



Czech Republic

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Digitisation policy

1. General description of the political support for digitisation

Czech digitisation policy was introduced in the national *Cultural policy of the Ministry of Culture* of the Czech Republic (www.mkcr.cz/en/www/article.php?id=10) and especially in its independent document *Concept of more effective care of movable cultural heritage in the Czech Republic in 2003-2008* (www.mkcr.cz/en/www/article.php?id=482) approved by the Decree of the Government of the Czech Republic in January 22, 2003, No. 87. The Concept presents the principal tasks of the state policy which should ensure the stable conditions for the care of movable cultural heritage in the Czech Republic. Among other priorities the digitation policy is introduced as improvement of the quality of information related to the museum collections and movable cultural heritage in the Czech Republic, as well as the enhancement of the accessibility of these information to both professional and general public. According to this document the Czech digitisation policy aims especially at more effective investments in digitising all sources of the cultural heritage, in accordance with the long-term contribution to the knowledge society. *Easy access for everybody* is the main task of the national policy in above mentioned cultural policy priority.

2. Range of policy (geographical, institutional and ideological)

Based on the main idea of national digitisation policy, following steps were introduced:

- Improvement of the quality and availability of information for professional and general public, primarily through application of information technologies and digitisation of movable cultural heritage (*National and regional levels*)
- Publishing of the Central Register of Collections (CES) in compliance with Act No. 122/2000 Coll. on Protection of Collections of Museum Character and Amendment to Certain Other Acts (*Regional scope: the publishing also applies to collections of regional and local museums*)
- Support of development of a multilingual and publicly accessible catalogue of collection items as the largest part of the movable cultural heritage. The catalogue is to be based on text and audiovisual information on collections, collection sets and individual items. Creation of a shared database for description of collection items, movable monuments and library documents from the historical funds of libraries for the catalogue. Publication of the catalogue on Internet and its continuous updating (*Regional scope: the programme is open to all museums*)
- Co-operate with the Czech Academy of Sciences – Centre for Documentation of Property Transfers of the Cultural Objects Belonging to Victims of World War II (primarily victims of the Holocaust). Continuation of the search for such cultural objects outside the Czech Republic with the purpose to return them to the Czech Republic and to their initial owners, fulfilling the law No. 212/2002 about the victims of the Holocaust and their property restitution. Necessity to ensure continuous updating of the restitution-art database (publishing the works coming from the property of the victims of Holocaust) (*National and regional levels*)
- Preparation of a methodology for involvement of museums into the international, national, regional and municipal information systems (*Regional scope:*



the methodology will be prepared for use also by regional museums)

- Encouragement of the popularisation of museums and their collections through Internet, and their continuous participation in the projects within the EU Framework Programmes – Information Society Technologies (*National and regional levels*)
- Support to the museums' presentation activities, including their virtual presentations (*Regional scope: the support will also apply to regional and municipal museums*)
- Support to participation of museums in tourism concepts at all levels, including the use of EU Structural Policies in this area (*Regional scope: all museums, including the regional ones, should participate*).

3. Available instruments and the use of those guidelines, funds, target organisations

The law No. 122/2000 Coll., on *Protection of collections of museum character and amendment to certain other acts* (www.cz-icom.cz/ceicom/CZ_zakon_1.html) and its executive Decree No. 275/2000 Coll., and *Methodological instruction of the basic preconditions for standard administration, registration and stock taking of museum collections*, issued by the Ministry of Culture, are the main available instruments that came into force in 2000. During year 2004 two new legal instruments were introduced: firstly, just after entering the European Union the law No. 101/2001 Coll. on return of the illegal export of the cultural property came into force; secondly, law No. 483/2004 Coll., on standards, services and information accessibility was launched into the practice. Except for these museum-oriented legal instruments, the overall law No. 20/1987 on the *State care of monuments* (www.cz-icom.cz/ceicom/CZ_zakon_3.html) defines

the responsibilities of the owner and the State in the care for cultural heritage, as well as the system of listing and registration of movable and immovable monuments. The law was partially modified with different Decrees, lastly by No. 1/2005 Coll. and No. 3/2005 Coll., both related to the listing and documentation of archaeological sites and artefacts.

