

Digitisation Coordination Initiative

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Introduction

In accordance with the eEurope 2002 action plan, the European Commission and the Member States have established co-ordination mechanisms for digitisation policies and programmes across Europe in the field of cultural and scientific contents and applications. The initiative started in April 2001 in Lund with the Lund Principles and the Lund Action Plan for the implementation of these principles
http://www.cordis.lu/ist/directorate_e/digicult/lund_principles.htm
http://www.cordis.lu/ist/directorate_e/digicult/lund_ap_browse.htm. This was fully described in the 1st report of the National Representatives Group (NRG) published in early 2003, <http://www.minervaeurope.org/publications/globalreport.htm> however, the overall objectives can be summarized as:

- increasing the visibility of on-going activities and sharing experiences
- selecting, promoting and exchanging good practices
- adopting common standards and moving towards a European platform.

This 2nd NRG report presents an updating overview of "Co-ordinating National Digitisation Policies and Programmes" in Europe.

The first part of this report presents the National Representative Group (NRG) mission, the approach adopted, recent activities and a position paper on the EU-added value in continuing this activity at European level. The second part reports on the progress made to date, provides space for individual national reports, and describes the results of the MINERVA network.

An updated Lund Action Plan is in the annex. In this 2nd report 27 countries have provided contributions: the 15 EU Member States, the 10 New Accession States, and in addition short contributions from Russia and Israel. Each country's report describes the status of national digitisation policies and programmes, and related co-ordination activities in the field.

National Representatives Group (NRG)

The NRG was established during the Belgian Presidency in 2001 as 'guardians of the Lund Principles'. The NRG is a group composed by representatives nominated by the Member States' authorities in response to the eEurope objective to create some coordination mechanisms and infrastructure across Europe regarding the digitisation of cultural and scientific contents.

The NRG is based on the Terms of Reference document (ToR) (http://www.cordis.lu/ist/directorate_e/digicult/t_reference.htm) which outlines the objectives and tasks of the national representatives' role. In most countries the ToR has been endorsed officially by national authorities which have given their full support to the initiative. During the Italian Presidency a new strategic document named the "Charter of Parma", has been produced and is being widely promoted. It re-proposes the basic mission, approach and the key targets/benefits of the initiative. The NRG meets every 6 months, under the chair of each Presidency in turn and supported by the EC, to share national experiences and create a common platform for cooperation and coordination of national activities throughout the European Union, as well as for their follow up at national level. It provides a stable, continuing focus for consensus building between Member States.

The Lund Action Plan, produced and updated by the NRG, fixes general objectives and areas. The NRG, with the help of the MINERVA network, establishes expert workgroups on those themes: the workgroups prepare reports, studies and recommendations that are validated and approved by the NRG and distributed and promoted through the network.

Five pan-European expert workgroups have been set-up: benchmarking, good practice in digitisation, inventories and multilingualism, interoperability, and quality for cultural Web sites. Each national representative provides experts as needed to these workgroups, and is responsible for animating discussions and disseminating results on specific topics within her/his country.

<http://www.minervaeurope.org/structure/nrg.htm>

Rolling agenda

The initiative is co-chaired by the European Commission and the country that holds the Presidency of the European Union at the time of the meetings. All Member States bring to the table their points of view, experiences and competencies.

The Presidency in turn fixes some key priorities and proposes objectives for its semester.

Co-ordinating ambitious objectives inevitably requires sustained efforts over a lengthy period of time, so in order to be more effectiveness the Greek and the Italian Presidencies prepared a joint-programme covering 12 months. This new trend was appreciated by all and is being developed by other countries as a way to reinforce the continuity of actions over time. In particular, the Italian Presidency has strongly supported this "rolling agenda" approach and has established a set of joint-activities with both the Irish (e.g. the "Assessment Plan") and the Dutch Presidencies (e.g. the "Firenze agenda").

The "rolling agenda" assures continuity and improves co-ordination, maximises synergy between Member States' actions, and ensures that results have the highest visibility and impact.

Starting with the French Presidency in 2000 each successive Presidency provides support, hosts the NRG meeting and expert workshops, and up-dates the Lund Action Plan.

<http://www.minervaeurope.org/structure/nrg/meetings.htm>

France

The French Presidency was instrumental in identifying specific objectives included in eEurope Action Plan that aimed at making digitised resources more visible and commonly accessible. They underlined the importance of digitisation as a primary building block for the development of the information society.

