Regional Meeting
on Digitization of Cultural Heritage

Ohrid, 17-20 March 2005
Republic of Macedonia

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COORDINATION OF DIGITISATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE IN SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COORDINATION OF DIGITISATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE IN SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE

Preamble

The enormous richness of the cultural and scientific heritage and knowledge resources in Europe, and in particular in the South-Eastern Europe, forms the collective and evolving memory of our diverse societies. It therefore demands that the highest attention is paid to its knowledge, preservation and promotion.

The advent of the Information Society and the diffusion of the new information and communication technologies affect the policies and programmes of the national states, that should act in a coordinated manner, in order to improve rationalisation and impact of the initiatives for their heritage.

New technologies increased enormously the range of possibilities for the organisation and storage of data about cultural and scientific heritage to improve access for citizens as well as for preserving SEE cultural heritage.

Digitisation is an essential step aimed at preserving and promoting collective cultural heritage, thus safeguarding cultural diversity in the global environment. Also it could improve the presence of the cultural heritage of the region on the Web, more in accordance with its contribution to the world's cultural heritage.
However, there are a number of barriers that could hinder reaching this objective such as fragmentation of approach and lack of synergies between cultural programmes and IT, obsolescence of formats and technologies, handling of intellectual property rights, lack of simple and common forms of access for citizens.

Digitisation is understood here as a collection of activities including, but not limited to: digital capture, transformation from analogue to digital form, describing and representations of heritage objects and documentation about them, processing, presentation and long term preservation of digitised content.

To make digitisation initiatives truly successful, economic and sustainable over time, several elements have been identified:

o   a strong need for political, legislative and institutional strategies and for their harmonisation;

o   a need for a stronger coordination at national and better exchange at regional level at policy, programme and project segments;

- o integration of activities carried out by research and cultural institutions and integration of services provided by archives, museums and libraries;

- o a need to develop awareness of the importance that cultural and scientific assets are catalogued before they are digitised, as knowledge of the heritage is essential for the correct interpretation of the digitised objects;

- o a need for guidelines and examples of best practices in order to improve cost-effectiveness and quality of the digitisation initiatives;

- o the use of standards to support interoperability, accessibility, preservation and security needs in order to improve the wide usefulness, cost effectiveness and long term future of digital resources.

The South Eastern European Countries could benefit from sharing experiences with the current EU Member States through working together on the existing common strengths as well as identifying weaknesses in order to establish a common agenda.

It is in these terms that UNESCO Venice Office in cooperation with the Italian Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities identified feasible modalities for addressing the situation of heritage digitization in South Eastern Europe (SEE).

Parallely with this process, following a number of requests and suggestions of the South Eastern European (SEE) member states, UNESCO Venice Office agreed with the Cultural Heritage Protection Office, Ministry of culture of Republic of Macedonia to organise a regional meeting with the following objectives:

1. to asses the current situation in heritage digitization in the countries of SEE;
2. to agree upon a joint and shared strategy;
3. to agree upon the mid-term actions to be undertaken in order to improve the national as well as regional processes of heritage digitisation.

Current situation

In order to asses the concept as well as the current situation of the level of heritage digitization, each country representative participating in this meeting, presented the paper structured on the questionnaire previously submitted.

The discussion that took place in the course of this meeting showed that:

- o There is a different level of governmental involvement in digitisation activities in the countries from the region;
- o Mass digitisation is still exception in the region;
- o The institutions from South-Eastern Europe currently are on various levels concerning expertise and digitisation practices;
- o All these lead to heterogeneous setting in the region;
- o However, because of the shared cultural and scientific heritage the cooperation on national and regional level is a key issue.

The presentation of the Project Minerva is enclosed in Annex 4. The project had a great impact in creating a common European platform made up of guidelines and recommendations for the heritage digitization in western Europe hence the experience acquired as well as the existing core of professional staff represents an asset to the process of creation of heritage digitisation strategy for SEE.

