

Strategy Section

Dublin: 6th NRG meeting conclusions

The Hague: 7th NRG meeting conclusions

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28 June 2004

Summary and objectives of the meeting

As part of the programme for the Irish Presidency of the European Union, the sixth meeting of the National Representatives Group (NRG) was held on 28 June in Dublin. A conference "Access all areas: Serving the user" was held on 29 June. Both events were hosted by the Irish Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism in co-operation with the National Museum of Ireland and An Chomhairle Leabharlanna and supported by MINERVA. The NRG was established, according to its Terms of Reference (ToR), to monitor, implement and coordinate actions concerning digitisation programmes and policies in Europe. Formal adoption or endorsement of the ToR by the participating EU Member States is ongoing and progress is reported regularly to the NRG. The Lund Principles are a set of guiding objectives concerning digitisation and the coordination of Member States policies and programmes. The Lund Action Plan maps out the actions needed and is updated with progress and planning on a six-monthly cycle. The actions are agreed at NRG meetings, and the MINERVA network, working with the Member States representatives, turns those actions into a practical reality.

The specific objectives of the meeting in Dublin were to:

- Welcome the New Member State's representatives to the NRG; welcome Norway as an EFTA state, the Council of Europe and Russia and Israel as observers at the meeting.
- Approve the Report of the Progress Assessment of the Coordination Digitisation in Europe - the draft Final Report on progress in meeting the objectives outlined in the Lund Principles, which was undertaken during the Irish Presidency.
- Identify and prioritise emerging issues and identify concrete results.
- Recommend and endorse new strategies and actions to take these forward through the Lund Action Plan and other relevant ongoing initiatives.
- Identify and discuss the proposals put forward under the Netherlands, Luxembourg and United Kingdom Presidencies for the future sustainability of the coordination initiative.

This report presents the key statements from the meeting, the progress made up to June 2004 for each action line, future actions and emerging issues.

Key Statements

1. The NRG welcomed New Member States' representatives from Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia

to their first meeting as members of the European Union. Apologies were received from the representatives of Lithuania and Luxembourg. Also welcomed to the NRG meeting were Ms. Pat Manson, Head of Unit Technology-enhanced Learning: Cultural Heritage Directorate General Information Society, the Council of Europe attending as observers for the first time and the NRG observers from Norway, Russia and Israel. Norway were there for the first time. The NRG hopes to continue the co-operation between the NRG and the Council of Europe. The new Member States with Russia and Israel are partners in MINERVA Plus, which has a synchronised workplan with MINERVA and which held joint meetings in Budapest in February 2004 and in Florence in April 2004. The new NRG members were already welcomed at the NRG meeting held in Parma in November 2003 during the Italian Presidency.

2. The Dublin Folio of documents was launched at the meeting. It comprised:
 - *Good Practice Handbook*;
 - *Coordinating Digitisation in Europe*; Progress Report of the NRG 2003;
 - The *Charter of Parma*
3. The next NRG report is planned for late 2004 and will include the 25 Member States and a strong focus on strategic issues. MINERVA will edit this report for publication.
4. The Progress Assessment Report Coordinating Digitisation in Europe documents the progress in implementing the Lund Action Plan. This report was undertaken by the Irish Presidency. It was co-funded by the Irish and Italian presidencies. Under MINERVA Plus, the review process, which was begun with the Report of the Progress Assessment of the Coordination Digitisation in Europe, will monitor progress by the NRG in the reviewing of the Lund Principles and the development of a new Action Plan. It will take into account the response to the Commission's Consultation on the 2005/6 IST Work Programme which outlines the view and the priorities of the NRG. It will also continue to assess the progress of implementing the Lund Principles under the Netherlands, Luxembourg and UK Presidencies. The final Progress Assessment Report will be launched under the UK Presidency in November 2005.
5. The NRG confirms the need to revisit the Lund Principles and the Lund Action Plan. It was agreed that consideration of the Lund Principles and a new Action Plan would be included in The Netherlands Presidency agenda and will be further discussed in The Hague at the NRG meeting on 17 September 2004. It was agreed that the Assessment Review of MINERVA Plus WP7 would support this.