Sweden

The main results of the Swedish Presidency were the Lund Principles & Action Plan. In Lund expert representatives from Member States agreed on basic issues and the first steps needed to build a coordination framework based on the benchmarking model.

Belgium

The Resolutions on "Culture in the knowledge society" and on "The role of culture in the development of the European Union", adopted by the Culture Council under the Belgian Presidency, and the results of the informal Council held in Bruges on 4-5 December, 2001 endorsed the importance of encouraging the visibility and diversity of the common European heritage, and of providing quality and equality of access for all citizens to this heritage through the use of new technologies.

Experts meetings, convened under the Presidency, resulted in the launch of a specific initiative: the "Brussels Quality Framework" on accessibility and quality of Web sites for cultural content. On 11 December 2001, the National Representatives Group (NRG) was set up, establishing its mission in the Terms of Reference (ToR).

Spain

During the Spanish Presidency, a Council Resolution by the European Council on the preservation of the digital memory was adopted (2002/C 162/02). This recognised the importance of sustainable approaches to safeguarding both born-digital and digitised resources and the role of the memory institutions in this process. The Presidency in addition to the NRG meeting in Alicante also hosted a workshop on "Digitisation good practises", which provided an exchange forum based on the 42 first examples of projects from different Member States.

Denmark

The NRG meeting under the Danish Presidency focused primarily on the National Reports, produced by each representative and presented in the first NRG report, as well as future strategies for the NRG to carry on in its coordination efforts.

A workshop on "Preservation of the digital memory" was attended by a number of experts from all Member States and other countries.

Greece

For the first time two Presidencies, the Greek and the Italian, prepared a joint plan for 12 months of activities to maximise the productivity and impact of the initiative. The programme included the following priorities: consolidating the NRG position; quality for cultural Web sites; good practice promotion; enlargement of the MINERVA network towards both New Accession States (NAS) and small or local institutions and authorities; benchmarking results presentation; digital memory preservation. Under the Greek Presidency the NRG meeting was held in Corfu in conjunction with a workshop on 'digitisation and preservation of the culture heritage'. Of particular interest was the 'meeting of networks', where all the main European networks in the field of digitisation and preservation of culture heritage were present.

Italy

Following the Greek semester, and in line with the 12 month programme, the Italian Presidency initiated some additional actions. The first is the "Charter of Parma" a strategic document to consolidate the NRG position and collect consensus by the user communities and by cultural authorities. The second concerned the quality of cultural Web sites, where a Handbook was presented to the NRG for approval. In addition, the New Accession

States (NAS) were officially invited to join the NRG group. Russia and Israel were present as observers. On digital memory preservation the "Firenze agenda" proposes a set of practical and concrete actions to be carried out in 12-18 months with the support of the future Presidencies.

The 5th NRG meeting organised in Parma brought together for the first time 27 countries. A particular emphasis was given to presentations from the 10 New Accession States, and from Russia and Israel. In conjunction with the NRG meeting a major Conference on quality for cultural Web sites was hosted. The importance and relevance of the topic was made evident when the meeting attracted more than 800 participants from all over the world.

Ireland

The Italian and Irish Presidencies will review the initiative's approach, mechanisms and impact: this Progress Assessment Plan will produce crucial recommendations on strategies for each area and sub-area of the action plan as well as on overall directions and methods. More information is available in a following section or on the MINERVA Web site. Other priorities for the Irish presidency will be the instruments for quality of cultural Web applications and implementation of the network extension to NAS and small institutions.

The 6th NRG meeting will be organised in Dublin on 28 June 2004. On 29 June 2004, there will be a digitisation conference "Access all areas: serving the user" examining cultural portals from an end-user perspective.

The Netherlands

During July-December 2004 the Netherlands will preside over the European Union and, as a result, will host the 7th official meeting of the national representatives group (NRG) for the implementation of the Lund Action Plan. The meeting will be held on September 15 in The Hague with the main objective to produce ingredients and organisational structure for a new Action Plan after 2005. The meeting will follow a two-day conference focusing on issues of quality and organisation of digitisation in Europe. Special attention will be given to questions of persistence as a follow-up on the Firenze Agenda on digital preservation. The objective of the conference is to sketch out new action lines to support the creation of a "European area for digitised cultural resources". More information on the conference can be found by following the conference link on <http://www.cultuurtechnologie.net>.

