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MINERVAPLUS

Ministerial NETWORK for Valorising Activities in digitisation PLUS

Assessment Report on the Coordination of Digitisation in Europe

1st Draft, 10th November 2005

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Organisation name of lead contractor for this deliverable: CL - An Chomhairle Leabharlanna (The Library Council)

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Executive Summary

This document presents the *Assessment Report on the Coordination of Digitisation in Europe*.

The assessment covers the lifetime of the coordination of digitisation initiative in Europe up to October 2005. It examines the work of the initiative vis-à-vis the Lund Principles and Action Plan, the Dynamic Action Plan and role and structure of the National Representatives Group (NRG). The report also considers the strategic relationships of the coordination initiative with other organisations. An analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT), based on a survey of stakeholders, for the period 2001-2010 completes the assessment.

This draft version will be presented to the National Representatives Group (NRG) at the 9th NRG meeting in Bristol, 17th November 2005. The final version of the report will be available on line on the Minerva web site[1] will be published by Minerva in early 2006.

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[1] www.minervaeurope.org

Introduction

This document refers to the report on the *Progress Assessment of the Coordinating Digitisation in Europe Initiative* presented to the 7th NRG meeting in Dublin, 29th June 2004.

The report was an initiative of the Irish Presidency, co-funded jointly by Irish and Italian Presidency and produced by Pintail Ltd.

Discussion between NRG members in Ireland and Italy, as well as the European Commission highlighted the importance of assessing the effectiveness of the NRG in the context of planning and laying the foundations for future policy development in the digitisation of the cultural and scientific heritage. Many of the existing objectives as laid out in the Lund Action Plan have been met, and a review and refocus was seen as an important and worthwhile exercise. Such an exercise would support the renewed Action Plan being developed by successive Presidencies.

Under the Irish Presidency, a steering group was established to review and monitor the progress of the assessment and to ensure that it addressed the most important issues. This steering group included representatives of the Irish, Italian and Netherlands Presidencies, and the European Commission.

In June 2003, meetings and discussion took place, leading to the identification and engagement of a suitable consultancy organisation for the assessment. Pintail Ltd. have an established track record both in the EU domain and working in cultural heritage digitisation projects in Ireland. They have contributed to some Minerva project deliverables in the past and have existing background knowledge of the cultural heritage digitisation policy area.

A specification for the assessment was drawn up, reviewed and agreed by the Assessment Steering Group. It was published as the *Progress Assessment of the Coordinating Digitisation in Europe Initiative: Report* (D3, Annex II)[2].

The continuation of the assessment process itself has been undertaken in WP7 of MinervaPlus, with The Library Council as work package leader. The Steering Group was enlarged to include Luxemburg, the United Kingdom and Poland in order to provide representation from the 2005 presidencies and the new accession states.

The final assessment covers the lifetime of the coordination of digitisation initiative in Europe up to October 2005. It places emphasis on the work of the initiative vis-à-vis the Lund Principles and Action Plan, the Dynamic Action Plan and role and structure of the National Representatives Group (NRG). The report also considers the strategic

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[2] This report is available at www.minervaeurope.org under the members area for the MinervaPlus project.

relationships of the coordination initiative with other organisations. An analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) on these topics for the period 2001-2010 completes the assessment.

This draft version will be presented to the National Representatives Group (NRG) at the 9th NRG meeting in Bristol, 17th November 2005. The final version of the report will be available on line on the Minerva web site[3] will be published by Minerva in early 2006.

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[3] www.minervaeurope.org

Lund Action Plan (2001 – 2005)

What is the Lund Action Plan?

The eEurope 2002 Action Plan is a major strategic initiative with wide-reaching impact on the EU. It was endorsed in June 2000 by the European Council. While wide-reaching in its scope, one focus is on the area of eContent. The eEurope 2002 Action Plan underlines a commitment to the stimulation of European content on the Internet.

