



Foreword

As Minister of Culture and on behalf of the Italian Presidency of the European Union Council, I have great pleasure in presenting this study which represents the second edition of "Coordinating digitisation in Europe".

The research, conducted in the ambit of the National Representatives' Group with the contribution of the MINERVA project, offers an up-to-date panorama of the policies, programmes and projects in the field of digitisation of cultural heritage in Europe, in order to support its diffusion and facilitate its on line accessibility. In line with this view, the National Representatives' Group, taking its inspiration from the principles established at Lund and with the important support of the MINERVA project, is laying the fundamental groundwork made up by a common platform of standards and guidelines in order to make the construction of interoperable cultural portals possible, as instruments for the diffusion of culture, for the support of research, didactics, and cultural tourism. All member States, through their representatives, have adhered to this common project with commitment, defining a preliminary programme, a rolling agenda, shared among the various presidencies of the European Union. The Italian Presidency has strongly committed itself, carrying out a series of actions and inspiring a shared European reflection on the strategies to adopt and the future actions to undertake.

The enlargement of the National Representatives' Group to candidate countries of the European Union was important. Russian and Israeli representatives have also joined the Group as observers. At the same time the MINERVA project, through its extension of MINERVA Plus, has also supported candidate countries' participation in the works of the network.

Another important result is the "Carta di Parma", a strategic document to promote and support European culture on the web. The text was discussed and approved by the delegates of the 27 countries in the formal meeting held in Parma. The text synthesises the common European programme that the Group has set itself and is committed to achieving with the involvement of governments and the European Commission. The last article of the document, which bears the ambitious title: "Building the future together: at the forefront of the knowledge society", poses an important challenge for the near future. All European countries will be engaged in promoting the creation of cultural portals that represent cultural institutions of a new type, omnipresent and easily accessible to everyone, content infrastructure that is able to guarantee a collective basis of knowledge.

The benefits of cooperation on a European level in the ambit of digital cultural heritage appear evident. It is necessary to remove national barriers, to create content and services that are shared on a European level, to develop common policies and a common approach to problems.

During the creation of this common European area the particularly fruitful collaboration which the National Representatives' Group and MINERVA initiated has revealed itself to be a resource. The MINERVA network, created with the contribution of all, has become an important reference point that I hope remains stable and long lasting. I thank the previous presidencies of the European Union Council, the General Directorate of the European Commission for the Information Society, the National Representatives' Group and the numerous experts of the Member States who have worked together for the success of the entire initiative.

Finally, I would like to wish the next presidencies, those of the Irish and the Dutch, the best of success in continuing and reinforcing the common programme.

Giuliano Urbani
Italian Minister of Culture
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