





CO-ORDINATION MECHANISMS FOR DIGITISATION POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES:

4TH OFFICIAL MEETING OF THE NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES GROUP (NRG)

CORFU, 26th JUNE 2003

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SUMMARY AND OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

The fourth meeting of the NRG was held on 26 June under the chairmanship of the Hellenic Presidency. In addition, a workshop on "Digitisation of Cultural Content" was held on 27-28 June. Both events were hosted by the Hellenic Ministry of Culture (HMC) on the island of Corfu, in collaboration with the High Performance Information Systems Laboratory (HPCLab) of the University of Patras, which represents the HMC in the NRG.

The NRG is 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 6-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 Corfu were to:

- Report on progress in the member states in meeting the objectives outlined in the Lund Principles, through the production of a short report on NRG-related activities carried out during the last 6 months
- Present a detailed report on the distribution strategies, impact and developments of the first «NRG report – progress 2002 and planning 2003 » published by the European Commission and MINERVA
- Review ongoing co-operative actions at European level, including those carried out by MINERVA, and recommend and endorse new strategies and actions









• Identify and prioritise emerging issues and make recommendations about how to take these forward through the Lund Action Plan and other relevant ongoing initiatives.

This report presents firstly the key statements from the meeting, then the progress made in the last 6 months, and, finally future actions and emerging issues.

KEY STATEMENTS

- 1. **The 1st NRG Report was a success.** A 2nd NRG report is in the planning for late 2003, but with a stronger focus on strategic issues. A NRG Handbook, as a companion compilation of factual data on portals and national profiles, useful contacts and networks, available guidelines and standards, training courses, etc. will also be prepared.
- 2. The implementation of the **Lund Action Plan** is proceeding as scheduled. It will continue to be updated and represent a practical guide on what's been done (removed), and what's happening in the coming months (added). A clearer focus on results, "products" and success indicators is envisaged.
- 3. The NRG announces that a **successor to Lund** will be developed for mid 2005. Several member states have volunteered, and MINERVA, as leader of the expert workgroups, will support the discussions and provide the necessary infrastructure.
- 4. The formal endorsement of the **Terms of Reference** is proceeding quite well.
- 5. There is an increasing focus on **practical products**, e.g. the production and/or summarisation of technical recommendations and guidelines, the selection and analysis of good practice examples, the collection of benchmarking data, the quality handbook, and awareness and consensus building.
- 6. Another focus is **ensuring relevancy** for smaller cultural institutions, and the inclusion of industry, academia and public authorities into the MINERVA user community.
- 7. The NRG calls for **wider participation** in the MINERVA workgroups, both from the member states and from users.
- 8. First significant steps towards involving **new accession states** have been made by the Hellenic Presidency with the presence of Latvia and Czech Republic in Corfu, and with the MINERVA meeting held in Rome. The NRG decides to open future NRG meetings to NAS representatives.
- 9. **The Patras–Rome initiative** with a focus on the societal and economic importance of digitisation and long-term preservation. This initiative was proposed jointly by two successive presidencies (Hellenic and Italian) and was further extended and approved by NRG.

MAIN FEATURES OF WORK IN 2003 (JANUARY - JUNE)

Follow-up of activities from the Copenhagen meeting. Progress on actions decided during the Danish Presidency has been good.







1. PROGRESS REPORT 2002

The «NRG report – progress 2002 and planning 2003 » proved to be a very substantive achievement. The report clearly showed that there are a significant number of important national initiatives, that a consensus is being reached on the value and necessity of standards and good practices, and that coordination approaches in the member states are now numerous and followed a wide variety of cooperative models. The compilation of the report proved to be more complex than originally envisaged, and it was published in April 2003.

Distribution of the report in most of the countries has followed official channels covering Ministers, ministerial advisors and correspondents in the field of digitisation, experts on digital documentation and multimedia, national programmes of digitisation, and cultural institutions and organisations, including provincial museums, archives and libraries. In some cases the report has also been distributed to related Ministries such as Education, Research, Foreign Affairs, etc. More novel approaches include dissemination at international prizes, in specialised libraries, during specialised and professional conferences, and to foreign partners of the various Ministries of Culture. The NRG report has proved a very useful "discovery" tool to disseminate the national policies of member states on digital content creation and (re-) use (the MINERVA Web sites should be consulted for copies of reports, handbooks, etc.). In addition it is now recognised that EU initiatives, such as the NRG and MINERVA, can influence national activities and that some new national initiatives explicitly reference the Lund Principles and the work of the NRG.