From a cultural perspective, the eEurope 2002 Action Plan provided the framework for the establishment of cultural content on the Internet. This cultural material is uniquely European in nature and is a major asset of Europe as a whole.

A group of national experts and representatives held an exploratory meeting in Luxembourg in November, 2000. This was followed by a meeting in Lund, Sweden, in April 2001, of Ministry of Culture representatives of member states and the European Commission. The Lund meeting recognised the importance of European cultural content and agreed a series of principles which established a commitment to the creation and management of European cultural e-content.

The *Lund Principles*…

- Established the value of online European cultural content
- Identified barriers to realisation of the full potential of the content
- Agreed steps that should be taken by Member States to overcome these barriers
- Outlined the role of the European Commission in these endeavours, by stimulating good practice and improved organisation, as well as by supporting research.

While these principles were agreed and endorsed by the meeting, it was perceived that a concrete set of Actions was needed in order to begin the implementation of these Principles. A follow-up document was drafted and agreed, which set out a series of steps to be taken. These are the *Lund Action Plan.*

What are its core objectives?

The Lund action plan is a set of concrete, measurable steps which would begin the implementation of the Lund Principles. These actions were not intended to lead to a full implementation of all the aspirations and areas covered by the Lund Principles; however they did provide an important set of first steps in the right direction.

The Lund Action Plan defines ten Actions, in the core areas of

- Improving Policies and Programmes through Cooperation
- Discovery of Digitised Resources
- Promotion of Good Practice
- Content Framework.

Assessment of the Lund Action Plan

The Lund Action Plan has acted as a de facto roadmap for the *Coordinating Digitisation in Europe* initiative. Progress has been measured in terms of the various Actions on a number of occasions. Some adjustments in focus and emphasis have been carried out from time to time, but the validity of the Lund Action Plan has remained relatively constant. Indeed, the SWOT analysis included in this document uses the Lund Action Plan as the framework for the assessment of the initiative up to 2005.

Dynamic Action Plan (2006 – 2010)

What is the Dynamic Action Plan?

In November 2004 the Council of the European Union agreed to proceed with the coordination of digitisation through an updated European action plan as a follow up of the Lund Action Plan, to be delivered under UK Presidency. The Netherlands, Luxembourg and UK Presidencies drafted the revised plan and its final version is the *Dynamic Action Plan for the EU coordination of digitisation of cultural scientific content* as per 27th October 2005.

The Dynamic Action Plan addresses the challenges of coordinating digitisation activities to build a European cultural information space that is accessible and usable by citizens in a period of rapid technical development[4]

What are its core objectives?

Six objectives are pursued through this updated action plan, acknowledging and building upon the previous set of Lund Principles:

(1) **Providing strategic leadership** in a dynamic and changing environment in which rapid technological and economical developments are taking place.
(2) **Strengthening coordination** and forging stronger links between Member States' digitisation initiatives, EU networks and projects.
(3) Continuing efforts in **overcoming fragmentation and duplication** of digitisation activities and maximising synergy.
(4) Assessing and **identifying appropriate models**, funding and policy approaches to sustain development and long-term preservation strategies
(5) **Promoting cultural and linguistic diversity** through digital content creation
(6) **Improving online access** to European cultural content

How will these objectives be delivered?

In order to deliver its objectives, the Dynamic Action Plan proposes immediate actions for 2006-07 under the following five action areas:

- Users and content
- Technologies for digitization
- Sustainability of content
- Digital preservation

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[4] See NRG Terms of reference

- Monitoring progress.

Member States are expected to take the necessary steps for the implementation of the action plan through the national Representative Group with new terms of reference. In line with its mandate as defined by the Cultural Affairs Committee, *the National Representatives Group* (NRG) will be responsible for supporting the implementation of the Dynamic Action Plan within Member States.

Role and Structure of the NRG

NRG 2001 – 2005

Composition, Profile, Mandate

As a successor to the group who met at Lund, and with the support of the European Commission, a group of national experts and representatives nominated by their Ministry of Culture, has been established in the context of the *Coordinating Digitisation in Europe* initiative. The members of the NRG are nominated by the Member States; members range from civil servants to the managers and IT leaders of major cultural institutions and programmes.