This experience has not been introduced on a systematic basis in the South-Eastern Europe. At the same time, the knowledge acquired through MINERVA project could catalyse the process of coordination and development of digitisation activities in the region.

The previous initiatives undertaken on the territory of SEE are listed in Annex 3. Very valuable work has been done to promote various aspects of digitization as well as bringing forward the necessity of standardisation and coordination on both national and regional level. Participants in this conference have been carefully selected to include the maximum participation of the achievements in all concerned countries. The contributions referred to this previous experience can be summed up in the following way:

- o There is initial informal form of regional cooperation which was developed as SEEDI, the South East European Digitisation Initiative initiated by the Borovets Declaration in 2003,
- o Some institutional agreement for cooperation already exist, e.g. there is an official agreement on the level of Academies of Sciences between IMI-BAS (Institute of Mathematics and Informatics of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences) and MI-SANU (Mathematics Institute, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts);
- o In most cases institutions work on small-scale isolated projects but this means that they already have some initial experience and understanding on the importance of shared regional resources.

The participants concluded that it is necessary to take in consideration the outcomes and integrate them in the future initiatives in the following manner:

- o taking measures on expanding, enriching and further developing the already existing cooperation forms;

- o sharing good experiences and learning from the unsuccessful ones;
- o presenting the experience of successful EU and other international projects in the region;
- o involving more experienced organisations in training throughout the region;
- o promoting the development of common resources.

Principles

Taking into account all the above premises and considerations, the participants of the Meeting agreed on the following principles:

- o **Intelligent use of new technologies**
  It is recognised the important role that the new information and communication technologies can play towards a widespread diffusion of culture and knowledge. For this reason, cultural institutions and technological centres will be fostered to work together in developing expertise for an appropriate use of the new technologies with a special reference to the Internet and the Web.

- o **Cataloguing and digitisation**
  It is recognised that knowledge of the cultural and scientific heritage is essential for taking decisions concerning its digitisation and for interpreting the digitised resources. For this reason, inventorying and cataloguing should precede or accompany the digitisation of cultural and scientific assets.

- o **Accessibility**
  Accessibility is recognised as a fundamental issue for all citizens, irrespective of age or level of technical understanding. A special priority will be given to people with particular needs. For this reason, the requirements of accessibility in its different aspects will be integrated into all guidelines and recommendations promoted by the participating institutions. These requirements will be developed in the context of international standards for accessibility, as the recommendations produced by the World Wide Web Consortium and others.

- o **Quality**
  Special attention will be paid to the implementation of quality standards in cultural and scientific content creation and web applications. Quality results achieved through the network will be disseminated and promoted. Support will be given to public awareness-raising events and training initiatives.

- o **IPR and privacy**
  Importance of balancing the right of access to the scientific and cultural heritage with the need to respect Intellectual Property Rights and the privacy of the individual is recognised. For this reason, the adoption of all the available technical and legal instruments to improve accessibility and overcome legislative and normative barriers is encouraged. Dialogue between cultural and scientific sectors, IPR experts, companies implementing Digital Rights Management solutions and the Content Industries should be encouraged as well.

- o **Interoperability and standards, long term preservation**
  It is of the highest importance that the digital resources produced are as widely interoperable, accessible and secure as possible. For this reason, the adoption of technical guidelines and open standards will be encouraged to enable the building of e-services that give integrated access to cultural and scientific heritage. The adoption of technical standards can support as well the durability and long term preservation of the digital resources created.

- o **Inventories and multilingualism**
  Fundamental requirement is to ensure that all citizens can easily find the contents that meet their needs. Knowledge of existing repositories and available digital resources of cultural and scientific interest as well as the careful monitoring of new

developments in this sector are necessary prerequisites for the realisation of valuable services aiming to make available digital resources of cultural and scientific interest to the citizens. It is recognised the need to adopt the necessary measures to allow the discovery and access to these resources within a multilingual environment, in order to safeguard the cultural diversity.

o **Good practices**
Promotion of good practices plays a very important role, with particular regard to the following objectives:
- to improve the knowledge of the others;
- to monitor advance as well as emergence of obstacles, through the analysis of what is happening in the other countries;
- to foster the participation of the cultural institutions, stimulating them to present themselves, their policies, programmes and projects.