The 2nd NRG report is planned for December 2003, under the Italian Presidency. Given the complex and mixed nature of the contents of the 1st report it is planned that the 2nd report will focus on policy issues (institutional, regional, sectorial) in the member states, as well as national programme initiatives and strategic developments considerations. This 2nd report will extend its coverage to the 10 additional member states preparing adhesion to the EU (possibly through a "lite" format). A particular emphasis will be placed on how digitisation is becoming an element in wider information or knowledge society policies. In this context, access, service delivery and interoperability will remain the key drivers, and the role of national institutions with archival mandates and obligations (major libraries, archives or museums) increasingly important. It should also focus more on the emerging cooperative actions between member states and in the international context. Another emerging issue to be addressed is how to make the Lund Principles and the actions of the NRG more relevant and visible to smaller cultural institutions. With the continued trend towards decentralisation in the member states the 2nd NRG report should provide a more in depth coverage of specific regional digitisation activities.

Factual information will be detached from the 2^{nd} NRG report and is being compiled into a separate NRG Handbook.

The 2nd NRG report will be edited under the Italian Presidency, and MINERVA will be asking for contributions for NRG members.

2. NRG HANDBOOK

In order to give visibility to national networks and expertise it was decided to create an easy to maintain "NRG Handbook". This will consolidate all factual information relating to digitisation in Europe. MINERVA is extracting factual information from the NRG progress report, and will publish this information in the form of NRG Handbook on their Web site. The NRG Handbook will include national policy profiles and web pages (including the "lite" profile specification and functionalities), information on membership, status, mandates and







working methods of national coordination groups through a "Who is who in cultural digitisation", information on centres of practical expertise and advice (including formally nominated competence centres), and lists of nationally recognised guidelines and training courses.

3. POLICY PROFILES

Policy profiles help raise awareness on national and regional initiatives and provide a starting point for multi-national cooperation. The challenge in the past was to maintain the profiles and to integrate them with other, more detailed, information sources already available in each member state (i.e. a 'lite profile' specification was developed to avoid duplication). Given the diversity of policy initiatives in place, there is still a need to continue providing generally accessible and easy to understand, multilingual, baseline information for an international audience.

The work of MINERVA in creating a data model linking best practices and benchmarking, and linked with the NRG reports and handbooks, provides a complete source of information on national polices and programmes. During the Italian Presidency this data will enable the creation and maintenance of policy profiles. Links to other policy data collections will need to be considered, e.g. Herein.

4. BENCHMARKING

It is now recognised that the benchmarking model has become a strategic tool. It helps increase the overall quality of digitisation projects, it supports the exchange of good practice, is valuable for project monitoring and review, and it can be used in the selection of projects to be funded authorities.

The model for benchmarking of policies, programmes and projects has been adopted and is being implemented, according to national requirements. The MINERVA benchmarking working group has split the activity into 3 phases, namely:

- Phase 1: experiment run during 2002 results have been integrated into the NRG Report 2002
- Phase 2: finalisation of tools and methods in order to extend benchmarking to a larger user community until August 2003 delivering to phase 3 the online tool as well as a larger sample of surveyed institutions per country
- Phase 3: starts late 2003 focus on campaign for questionnaire collection, analysis and exploitation of gathered data, tool improvements, and the involvement of the new accession states.

The progress made so far has been very encouraging. A new benchmarking platform has been launched and more than 100 online answers have been completed. A common approach exists and it is a sound basis for member states to continue encouraging projects to participate in the benchmarking process.

The first results presented clearly show that the new approach works, and MINERVA will produce a report in August 2003 outlining ways to develop and promote the use of the benchmarking tool.

The next steps will be to help institutions find benchmarking partners so that they can share results and create best practices.