The NRG meets every six months, chaired by the current Council Presidency. Each meeting reviews progress towards the Lund Action Plan and also in the light of actions identified for execution in the previous NRG meetings. Meetings are usually supplemented by a conference on a topic of particular relevance.

The primary role of the NRG is to identify priorities for coordination, research and implementation by Member States, and to coordinate digitization development at national and EU level. The deliberations of the NRG can impact on the Member States themselves, since NRG membership is largely made up of senior figures from Member State governments, agencies and cultural institutions. The priorities and work plans of the European Commission can also be influenced by the NRG, for the same reason.

The NRG does not, however, undertake the implementation of the priorities which it identifies. As a coordinating and priority-identifying body, it does not become involved in carrying out technical projects. It publishes an annual report. Minerva and MinervaPlus have provided support to the NRG.

NRG 2006 – 2010

As part of the review of the Lund Action Plan, the need to strengthen the NRG and to establish clear Terms of Reference has been identified. These have been approved in October 2005.

The renewed NRG is an informal group established to co-ordinate national policies of digitisation of cultural heritage at European level. The NRG will serve as a platform for

the exchange of information and of good practices. It will contribute towards the development and implementation of the Dynamic Action Plan and monitor its impact.

As stated in the Terms of Reference, up to three individuals may be nominated by the Ministry(ies) responsible for Culture of each Member State and Accession Country. In deciding which individuals to nominate to the NRG, Member States shall take into account the Terms of Reference which indicate the roles and the responsibilities they have in the implementation of the Dynamic Action Plan.

The NRG may grant observer status to third countries, as appropriate for achieving effective European co-operation.

NRG Members shall:

- formulate recommendations and take decisions in NRG meetings, based upon prior consultation with Ministries and other relevant authorities,

- support the implementation of the Dynamic Action Plan at Member State level,

- monitor progress at national level and report on this in the Annual Report of the NRG,

- maintain close relations with national stakeholders, in particular policy makers, cultural institutions and their audiences, and those involved in research initiatives on digitisation.

Strategic relationships

European Commission

The European Commission is a politically independent collegial institution which embodies and defends the general interests of the European Union. Its virtually exclusive right of initiative in the field of legislation makes it the driving force of European integration. It prepares and then implements the legislative instruments adopted by the Council and the European Parliament in connection with Community policies[5].

The Commission also has powers of implementation, management and control. It is responsible for planning and implementing common policies, executing the budget and managing Community programmes. As "guardian of the Treaties", it also ensures that European law is applied.

The involvement of the European Commission in the Coordination of Digitisation in Europe Initiative is strategically important and the relationship between the Commission and the NRG gives benefits to both parties.
The Commission values the existence of a form of experts in cultural digitization representing all Member States for informing their deliberations on these matters. However, it should be noted that the Commission does not need to take account of the views of the NRG. On the other hand, the Member States certainly benefit from the briefings and feedback from the Commission.

Cultural Affairs Committee

The Cultural Affairs Committee (CAC) is the advisory body on culture to the European Commission. Proposals sent to the Commission are evaluated by the Committee who advise the Commission and give recommendations in relation to the submitted proposals.

The NRG is seen by the CAC as a success in the context of digitisation of cultural heritage; it is a useful coordination and information sharing mechanism.
The NRG can have a useful role for advising the CAC in relation to specific areas of cultural digitisation. In order to gain an higher profile, the advice of the CAC is that the NRG should be aware of the political mechanisms at Member States level and EU level, and focus on how best to use the very limited resources that the EU can offer. The NRG should maximise co-operation amongst Member States so that digitisation proposals could be based on the work carried out by the NRG and include objectives of a common EU interest and value. In this way duplication of efforts by separate parties could be avoided.

