



Bel gi um

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Introduction

This Second Progress Report is the result of continuous consultations of the ad hoc Consultation Group for the follow-up of the Lund process.

As a reminder, with a view to allow a co-ordinated approach to NRG related activities, this group was set up on the proposal of the General Secretary of the French Community, Henry Ingberg, in regards of the role of the French Community in the MINERVA project (Ministerial NETwork for Valorising Activities in digitisation). This group is composed of the Flemish Community's Representative in the NRG, Debbie Esmans, the French Community's Representative in the NRG, Isabelle Dujacquier, the German-Speaking Community's Representative in the Cultural Affairs Committee, Edith Bong and the Director of the Scientific and Technical Information Service (STIS), a department of the Federal Science Policy Office, Jean Moulin.

The present report is the continuation of the first NRG Progress Report published in March 2002 and should be read as such.

Digitisation policies and emerging initiatives

During the last months, initiatives and projects have continued to develop in the field of digitisation.

1. Flemish Community

In the Flemish Community the networks, projects and the work of institutions related to digitisation are further developing.

The intention of the current Minister of Culture is to create new Flemish Parliament Acts in the field of the arts and cultural heritage and, in this context, the idea

has been formulated to start working on a masterplan for the cultural heritage sector that would include a section on digitisation.

In this context a research project on digital cultural heritage in Flanders is already in progress. A section on "digital culture" has been added to the Website of the Culture administration. This section is one of the steps towards a more structured dissemination of information on digitisation in Europe and Flanders and aims to guide the visitor towards information on digitisation in terms of policy and practice (www.vlaanderen.be/cultuurdigitaal).

2. French Community

In the French Community, the foresight study for a co-ordinated process of digitisation is still under development. A first state of art has been proposed and must be approved. In this framework, the Ministry of the French Community organised a study day on digitisation during which the choices of the digitisation policy from 1996 till 2003 of the Ministry of Culture and Communication of France were presented.

3. Federal Science Policy

The programme of the new federal Government (July 2003) states that the Government will carefully examine the practical ways for implementing the recommendations of the White Book on the modernization of the ten federal scientific establishments (FSEs: National Library and State Archives; Museums of Fine Arts, Museums of Art and History and Institute of Artistic Heritage; Institute of Natural Sciences and Museum of Central Africa; Royal Observatory, Meteorological Institute and Institute of Space Aeronomy). Among the priorities

of the White Book, the preservation and valorisation of the scientific, historical and artistic heritage held by the FSEs (and in particular the digitisation policy) have been identified as major issues at stake, in order to give the FSEs the capacity to keep in phase with the evolution of society, to contribute to the image of the country and of its institutions and to improve the services to society, political authorities and citizens. Another major challenge is the role the FSEs have to play in the development of the information society and especially in the improvement of the access to knowledge. In order to reach these objectives and to fill the gap accumulated with respect to similar foreign institutions, significant extra-investments will be needed during ten years, in particular as regards infrastructure. A multiannual digitisation plan is currently being worked out, following the conclusions of a detailed study which was carried out in 2002. A global and collective approach to a large-scale digitisation of the scientific and cultural heritage held by the FSEs will be followed, taking into account the individual constraints and priorities and the specificities of each institution.

The federal Minister of science policy announced in January 2004 that considerable financial means will be committed from 2005 onwards – 150 millions EUR in ten years – by the Federal science policy for an ambitious digitisation plan of the ten Federal scientific establishments. Half of the budget would be allocated with the help of a loan that will be asked to the European Investment Bank.

Multiannual Information Society Support Programme (2001-2008). The Programme is implemented by the Federal Science Policy Office and backs up the various initiatives taken elsewhere. Its aim is to stimulate the use

of information technologies in target sectors through application projects. The technologies concern the complete array of tools for, e.g., digitising, processing, exchanging and disseminating information of all kinds, emphasizing what is actually at stake with respect to the interoperability of existing systems. The programme has a multiannual budget (2001-2008) of EUR 15.2 million.

For the FSEs, the programme gives the preference to projects that use a cooperative approach to tackle the digitisation of these highly specialised establishments' collections and information holdings with the purpose of ensuring their conservation and facilitating their use. What is more, in line with the European initiatives taken in this area, it is expected to see the development of innovative application projects on accessing this heritage, especially when it comes to access for users outside the FSEs themselves, that is, the scientific community, education sector, the broad public, etc. The projects are carried out in partnership with technical and/or academic service providers.