For this scope, campaigns of data collections in each of the participating countries will be promoted, publishing of regular reports about results and analysis of the gathered data will be encouraged.

o **Cooperation at local, national, regional, European and international levels**
Cooperation is looked for and established with local, national, regional, European and International institutions and organisations, which deals with preservation, access and promotion of cultural and scientific heritage. This initiative will be opened to the various sectors of the civil society such as:
- cultural governmental and non-governmental organizations;
- research and academic sectors;
- private business and industrial sector, particularly with the software, media and content industry as well as IPR protection organisations;
- the tourism sector;
- the educational sector.

o **Training**
Training is considered as an issue of primary importance. Heritage professionals participating in the processes of heritage conservation and management should acquire appropriate skills to understand and perform the necessary procedures of digitization. Such training should be provided in both formal and informal way as well as it should be encouraged as a periodic activity.

o **Building the future together: at the forefront of the knowledge society**
Emerging on-line cultural portals represent a very important component in the development of an inclusive Information Society. These portals need to be built on a firm foundation of good quality and interoperability, to meet the real needs of learners, tourists and citizens, as well as the cultural and creative industries. A multitude of different actors, with different skills, interests and economic resources are demanded to meet with the common goal of implementing sustainable services of public interest. These implementations should happen within a joint and coordinated approach of all heritage domains.

Proposed strategy for the next three years

Based on the above analysis of the current situation and the discussion that took place in the course of the Regional Meeting on Digitization of Cultural Heritage – Ohrid, Republic of Macedonia, 17-20 March 2005 the participants agreed on the following:

1. Most important pre-requisites that need to be pursued and encouraged in the light of the future international cooperation of the South-Eastern European area are:
    a. the coordination of initiatives and programmes at national and regional level;
    b. the development of national systems of reference;
    c. the creation of stable and acknowledged cooperation between scientific research and cultural heritage sector;
    d. the organisation of national campaigns to increase awareness and understanding of the available international standards, catalogues and guidelines;
    e. the standardisation in the frame of digitisation of cultural and scientific heritage.

2. Concrete steps to be considered:
    a. Establishment of national reference points.
    b. Establishment of a regional coordination point having the following tasks/objectives:
        i. To facilitate contacts between SEE coordination and EU/NRG;
        ii. To set up an action plan based on the Member States' contributions to this meeting;
        iii. To establish experts groups on specific topics;
        iv. To conduct additional surveys of regional, national and local initiatives;
        v. To create a framework to promote inventories and digitisation projects, with regard to the integration of cultural and scientific heritage sectors;
        vi. To create a framework for the identification of good practices and competence centres in the Region;
        vii. To encourage the development of common online resources (e.g. authority files)
        viii. To use the Web as communication and coordination tool;
        ix. To conduct periodic progress assessment and provide feedback to the parties involved.

3. The participants to the Meeting also request UNESCO Venice Office to assist on the following:
    a. Promotion of cooperation in the domain of heritage digitization in SEE;
    b. Assistance in guidance of the implementation of the strategic development process;
    c. Facilitation in development of a regional process of coordination and training in the heritage digitisation;
    d. By acting as a catalyser in the initiatives of institutional exchange and capacity building, notably referring to the experience acquired by the project Minerva, coordinated by the Italian Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities.