6. The NRG agreed that digital preservation remains a central concern for the future.

7. Sustainability of the strategic cooperation, which has been put in place through the NRG, and the mechanism to support this were discussed. A task force comprising nominations from the NRG Meeting was set up with the aim of discussing and planning the long-term sustainability of the digitisation coordination between Member States and the European Commission. The Task Force at present comprises 16 countries (Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Sweden, and United Kingdom) with Ireland and Luxembourg as observers. Israel also attended the meeting. Members will produce a draft report before the 7th NRG meeting in The Hague on 17 September 2004.

Progress of implementation up to June 2004

The Lund Action Plan 2001-2005 takes as its reference the Lund Principles, identifying four main areas where specific actions are needed:

- Improving policies and programmes through cooperation and benchmarking;
- Discovery of digitised resources;
- Promotion of good practice;
- Content framework.

For each action the Action Plan defines objectives, the implementation approach and associated tasks, actors, and results achieved. NRG has launched various activities to cover issues within the four areas.

Progress in other areas

NRG Report

The 1st NRG Report, which was circulated widely within the Member States, disseminated information in relation to the variety and the progress of national initiatives on digitisation across the EU. The 2nd NRG Report "Coordinating digitisation in Europe", progress report of the National Representatives Group 2003 had been published and is being distributed; it includes the report of old and new Member States, with Russia and Israel. The next NRG report is planned for September 2004 and will be coordinated by The Netherlands Presidency.

Minerva Knowledge base

The MINERVA Knowledge Base is under development for the MINERVA web site. This on-line tool is intended to give detailed information about previous and ongoing activities, to provide exchange of information on digitisation within the Members States, including the completion of questionnaires on-line about

benchmarking and multilingualism, the submission of good practices examples, and the obtainment of information about the IST issues across Europe.

Benchmarking

Following the work carried out by Finland, Greece, United Kingdom, The Netherlands and Italy in developing a benchmarking model, a set of benchmarking indicators were agreed. The implementation of the benchmarking activities has been proceeding within the Member States after the final deliverable of Work Package 2.

Cooperative networks

Following an initiative launched by the Greek Presidency a digitisation cluster was established to maximise the impact and effectiveness of EU funded IST research projects and activities, particularly those developed in FP6. The Projects have agreed to evaluate the MINERVA Technical Guidelines as the basis for the development of their projects. The next meeting of the Network is planned for Strasbourg in the autumn. Further information on the digitisation cluster are available at www.minervaeurope.org/digicluster.htm

Inventories and resource discovery

France and Hungary, as coordinators for the Working Group on "Inventories, Discovery of digitised content, multilingual issues", have undertaken actions to:

- Examine a common description model implemented through MICHAEL;
- Circulate a questionnaire about multilingual thesauri for cultural applications.

Results are expected by the next NRG meeting in The Hague on 17 September 2004.

Interoperability

UK and Greece, as coordinators for the Working Group on "Interoperability and Service Provision, Business Models", have finalised the Technical Guidelines and the design of a future Observatory, to be included in the discussion of the sustainability of the co-ordination initiative. The first version of the Technical Guidelines were presented in Dublin. The final version will be published on the occasion of the 7th NRG meeting in The Hague.

Quality

Following the launch of the Quality Principles under the Italian Presidency, the Quality Editorial Board, led by Belgium, presented the final draft of the Cultural Website Quality Principles: A Practical Guide. This final draft will be presented at the ICHIM Conference in August 2004 where the strategy for its dissemination

and validation in Europe will be discussed in the frame of a focused workshop. The final version of the Guide together with a plan for its implementation will be presented at the next NRG in The Hague.

Sustainability

A Task Force made up of representatives of the NRG and the observer countries was set up with the aim of discussing and planning the long-term sustainability of the coordination initiative. Possible strategies for sustainability were discussed at the Dublin meeting and will be further discussed in The Hague on 17 September 2004.

