Belgium

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This Fourth Progress Report is the result of consultations within 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 digitization).
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, a German-Speaking Community´s Representative, Alfred Belleflamme and the Director of the Scientific and Technical Information Service (STIS), representing the department of the Federal Science Policy, Jean Moulin.
The present report is the continuation of the previous NRG Progress Reports and should be read as such. During the last months, the initiatives and projects have continued to develop in the field of digitisation.

A. Users and content

At the World Summit on the Information Society in December 2003 in Geneva, Belgium undertook to draw up a national action plan to fight the digital gap. The action plan was presented at the World Summit in November 2005 in Tunis, and aims at reducing the digital gap by one third during the following five years. The plan describes the current situation in Belgium on the basis of research and available figures, and provides a survey of the initiatives that the various authorities have undertaken so far with regard to the fight against the digital gap. The action plan then focuses attention on three action leverages for the future, that is awareness-raising, training and access.
To the story of heritage digitisation, this general framework is important as well.

FLEMISH COMMUNITY

A number of recent developments within the Flemish Community can be mentioned.

The results of the cultural participation survey, carried out by the interuniversity support centre "Re-Creatief Vlaanderen", were published, including a specific part devoted to virtual cultural participation.
<http://www.re-creatiefvlaanderen.be>

The Flemish art collection is worth mentioning as well. The Flemish Art Collection is the structural partnership between three art-historical museums of Flanders: the Groeningemuseum in Bruges, the Museum of Fine Arts Ghent and the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp. All aspects of the museum operation are covered by the partnership, including the registration and opening up of the collection, exhibitions, scientific research, conservation and management, security, etc. Content-wise, the three collections complement each other perfectly as they provide a unique and representative survey of the plastic arts of the Southern Netherlands from the 15th to the 21st century. Moreover, the three museums are situated close to each other, in three important art cities.
The online collection allows visitors to browse through the Flemish Art Collection heritage on this Website. The collections of the three museums are gradually being digitised and opened up.
<http://www.vlaamsekunstcollectie.be>

The Flemish Art Collection
6,750 paintings
40,000 drawings
2,000 statues
over 200 years of museum history
at least 12 exhibitions each year

The Heritage site is a joint initiative of 'Culturele Biografie Vlaanderen vzw' and the 'Vlaams Centrum voor

Volkscultuur vzw', with the support of the Flemish Minister for Culture, Youth, Sport and Brussels Affairs, the Visual Arts and Museums Division, and in cooperation with the Flemish Institute for Immovable Heritage (VIOE). The Heritage site presents Flanders' cultural heritage to a broad public. This portal site informs about heritage institutions (archives offices, museums, conservation libraries) and heritage associations, mentions interesting Websites and focuses on new developments. `<http://www.erfgoedsite.be>`.

MovE refers to 'Musea Oost-Vlaanderen in Evolutie' (Museums in East Flanders in Evolution) and is a project of the province of East Flanders that provides, apart from the support, stimulation and standardization of object registration of the associated museums, a portal site of East Flemish museums and the creation of an East Flemish central museum object catalogue. `<http://www.musea.oost-vlaanderen.be>`

FRENCH COMMUNITY

Wallonia's Museum Portal initiated in 2002, has benefited from the first conclusions of the workgroup on the quality framework for cultural Websites, a group chaired by the Ministry of the French Community of Belgium. Ever since it was first set up, in other words from the formulation of the objectives and terms of reference on, the Brussels Chart has been a reference tool for the elaboration of this Website, an easy-to-be-used guide and a warranty as regards the quality level of the structure and the completeness of the basic information. In 2002, few documents of this type offered a synthesis of the most essential and necessary elements to ensure the quality of cultural Websites. The contribution of the MINERVA project was, therefore, of paramount importance for an appropriate management of the project.

Volume: Wallonia's Museum Portal regroups the information for the public at large and more professional information from more than 400 Walloon museums. The overall budget was about 372,000 €.

The Museum Portal of the Grande Région (2005) is co-ordinated by the AMGR (Association des Musées de la Grande Région), this European project has benefited from the European co-operation resulting from the MINERVA project. France, Germany, and Luxembourg and Belgium co-operate to centralise data about museums within the Grande Région. The contribution in terms of translation is quite meaningful.

Volume: The French Community contributes to this project for an amount of 12,500 €.