ANNEX 1

UNESCO
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Regional Meeting
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P r o g r a m m e

Thursday, 17 march 2005

Arrival of participants and transfer to Ohrid
("Metropol" and "Bellevue" hotels)

Friday, 18 march 2005

08.00 – 09.00   *Registration*

09.00 – 09.20   *Official Opening of the Meeting by:*

Acad. Katica Kulavkova
Deputy President of the National Commission for UNESCO in Republic of Macedonia

Mr. Damir Dijakovic,
UNESCO-ROSTE

Mr. Jordan Trca
President of the Local Community Council - Ohrid

Beginning of the working session moderated by: Ms. Milena Dobreva, Ms. Rossella Caffo, Mr. Lazar Sumanov

09.20 – 09.30   **Mr. Koço Gjipali,**
National Center for Digitalisation of Cultural Heritage, ALBANIA
Mr. Vasil S.Tole,
Department for Cultural Heritage, ALBANIA
Cataloguing, Actual Situation and Perspective

09.30 – 09.40   **Ms. Muamera Smajić,**
National and University Library of Bosnia and Herzegovina, BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA
Challenges in Protecting of Cultural Heritage in B&H

09.40 – 09.50   **Ms. Milena Dobreva,**
Institute of Mathematics and Informatics, BUGARIJA
An Overview of Bulgarian Digitization Experience

09.50 – 10.00   **Ms. Dunja Seiter Sverko – Ms. Lana Krizaj,**
Ministry of Culture, Administration for Cultural Development and Cultural Policy, CROATIA
Digitization of Cultural Heritage in the Republic of Croatia: From the Current Situation Assessment Towards the National Strategy

10.00 – 10.10   **Mr. Aleksandar Cicimov,**
National Institution - Conservation Centre - Strumica, MACEDONIA
Digitisation Basics and the Current Digitisation Status in the Field of Protection of Cultural Heritage in the Republic of Macedonia

10.10 – 10.20   **Mr. Dan Matei,**
CIMEC – Institute for Cultural Memory, ROMANIA
The Union Catalogues of the Memory Institutions and the Digital Libraries: The Romanian Case

10.20 – 10.30   Coffee break

10.30 – 10.40   **Mr. Zoran Ognjanović,**
Mathematical Institute of serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, SERBIA and MONTENEGRO
Digitization Experiences in Serbia – National Centre for Digitization

10.40 – 10.50   **Mr. Sinisa Temerinski,**
Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of Serbia, SERBIA and MONTENEGRO
Digitization of the Existing Documentation of Kalenic Monastery

10.50 – 11.00   **Mr. Lazar Sumanov,**
ICOMOS, MACEDONIA
Model of the National Inventory of the Immovable Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Macedonia

11.00 –11.10   **Ms. Eleni Novakovska,**
National and University Library, MACEDONIA
Initiation of the digitization process in the NUL

11.10 – 11.20   **Mr. Milan Ivanovski,**
National Institution - National Conservation Center, MACEDONIA
Initiation of the digitization process of the movable and immovable cultural heritage

11.20 – 11.30   **Mr. Dimitrie Buzarovski,**
IRAM (Institute for Research and Archiving of Music), MACEDONIA
IRAM's Digitisation of the Audio and Video Cultural Heritage

11.30 – 11.40   **Ms. Snezana Venovska Antevska,**
Institute for Macedonian Language "Krste Misirkov", MACEDONIA
Digitization as possibility for language protection

11.40 – 11.50   **Mr. Marko Kolovski,**
Ensemble "Tanec", MACEDONIA
Between the past and the future: "TANEC" Folklore Ensemble at the threshold of the digital era

11.50 – 12.00	**Mr. Igor Stardelov,** Cinemateque of Macedonia, MACEDONIA *Cinemateque of Macedonia in the 3-D era*
12.00 – 12.10	**Mr. Goce Simonoski** InfoTeh Company, MACEDONIA *Development of New Digitalisation Techniques,* *Supporting Cultural Heritage Management in SEE*
13.00 – 14.30	Lunch
14.30 – 16.15	**Ms. Rossella Caffo, Ms. Giuliana De Francesco, Ms. Marzia Piccininno,** MINERVA Project *Minerva experience/model Products*
16.15 – 16.30	Coffee break
16.30 – 17.45	Presentation of a draft SEE strategy, Discussion
17.45	End session
19.00	Dinner (Eventually working group on preparation of draft document - evening after the session)