5. COOPERATIVE NETWORKS

Cooperative networks have appeared in almost all member states, and in many cases initiated and/or lead by NRG members. The role and competences of these networks are to be described in the forthcoming NRG Handbook. The type and tasks of the networks should be considered as examples of good practices, and be disseminated as such. The workshops hosted under the Hellenic and Italian Presidencies will use many of the well-established national and European networks (e.g. PULMAN, DELOS, HEREIN).

MINERVA working groups are an effective way to bring together experts from different national networks and projects. Equally the possibility to link existing national conferences should be considered.

6. TERMS OF REFERENCE (TOR) AND POSITIONING OF NRG

The formal endorsement of the ToR is proceeding quite well. The nature of the endorsement by national authorities is very different in different member states. It varies from Ministerial recognition of the NRG and formal nomination of national representative and experts, through contributing to inter-ministerial cooperation in the field of digitisation, to the formal notification of the ToR on national cultural Web sites or portals.

7. ENLARGEMENT TO NEW ACCESSION STATES (NAS)

MINERVA has identified and established contacts with NAS representatives. A meeting was held in Rome, and additional funding for new participants in the MINERVA network has been requested. The Hellenic Presidency invited NAS representatives to the NRG meeting and workshop in Corfu. This invitation will again be made for the next NRG meeting in Parma, Italy. Initial, but valuable, tasks have already been started in some NAS countries, e.g. translation of Lund Principles.

An opportunity to showcase activities in the new accession states will be provided during the Presidency of Ireland.

8. RELEVANCE FOR SMALL INSTITUTIONS

Possibly one of the biggest challenges facing the NRG and MINERVA is to ensure that its products and services (e.g. progress report and handbooks) are relevant to smaller cultural actors. MINERVA has started to encourage participation in the network beyond the larger institutional actors. It has created a users group attracting representatives from industry, universities, regional and local administrations, and small cultural institutions using the successful tool of the "cooperation agreement". The first users group meeting will be held under the Italian Presidency in Rome at the workshop "Digitisation: What to do and how to do it" on 29 October 2003. The focus must be on demonstrable benefits of participation.

In addition, e-learning (open distance learning) modules are a valuable and practical initiative for local institutions. Topics to be covered are:

- Digitisation processes and management of digital resources
- Legal aspects (IPR, copyright, data protection)
- Quality criteria for cultural web sites
- Digital collection and project management, service orientation and management.





9. INTEROPERABILITY, INVENTORIES AND RESOURCE DISCOVERY

At least 10 member states are known to have national cultural portals, culture-nets, or listing of projects, but coverage is neither systematic nor comprehensive. Inventories and resource discovery functions have become backbone functions of these portals or aggregator sites. These inventories must be easy to maintain, tools must be easy to use, fragmentation of coverage must be combated, and new user services built. Standards for XML-based metadata and collection level descriptions are both key to ensuring interoperability in a cross-domain environment.

After a meeting in Paris (Jan. 2003) a data model was agreed along with metadata for systems collecting data on digitisation (covering institution, project, digital collections, and service/product). The next step will be to collect data to test the validity of the model. The importance of multilingualism was recognised, as was the relationship with the accessibility and usability of cultural content.

In addition, the discussion on interoperability and service provision has continued, and a major programme of work is proposed for the next 6 months covering interoperability, standards, IPR, and the concept of an observatory. The use of an XML schema, DC.Culture, will be evaluated, and should lead to the development of a test-bed using OAI-PMH to federate information from several member states. Building on the MINERVA results on inventories and interoperability this could lead to a European inventory of digitisation projects.

A set of European technical guidelines will be presented at the next NRG meeting, and could provide the basis for developing a EU-wide observatory on digitisation.

10. PROMOTING GOOD PRACTICES AND GUIDELINES

Guidelines do exist but they are often highly specialised, fragmented and represent the experience gained by specific institutions on specific types of source material (text documents, film, audio, photographs, etc.). The task is to provide practical good-practice information for cultural organizations embarking on digitisation

Projects have been identified and documented so as to highlight specific good practices and the guidelines they illustrate. The examples identified for the NRG meeting in Alicante have been analysed and validated, and MINERVA will publish a handbook for the NRG meeting in Parma.