For a detailed time line, please refer to the "Key steps 2001-2004" table below. For more information, please refer to the reports and documents on the following site:
<http://www.minervaeurope.org/whatis/minervaevents.htm>

Key steps 2001-2004

January 2001

Questionnaire on national/regional policies and programmes on digitisation of cultural and scientific content

March 2001

"An open method for benchmarking digitisation policies - objectives, methodology and indicators"

4 April 2001

Lund Principles & Action Plan.

17 July 2001

Workshop on "Internet & culture, experts meeting on European Cultural Heritage on the Web"

September 2001

EC Communication on "Accessibility of Public Web Sites" COM(2001) 529, Brussels, 25.09.2001

10 December 2001

The benchmarking Workgroup agreed the proposed model and launched the first data collection

11 December 2001

1st National Representatives Group (NRG) meeting in Brussels, Brussels Quality Framework, for accessibility and quality of Web sites for cultural content, was developed in cooperation with the Belgian Presidency

January 2002

Council Resolutions 2002/C 332/01 e C32/02 on "Culture in the knowledge society" and "Role of culture in the development of the European Union"

March 2002

MINERVA Thematic Network Project started

16 May 2002

2nd NRG meeting in Alicante, under the Spanish Presidency

17 May 2002

Workshop on "Digitisation good practices" in Alicante, organised by the Spanish Presidency and MINERVA project

September 2002

Council Resolution 2002/C 162/02 on "Preserving tomorrow's memory - preserving digital content for future generations"

17 October 2002

Workshop on "The Quality in Cultural Web Sites" in Rome at the Bibliocom Conference, organised by the MINERVA Project

10 December 2002

3rd NRG meeting in Copenhagen, under the Danish Presidency

11 December 2002

Workshop on "Preservation of digital memory" in Copenhagen, organised by the Danish Presidency

26 June 2003

4th NRG meeting in Corfu, under coordination of the Greek Presidency

27-28 June 2003

Workshop on "Digitisation of Cultural Content" in Corfu, organised by the Greek Presidency

16-17 October 2003

International conference on "Long Term Preservation of Digital Memories" in Florence, organised by the Italian Presidency

19 November 2003

5th NRG meeting in Parma, under coordination of the Italian Presidency

20-21 November 2003

International conference on Web Quality for Culture, in Parma, organised by the Italian Presidency and the MINERVA project

28 June 2004

6th NRG meeting in Dublin, under coordination of the Irish Presidency

29 June 2004

Digitisation conference, in Dublin, on "Access all areas: serving the user" examining cultural portals from an end-user perspective

13-14 September 2004

Conference on innovative retrieval and disclosure of digitised cultural collections and knowledge and digital durability and long-term preservation of memory

15 September 2004

7th NRG meeting in The Hague, under coordination of the Dutch Presidency

The National Representatives Group and MINERVA

The NRG is an independent group established on a volunteer basis by Member State representatives. It is co-chaired by the Presidency in turn and the European Commission, and the MINERVA network provides the practical co-ordination for both the plenary meetings every 6 months and the regular expert workgroups.

MINERVA (<http://www.minervaeurope.org>), Ministerial Network for Valorising Activities in digitisation, is a network on 'digitisation of cultural and scientific contents', and aims to create a European infrastructure to support digitisation. The network focuses on the areas and objectives described in the Lund Action Plan.

MINERVA's main objectives are:

- contribution to the co-ordination of national programmes and activities in the Member States;
- identification of good practice & competence centres;
- recommendations and guidelines on digitisation management; benchmarking methodology; resource discovery and multilingualism; rights management; interoperability; users' needs and quality for Web sites; and long-term accessibility.

The project is funded by the European Commission and has recently been extended to the New Accession States. The network provides a single and unique pan-European infrastructure involving experts and national representatives from 27 countries.

The co-ordinator of the MINERVA project is the Italian Ministry of Culture and Arts.

Most of the partners are Ministries or institutional bodies, in order to insure that the network has a strong influence, visibility and a high-level of commitment. MINERVA reports on progress and makes proposals to NRG every 6 months at the plenary meetings. NRG representatives have been successful in ensuring that Member States continue to invest in digitisation activities. Increasingly such investments are being seen as a single co-ordinated effort bringing together both national and European funding.

The NRG report

The 1st NRG progress 2002 & planning 2003 report was a professionally designed publication which was distributed in 3500 copies. The main goal of the report was to introduce the coordination initiative and the key activities in Europe. To do so the report presented an overview of on-going digitisation activities in the 15 EU Member States.