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[5] http://europe.eu.int/scadplus/glossary

MINERVA / MINERVA Plus[6]

The Minerva and MinervaPlus projects are initiatives funded under the IST programme of the EU. They provide support and secretariat services to the NRG as well as implementing selected priorities and policies identified by the NRG. In many ways they may be reasonably viewed as the 'executive arm' of the NRG. Many members of the projects are also represented on the NRG.

The Minerva project was the first of the two to be proposed and to receive funding from the Commission. Its proposal and technical annex (plan of work) mirror quite closely the structure and objectives of the Lund Action Plan. The project is broken up into a number of parallel working groups, chaired by representatives of various Member States and focusing on some particular area (e.g. benchmarking, interoperability, quality, good practice). Minerva deliverables are typically documents such as

- The good practice handbook
- The quality principles, criteria and handbook
- The technical guidelines

An important output of the Minerva project has been the online tools for benchmarking (collecting information about digitisation projects, programmes and initiatives across Member States, promulgating good practice through partnership and cooperation). The benchmarking tools are being subsumed by a new centralised Knowledge Base for information about digitisation policy and practice, currently under development.

The MinervaPlus is a geographic extension of the Minerva project to include additional Member States with representatives also from Israel and Russia. A number of additional and supplementary working groups have also been set up within the project, to cooperate with existing Minerva working groups. Their remit includes multilingualism, digital rights management, needs of small cultural institutions and cost reduction in the digitisation process

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[6] www.minervaeurope.org

SWOT Analysis 2001- 2010

An analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) of the coordination of digitization of Europe is here included for the period 2001-2010.

A questionnaire was sent to all NRG members[7], and the European Commission and the Cultural Affairs Committee were interviewed in order to complete the report. Ten Member States replied to the survey. The SWOT analysis focuses on the Lund Action Plan, the Dynamic Action Plan, the NRG and its strategic relationships. The findings are based on the feedback received from the ten NRG representatives, representing 40% of the overall NRG.

There is a unanimous opinion that the Lund Action Plan is a success. Co-operation, networking, awareness and exchange of information amongst the Member States are pointed out as the main strengths of the NRG together with the opportunity to define common project ideas and submit common projects. However, some weaknesses have also emerged. The NRG does not have an official mandate and 50% of the interviewed Member States feel that the NRG status is unclear with difficulties in getting support and recognition by the national institutions and ministries.

Member States have achieved numerous benefits from the NRG at national level. The main opportunities arising are:
- Better awareness of some digitization issues, e.g. long-term preservation
- Promotion of co-operation and networking
- Creation of national inventories of digitization projects and initiatives
- Hosting international conferences and meetings.

The interviewed Member States agree that some aspects to digitization have not being addressed by the NRG and suggest that the following areas should be covered:
- Funding, especially for smaller countries
- Links with eLearning and Tourism
- Public/private partnership
- More extensive promotion of good practice in digitization
- Better awareness at political level
- Audiovisual
- Cultural content for education purposes.

The Dynamic Action Plan should be a success but there is some concern that the plan is too ambitious and too wide focused. The NRG will need to act strategically, and keeps sight of the top-level goals. Particular attention will be required to the co-ordination of all activities. The NRG does not control any funding and all effort is voluntary.

Some action areas are not sufficiently highlighted in the plan, such as user and markets perspective from a real user/markets point of view, educational use and cultural tourism.

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[7] See *Appendix 1: WP7 questionnaire* at the end of the document.

50% representatives feel that their mandate is unclear especially within their country. However, the proposed NRG composition should work adequately but one NRG representative pointed out that it would be useful to have a small executive group within the ministry in order to support the implementation of the DAP at national level.

In order to assure sustainability for the future of the NRG some form of funding should be provided. If financial support of the European Commission cannot be guaranteed, then national ministries or participating institutions should allocate specific budget for attending meetings. Another source of funding could come from new projects such as the EEIG for example. Active participation is required by all Member States and from a management point of view the NRG could fund a secretariat that works on its behalf. It is essential that achieved goals should be promoted.

