaria) August 28th – September 1st 2004;¹
- *Belgrade Calimera Conference*, November 15th 2004, and the following Calimera Belgrade Workshop, November 16th 2004 (<http://www.milutinbojic.org.yu/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=34>).

As result of these contacts, three South Eastern European institutions subscribed MINERVA cooperation agreement:

- Institute for Mathematics and Informatics of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (Sofia);
- National Centre for Digitisation Belgrade;
- Mathematical Institute of Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (Belgrade).

UNESCO Bureau for Science in Europe and MiBAC/MINERVA

Unesco Office in Venice (UVO) – Regional Bureau for Science in Europe intended to develop a strategy in the field of digitisation of cultural heritage for South Eastern Europe and needed a highly qualified partner.

It therefore looked for cooperation of the Italian Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities. Through its publications and some meetings with MINERVA coordinating staff, UVO identified MINERVA experience as the most significant in the field of digitisation of cultural heritage and as a model to be presented to South Eastern European countries. UVO ROSTE therefore chose the Italian Ministry, coordinator of MINERVA project, as the right partner for outlining a strategy on digitisation in SEE.

The first step towards the achievement of a SEE Regional coordination was the organization of a Regional meeting on digitisation in South Eastern Europe, aimed at gathering representatives from eight South Eastern European countries (namely Albania, Bosnia Hertzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, F.Y.R.O.M., Moldova, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro).

Main objectives of the meeting were:

- to allow representatives of the SEE countries to present the national situation concerning policies, programmes and projects in the field of digitisation of cultural heritage;

¹ Proceedings of the international seminar "Digitisation of Cultural and Scientific Heritage", Bansko, 28 August – 3 September 2004 appeared in the *International Journal Information Theories and Applications*, 2004, vol. 11, no. 3, pp. 203-300 (<http://www.foibg.com/ijita/ijfv11.htm>).

- to make progress towards a Regional coordination of the efforts in the field of digitisation of cultural and scientific heritage through an agreement on a set of recommendations and on the future strategy.

MiBAC, through MINERVA coordinating staff, and UNESCO strictly collaborated in the preparation of the meeting.

The two offices exchanged their contacts in the area and transmitted them to the F.Y.R.O.M. Ministry of Culture, thus enabling them to invite to the meeting the relevant representatives of SEE countries.

To allow consistency and facilitate the country presentations, a questionnaire was drafted by MINERVA staff, based on the experience achieved by MINERVA through the National Policy Profiles.

A draft document on principles and future strategy was prepared by MINERVA and UVO staffs, based on the Charter of Parma and taking into consideration Lund Principles, Lund Action Plan, MINERVA global experience and the specificities of the SEE Region. The draft had to be presented for modifications and approval to the SEE country representatives during the meeting.

The meeting

The first session of the meeting was devoted to the country presentations.

Representatives of seven SEE countries (Albania, Bosnia Hertzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, F.Y.R.O.M., Romania, Serbia and Montenegro) gave an overview of the digitisation initiatives in their own countries, basing on the questionnaire prepared by MINERVA and previously distributed by the Macedonian Ministry of Culture.

The general view emerged from the presentations was very rich and extremely interesting, although very fragmented. A strong need came out for harmonisation of institutional strategies and initiatives, coordination at national and Regional level and among research and cultural institutions. The importance of common standards in cataloguing and digitisation was emphasized, as well as a clear awareness that staff training is crucial.

In the afternoon session MINERVA experience was introduced, in particular the coordination model, the strategic and technical results and the products of the coordination initiative.

A possible strategy for digitisation of cultural heritage in South Eastern European countries was then outlined by the chair persons of the meeting, Milena Dobрева (IMI-BAS, Sofia), Rossella Caffo (MiBAC, MINERVA coordinator) and Lazar Sumanov (ICOMOS Macedonia).

The draft document was adapted on the basis of the outcomes of the presentations and of the discussion, and then distributed to the country representatives.

The last session on Saturday morning was devoted to discuss and finalize the draft document. The comments made on the document by the representatives were very positive and the set of Recommendations was endorsed. As usual for NRG meetings, two further weeks were given to the representatives, for making suggestions and further observations to be included in the document.

Conclusions

The meeting was in general very successful. Several needs were addressed and most delegates expressed a strong will for further cooperation and for the establishment of an ongoing forum for coordination in the area, to work in contact with NRG.

MINERVA coordination committed to explore possibilities for EC funding for coordination, digitisation or knowledge transfer initiatives.