

Digitalisation Coordination Initiative

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Rolling Agenda

Austria

The growing interest of commercial actors like Google and the Open Archive Initiative in digital libraries, as well as the announcement of the European Commission to launch a European Digital Libraries project within the framework of its i2010 strategy, create a new momentum for the work of the National Representatives Group.

Considering these recent developments, the official launch of the new *Dynamic Action Plan* on November 16, 2005 under the UK Presidency is indeed timely and important, as the action plan offers a potential road map towards realising a European area of digital cultural and scientific resources. In the vision of the National Representatives Group as adopted in November 2003 during the Italian Presidency, this common European area of digital content resembles a continuum of networked digital resources, not just books, but all sorts of cultural and scientific material, that are accessible to all European citizens in a distributed repository that is nourished by all Member States who are equally responsible for its maintenance. The Austrian EU-Presidency therefore aims to strongly support the future work of the National Representatives Group (NRG) and its ability to build on the current momentum and function as a catalyst for future European activities in the area of digital cultural heritage. Being the first country to implement the *Dynamic Action Plan*, the most important tasks under the Austrian EU-presidency include:

Encouraging discourse between existing and newly emerging digital libraries initiatives

In the light of the i2010 Digital Libraries initiative, the Austrian EU-Presidency has a high interest in fostering discourse between the stakeholders of this and other newly emerging initiatives and the National Representatives Group, which has a proven track record of coordinating pan-European work in the area of digital cultural heritage. The NRG hence will seek close cooperation with both the European Commission and the different Member States.

Ensuring operative support for the NRG

Since operative support through the EU-funded Minerva Project ceased by the end of 2005, the NRG

now works as a self-sustaining, i.e. mostly Member State-financed body. It will therefore be necessary to set up the operative infrastructure and working platform for future NRG work. Envisioned as a shared responsibility between the last, the current, and the future presidencies, it will be necessary to clarify the roles and define the shared responsibilities for the new “rotating” NRG executive structure. The Austrian presidency will therefore encourage the debate for this new operative infrastructure by convening a working group meeting on that issue before the next official NRG meeting in June 2006.

(Re-)Confirming NRG members

In response to the Council of the European Union’s request to transform the National Representatives Group into a strong European cooperative group with clear function and range, the NRG under the UK Presidency also adopted new Terms of Reference (TOR) and working rules. The new TOR offer Member States the opportunity to nominate up to three representatives to the NRG. Although the majority of the Member States has reconfirmed the current nominations, it will fall under the Austrian Presidency to welcome newly nominated members to the NRG.

Taking forward the Dynamic Action Plan

The *Dynamic Action Plan* will be taken forward by the NRG Action Groups (according to the terminology of the new action plan), which will be constituted under the Austrian Presidency. Following the structure of the Dynamic Action Plan, there will be five action groups, one for each action area. It will be up to the working groups to further define concrete and tangible actions within each action area (the dynamic part of the action plan), prioritise actions, and agree on a mode on how activities should be carried forward.

Continuing coordination and exchange of best practice

The Austrian EU-Presidency will also continue the well-established tradition of providing a coordination platform for exchanging information on current and planned activities in digital heritage. The 10th Official

Meeting of the National Representatives Group will be taking place in June 2006 in Salzburg, and will be preceded by a two day international conference, which focuses on the institutional practices and challenges when collecting, connecting and especially conserving our digital cultural heritage.