FEDERAL SCIENCE POLICY

First phase (2005-2008) of the digitisation plan of the Federal Scientific Establishments (FSEs)
Nine co-operative projects have been identified by the FSE's (Royal 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) and the Royal Film Archives. The budget amounts ca 25 MEUR, including the contribution of the Federal Science Policy budget (15 MEUR) and the specific efforts of the institutions themselves. A global and collective approach to a large-scale digitisation of the collections will be followed, taking into account the individual constraints and priorities, and the specificities of each institution. The projects cover the following areas: retroconversion of library catalogues; creation of databases of scientific, artistic and historical collections; digitisation of newspapers, archival documents, books, photographic plates, photographs, pictures and audiovisual material.

A common catalogue of the libraries of the federal public services has been created and is accessible on the portal site of the Belgian Governement. A common catalogue of the libraries of the federal scientific institutions is being set up and will be soon also publicly available. The Belgian portal operates eCommunity spaces for all the federal librarians (public services and scientific institutions). `<http.//www.bib.belgium.be>`

The Scientific and Technical Information Service (STIS) of the Federal Science Policy operates a portal called DIGIPAT (digipat.stis.fgov.be/). The portal is divided in 4 sections providing information on, and links to: (I) European activities on digitization; (II) information notes on digital preservation;

(III) the Belgian federal scientific institutions that conserve and valorize federal digital heritage and (IV) links to heritage Websites in Belgium and abroad.

B. Technologies for digitisation

FLEMISH COMMUNITY

An important new actor within the field of the development of new technologies, is the Interdisciplinary Institute for Broadband Technologies <http://www.ibbt.be>.

The IBBT's vision and strategy can be summarized as follows:

1. The realisation of demand-driven research programmes aimed at developing generic knowledge (knowledge at medium term).
2. The realisation of company specific R&D projects with and on the initiative of the industry and services sector and/or the participation in European research programmes.
3. The provision of a test environment for broadband networks.
4. The establishment and guidance of a forum with a view to broad networking between all economic, scientific and social actors involved.

In that respect, two projects, IPEA and VACF, can be mentioned.
IPEA, the Innovative Platform on Electronic Archiving, is developing community standards for the exchange and archiving of audiovisual data in Flanders. In addition to the practical difficulties of storing non-digital formats, the increasing demand for the access of archived information is also a significant impetus for this project. Exchanging means establishing agreements, and the collaboration between the market leaders in the world of the AV broadcast is therefore an absolute condition for the realization of these objectives. IPEA focuses first of all on all technological and user aspects of digital archiving for production houses and radio and TV broadcasters. In a later phase the project can also focus on the digital archiving of audiovisual data with other players such as press agencies, advertising agencies, publishers, the government, regional broadcasters,

production houses, educational institutions, etc. <https://ipea.ibbt.be>

The challenges and opportunities of digitalisation and e-culture for cultural institutions are numerous, both in the area of the growing range of cultural carriers, art and presentation forms and in the area of communication and interaction with the public.
The main goal of the IBBT-project is researching and constructing a prototype for the "Virtual Arts Centre of the Future" Kunstencentrum Vooruit functions as a pilot, but the model will be applicable and expandable towards the broad cultural sector. The aim of VACF is the development of three strongly integrated demonstrators: a Web portal, a 3D digital platform and a decentralised collective Customer Relationship Management application (CRM).
<https://vacf.ibbt.be>

FRENCH COMMUNITY

The AICIM project (Computerised access to the collections of museum institutions - 2001) rests on computer assistance to promote the quality and perenniality of museum collection inventories but also to increase exchanges between professionals of the sector and between museums and their public. Other projects with respect to museum inventories or crossed consultation of databases have also seen the light of day in other countries in Europe and it goes without saying that the exchange of good practices and experience by the MINERVA project has been profitable and has enriched the thinking activity around this project.
Within the European background, French models and exchanges with the Culture Ministry in France have triggered an awareness-awakening process as regards the importance of interoperability and namely the promising and indispensable use of xml-technology.
Finding a balance between author rights and information accessibility for most people remains one of the most critical concerns of this project. The protection of images is warranted through very simple solutions (resolution not allowing commercial exploitation and copyright inscription on every image). The protection of tools like the thesaurus is ensured through passwords.

Volume: The AICIM network regroups about sixty museums in the French Community of Belgium and

featured in December 2005 about 3,500 items in its database. Up till now, this amounted to an annual budget of about 20,000 € (since 2001, more than 250,000 € of subsidies).

