

# Summary

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The 2005-2006 year has been devoted mainly to the following tasks:

- to launch the new phase of the NRG and the Dynamic Action Plan,
- to complete the MINERVA and MINERVA Plus projects,
- to prepare the successive MINERVA-EC action,
- to progress MICHAEL implementation and to finalise the negotiation of the MICHAEL Plus enlargement.

Fruitful cooperation has been established with other European projects active in the cultural sector. At international level, the MEDCULT cooperation with the Mediterranean countries started, supported by the UNESCO Information for All Programme.

Two “spin-off” projects were launched, namely:

- EURIDICE (European Recommended Materials for Distance Learning Courses for Educator, see <http://www.euridice-edu.org>), market validation project coordinated by the Polish Agency for National Archives and
- IMAGINATION (Image-based Navigation in Multimedia Archives), research project, where the organisations hosting the Greek and the Italian NRG Members participate.

Several national follow-ups have occurred, among which it is worth to mention:

- The Jerusalem Declaration
- The Malta National Digitisation Policy for Cultural Heritage
- The Recommendations for coordination of cultural heritage in South-Eastern Europe
- The Directive of the Italian Ministry of Culture about the promotion plan and the quality and accessibility of its Websites

Further information on the national activities is provided in the following sections within the national reports.

The period reported in this document has been mostly devoted by the NRG to the implementation of the priorities defined in the Workplan for Culture (2005-2006) of the CAC.

Under the **Luxemburg's Presidency**, the discussion about the revision of the Lund Action Plan started. The task force identified at the time of the Irish Presidency was called for a focused meeting in Luxembourg and the general structure of the new Plan was agreed, as well as the concept of being "dynamic", as a mean to keep it aligned with a changing surrounding environment. The 8<sup>th</sup> NRG meeting took place in Luxembourg on the 20<sup>th</sup> of June 2005. The International Conference on future coordination of digitisation which was held on 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of June, was introduced by the key speech of the Commissioner Madam Viviane Reading.

Further, under the **UK Presidency** the 9<sup>th</sup> NRG meeting took place in Bristol on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November 2005. Two conferences were organised in the occasion of the NRG meeting in Bristol: the MICHAEL Conference "MICHAEL: Towards a catalogue for the digital library" on the 15<sup>th</sup> and the Conference on eLearning "Inspiring eLearning: the European Cultural Information Space" on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November.

In the frame of the 9<sup>th</sup> NRG meeting, the new *Dynamic Action Plan* (DAP) for the EU coordination of digitisation of cultural and scientific content was adopted.

The DAP covers five action areas: users and content, technologies for digitisation, sustainability of digital content, digital preservation and monitoring progress. During the Austrian Presidency a meeting took place in Rome on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 2006, hosted by the German Academy where the creation of the NRG Executive Support Group and the launch of five action groups were discussed, each specialising in one action area of the DAP. As a follow-up of this meeting, a group of countries is preparing a proposal for the creation of the NRG website and initial coordination of the DAP working groups has started with the aim to launch the actual activities of the group by the end of June 2006, with the support of the MINERVA-EC project.

An additional result achieved by the NRG in the reported period is the agreement on the NRG Terms of Reference that represent an important step in the direction of the formal establishment of the NRG as a permanent structure.

The dynamic nature of the surrounding environment has been demonstrated by the initiatives launched at national and European level to create a European Digital Library. In particular, on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2005, the European

Commission submitted the Communication *i2010 – Digital Libraries* [COM (2005) 465] which is aimed at making European information resources easier and more interesting to use in the online environment. An online consultation was launched and in February 2006, the European Commission set up a "High Level Expert Group on Digital Libraries" which will advise the European Commission on organisational, technical and legal issues [2006/178/EC].

The results of the online consultation and the advice of the High Level Expert Group will be fed into a European Commission's proposal for a "Recommendation on Digitisation and Digital Preservation", expected to be submitted before summer 2006.