In each Member State the document has been distributed and widely promoted to national and sectoral actors. In most of the countries the NRG report was distributed through the official channels of national authorities for culture heritage. The response from the target communities was very positive, thus suggesting that the focus and format should be retained for future publications. In particular, the target users of the report need information on good practices within a pan-European context. There is strong support for improved co-ordination with the objective to optimise not only practical digitisation techniques but also the overall impact of national programmes.

As such the 2nd NRG report aims to give more space to strategic considerations (where much practical information can now also be found on the Web), the main goals of this new report are to describe national strategies and future developments, to include the current situation in the 10 New Accession States, to open a section for non-EU countries (e.g. Russian and Israel), and to present concrete results which have been achieved through the MINERVA network.

Report on the adopted distribution strategies within Member States

Austria

In Austria the 1st NRG report has been distributed centrally by division IV for cultural and media affairs of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture to decision makers in cultural institutions and to project managers of national projects. A covering letter indicates the significance and necessity of coordination measures, the activities of MINERVA and the intended national measures.

Belgium

The 1st NRG report was disseminated to a number of core actors, organisations and decision-makers in the field of culture, cultural and scientific heritage and innovation. The report was accompanied by a letter signed: for the Flemish Community, by the Director-General of the Culture Administration; for the French Community, by the Secretary-General of administration of the French Community and for the federal institutions, by the director of the STIS (Federal Science Policy Department). These letters explained the functioning of the NRG and asked to help further publicise the functioning and the results of both the NRG and the MINERVA project. The 1st NRG report was announced in the newsletters the different divisions of the Culture Administrations use to inform their sector. In addition, the report is published on the websites of the Culture Administrations and of the STIS.

For the Flemish Community the report was distributed to:

- the Minister for Culture and his Office
- the Secretary-General for Welfare, Public Health and Culture
- the Secretary-General for Science, Innovation and the Media
- senior officials and administrative staff of the Culture Administration
- senior officials of the Science, Innovation and Media Department
- the administration of the "Vlaamse Gemeenschapscommissie Brussel" (Flemish Community Commission Brussels)
- the permanent European representation centres of expertise
- the nationally recognised museums
- the museums of the Flemish Community
- the heritage unit in Antwerp, Ghent, Bruges, Mechelen, Leuven and Tongeren
- "Erfgoed Vlaanderen vzw" (Flanders' Heritage, non-profit organisation)
- "Vlaamse Museumvereniging" (Flemish Museum Society)

"Vlaamse Vereniging voor Bibliotheek-, Archief- en Documentatiewezenen"
(Flemish Association for Libraries, Archives and Documentation Centres)

- the provincial museum consultants
- the members of Digicult Vlaanderen
- the four private archives and documentation centres on the basis of social-philosophic movements
- the Antwerp City Archives

Denmark

The 1st NRG report with an accompanying letter have been sent to all the state-owned cultural institutions with an interest in digitisation. The national network for digitisation has been informed by mail. Information about the material and the possibility to request further copies has been published on the ministerial Web page. Actors from other ministries with an interest in digitisation have received a copy. And of course the material has been distributed widely in the Ministry of Culture. The impact of the NRG report is obviously hard to measure. But several institutions have requested further copies, and interest in general has been high. It is the assessment that the document has helped to increase the interest in the coordination initiative.

Finland

The 1st NRG report has been distributed to the Ministers and relevant officers of the Ministry of Education. It has also been sent to several cultural institutions and organisations as well as provincial museums, archives and libraries.

France

The 1st NRG report has been distributed with an accompanying letter. The dissemination strategy is composed of several actions: The report has been given to the minister's adviser for information technologies. The report has been presented to all members of the committee on digital documentation and multimedia, representing all directorates of the ministry, gathered for the national programme of digitisation. The report is being sent, together with the letter to the main correspondents of counterparts and laboratories in the field of digitisation (INA, ICRAM, private companies, counterparts and laboratories in the research sector, in the ministry for foreign affairs, in various regions...). The report has been used to disseminate the work in the Paris VIII university, which is organising the international Möbius Prize on multimedia creation. Relais Culture Europe's specialised library proposes the report to all people searching for information on digital heritage in Europe. The report is being given to attendants of specialised and professional conferences, such as the I-expo 2003

conference on digital information in France and a conference on scientific communication in Canada (Communication scientifique en 4 dimensions) organised by the France-Canada inter-university cooperation centre. The report has been presented to foreign partners of the ministry, notably the Egyptian National centre for documentation of cultural and natural heritage (Cultnat), the Tunisian ministry of Culture.