Immediate actions (June– December 2004)

Practical actions to be undertaken before the next NRG meeting:

- The 2nd NRG Report will be distributed to all NRG members for circulation in their own countries. Members are encouraged to use the report to highlight and market digitisation initiatives.
- The 3rd NRG report is planned for December 2004, under the Netherlands Presidency.
- The Good Practice Handbook was published in English for the Dublin meeting. A French, Italian and Portuguese version will be presented at the NRG meeting in The Hague on the 17 September 2004.
- The Progress Assessment Report will be continued by the Irish partner in MINERVA Plus and will assess the on-going work under the Netherlands Presidency. The revised report will be circulated in December 2004. The final report will be launched during the UK Presidency.
- The Practical Guide for the interpretation of the 10 quality principles, which was presented at the Dublin meeting, will be finalised for publication for the meeting in The Hague in September 2004. Postcards listing the 10 principles for cultural website will be published in English, French, German and Italian for the meeting in The Hague on 17 September 2004. Translations into other languages will follow.
- Following an initiative launched by the Greek Presidency a digitisation cluster was established to maximise the impact and effectiveness of EU funded digitisation projects and activities. The next meeting is planned for Strasbourg in the autumn.
- The working group on IPR will investigate European legislation regarding IPR issues. The group will be examining key components constituting an IPR management and protection system and analysing successful IPR projects around Europe in order to produce a concrete business model. The results on the IPR work package are expected by the next NRG meeting in The Hague on 17 September 2004.
- The working group on "Inventories, discovery of digitised content, multilingual issues" has undertaken actions to produce a common

description model implemented through MICHAEL. The group has circulated a questionnaire about multilingual thesauri for cultural applications. Results on the questionnaire are expected to be available at the next NRG meeting in The Hague.

- The working group on “Good practices and Competence Centres” will investigate cost reductions issues.
- The Netherlands Presidency will initiate the process to revisit the Lund Principles and the Action Plan, as well as the current organization of the co-ordination initiative.

The meeting agreed that the NRG members at national level would undertake and support the following actions, in addition to the ongoing support for the workgroups coordinated through MINERVA.

Emerging strategic issues

Future strategies and EU-added value

The Lund Action Plan will close in 2005. A follow-up is under discussion and preparation by the NRG and MINERVA.

Cultural Portals

The concept of a portal is increasingly seen as a valuable tool to present cultural resources and to dialogue with the citizen. Today it should be seen as an important practical step in providing improved access to cultural collections. Many Member State reports highlight the role of cultural portals, and/or culture “nets”, and indirectly underline the increasing importance of collection building and standards. Portals and culture-nets can integrate work on policy profiles, inventories and interoperability, research on distributed digital libraries, resource discovery services, collection descriptions, quality, accessibility and usability, multilingualism, best practices, etc. The portal is an excellent way to reach a very wide user community and offer a set of e-services based upon digital heritage. The portal federates the efforts of cultural and memory organisations (archives, libraries, museums), e-government actors, academia, and industry. Today education and cultural tourism are two of the most powerful drives for creating these applications; however others can be expected to emerge in the future.

The International Digitisation Conference organised by the Irish MINERVA Plus partners – Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism, the National Museum of Ireland and An Chomhairle Leabharlanna/The Library Council – was held on 29th June and focused on “Access all areas: serving the user”.

The conference offered an opportunity to reflect and to question the impact of digitisation on archives, libraries and museums and especially on how cultural

institutions can make their services relevant to the users.

A conference in The Hague will be held on 17th September and will focus on “Strategies for a European Area of Digital Cultural Resources”. The scope of the conference is the development of the public sustainable and trusted European digital space where cultural resources and cultural knowledge can be shared and accessed without the impediments of time and space.

Conclusions of the meeting

The NRG appreciated the Irish Presidency’s work in support of the Lund Action Plan and welcomed the discussions on sustainability and future actions. It also welcomed, at a practical level, the development of concrete results and products and the follow-up given to the former Presidencies work on digital preservation. In particular, the NRG welcomed the focus on revisiting the Lund Principles with a new Action Plan and the sustainability issue for the NRG. The Netherlands Presidency will host the 7th NRG meeting in The Hague on 17 September 2004. On the preceding days, a European Conference on Strategies for a European Area of Digital Cultural Resources will be held.

The NRG thanked the Irish Presidency for its organisation and constructive input to the debate of this meeting and looked forward to the International Digitisation Conference “Access all areas: serving the user” to be held on the following day.

