The Italian workgroup for the definition of quality criteria for cultural web sites determined its work programme to define the quality guidelines for cultural websites at its first meeting, held in Rome 11 November 2002.
The themes of the above-mentioned work programme are the following:

1. **Methodological introduction – Recommendations**

   Definition of:
   A. *Strategy of valorisation of the public cultural entity's identity and objectives through the web;*
   B. *Web language strategy in relation to educative vocation.*
   C. *Coordinated communication strategy of the cultural entity with regard to the web;*

2. **Verification of "typical" quality criteria regarding cultural heritage in relation to "typical quality criteria of the web**

   Application of language criteria with regard to public cultural entities
   Definition of quality criteria with regard to
   a) cultural entities
   b) heritage
   c) user needs:
      - *Accessibility*
      - *Layout*
      - *Navigation*
      - *General content/adhesion to sector regulations*

3. **Quality criteria applicable to heritage sectors**
   - *Museums*
   - *Libraries*
   - *Archives*
   - *Diffused heritage*
   - *Cultural activities*
   - *Cultural projects*

4. **Production of the guidelines**

5. **Testing of guidelines criteria**

In its first two months of activity the WG5 drew up Document no. 1, which is to be considered working material to be diffused to other work groups and the public through the MINERVA project web site.
The progress made in the group's activities was defined in the meeting of 14.01.2003, and is illustrated in the following table:

WP5 – Identification of user needs, content and quality framework for common access points

	Definition	*Discussion*	*Elaboration*	*WG Approvation*
1.A	*11 November*	*14 January*	*14 January*	*14 January*
1.B	*11 November*	*14 January*		
1.C	*11 November*	*14 January*		
2	*11 November*			
3	*11 November*			

The Italian group will continue to define and elaborate the programme points, however each contribution coming from the other European groups will be received with the view of integrating it into the subsequent points elaborated by the group.

DOCUMENT No. 1

Definition of quality in public cultural web sites.
Up until now there has been substantial difficulty in formulating a definition of quality for cultural web sites. We believe it is necessary to define it by starting from the cultural entity to which the site itself refers.

In particular, with regard to each site we should ask ourselves:

1. What its reasons for being are
2. What its objectives are
3. What quality means for a public cultural web site
4. Who is (and who could be) the typical user (defined in terms of quality)

*We will try and respond with **premises** and with **guidelines** of a general character that could constitute a framework for defining quality criteria.*

General Premises

1. *Culture – Diffusion in Europe and European Added Value*
   In the European knowledge society the diffusion of culture has been recognised as a fundamental instrument for a higher quality of life and for affirming the added value of a shared European culture.

2. *Public Cultural Entities – relationships/networks*
   A public cultural entity forms part of a close community with other cultural entities, which work together for the development of culture in each thematic sector.

3. *Culture - systems of communication*
   Public cultural entities have as their objectives the diffusion of culture to people for both their personal growth and as an instrument to awaken awareness about heritage. Web sites are recognised as an important and innovative communication channel for these objectives. In any case, a web site is one of a number of means of communication for the diffusion of culture.

4. *European cultural mission – a suitable use of the web*
   The rich technical potentialities of the web must be used knowingly so that they can give a valid contribution to growth of the information and knowledge society, respecting cultural diversities and democracy.

GUIDELINES

1.A.   *VALORISATION OF THE CULTURAL ENTITY'S IDENTITY AND AIMS THROUGH THE WEB.*

> *1.A.1. A public cultural web site must reflect all the elements which determine a public cultural entity, both in its contents and in the web interface used.*

*Definition of the field of reference: **public cultural entities***

By public cultural entity (PCE) we mean an institution, organisation or project of public interest which has in its statutes the end purpose of producing, conserving, safeguarding, valorising and diffusing culture in its specific sector (archives, libraries, mobile and immobile heritage, archaeological, artistic, architectural, historical, demo-ethnological, anthropological and/or immaterial, cinema, theatre, live shows).