All museum collections owned by the state, regions or municipalities and a number of collections owned by other legal and private subjects are registered in the Central Register of Collections (CRC) in the Ministry of Culture. CRC is publicly available through an information system and contributes in this way to increase information awareness of museum collections and museums themselves. It also creates basic conditions for preservation of collections after the entry of the Czech Republic into the European Union.

Contemporary programme "Integrated Movable Cultural Heritage Protection System", funded from the state budget, is specifically focused on the description of endangered cultural objects and already thousands of collection items, movable cultural heritage objects and objects of cultural value have been documented. In addition, digitisation has brought about a continuous improvement of the quality of the on-going documentation of all collection items. The programme is recently divided into five sub-projects, with newly added category (No. 5) and precisely defined supplemented element in No. 2:

1. Equipment of the museums and historic monuments (castles and churches) with alarm systems and mechanical barriers)
2. Uniform system of recording and documentation of cultural objects (this applies currently in particular to ecclesiastic objects). During the last year a new

project, that will be implemented since 2005 – Information Network (ISO B) – was prepared according to the proposals and guidelines of MINERVA Plus project and other European projects or institutions, aiming at technical improvement and central coordination of documentation and digitisation of cultural heritage. Its importance lies in the possibility of utilising the Internet network as an instrument for the fast transfer of pictorial and textual information between participant workplaces and enabling access to selected information even beyond the frontiers of the Czech Republic. Technically, it will thus be possible to check the present state of Internet for the transfer of considerably large files and to use this network for police investigations and work of the customs authorities. The project also contributes considerably to enlarging and popularisation of Internet among employees of our cultural institutions. The extension of the number of workplaces and further equipment of existing workplaces with computer technology and especially their interconnection will ensure considerable progress in the following three spheres:

- improvement of the present state of documentation of the movable cultural heritage and its presentation to the public, as well as enhancement of data accessibility to users
 - considerable increase of the efficiency of the entire system in which the required information will be readily accessible for the needs of finding or identification of stolen, recovered, or unidentified objects of cultural value. By ascertaining the origin of these objects it will be possible to return them to their original owner
3. rescue purchases of cultural treasures and objects of cultural value into property of state and regional museums and another state collections

4. protection against the ravages of certain climatic conditions or environment in general (equipment of the museum storages and permanent exhibitions, equipment of the museum conservation and restoration laboratories etc.)
5. international legal cooperation on illegal export of the cultural property (following the above mentioned law No. 101/2001 Coll.).

The mostly used database system is Demus (Documentation and Registration of Museum Collections), which corresponds with the recommendations of the international commission CIDOC ICOM and its data structure with the Object ID description rules. Demus has been developed by the Moravian Regional Museum in Brno. Another largely used system is Bach. Both systems enable registration of the collection records as well as linking to pictorial information about individual collection objects. Since 2004 the new Centre for Information Technologies started to operate within the Moravian Regional Museum in Brno. Its main aim is to create general standards, guidelines, as well as software tools and to provide technical support for digitisation of all sources of cultural heritage, predominantly collected in the museums. The Centre based its activities on the previous practice (Demus) and takes into account publications and guidelines coming from the international projects, such as MINERVA Plus and Calimera, etc.

Co-operation

1. National networks: national portals for culture

In cooperation with the newly established Centre for presentation of Cultural Heritage (2004), based within



Jaroslav Horejc,
Chain with animals and mythological creatures, 1922
Prague, Museum of Decorative Arts



Steam machine Sentinel, Škoda, Plzeň, 1925
Brno, Technical Museum

the National Museum in Prague, and Centre for Information Technologies, the Ministry of Culture coordinates the national project "Czech museums". The project will be implemented through a public available information system and common Internet portal for cultural heritage – www.emuseum.cz – connecting present sets of data of the Central Register of Collections with the data of the server of the Czech museums, recently run by the professional organisation of museums and galleries – the Association of Czech and Moravia-Slesian Museums and Galleries of the Czech Republic. The aim of this project is focused on the virtual presentation of the museums on national and regional levels, their collections and activities, such as virtual presentations, exhibitions, educational programmes, publications, etc. This project supposes creation of standards for digitisation of collection items, for preservation of digitised data, creation of websites, etc. The ambition is to recognize nationwide the standards, created according to the international standards of the European museums and other AML institutions, and to enhance the quality of the museum presentation, as well as accessibility of the digitised information. In order to support and ensure the cooperation between museums, and museums and "Centres" in the field of digitisation, the Ministry of Culture will partially financially support the contributing institutions through special funding project.