With regard to the projects achievements, several results should be reported for the last period, concerning in particular the following European and international projects: MINERVA, MICHAEL and MEDCULT.

**MINERVA** was successfully completed in July 2005. The final review of the project was held in Rome on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> of July, hosted by the Library of Modern and Contemporary History. At the review, the MINERVA consortium showed a rich collection of products developed along the project. The experts appointed by the European Commission to assess the project results expressed their full appreciation for the work done. From the final review report by Myriam Diocaretz and Hervé Le Guyader: «MINERVA has been operational by creating awareness about the challenges, by contributing to indicate concrete solutions, such as the factor of involvement of all stakeholders, especially the institutional and political decision-makers, engaging the latter for their endorsement and commitment. ... The project has fulfilled its plans more than satisfactorily».

**MINERVA Plus** continued for another 6 months during which the partners of MINERVA formally joined the MINERVA Plus project.

During the reported period, the deliverables foreseen in the workplan of MINERVA Plus were completed and the final exploitation plan developed.

The final review of MINERVA Plus took place in Prague on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> of January 2006, hosted by the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic.

The reviewers appreciated the work done and fostered the continuation of the cooperation. From the final

review report by Myriam Diocaretz and Hervé Le Guyader: "MINERVA achieved more than was expected, but left a few issues open for MINERVA Plus to finalise. MINERVA Plus could be qualified in a similar manner: on the one hand it has delivered more than was contractually requested, but it is also leaving open roads for further development, to be addressed by several "offsprings" which have been emerging from the initiatives of this creative consortium. Such exemplary fertility has been recognized early on through the metaphor "MINERVA Galaxy", used by the authors of the present report in the previous review, expression which has now been adopted by the consortium as a fair model to characterise the ensemble of their projects".

After the formal completion of the MINERVA and MINERVA Plus projects, the working groups established in the past years concentrated on the completion of the publications still under finalisation, namely: the study on Cost Reduction developed in the frame of the Working Group on Best Practices and Competence Centres and the report on the survey about Multilingualism developed in the frame of the Working Group on Inventories and Discovery of digitised contents.

#### The MINERVA Website

<<http://www.minervaeurope.org>> is still operational and maintained by the MINERVA Secretariat at the Italian Ministry of Culture.

In addition to the present Report, three new Handbooks are under publishing and will be made available at the 10<sup>th</sup> NRG Meeting in Salzburg:

- *Cost Reduction in Digitisation*: a practical instrument for cultural institutions to support decision making and planning for digitisation initiatives. It covers the key parameters to be taken into account to assess and monitor the cost of digitisation, how to model the cost of a given initiative, and ways in which the cost of digitisation can be reduced.
- *Multilingual access to the European Cultural Heritage*: The results of the survey conducted in the frame of MINERVA Plus, showed an overview of the situation concerning language usage in cultural websites. The aim of the survey was to see to what extent cultural websites and portals are available for users of different language communities and also whether websites use

more languages than the language they were originally created in. Furthermore the survey intended to find out if cultural websites are using retrieval tools such as controlled vocabularies or thesauri and whether multilingual tools are available for use.

- *Guide to Intellectual Property Rights and Other Legal Issues*: Rights issues are prevalent within pretty much anything to do with digital content, from its formation, reproduction, adaptation, negotiation, dissemination and repackaging. In order to limit risks of infringement and take advantage of the benefits that the digital environment presents, it is essential that museums, libraries and archives familiarize themselves with copyright and other issues, as well as train staff in good practice procedures. This Guide is intended for this scope.

The working groups established under MINERVA and MINERVA Plus are still active in many cases at national level and they represent the basis for the creation of the new working groups foreseen in the frame of the workplan of MINERVA-EC.

**MINERVA-EC** is the thematic network proposed for funding to the European Commission in the frame of the first call of the eContent Plus Programme in November 2005.