Saturday, 19 march 2005

09.00 - 11.45	Discussion and finalization of the document
11.45 - 12.00	Coffee break
12.00 - 12.30	Conclusion
12.30	Lunch
Afternoon	Guided visit of city Ohrid
20.30	Dinner

Sunday, 20 march 2005

Transfer to Skopje and departure of participants

ANNEX 2

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ANNEX 3

THE BACKGROUND INITIATIVES

A - THE PREVIOUS ACTIONS

The following actions have been taken in the South-Eastern European area:

- International Conference "New Technologies and Standards: Digitisation of Cultural Heritage" (Belgrade, 3-5 June). Representative of Minerva participated to the Conference and its presentation was included in the Proceedings of the Conference published in the *Review of the National Centre for Digitisation*;

- South Eastern European Digitisation Initiative was established as outcome of the Viminacium Round Table on future cooperation in the field of digitisation of cultural and scientific heritage among South Eastern European institutions (June 5th 2004);

- International Seminar "Digitisation of Cultural and Scientific Heritage" (Bansko, Bulgaria, 28 August – 2 September 2004). Representative of Minerva participated to the Conference and its presentation was included in the Proceedings of the Conference published in the International Journal Information Theories and Applications.

The following South-Eastern European institutions subscribed the Cooperation Agreement with MINERVA:

Institute for Mathematics and Informatics (IMI), Bulgarian Academy of Science, Sofia
http://www.math.bas.bg/

Mathematical Institute of Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Belgrade
http://www.mi.sanu.ac.yu/

National Center for Digitization, Belgrade
http://www.ncd.matf.bg.ac.yu/

Concerning the National Centre for Digitisation, which is hosted by the Mathematical Faculty in Belgrade, the list of founders institutions follows:
Archaeological Institute SANU
Serbian Archive
Yugoslav Film Archive
Mathematical Faculty
Mathematical Institute SANU
National Museum
Serbian National Library
Institute for Protection

The ensemble of these actions represents the fundamental background of this Strategic Document.

B - THE EUROPEAN REFERENCES

The following actions of the European Union and its Member States are considered as very important references, in the aim of the international environment where this Strategic Document was conceived and shall be further implemented:

- eEurope 2002 - Accessibility of Public Web Sites and their Content - seeks to bring European citizens on-line in all aspects of their lives, allowing them to participate in and benefit from the possibilities offered by digital technologies;

- eEurope 2005 aims to stimulate secure services, applications and content based on a widely available broadband infrastructure and seeks to ensure that "Museums, libraries, archives and similar institutions that play a key role in elearning should also be connected to broadband networks"

- Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 May 2001 on the Harmonisation of certain aspects of copyright and related rights in the Information Society (2001/29/CE);

- Commissioner Liikanen called in COM(2001) 529, Commission and Member States to adopt by the end of 2001 the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) Guidelines, produced by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C);

- Council Resolution of 21 January 2002 on culture and the knowledge society (2002/C 32/01) encourages the European Commission and the Member States to facilitate cooperation and to exchange information and good practice at European level; to ensure accessibility to digital contents by every citizen of the European Union; quality-initiatives in cultural web sites; and Council Resolution of 21 January 2002 on the role of culture in the development of the European Union (2002/C 32/02) remarks the strategic role of culture;

- Council Resolution on Preserving Tomorrow's memory - Preserving Digital Content for future generations of the 25 June 2002 (2002/C/162/02);

- Charter of Parma, approved by the National Representatives Group during its fifth meeting held in Parma on the 19th of November 2003, under the Italian Presidency of the European Union.