The draft report is already available on the MINERVA Web site. It is intended as a "living" handbook where the report is complimented by a dynamic and growing list of good practices. New examples can be submitted and new lessons learnt described and contextualised. NRG members are responsible for the good practices submitted, as well as the strategy for dissemination, e.g. translation, if necessary, and targeting to cultural institutions.

11. THE QUALITY FRAMEWORK

Quality remains a critical and timely issue. The W3C-WAI accessibility guidelines are mandated by the European Commission for public administrations and are increasingly being recognised and implemented in member states. However quality goes far beyond the issue of accessibility (e.g. functionality, usability, fit-for-purpose, credibility, etc.) and Europe's cultural institutions must rapidly adopt and implement a common framework for the recognition of quality cultural content on the Web (and relevant to all citizens). The endorsement of the Brussels Quality Framework, acceptance of its recommendations, and its implementation is a vital first step.





The MINERVA working group on quality targets a very practical result in the form of a Quality Handbook. Comments (editorial team) are requested so that the final handbook can be presented and accepted at the next NRG meeting. An adoption and implementation strategy is needed, as are some immediate practical examples for testing (there is a possible link to good practices examples). It is envisaged to present the handbook in a condensed form to the Council of Ministers and CAC to ensure the widest possible adoption.

12. SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is addressed first and foremost in terms of long-term digital preservation. This important challenge must be treated both at a national/international level and through the development of research actions in both national and European programmes. The Spanish and Danish Presidencies were strongly committed to this topic, as is the present Hellenic Presidency and the upcoming Italian Presidency.

In addition to the challenge of digital preservation, the long-term sustainability of a European content framework also depends upon the following issues: multilingualism and cultural diversity, relevance, accessibility, effective exploitation and delivery of digital cultural content. It is also vital that MINERVA formally encourages the drive towards information society services for the citizen and makes culture and e-culture an integral and relevant part of their daily life.

EU-funded research projects to be launched in near future will go some way to addressing specific problems in long-term preservation, however a clear set of practice tasks needs to be identified which cover all the major challenges. It is agreed that MINERVA should support the work of ERPANET to generate a clear short-term action plan for presentation and validation during the International Conference on Long Term Preservation of Digital Memories organised under the Italian Presidency. A specific task is that MINERVA (possibly with the aid of the NRG) helps distribute the ERPANET questionnaire on long-term digital preservation activities in the member states.

13. RESEARCH

Research initiatives are needed on topics of interoperability, semantic Web and long-term digital preservation. The European Commission issued a call for new research projects and networks of excellence in the fields of: advanced digital library services (including middleware for searching distributed content, end-user research and business models), intelligent heritage (modelling and visualisation of cultural objects, monuments, sites, etc.), and digitisation, restoration and preservation topics (in particular for historic film and video material).

An important additional challenge concerns the role of cultural institutions in supporting technological-oriented research activities. Today few large cultural institutions have specific "digital" technology research activities and departments, yet this is a prerequisite for attacking some of the emerging 21st Century challenges such as digital preservation.

14. THE PATRAS-ROME INITIATIVE AND ON-GOING WORK

The objective of this initiative is to focus attention on the societal and economic value of digitisation and long-term digital preservation in Europe. The initiative aims to promote the expansion of digitisation to a critical mass of European organizations. Particular attention is paid to the large number of cultural and other "small" organizations that possess limited technical expertise and/or financial and human resources and hesitate embarking on





potentially costly digitisation and preservation actions. The initiative aims to build out of the on going actions already adopted by NRG and being carried out by MINERVA. The full text of the Patras–Rome initiative is included in the meeting's proceedings. However, summarising the joint Hellenic-Italian document the focus is on making available results as visible and useful as possible. The target is to extend digitisation and preservation to the large number of organisations who don't have, and may never have, in-house digitisation and preservation facilities. They need easy to digest information and targeted training. They will probably need external support and services, and this may involve trusting their content to third parties.

The core of this initiative is the Patras-Rome list. This should provide a consolidation of all recommendations, guidelines, practices, and technical standards available. It will be updated every 6 months and include the evaluation of the usefulness and applicability of the different guidelines.