Greece

Based on a distribution plan, which has been drawn and implemented by the High Performance Information Systems Laboratory of the University of Patras, the 1st Progress Report of the National Representatives Group was distributed to important organizations, such as ministries, cultural institutions and information society directorates. Specifically it was distributed to: The Hellenic Ministry of Culture. The 1st NRG report was presented to the Minister of Culture and the General Secretary of the Ministry. The Ministry, through the Directorate of European Union has distributed the report to all the supervised Directorates of the Ministry, the most important museums and cultural institutions and to other supervised organizations, such the Hellenic Intellectual Property Organization, the Hellenic Culture Organization S.A., etc. The Ministry of Economy and Finance. Specifically the report was distributed to the Directorates of the Ministry which are responsible for the Information Society Programmes and Projects in Greece. The report was presented to the General Secretary for the Information Society. In addition it was distributed to the Managing Authority for the Operational Programme "Information Society" and especially to the Unit which is managing and promoting projects for digitization of cultural and scientific resources in Greece. The report supported the Managing Authority to draw a financial plan aiming at assisting cultural organizations to digitize their resources. Regions of Greece. Through governmental organizations the report was distributed to almost all the Regions of Greece. The Region of Western Greece, the Region of Northern Aegean, the Regions of Thessaly and Macedonia, the Region of Peloponnesus and the Region of Ionian Islands expressed their high interest to the report. The report supported the aforementioned Regions to open calls for digitization projects within their authoritative Agencies and Organizations. Universities. The most important universities received a copy of the 1st NRG report. The Technical University of Athens, the Universities of Crete, Aegean, Corfu, Peloponnesus and the Aristotle University of Thessalonica are only indicative examples. Important museums. The Acropolis Museum, the Benaki Museum, the Museum of Ancient Olympia, the Thessalonica Byzantine Museum and many other

cultural institutions received a copy of the report and are looking forward for being further informed with the latest progress of the NRG. The 1st NRG report has been proved as a very useful tool, which provided guidance, advice and support mainly to the direction of harmonizing digitization programmes and projects in Greece with the European experience and good practice.

Germany

The 1st NRG report has been sent to a number of relevant persons and groups. It has also been presented at the annual conference of the German Museum Association, SIG "Museum documentation". A continuous updating of this report activity, as well as of the details of information recorded, is being undertaken in the EUBAM group and its Secretariat.

Ireland

The report Coordinating Digitisation in Europe was circulated to all managers of national and cultural institutions in Ireland. Senior managers in cultural heritage policy areas in national and local government were presented with copies and were advised of comparative developments within Europe in order to reinforce their support for this initiative. The response to the report has been uniformly positive and supportive of further development.

Italy

The distribution of the 1st NRG report was widespread: more than 1,000 copies were disseminated; besides the highest directional level of all the Italian Ministry for culture heritage (MiBAC), the volume was sent to all the national libraries, distributed in all the events to which MINERVA participated (EVA Florence 2003, PULMANN Conference, Bibliocom 2003, etc.) and organised, in particular those ones of the Italian Presidency of EU (the international conference in Parma, Naples and Florence). An introduction letter, signed by the General Secretary Director, was attached to this book in order to explain its sense and promote a feedback from the receivers, together with a circular letter published in the intranet area of the MiBAC Web sites.

January-December 2003 Web sites statistics
1,010,403 of hits, an average of 2,371 a day;
average of the home page: 2,516
Visitors: 24,692 (unique), 19,289 (once),
5404 (more than once)

The most visited period was October-December 2003, because of the MINERVA European Conference in Parma and on the occasion of the publication of the MINERVA handbooks

The most visited pages are: Home page, MINERVA European Conference, General information on MINERVA, Events, Publications. The most downloaded files are: the MINERVA handbooks

The Netherlands

The NL-National Status Report is published on the Web for broad consultancy and for national and international users info. The European Status Report is distributed amongst main cultural institutions and ministerial departments with an accompanying memo by the National Representative to:

- Minister and Junior Ministers for Education, Culture and Science
- Ministerial board
- Culture Departments
- Workgroup for NL presidency 2004
- Lund-partners: Royal Library, National Archives, Netherlands Digital Heritage Ass., National Institute for Image and Sound
- Mondriaan Foundation for Cultural Heritage
- Further distributed to any interested institution
- Dutch report ready for download on national website (<http://www.cultuurtechnologie.net>)
- Attention to the NRG-actions has been given internally through the ministries' presentations on the Web, and elsewhere and externally through several national magazines on digital culture.