As a result of two calls for proposals issued in 2000 and in 2002, nine projects involve FSEs. They cover the following topics: towards a Belgian virtual union catalogue; digital access to aerial and astronomical photographic archives; document management integrated system for scientific organisations; telematic network for teaching art history in universities; digitisation of ethno-musicological sound archives; multimedia archaeological research system; generalized natural sciences online spatial information system of the FSEs; centralised electronic information system on genetic resources of living plant material (a prototype for woody plants); critical system for integration, digitisation and retrieval of Belgian penal statistics.





Intérieur
 Painting of Jos Albert
 Collection of the Belgian State
 run by the French Community of Belgium
 Deposit in the Museum of Ixelles, Brussels



Circumcision
Painting of Albrechtmeister
Collection of the Belgian State
run by the French Community of Belgium

Cooperation developments

Some institutions are involved in projects and networks of the FP5 and FP6 and in other international cooperative projects and networks.

1. Flemish Community

Cross-sectoral dialogue and networking do exist in Flanders. In the cultural heritage sector, for instance, Culturele Biografie Vlaanderen covers both archives and museums. Other organisations such as the VVBAD cover libraries, documentation-centres and archives. Also initiatives as the Heritage Weekend cover different types of organisations in the sector of the cultural heritage.

Cooperation between some of the universities is consolidated into Re-Creatief Vlaanderen which focuses on scientific research into different matters of the cultural sectors and cultural policy.

2. French Community

The Ministry of French Community has been approached to participate in two projects of the FP6.

Co-ordination meetings bringing together the representatives of the French Community at Unesco, the European Council and the NRG are now henceforth organised. This, among other things, allowed a co-ordinated approach to the charter for digital heritage preservation adopted by Unesco.

3. Federal Science Policy

During the preparation of a digitisation plan for the FSEs (strategic study), cross-sectoral thematic working groups were set up.

Emerging issues

In the Flemish Community, some projects are working on specific areas of long-term preservation, for instance, the conservation of videomaterial from public collections.

For small-and medium-sized cultural institutions overall a great need is felt to first extend investments on inventories and infrastructure.

Over the years the public broadcasting institute (VRT) has developed a large and significant image and sound-archive. Further initiatives on digitisation will depend largely on the available amount for funding. In the French Community, the RTBF (French Radio-Television in Belgium) has preserved more than 125,000 hours of TV archives (since 1953) and more then 50,000 hours of radio archives. Each year, this heritage grows richer through the addition of new broadcastings produced or co-produced by the RTBF. The ambition is to preserve this heritage without time limitation, to describe it and to make it accessible for some time to come.

In the first phase of the strategic study carried on in 2002 on the digitisation of the scientific and cultural heritage held by the Federal Scientific Establishments and the Royal Film Archives of Belgium, an exhaustive inventory was made of the collections, of the state of digitisation, of the needs and of the skills and expertise already present in the institutions.

Use of NRG/MINERVA results and impact

Active participation in the NRG and the MINERVA-working groups has led to a more coordinated approach. The attention to and need for action on certain aspects of digitisation have become more concrete and put into an international perspective. Activities of the NRG and results of the MINERVA-working groups are being disseminated through different channels such as newsletters and websites, but also through networking between professionals of different support points and those involved in NRG and MINERVA.

The Communities and the Federal Science Policy Office are now more represented in the MINERVA Working Groups.

The progress report 2002 of the NRG Coordinating digitisation In Europe was widely disseminated to a number of core actors, organisations and decision-makers in the field of culture, cultural and scientific heritage and innovation. This report was accompanied by letters signed by the Director-General of the Culture administration for the Flemish Community, by the Secretary-General of the Culture administration for the French Community and for the Federal institutions, by the director of the STIS (Federal Science Policy Office). These letters explained the functioning of the NRG and asked to help further publicise the functioning and the results of both the NRG and MINERVA project.

The first NRG progress report was also announced in the newsletters the different divisions of the Culture Administrations used to inform their sector. In addition, the report was published on the websites of the Culture Administrations (Flemish and French Community) and of the STIS.

The work of the NRG is now better perceived as a useful contribution to the development of digitisation policies in Belgium. This is, among others, a result of the work of the ad hoc consultation group, co-ordinated by the French Community.

Comments and suggestions

The Benchmarking questionnaires are often – in spite of the follow-up – perceived as difficult to fill in; also questions are being raised by organisations on how this could be used to their own benefit. The progress report 2002 is a useful instrument to create an overview of the policy and actions of the different member states, but for the concrete practice the practically-oriented results of the MINERVA-project will be of greater importance for the different organisations involved.

It is the impression of the ad hoc Consultation Group that there is a growing attention for, and influence of, the NRG and the MINERVA-project.



Museum of Modern Art, Brussels (Federal Science Policy)