The NRG progress reports, handbooks, etc. as well as the e-learning materials will all support such an initiative. The Hellenic Presidency presented some very early results after setting up a pilot user group.

More generally several of the Member State reports highlighted the importance of open source software for smaller cultural institutions. And in one case the idea of a "virtual European observatory" for digitisation was mentioned as a federating concept for the future.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (JULY – DECEMBER 2003)

For the second semester 2003 the Italian Presidency sets out the following priorities:

- 1. Consolidate the NRG position and high-level political commitment also using the tool of publications and recommendations by NRG.
- 2. Present the guidelines for quality for web sites on culture.
- 3. Extend the network to NAS and small institutions.
- 4. Finalise the handbook on good practice before publication
- 5. Carry on the activity on preservation of digital memory.

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.

Practical actions to be undertaken before the next NRG meeting:

- The 2nd NRG report is planned for December 2003, under the Italian Presidency. It will focus on policy developments, national initiatives and strategic developments considerations. Coverage will be extended to the 10 member states preparing for adhesion to the EU. It will emphasise cooperative actions, relevance to smaller cultural institution, and specific regional digitisation activities.
- Continued distribution of the 1st NRG report opening channels for future NRG publications and reinforcing the position of NRG in accordance with their ToR.
- Factual information will be detached from the 2nd NRG report and will be compiled into a separate **NRG Handbook**. The "Who is who" is to be completed for the next NRG meeting and input will be required from NRG members, and urgent "positive" feedback will be needed NRG and MINERVA on the initial data structures and data collection approach.







- During the Italian Presidency MINERVA will consolidate a data model linking best practices and benchmarking and, coupled with the NRG reports and handbooks, will enable the creation and maintenance of **policy profiles**.
- MINERVA will produce a report in August 2003 outlining ways to develop and promote the use of the **benchmarking** tool. The longer-term focus will be online benchmarking, analysis and exploitation of gathered data, tool improvements, and the involvement of the new accession states.
- Concerning inventory building validation activities will be identified and presented at the next NRG meeting. The target is to set guidelines for such a service, keeping in mind multilingualism.
- Concerning **interoperability and service provision**, work will cover interoperability (focusing on the evaluation of DC.Culture), a draft set of technical guidelines, an IPR round table, and consideration of the concept of an observatory with recommendations as appropriate.
- The **good practice handbook** will be published for the NRG meeting in Parma. Good practice nominations will continue (the NRG is responsible for the selection of examples). Work will continue in order to refine the "Handbook on good practice" through the web form on the MINERVA web site comments and amendments are invited. Each country is asked to nominate at least one expert to join the MINERVA working group.
- Under the "Patras Rome" initiative the next tasks are to package the results on benchmarking, good practice and quality guidelines and prepare them as a "Patras—Rome List of Guidelines" under the Italian Presidency. Ways to promote the benefits of digitisation to the many smaller organizations and the collection of recommendations, guidelines, practices, and technical standards will be further advanced under the Italian Presidency.
- Comments and amendment are also needed to the list of **competence/advisory centres.** A strategy is needed to create added value services at European level by reinforcing the network of expertise.
- MINERVA will enlarge the group on **IPR** (including the new ascension states) and report at the next NRG meeting. The topic space covers also digital rights management, technical protection mechanisms, copyright exceptions and the educational use of digital assets, and names of experts are requested from NRG members.
- A **first user group workshop** will be held in Rome on "Digitisation: What to do and how to do it" (29 October 2003). It will be open to those who have signed the new MINERVA "cooperation agreement".
- The 1st draft of **e-learning** training courses in English will be made available for comments.
- Strategies and actions will be identified for the adoption and implementation of the **Quality Framework** for web sites at national level. A quality handbook will be finalised for the next NRG meeting. As part of this strategy, the Italian Presidency and the MINERVA quality working group intends, in agreement with NRG, to produce a "charter" to be submitted for approval to the Council of Ministers of Culture on 24 November.
- MINERVA to support the work of ERPANET to generate a clear short-term action
 plan for presentation and validation during the International Conference on LongTerm Preservation of Digital Memories organised under the Italian Presidency.
 MINERVA to help distribute ERPANET questionnaire.