The proposal has been positively evaluated and finally retained for funding.

The negotiation of the project started at the beginning of 2006 and the actual work is planned to start in the second half of 2006 and to last for the next two years. MinervaEC will operate through the coordination of national policies, programmes and institutions of the cultural sector, and by supporting the National Representatives Group of the European Ministries of Culture. Its goal is to support the creation of added value products and services at European level to improve awareness of the state-of-the-art in the sector, to contribute to the overcome of fragmentation and duplication of digitisation activities of cultural and scientific content and to maximise synergies among Member States.

Four action lines have been identified to carry out this work.

The first line of activities will be devoted to the development of a European Cultural Content Interoperability Framework, to provide clear guidance on the creation, use and management of cultural content across Europe by establishing an informal network of competence centres funded at National level across Europe and by enabling these centres to work together.

The second main line of activities relate to the establishment of a Quality, Usability and Accessibility service. The service will be provided by the MINERVA-EC partners to the European cultural institutions and will aim to mediate the complexity of the European cultural information space for users to ensure that it is accessible, relevant and usable. Further, another action line will focus on the development of a repository of cases of best practices in the area of enriched cultural content. This repository will aim to contribute to create a European digital cultural heritage able to reflect and to promote the European cultural and linguistic diversity. Finally, an integrated set of Coordination, Assessment, Mobilisation, Awareness and Dissemination functions will be established in order to valorise and exploit all the results achieved within the other action lines. MINERVA-EC will be run by a network of Ministries of Culture in cooperation with many cultural institutions, from 21 European countries.

The joint efforts of the MINERVA working groups active on interoperability and inventories originated the **MICHAEL** project (Multilingual Inventory of Cultural Heritage in Europe - <<http://www.michael-culture.org>>), which was presented and approved in the framework of the eTen programme, and started its activities in June 2004. The project was presented at the International Conference in Bristol in November 2005. Starting from a prototype set-up in France and already tested in Italy, MICHAEL defined a common approach and a model of digital cultural heritage services is under application across the participating countries. It focuses on the integration and alignment of many national initiatives in the digital cultural heritage sector. From a technical point of view, the project is going to deliver interoperability of national cultural portal initiatives and a high-quality end-user service, which will facilitate the exploitation of European cultural content resources.

The MICHAEL project is progressing on target and its achievements have been the subject of the Conference organised in the occasion of the 9<sup>th</sup> NRG meeting held in Bristol in November 2005. The success of the conference and the positive results of the project review organised by the European Commission are encouraging:

- Data model, software platform and related documentation are ready.

- National instances in Italy, France and the UK have been localised.
- First online version of the European user interface is ready for validation.
- Communication and marketing plan has been agreed.

Population of the national instances is progressing as a continuous on going activity.

The legal framework related to the management of IPR issues has been defined.

A specific section of the present report is devoted to the description of the actual achievements of the project.

The MICHAEL consortium is made up of the Ministries of Culture of France, Italy and the United Kingdom, supported by Amitié and Dédale for the technological and organisational aspects. All these organisations are also partners of the MINERVA-EC project.

Several other countries declared their intention to join the project, the enlargement of the MICHAEL project was approved for co-funding by the European Commission in the frame of the eTEN Programme. The negotiation has been successfully completed and the **MICHAEL Plus** project will actually start on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June 2006. Since the 1<sup>st</sup> of June 2006 the MICHAEL Plus project is in operation, to extend the activities to Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Sweden.

A total of 14 countries participate now in the MICHAEL initiative, that involves a total investment of more than 90 million euros, 90% funded by national investments and the remaining 10% co-funded by European eTEN programme.

The activities of the MICHAEL project will be completed in May 2007, while MICHAEL Plus will be complete in May 2008.

A fruitful cooperation has been carried out with other projects operating in the cultural sector. Some examples of the work done are provided in this report as a reference for the future initiatives.