Multiannual Information Society Support Programme (2001-2008)

The Programme is implemented by the Federal Science Policy department 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., digitizing, 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. These projects can be seen as preparatory bricks for the ten-year digitisation plan of the FSEs.

C. Sustainability of content

FLEMISH COMMUNITY

In the course of 2005, the Reproduction Fund further developed its operation. The Reproduction Fund is a services centre providing the following main activities:

1. creating a digital platform for the production, opening up and interactive management of high-quality pictures of the Flemish cultural heritage

2. developing merchandising
3. developing a knowledge centre with regard to picture rights and image processing.

D. Digital preservation

FLEMISH COMMUNITY

The previous progress report already dealt with Packed and its role in the development and sharing of knowledge in the field of the preservation of media arts. <http://www.packed.be>

The expertise centre 'eDAVID vzw' is also a research and knowledge centre with regard to digital archiving, that is specifically aimed at the cultural heritage sector. The research domain of eDAVID concerns:

• digital born documents, specifically those in the business processes of the government or of companies that require a sustainable preservation
• digitised documents, photographs, sound and image documents present in archives, museums or libraries et al

To that end, eDAVID <http://www.eDAVID.be> takes innovative initiatives aimed at:

• developing archiving strategies for digital heritage
• extending the laboratory function of previous projects with regard to digital archives and cultural heritage
• promoting the development of methods, techniques, procedures and tools that allow and support sustainable digital archiving
• realising the recommendations of the *Unesco Charter on the Preservation of the Digital Heritage*, in order to prevent information or art and heritage objects from being wasted due to negligent digital management,
• operating in Flanders/Belgium and co-operating with partners in Europe and those who are involved in European projects and partnerships.

Also important are the steps taken by the public television to further digitize, preserve and open up its archives. In this respect, consultation is also organised with representatives from the cultural sectors, among which the cultural heritage sector.

In its capacity of public broadcaster, the VRT considers it its duty to secure and preserve the Flemish audio-visual heritage. It intends to do so for its own archives, but also for the valuable external archives. The public broadcaster intends to open up this valuable cultural heritage and put it at the disposal of private, institutional, scientific and professional users through one common Digital Flemish Audio-visual Archive (DIVA). Besides, the development of a digital archive as a contribution to the Flemish cultural heritage is one of the recommendations formulated by the Media Council in December 2005. Its financing and development are the object of the negotiations about the new management agreement that will be concluded in the summer of 2006. A working group with representatives of the Ministers in charge of media, culture, education and scientific research will go into the future of the archive and the DIVA project.

FRENCH COMMUNITY

The inventory of Mediaeval Manuscripts in the French Community of Belgium (2005-2006)
The inventory of mediaeval manuscripts in the French Community of Belgium has thankfully benefited from the experience of other European countries and of Belgium as concerns good practices, project planning and technological orientations thanks to the contribution of the MINERVA project. This project is the logical follow-up to the Scriptorium project (Computer Institution of the magazine Scriptorium and of the *Bulletin codicologique* accessible on Internet since 2002 at the address <http://www.scriptorium.be>) that benefited from the same contributions from MINERVA.

Volume: The project for the inventory of mediaeval manuscripts in the French Community began in 2005 with a budget of 39,000 €. <http://CICweb.be> is a virtual and human network regrouping, for the moment being, 76 schools from Wallonia and in Brussels, – schools that potentially preserved manuscripts –, as well as several specialists of mediaeval books. The aim is to provide within a reasonable term a collective inventory in the shape of an online guide to all mediaeval manuscripts preserved in the French Community of Belgium. Its objectives are to locate, identify and describe all mediaeval manuscripts preserved on the French-Speaking Belgian territory,

with or without illumination, accessible to the public or not. Resting on this counting, the CIC endeavours to create a computerised access through questioning an online database with multiple criteria.

FEDERAL SCIENCE POLICY

The STIS has produced since 2004 a series of information notes on the long-term preservation of the digital heritage. The information notes provide an overview of the research performed in the field, and of good practices, experiences, recommendations,... which result from the many projects, experiments and initiatives running at this moment in Europe and in the whole world. An exhaustive list of the most important information sources is set up. The document is available on the DIGIPAT Website <digipat.stis.fgov.be>.