With regard to the liaised actions in the European Union, the following references should be taken in consideration for the further deployment of the aims of this Strategic Document:

- on April 2001 the European representatives encountered in Lund, under the auspices of the Swedish Presidency in turn and of the European Commission, and agreed to become the guardian of the *Lund Principles* for the digitisation of the cultural and scientific contents. For this purpose they established a permanent group of representatives of the national authorities, further named *National Representatives Group (NRG)* and the implementation framework for the coordination mechanisms for digitisation policies and programmes further named *Lund Action Plan*;

- on March 2002 the *Minerva* project was launched with the support of the European Commission and the coordination of the Italian Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities, constituting the operative framework for the implementation of the Lund Action Plan and hosting the secretariat of the NRG; the Minerva project is coordinated by the Italian Ministry of Culture (Ministero per i Beni e le Attività

Culturali) who cooperated with UNESCO Roste to the preparation of the Ohrid Meeting and participates with its delegation;

o in April 2003 Minerva submitted a proposal to extend the Minerva network to the New Accession States, Russia and Israel, creating the *Minerva Plus* project that is actively running since February 2004.

o in November 2003 the Charter of Parma was approved by National Representatives Group met in Parma for their semi-annual official meeting. The Charter continues and supports the fundamental Lund Principles.

o On September 3rd 2004 the Council of the European Union approved the Conclusions on the Work Plan for Culture 2005 – 2006 in view of the discussion of the Cultural Affairs Committee on 7 September 2004. The Conclusions encompasses among its 5 priorities the progress of the coordination of digitisation, aiming at strengthening the role of the NRG.

Other international references:

o *UNESCO Charter on the Preservation of the Digital Heritage,* adopted at the 32nd session of the General Conference of UNESCO, 17 October 2003.
http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13366&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

o *UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace*, adopted by the UNESCO General Conference at its 32nd session (October 2003).
http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13475&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

The *Recommendation* addresses following issues:
- Development of multilingual content and systems
- Facilitating access to networks and services
- Development of public domain content
- Reaffirming the equitable balance between the interests of rights-holders and the public interest

ANNEX 4

MINERVA PROJECT

FOREWORD: THE EEUROPE INITIATIVE AND THE LUND PRINCIPLES

The critical role of the digitisation of cultural and scientific content was recognised in the *e*Europe 2002 Action Plan, endorsed by the EU Member States at the Feira European Council in June 2000. Amongst the objectives of the Action Plan is that of stimulating European content in global networks (objective 3d), in order fully to exploit the opportunities created by the digital technologies.

The Commission convened a meeting in Lund (4 April 2001), in cooperation with the Swedish Presidency, asking Member States to nominate representatives and started collecting information on existing experiences and programmes in Europe.

Objective of the meeting was to identify ways in which "a coordination mechanism for digitisation policies and programmes across the Member States" could be put in place to stimulate European content on global networks. The major outcome of this meeting was the 'Lund Principles'. From these principles the Lund Action Plan was developed, as a practical list of objectives and tasks for implementation.

The Lund Principles state that the Member States could make progress on the eEurope objective if they:

• established an ongoing forum for coordination of policies for digitisation;

• supported the developing of a European view on policies and programmes;

• exchanged and promoted good practice, guidelines and consistency of practice and skills development;

• worked in a collaborative manner to make visible and accessible the digitised cultural and scientific heritage of Europe.

The Commission could help achieve the eEurope objectives by:

• supporting coordination activities;

• enabling the creation of competence centres;

• fostering the development of benchmarking tools for digitisation practices;

• encouraging a framework that would enable a shared vision of European content;

• assisting Member States to improve access and awareness for citizens through enhancing the quality and usability of content and the development of models to enable eCulture enterprises.

COORDINATION MECHANISMS: THE NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES GROUP

The European Commission asked the Member States to appoint national representatives for digitisation in order to coordinate digitisation policies and programmes and to facilitate the adoption and implementation of the Lund Action Plan. All the people appointed make up the National Representatives Group – NRG.

The NRG meets every six months, under the chair of each rotating Presidency and supported by EC, to share national experiences and create a common platform for cooperation and coordination of national activities across the European Union, as well as for their follow up at national level. NRG provides a stable, continuing focus for consensus building among Member States, for promoting good practice, and for encouraging initiatives to support the visibility of quality cultural sites.