A special thanks was expressed to the Irish Government, the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism, the National Museum of Ireland and An Chomhairle Leabharlanna/The Library Council.

The Hague: 7th NRG meeting conclusions

17 September 2004

Summary and objectives of the meeting

As part of the programme for the Netherlands Presidency 2004 of the European Union, the 7th meeting of the National Representatives Group (NRG) was held on 16th (evening) and 17th September in The Kurhaus in The Hague. On the 16th, all official NRG members joined a Group Decision Support Session on the future organisation of the coordination initiative. On the 17th, the regular half yearly NRG meeting took place.

Preceding the 7th NRG meeting a two days conference "Towards a Continuum of Digital Heritage - Strategies for a European Area of Digital Cultural Resources" was held. Both the NRG meeting and the conference were hosted by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and supported by the Minerva IST project.

The NRG consists of a group of national delegates (civil servants and managers of culture ministries, other ministries, IT managers of major national institutions and programmes), who were nominated by their permanent representatives for the EU. The NRG meets every six months, chaired by the current Council Presidency. Operative tasks are supported by two projects: Minerva and MinervaPlus. These projects are funded by the IST programme of the European Commission. Their members - many of whom are also members of the NRG - serve as technical experts and provide secretarial support for the NRG and for the implementation of the selected priorities and policies identified by the NRG.

At the forefront of the discussion during the 7th NRG meeting were the ambitions and future challenges of digitisation of European cultural heritage. Today, the coordination of digital heritage is faced with new important challenges:

- to proceed by revisiting the current principles and the drafting of a new dynamic action plan, in order to be able to tackle new contexts and issues (e.g. copyrights, access, enrichment...);
- to strategically integrate with its economic sectors of reference (such as culture, education, tourism, technology, research...), their policies and programmes, their policy-drivers (institutions, industries, users, general public, ...) and their objectives in the enlarged Europe, to effectively integrate regions with different know-how and experience;
- to produce relevant and visible European cultural added-value.

The end of 2005 is set to be the end of the current Action Plan for coordination of digitisation in Europe that was drawn up under Swedish EU Presidency in 2001, and of the funding for the Minerva and MinervaPlus IST projects. Through the Lund Action Plan and Minerva(Plus), the Member States showed a strong commitment to a

coordinated European heritage digitisation, after a relatively modest support by the European Commission. Starting point for the 7th NRG meeting was that this commitment should be further developed over the next year in a more visible organisational entity with a clearer range and mandate that supports coordination actions and strategies in the near and longer future. The NRG currently has a mixed connotation of a European network and a forum of (semi-)public authorities. These typically represent basic degrees of organisational mechanisms at European level, which may evolve to more organic ones, depending on the future commitment of the stakeholders.

The specific objectives of the meeting were to:

- Introduce NRG to the Culture Council Work plan 2005-2006, including the agenda regarding the future coordination of digitisation;
- Accelerate conceptualization of NRG's position by 1) identifying and prioritising digitisation obstacles and impediments as seen by the individual NRG members; 2) discussing existing and possible actors and actions for the future organisation of digitisation in Europe; 3) discussing possible EU organisational models for the future of the coordination initiative;
- Report back to the NRG the progress made by the "Taskforce for the future Coordination Initiative" and the presentation of a building blocks document which was prepared by The Netherlands EU Presidency.
- Identify and prioritise emerging issues and identify concrete results. Recommend and endorse new strategies and actions to take these forward through NRG's activities.
- Identify and discuss the proposals put forward by the Luxembourg and United Kingdom Presidencies for the future sustainability of the coordination initiative.

NRG-progress since last meeting

- The Netherlands Presidency initiated the process to revisit the Lund Principles and the Action Plan, as well as the current organisation of the co-ordination initiative.
- Building on the EU added-value position paper that was presented in Parma by the Netherlands representative, a conference was held in The Hague on the 15th and 16th September. Theme of the conference was the building of a European Area of Digital Cultural Resources. The conference addressed the quality and organisation of such an area and the strategic issues involved as well as current European assets and achievements, common viewpoints, and future actions and policies. A report of the conference including the 7th NRG meeting conclusions will be produced and distributed to all participants and NRG members by November 2004.
- A Building Blocks document was prepared by the Netherlands Presidency in cooperation with the Task force for the future of the Coordination Initiative to

prepare discussion on the future organisation of NRG and MINERVA. The document proved a valuable input for the meeting and will be used as reference for future discussion.