The **identity** of a PCE has as its specificity:
a – its institutional aims
b – the cultural content it produces, conserves, diffuses and/or safeguards
c – its management structure

Definition of cultural entities

   Also with the goal of conforming to the cultural domains of the other European States we can distinguish:

CATEGORIES	SUB-CATEGORIES	CULTURAL ENTITIES
Beni culturali Cultural Heritage Patrimoine culturel	**Archaelogical** **Architectural** **Artistic** **Landscape** **Historical** **Scientific** **Demo-etno antropological**	Departments of Conservation Monuments Sites/Parks/Reserves Museums Central Institutes Research and Training Centres
	Bibliografical	Libraries
	Archival	Archives, Departments of Conservation
	Audiovisual	Museums, Libraries, Archives, Research Centres
Cultural Activities	**Live Shows** **Cinema** **Artistic Production**	Artistic and Cultural Events Production and Artist Training Centres
Heritage + Activities	**Exhibitions, displays, Visual art performances**	All types of above-mentioned entities

> *1.A.2. A European cultural web site must be characterised by transparency, clarity, accuracy, completeness of contents, logical organisation of contents.*

Objectives and functions of PCE web sites

For a public cultural web site to reflect efficiently the identity and objectives of the PCE that is at its origin, it must take shape FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE ENTITY as a✳:
- *means of presenting the cultural entity*
- *means to provide administrative and managerial transparency*
- *means to offer services for accurate research*
- *means to offer services to sector operators*
- *means of instruction*
- *means for the promotion of cultural tourism*
- *means for the diffusion of cultural contents*
- *means which highlights its belonging to a network*

For a public cultural web site to reflect efficiently the identity and objectives of the PCE that are at its origin, it must take shape FROM THE END USER'S POINT OF VIEW as a✳:
- *source to check administrative and managerial transparency*
- *source for accurate research*
- *source of professional assistance*
- *source of instruction*
- *source for informed cultural tourism*
- *source of cultural information*

✳ not all of these conditions need be satisfied, it depends on the specific identity, objectives, and functionality of the PCE.

Research Instruments
*This aspect needs to be developed through the creation, implementation and/or the extension "on line" of **Databases** of cultural contents, creating indexes, metadata for research, glossaries, bibliographies, **thematic links** with other databases.*
*It is necessary that such databases be consultable and also be organised as **Services for research development** (selection of consultable data, downloadable etc.) keeping in mind the fact that it is a question of public services.*
*An appropriate importance should be given to the **interactive activities** that develop cultural exchanges and foster increasing relationships within research communities. Thematic forums, e-mail, mailing lists, newsgroups, videoconferences etc…*

A means for diffusing research
*Specialised programmes dealing with **on-line instruction** should be created, together with; assisted and/or selected **paths** for the consultation of databases or thematic sectors of*

*divulgation; thematic **glossaries**; dedicated **forums** and **e-mail**; updated **news** sections; **e-serials** etc.*
The diverse technical/scientific specialists should elaborate the contents, and then submit them to a team also made up of experts in training, communications, and on-line communications for checking and validation.

Instrument of information about activities and services
It constitutes the most direct interface with the users. With regard to content it must represent – in a logical layout – the "mosaic" of the institution's functions, services and activities. It can be expressed as:

Institutional functions			
Produce	*Conserve*	*Valorise*	*Protect*
Services		**Activities**	
stable	*temporary*	*stable*	*temporary*

1.A.3. A European cultural web site, in observance with content and communication democracy, should be inserted in European networks and thematic portals effectively, with the goal of being more easily recognisable and the objective of contributing to European added value

European networks and thematic portals
Networks and thematic portals are recognised as instruments for the "acknowledgement of different cultural identities" and for the identification of elements of unity for the creation of European added value.
*Through such an instrument it will be possible to create a **common platform,** in which diverse institutional organisational systems of research, diffusion, and languages will have to meet, exchange experiences and be dissolved.*
*Therefore, the adoption of common platforms and criteria of European States that allow **interoperability** at the Community level is necessary, right from the designing of cultural web sites.*