On the area of strategic relationships, 50% of those interviewed find unclear the NRG relationship with the European Commission. The consultation role of the NRG seems confusing because the Commission does not necessary need to take into account the views of the NRG. Some representatives express the same concern in relation to the CAC.

The value of a project such as MINERVA is widely recognized and has made it possible to implement the NRG strategies. However, information exchange between Minerva and NRG has been confusing at times and future initiatives should require more clarity on this regard. A representative suggests including MINERVA partners in the NRG.

Strategic relationships should be strengthened with UNESCO. Some work on this direction has been already started by Minerva with their cooperation with the Information for all programme (IFAP) through the MEDCULT project and promotion to the UNESCO-ROSTE. Another relevant relationship to be considered should be with the Cultural Content Forum.

NRG representatives suggest that opportunities together with weaknesses and threats for the future of the NRG and the Dynamic Action Plan arising from the assessment should be discussed at the 9th NRG meeting in Bristol.

Strengths	Weaknesses
2001-2005 • Establishment of NRG • Co-operation • Networking • Awareness of digitization issues • Information exchange **2006-** • Terms of Reference • Action areas	**2001-2005** • NRG mandate unclear nationally and at EU level **2006-** • DAP too wide focused • Some action areas not covered properly • NRG unclear in strategic relationship with EC and CAC
Opportunities	**Threats**
2001-2005 • Defining common ideas • Participating in projects • awareness of some digitization issues, e.g. long-term preservation • Promotion of co-operation and networking at national level • Creation of national inventories of digitization projects and initiatives • Hosting international conferences and meetings. **2006-** • Awareness of political mechanism • Promotion of activities • Information exchange with projects • Strategic relationships with UNESCO	**2001-2005** • Difficulties in getting political recognition and support **2006** • Funding issues • Lack of participation

Conclusions

Based on the responses of Member States and other institutions, the assessment team can confirm that the Lund Action Plan and the NRG have been a success so far. The Dynamic Action Plan is another step forwards the development and co-ordination of digitisation in Europe. However, there are some issues which need to be addressed by the NRG as soon as possible in order to guarantee progress and full agreement of all Member States.

Appendix 1: *WP7 Questionnaire - Assessment on the Coordination of Digitisation in Europe*

To Each NRG member

Lund Action Plan (NRG) 2001-2005

1. Do you think the NRG to date was a success?

2. What do you think worked well?

3. What do you think did not work so well?

4. What has been the benefit to your country from your involvement in the NRG?

5. Are there aspects to digitisation in your country which the NRG has not addressed and you feel should be addressed?

Dynamic Action Plan 2006-2010

1. Do you think the Dynamic Action Plan will be a success? Please specify three outputs which would improve the situation in your country.

2. Is there any particular area which you feel is missing from the Dynamic Action Plan?

3. If any, what do you think are the strengths and opportunities of the new Dynamic Action Plan?

4. If any, what do you think are the weaknesses and threats of the Dynamic Action Plan?

Role and Structure of the NRG

1. How would you measure success in your role as NRG representative? Please include achievements from your participation in the NRG both in your country and in ensuring your country concerns are represented at EU level.

2. How will the proposed composition of the NRG work for your country?

3. What is the understanding of the role of the NRG members, the role of the CAC representatives, and the relationship with the EU in your country?

4. Do you feel you have a clear mandate as an NRG representative

   a) within your country?

   ☐

   b) representing your country?

   ☐

   If you feel there isn't a clear mandate, what do you think the mandate should be?

6. How do you think the sustainability of the NRG should be supported in the future?

7. How will the sustainability plan of the NRG effect its future?

[ ]

Strategic relationships

What do you think is the relationship of the NRG with:

a) EU

[ ]

b) Minerva

[ ]

c) Other strategic relationships you would consider relevant.

[ ]

Please give details under each heading if possible.

Any additional comments?