- All official NRG members participated in a Group Decision Support Session preceding the 7th NRG meeting. The outcomes were presented to all NRG members at the meeting on the 17th September. A comprehensive report will be made available for internal NRG use.
- The Netherlands EU Presidency supported the ongoing activities of the Firenze expert workgroup on long term preservation. The expert workgroup, with the support of the Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo Unico in Rome, improved the community awareness, consensus and participation. The Netherlands EU Presidency presented the progress of the activities during the conference in The Hague on the 15th and 16th September. Two strategic reports were produced: a detailed position paper draws the current worldwide scenario and future possible strategies through identification of priorities and recommendations at the European level. An additional questionnaire responses summary presents a synthetic survey about the main on-going initiatives across Europe.
- The Progress Assessment will be continued by the Irish partner in MINERVA Plus (WP7) and will assess the on-going work under the Netherlands Presidency and Luxembourg Presidency. The revised report will be circulated in December 2004. The final report will be launched at the end of the Luxembourg Presidency.
- The activities of MINERVA in 2003-2004 were printed and distributed to NRG.
- The 2nd NRG Report was distributed to all NRG members for circulation in their own countries. Members are encouraged to use the report to highlight and market digitisation initiatives. The 3rd NRG report is planned under the Netherlands Presidency.

Key Statements

1. The Netherlands Presidency Agenda for Culture includes a proposal for a Workplan for Culture for 2005-2006. The workplan aims at an operational follow up in terms of addressees, tasks and timeframe. The agenda consists of 5 priorities to be implemented in 2005 and 2006. One of the priorities is the future coordination of digitisation. The proposed action calls for the proceeding with coordination through a dynamic action plan after 2005. Also it calls for a clear organisation of the actions. The European Commission is to strategically integrate digitisation with different sectors (culture, education, technology, research).
2. Top-level generic domains make it possible to assess the origin, quality, and trustworthiness of internet resources. Ambiguity of top level domain names can not be solved by current instruments, such as resource

location tools (e.g. Google). Top level domains like '.museum' have the opportunity to create a n area / domain of guaranteed trustworthy digital sources. The NRG can contribute to the adoption of the '.dot.museum' TLD through its dissemination channels.

3. The Florence agenda expert workgroup produced two reports on long term preservation that were presented at the conference on 15 and 16 September. Besides its research programmes possibilities, the European Commission takes no additional actions for digital preservation. Part of the work roll-out in research is stimulating meetings and networking sessions. EC anticipates two areas: coordination actions and testbeds. There may be some future additional horizontal possibilities: econtent+, public domain, etc.
4. Next Presidencies: the Luxembourg EU Presidency will hold a conference and NRG-meeting in June 2005 (tentative). Special focus will be on digital preservation (review progress of Florence agenda). The United Kingdom EU Presidency will continue actions regarding the NRG framework. It will support the revision of the current Lund Action Plan. Focus will be a.o. on access and users (eLearning and eInclusion) and building on current practical initiatives.
5. NRG appreciates the work done by MINERVA in the past months, which is described in the appendix (www.minervaeurope.org/structure/nrg/documents/thehague040917.htm#appendix).

Conclusions

1. A draft action plan for future coordination actions (2006 et sq) will be prepared by the Netherlands, Luxembourg and United Kingdom EU presidencies in close cooperation with the Taskforce, before the next NRG meeting in June 2005. The final action plan is to be decreed by a Council resolution under the UK EU Presidency.
2. Parallel, a proposal for nomination (or reconfirmation of that nomination) of the NRG members with new Terms of Reference, to reinforce the mandate of the future NRG, will be prepared before and discussed in the next NRG meeting. If advisable, the NRG will be consulted on both items in an interim meeting early 2005 to be organised by the Luxembourg EU Presidency.
3. The digitisation-specific workprogramme/Lund-update together with the renewed NRG structure will be put as a request through the Council by December 2005, to reinforce the mandate of NRG in its new context and to kick off the new action plan.