Digitisation in Libraries – Continuing success

The national digitisation programmes continued to enjoy the state support based on ministerial calls for proposals. The features of the existing digital libraries were completed with new imaging and interoperability solutions. An image server, based on MrSID technology, was implemented into Manuscriptorium (more than 800,000 pages of manuscripts and old printed books

available by now) to handle large files of digitised maps. The same digital library started to communicate via Z39.50 and OAI-PMH protocols, while OAI-PMH was added also to Kramerius for digitised periodicals (more than 1.2 million pages of acid-paper materials digitised). A long-term research programme targeting creation of virtual research environment started in the National Library of the Czech Republic.

2. International co-operation, NRG and MINERVA Plus results, their interpretation and impact

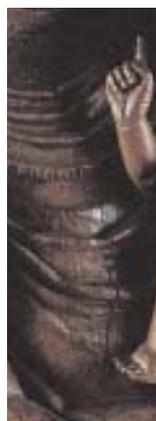
The Ministry of Culture and its Department for Movable Cultural Heritage Preservation, Museums and Galleries co-ordinates the MINERVA Plus project on the national level with special focus on the dissemination of the information on results and outcomes of the project. The main activities were divided between the national implementation of the project's results (especially through Centre for Information Technologies, Museological Methodical Centre) and participation in the international researches, activities, etc. Representatives of the Czech NRG actively contributed to the research of the WP3, especially to the research focused on the multilingual qualities of the Czech museums websites. This research created the basis for the new unique programme of the National Technical Museum in Prague, oriented towards the research of the use and potentials of the multilingualism within Central Eastern European languages in the museum environment. Another crucial activity within MINERVA Plus project was to support and implement the AML cooperation on national level, in accordance to the cooperation with the international organisations. Since the knowledge transfer plays a central role in digitisation and standardisation and the two-way flow of knowledge and information within all

ALM institutions must be guaranteed, leading activities in year 2004 were oriented towards the knowledge and professionalism investment. Therefore, the NRG supports besides all the technical equipment, especially the substantial investment into the human capital, encouraging continuing education, dissemination of information, training and intellectual support. With major support of MINERVA Plus project and in very close cooperation with other ALM institutions (especially National Library and National Archive), two very successful international conferences were organized: "Collections in computers – museums, libraries and archives in the digital information era" and "Archives, libraries and museums in digital era 2004". The post-prints with all contributions from both conferences were also supported by MINERVA Plus project. The Czech Republic was very happy to welcome among other participants from neighbouring countries two international contributors to the second conference "Archives, libraries and museums in digital era 2004": Peter Holm Lingaard from Denmark and Alessandro Piva from Italy. Members of the NRG ensured the dissemination of the information on Web publications of the MINERVA Plus project and with assistance of other leading ALM institutions also Calimera project, especially those related to the quality standards. As a result of the whole year activities (presentation at the above mentioned conferences, as well as IST information days in cooperation with the Technical Centre of the Czech Academy of Sciences, and established specialized Centres), the national quality group on cultural heritage website is being formed within the Coordinating Board of the project "Czech museums".

Emerging initiatives within libraries

The European CERL MSS project used the

Manuscriptorium Z39.50 functionality for testing integrated access to European digitised manuscript resources. A DTD for digitised museum objects was revised and the implementation work into Kramerius started upon the agreement with the National Museum and with the support of Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. A draft of a new DTD for digitised audio documents has been completed and published. The Manuscriptorium co-operation with foreign data providers was strengthened and necessary tests were run to verify future integration of resources from several foreign institutions (Germany, Austria, Croatia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Poland, Hungary, etc.). The National Library entered into new EU projects such as M-CAST (eContent) or TEL-ME-MOR (FP6), while its co-operation within the existent projects continued (VICODI, CALIMERA) incl. ECH:TOPICC in the Eureka! programme. A new regional UNESCO-based project started with the aim to add value to historical digital resources concerning development of technologies. The National Library participated in creation of a UNESCO/FAO e-learning digitisation courses to be published on CD-ROM. Digitisation courses were taught in Serbia and Lithuania on behalf of the OSITraining Programme, while four regional digitisation courses for librarians were organized on national scale.





Madonna on Lion, ca. 1360
Prague, National Gallery