MINERVA – Ministerial network for valorising activities in digitisation

Within this European framework, MINERVA project has the tasks to carry on the coordination started by the European Commission in collaboration with Member States, to support the activity of the National Representative Group.

MINERVA is a project financed by the European Commission in the ambit of the IST programme and the Fifth Framework Programme. It set up a network of the European Ministries for culture, plus those of Israel and Russia, coordinated by the Italian Ministry, to harmonise policies and programmes in the field of digitisation of cultural heritage.

Thanks to the high level of involvement of national governments, MINERVA also intends to coordinate corresponding national programmes, as well as to establish contacts with other European countries, international organisations, associations, networks and projects involved in the digitisation sector, supporting the convergence among archives, libraries, museums, in a perspective of integration of services among the various memory institutions.

MINERVA's goals

- To discuss, correlate and harmonise activities carried out in digitisation of cultural content to promote awareness and exchange of experiences at European level

- To create a common European platform made up of recommendations and guidelines about digitisation, standards, long-term accessibility and preservation quality of cultural web sites.

- To coordinate the national programmes

- To cooperate with other projects acting in the field of digitisation

- Sustainability of the network

How MINERVA works

MINERVA, therefore, operates on two levels: one political and the other technical.

The political level consists in guaranteeing close collaboration among Member States through high-level institutions such as ministries that have responsibility for cultural heritage, and between these and the European Commission.

Moreover, in this perspective MINERVA intends to give visibility to national initiatives, to promote the exchange of good practices, and to ensure the diffusion and awareness of community policies and programmes at both national and local levels.

The technical level concerns the creation of a common European platform built from a series of recommendations and guidelines, metadata, standards related to digitisation, to the long-term conservation and accessibility of contents, in the framework of quality guarantees.

Organisation

Great importance has been attached to the organisational structure in order to enable the concrete realisation of the actions encompassed in the project workplan and to create an effective coordination mechanisms, essential for the success of the project.

This foresees a Steering Committee, made up of a representative for each partner and chaired by the project coordinator, and a series of workgroups made up by experts nominated by the partners.

In each partner country there is a national structure, which works in close contact with the European structure, and corresponds to the general structure.

The workgroups carry out their activities in constant contact with their European colleagues.

The main function of the project coordinator is to guarantee that all activities are carried out in the perspective of European integration, to favour the participation of all partner countries, to ensure common effort, so that each result obtained, each product created takes on a real European dimension, built through the consensus of all.

The added value of the project lies in the fact that it has initiated a real and effective collaboration, at both national and European levels, among all heritage sectors, outlining a framework of convergence among all memory institutions with the objective of achieving, thanks to technology, integrated access services to cultural resources.

MINERVA working groups are:

- Benchmarking framework
- Identification of good practices and competence centres
- Interoperability and service provision
  - ✓ IPR-Intellectual Property Right
- Inventories, discovery of digitised content, multilingualism issues
- Identification of user needs, content and quality framework for common access point

Results & networking

MINERVA has demonstrated to have contributed to the creation of a broad consensus at institutional level on the importance of promoting the European culture through the net.

The NRG activated a mechanism of institutional cooperation among the Presidencies of the Council of the European Union through a rolling agenda. This strategy allows grants continuity and incisiveness to the actions undertaken.

The NRG/MINERVA network is now a point of reference for Member States for the digitisation of the cultural and scientific heritage because it is the link between the EU and the Member States and it is a network gathering hundreds of experts and institutional representatives for the digitisation of cultural heritage.

This fundamental role of the network NRG/MINERVA was also recognised by the Comité des Affaires Culturelles (CAC) of the council of the ministers of the European Union that included into its own priorities for the period 2005-6 the institutionalisation of the NRG once the European funding will end (12074/04 CULT62, 3 September 2004).