The first cooperation to be mentioned is with **The European Library** (TEL) initiative of CENL. Representatives of TEL were invited to the 9<sup>th</sup> NRG Meeting in Bristol to present the initiative to the NRG Members.

Further MICHAEL representatives participated in a joint meeting with TEL Contact Board in Frankfurt on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March 2006, hosted by the German National Library. At this meeting, the general picture was discussed about the possible ways for the MICHAEL and the TEL initiatives to contribute in synergy towards the creation of the European digital library. MICHAEL representatives participated to the TEL-ME-MOR regional workshops in Warsaw, Budapest and Ljubljana and further cooperation are already planned in the frame of the final Conference of TEL-ME-MOR in Tallin in the second half of 2006.

The second framework of cooperation is with the research projects and in particular with the **DELOS** Network of Excellence <<http://www.delos.info>> and with the **BRICKS** Integrated Project <<http://www.brickscommunity.org>>. A series of demonstrations of the technologies made available by DELOS have been organised at the beginning of 2006 in Paris on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February and in Rome on the 11<sup>th</sup> of April. A presentation of the MINERVA results was delivered at the BRICKS workshop in Lisbon in May and a BRICKS event is hosted in the frame of the International Conference organised by the Austrian Presidency in Salzburg in June 2006.

With regard to the international dimension, the progresses of the MED-CULT project should be mentioned. **MEDCULT** is the international cooperation sponsored by the UNESCO Information for All Programme. It aims at improving the quality of cultural websites across the Arab countries through the dissemination of the guidelines and tools developed by MINERVA. The MEDCULT project is carried out in cooperation with STRABON. STRABON is a project supported by the European Commission in the frame of the EUMEDIS programme, coordinated by Maison des Sciences de l'homme (MSH) in Paris with the goal of providing the Mediterranean region with a multilingual and multimedia information system. MEDCULT actually started in the second half of 2005. The kick-off meeting of the project took place in Rome on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 2005 with the participation of partners from Morocco (Centre of Inventory and documentation of the Moroccan Ministry of culture), Egypt (CULTNAT Centre at Bibliotheca Alexandrina), Jordan (Department of

Antiquities of the Jordan Ministry of Culture) and the representative of the STRABON Network. The first workshop of MEDCULT took place in Cairo on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of April 2006. Representatives from 17 institutions in Egypt concerned with the cultural heritage (museums, libraries, archives, etc) attended at the workshop along with the other partners of MEDCULT. The first session of the workshop was devoted to an overview of the European context in which the MINERVA project was developed. It, then, presented the MINERVA tools for acquiring and maintaining quality in cultural websites. General recommendations, accessibility guidelines and "Museo & Web" (a practical tool that enables small cultural institutions to create their own websites of good quality) were among the topics discussed. Of particular interest, the MINERVA handbook: *Quality Principles for Cultural Websites*, which has been translated into Arabic by experts at CULTNAT, was presented. The aim of translating the handbook into Arabic is to ensure the widest diffusion among Arabic speaking countries. The second session mainly focused on the analysis of various Websites applying the principles discussed during the first session to determine their quality. The next workshops are to be held in Morocco in June and Jordan in August. By the end of MEDCULT project, the whole set of guidelines developed by the MINERVA project regarding quality of cultural websites are expected to be enriched through the exchange with the Mediterranean partners, using different languages and diverse applications and experiences.

The wide spectrum of activities carried out during the past year demonstrate the vitality of the network and the quality of its projects. In addition to the tangible and practical results of the work done, also the more strategic dimension of the initiative has demonstrated its potential. A new phase has been launched with the adoption of the *Dynamic Action Plan*. In synergy with the progresses of the projects described above, the challenge for the next year will be the actual kick-off of the implementation of the Plan. The actions carried out by the Austrian Presidency, the plans of the next Finnish Presidency and the results of the 10<sup>th</sup> NRG Meeting in Salzburg will represent the basis for this implementation.