European added value / Diversity in unity
*The definition of quality criteria for the content of European web sites is an important element in attaining **European added value**, given that a web site is not only a "window" on European culture, but is also more and more a means of diffusing knowledge of European heritage.*
*The fundamental condition for reaching this objective is that European cultural web sites be designed by really adhering to the specific identities of the institutions, thereby exalting their complexities, wealth and differences. In so doing, **diversity in unity**, one of the characteristics recognised as fundamental for European added value, is given value.*

1.A.4. A quality European cultural web site should be validated through specific means, like a specific domain name: e.g. ".xyz.eu" or ".museum"

The European directive excludes the use of country codes (it, fr, etc…), which are second level domains after the TLD .eu. It is, therefore, necessary to individuate a second level domain name capable of describing the content effectively (museum. culture, etc…). An alternative could be to coordinate the WG's activities with MuseDoma, manager of the TDL museum in order to reserve a second level domain name like CC. Although we are aware of the complexity involved in activating a new TLD (cult, etc…), it seems appropriate to put forward a proposal in this sense anyway.

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1.B LANGUAGE STRATEGIES WITH REGARD TO THE EDUCATIVE VOCATION

Some definitions of a general nature have been identified. The work of the Italian WG5 will concentrate on these.

> **1.B.1. A web site of a public cultural entity has interest in reaching the widest and largest possible public.**

> **1.B.2. A web site of a public cultural entity must respect and fully apply all national and community regulations regarding accessibility and usability**.

> **1.B.3. In general, a web site of a European cultural entity must be suitable for a platform shared by other European cultural web sites. It must correspond to the following structure: Information, Services, Activities, Contents, and Interactivity.**
> **The essential part of each of these sectors should be multilingual and be realised with an interface.**

> **1.B.4. A European cultural web site must share a platform with other cultural web sites following a simple general framework of:**
> **themes, contents organised logically;**
> **shared names/symbols/colours and terminology.**

> **1.B.5. A European cultural web site must choose a suitable language without sacrificing the highest possible level of quality in its cultural communication.**

> **1.B.6. Correct language for a European cultural web site should become progressively more specialised as the "surfer" reaches the deeper research levels.**

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1.C. COORDINATED COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY OF THE CULTURAL ENTITY WITH REGARD TO THE WEB

Some definitions of a general nature have been identified. The work of the Italian WG5 will concentrate on these.

> ***1.C.1. A public cultural entity website project must examine the logical connections with all the other systems of communications, digital or not, with the organisation of workflows, with out-servicing, with research activities etc.... If necessary it must modify or create a new personnel resources model for the communication needs of the public institutions involved.***

<u>*What type of staff for a PCE?*</u>
The staff must be civil servants, stable and made up of representatives of all activity sectors and services of the institution, as well as an expert in communication (didactics, tourism...) for managing the content, and a webmaster and web designer for the technical part. All should have received some basic training on web techniques (hypertext, languages, interactivity, static and dynamic pages etc.)

<u>*Staff duties in PCEs*</u>
   Content management
   - *Design*
   - *Production*
   - *Coordination of internal information flow*
   - *Check*
   - *Updating*
   Technical administration
   - *Control and updating of programming language, usability, accessibility*
   - *IPR control*
   Financial management
   - *Control*
   - *Audit*

<u>*Which relationships with other communication channels?*</u>
Given its specific characteristics and the possibilities it offers, a web site must not only be designed within an organic information and public communications framework of the institution, but also in relation to the fundamental functions of the institution. Therefore, it is not only a "means of information" but also an "active (or interactive) archive" of the institution.
It is necessary to study a control system that checks the coherence between the traditional information and the web information.

- **The quality of the external information flow, digital or not, depends on the quality of the internal information flow.**
  The modulation of internal information flows within the PCE is necessary, especially after the introduction of a communication channel on the web, also with regard to technological formats, which guarantee high quality information (cfr. per l'Italia Linee Guida Ministero F.P. Circ. 3/2001, punto 1- for Italy; Ministerial guidelines F.P. Circular 3/200, point 1)