Portugal

The 1st NRG report has been distributed to the all highest offices, bodies and organizations within the Ministry of Culture and to other governmental departments as the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Ministry of Education, Science and Highest Education; the Institutes and Foundations related with these matters, such as the Science and Technology Foundation, received also a copy of the NRG report as well did the members of the Society Information Group of the Ministry of Culture; UMIC directors and the Operational Programmes for Culture and for Information Society Directorate.

The 1st NRG report was delivered with a letter enclosed, signed by the Secretary General Assistant, which explained the content, the sense and the goals of the Report. The feedback was very positive.

The majority of the receivers called or sent messages of incitement and congratulations due to the excellent quality of the reports and also because of the opportunity to know in a unique document the European Union scenery about digitisation and correlated matters.

Spain

The distribution strategy of the 1st NRG report, postponed until the signature of the agreement between the Ministries of Science & Technology and Culture on the 10th June 2003, was carried out in October. The Global Report was sent along with an introductory letter, a dossier of Patrimonio.es and an application form to fill in to ask for more issues. It has reached 144 organisms and institutions related with the digitisation of cultural and scientific heritage

in Spain: public institutions depending on the State, public institutions depending on regional authorities (Comunidades Autónomas), and private memory institutions and foundations. Approximately 10% have filled in the application form showing interest in the NRG/MINERVA activities, mainly regional authorities' institutions and private foundations.

Sweden

The 1st NRG report has been distributed to almost everyone involved in digitisation on institutional level. The impact of the document is obvious.

It indicates that co-ordination in digitisation is regarded as an important question in all Member States. Besides giving an overview of the state of the art in the European Union, it also pretty well state the position of each Member States. The most important result is, however, that the existence of the NRG report creates a political pressure to support and co-ordinate digitisation on national level.

United Kingdom

Within the UK the 1st NRG report has been endorsed by Tessa Jowell, Secretary of State at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. The report has been distributed to a wide range of organizations in the cultural sector, including the member ship of the Forum for Network Co-ordination (<http://www.peoplesnetwork.gov.uk/future/network.asp>), which brings together all the key organizations in the UK. This is already resulting in the development of a higher profile for the NRG within the UK, particularly in discussions with the Home Countries. Also we need to add something about circulation to the Accession States - e.g. some copies have been given to the Secretary of State for Culture in Hungary and to a number of people from Canada, US and New Zealand.

European Commission

The 1st NRG report is a registered issue by the Commission, the unit on culture heritage headed by Bernard Smith has published on the own Web and newsletter, and promoted to other projects and any related event, the unit has also distributed, with a presentation letter signed by the Director Horst Foster, the book internally to the DG Information Society to the General Director secretary and assistants, to each Director, and to most of the 'head of unit' related to the issue. Some additional copies and info have been requested, many positive feed-backs with request to be included in the next issue, quite big expectation and interest in following developments have been expressed by most of the users.

The European Commission will continue supporting the initiative in the next steps forwards.

Future strategies

To date the initiative has relied on support from the European Commission (through the MINERVA network) and from internal resources allocated by each of the Member States. Long-term financial sustainability of the initiative will require a more structured effort by Member States. New co-ordination tools such as an agency/observatory providing a long-term and stable structure need to be evaluated.

The Italian and Irish Presidencies have decided to carry on an interim benchmarking review of the initiative's approach, impact and mechanisms which have been implemented jointly by the NRG and the MINERVA network. An expert will analyse the reference documents, for example the Lund Principles & Action Plan, and all the material produced by the workgroups in order to evaluate the coherence of the overall objectives, main progress and results.

Recommendations will be made for each area and sub-area as well as on overall directions and method. More info is available in the following section or on the MINERVA Web site.

A new position paper on EU-added value stresses the importance of this initiative and the need to continue encouraging pan-European co-operation. It highlights the fact that there are still enormous potential benefits in merging national efforts and resources. The position paper also underlines questions concerning the best future strategy to adopt in order to obtain a stable pan-European framework for cultural co-operation, covering more than just digitisation issues. The creation of a "cultural area common to the peoples in Europe" can represent a public space where cultural resources are shared freely without impediments of time and place and technical expertise as a significant step forwards the future digital society. More info is available in a following section or on the MINERVA Web site.