- General call to extend **experts participation** in all the MINERVA workgroups as a way to bring together a wider range of experts in different national networks.
- The Netherlands will lead the development of a position paper on **EU-added value** and post-Lund strategy, and will present it at the next NRG meeting. This should include a set of concrete objectives and success indicators for each action in the Lund Action plan. It will also define a set of possible priorities for a next action plan.
- MINERVA will establish a working group on multilingual access.

EMERGING STRATEGIC ISSUES

Some strategic issues identified in the last NRG meeting are being treated by MINERVA, e.g. multilingual access, IPR, the relevance to smaller institutions, the inclusion of new accession states. Other strategic issues still need to be addressed, and yet others are now emerging. The approach taken must always focus on providing very practical answers.

Creating a European area for digitised cultural resources and defining the EU-added value of the content framework. Emerging issues are those of optimising content creation (e.g. via linking national memory programmes and projects, collaborative policies for digitisation), open technical infrastructures and common standards, business models, and digital service delivery. Several member states (the Netherlands, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, UK and Ireland) are prepared to develop a position paper on EU-added value. This task should start with a set of concrete objectives and success indicators for each action in the Lund Action Plan. It should then define a set of possible priorities for a next action plan (a post-Lund plan envisaged for mid 2005). The concept of a virtual European observatory on digitization could be a useful catalyst for strengthening complementary activities in the different member states and for fostering reflection on future objectives. Links with research initiatives must be examined, with a duel focus on new tools for high quality cultural content creation and on ensuring that emerging technologies are rapidly taken-up. How best to support partnerships between technology and industry and the institutions? How to "embed digitisation" in the routine work of the institutions? How to exploit the enabling opportunities of advanced technologies, and to build technological expertise and skills in the institutions? How to equip institutions with a research capability, and help them structure a future European digitised cultural content space? How best to contribute to emerging digital preservation policies? MINERVA should support this discussion, and enable the NRG plays its full role in the debate.

Work on inventories and interoperability is creating the possibility of a European inventory of digital culture. It is important to build on the work of existing **national portals** and culturenets. A meeting will be organised to consider how a sustainable European Inventory can be created.

The plans concerning the 2nd NRG progress report on policy developments in the member states, coverage of the new accession states, and emphasis on cooperative actions between member states and in the international context, certainly reflects a shift in focus of joint NRG/MINERVA products.







CONCLUSIONS OF THE MEETING

The NRG is guardian of the Lund Principles and a platform for pro-active coordination, as stated in its Terms of Reference. MINERVA is responsible for the routine implementation of Lund Action Plan. The NRG promotes the objectives of Lund and the products of MINERVA, identifies emerging priorities, and encourages wider cooperation both between different cultural institutions and with other related sectors. NRG members must ensure the continuity of the actions, develop collectively new themes and goals, and plan for their regular meetings.

The NRG appreciated the Greek Presidency's work in support of the Lund Action Plan and welcomed both the discussions on new priorities and the follow-up given to the Spanish and Danish Presidencies work on digital preservation. In particular, the NRG considers that the Patras-Rome initiative contributes significantly towards the grouping of different actions and the increased focus on the societal and economical value of digitisation and long-term preservation of digital assets.

One additional positive feature of the initiative is that it materialises, for the first time, the principle of joint effort and actions to be undertaken in common by successive presidencies. Such an effort is necessary given the great complexity of the actions envisaged, the consensus that must be built, and the time required to carry the actions envisaged.

The NRG thanked the Hellenic and Italian presidencies for this example of successful collaboration and considered that such efforts should be continued by the upcoming presidencies.

The Italian Presidency is holding 3 major conferences on Cultural Heritage: an International Conference on Long Term Preservation of Digital Memories in Florence on 16-17 October, the MINERVA users group meeting in Roma on 29 October, the 5th NRG meeting in Parma on 19 November followed by an international congress on Accessibility and Quality Framework on Cultural web site and IPR on 20-21 November.

The NRG thanked the Hellenic Presidency for its hospitality, and the organisation of and constructive input to the debate of this meeting.

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