

Consultation: Green Paper on a Common Strategic Framework for future EU Research and Innovation Funding

Position Paper of DC- NET and LINKED HERITAGE partners

Draft Version 4.0

19/5/2011

Foreword

The partners of DC-NET ERA-NET and of LINKED HERITAGE Best Practice Network have agreed on the following 7 points that represent very important key aspects for the progress of the research and innovation in the domain of the digital cultural heritage.

A wide community exists in the digital cultural heritage acting in the frame of the research, development and innovation deployment. This community has been successfully working together in the last 10 years on standards, recommendations, deployment of innovative services and program coordination. The same continuously growing community is currently committed to progress on the digitization and digital access to the European heritage, for the research, for the education and for the long-life learning, with actions both at local, regional and European levels.

The community participates to the DC-NET and to the LINKED HERITAGE projects (supported by the European Commission respectively under FP7 and CIP ICT-PSP programmes) and within the scope of the projects it agrees to contribute to this open consultation on a jointly basis.

The following 7 points represent the synthesis of the common shared priorities and pre-requisites for the success of the new framework for the European Competitiveness and Research in the domain of the digital cultural heritage.

Naturally, cultural and research institutions, Member States, regional governments and all the organizations that participate to the above mentioned projects are contributing also autonomously to the open consultation with their own individual papers.

1. European Coordination: the role of Member States and European Commission

The sector of the cultural heritage is changing very rapidly.

The new ICT technologies are opening new areas of research, development and growth for the sector that need to be monitored and accompanied carefully.

The integration of investment from the private and the public sector, within a dimension that becomes more and more global demand for the attention and the reflection of the Member States and the European Commission, together, in a coordinated and synergic manner.

The experience of the National Representatives Group for the digitization of cultural heritage, supported by the Minerva series of projects¹, which run from 2001 to 2007 and which prepared for the advent of Europeana has demonstrated the validity of such an approach.

The new Member States Expert Group established by the European Commission to support the evolution of European reinforces the idea.

The time is mature now to re-launch a more ambitious approach to cooperation and pooling of resources , not restricted to Europeana but addressing the whole range of the Digital Cultural Heritage needs, where Member States and EC representatives work together, with the support of the EU Presidencies and of a coordination project acting as the operational arm of the action. From this point of view, the example of Minerva and of the Joint Programming Initiative are important models of reference.

2. Europeana: towards its full deployment

The Digital Agenda for Europe, one of the seven flagship initiatives of the Europe 2020 Strategy has pointed out the importance of strengthening Europeana, the EU public digital library.

The DC-NET and LINKED HERITAGE projects acknowledge the importance of the role that Europeana can have for the cultural heritage sector.

It can be also said that Europeana has completed its innovation loop and the project is now entering into its full deployment phase. In this light, the identification of a specific and tailored mechanism for the provision of the EC funding is recommended , complemented by the mechanisms for its continuous innovation.

3. Preservation: a task for the Member States

The task of preservation of digital master copies is the responsibility of the Member States; it takes place via the national memory institutions or through other public institutions under the direct responsibility of governments. National frameworks that regulate this area, like rules on legal deposit and handling of public records differ from country to country; the publishing sector is also involved, for example where born digital material is concerned.

For this reason, the task of preservation and the creation of a "dark archive" where master copies of digital resources in the public domain and born digital works can be stored is a delicate and relevant matter and can **not be** an appropriate task for Europeana, as hypothesised in the *New Renaissance* report².

4. Digital Cultural Heritage: the need for a research e-Infrastructure

¹ www.minervaeurope.org

² Report of the "Comité des Sages". Reflection group on bringing Europe's cultural heritage online.

Research in digital cultural heritage is rapidly becoming data intensive.

This is largely due to the creation of large bodies of digital material through mass digitisation programmes³; best estimates suggest that only a small proportion of all cultural heritage material has been digitised to date, and there is significant commitment to further digitisation at national and institutional levels across Europe⁴. Further, substantial amounts of born-digital material exist, such as heritage-related data produced by scientific research and by the digital analysis of cultural objects.

This amount of data creates a strong demand of service and data facilities where data can be stored, preserved, accessed, re-used and annotated by the researchers of the digital cultural heritage.

Such collaborative data infrastructure should include multilingual and interoperable approaches and it must be based on and valorise the initiatives that each institution is carrying out at national, regional and local levels. It will be a major tool for developing virtual Digital Cultural Heritage communities.

The multicultural aspects are also fundamental for the sector that is committed to replicate in the digital dimension the same democracy that the cultural heritage is aiming at, in the tangible dimension.

To achieve these results, the governance model should facilitate involvement in the decision making by all levels institutions.

It should be avoided to be blinded by impression of an immediate efficiency generated by a centralistic approach.

Only deep roots among the actual stakeholders represent a real guarantee for the continuity of the services, the sustainability of the initiatives and a long lasting life of the infrastructure. The participation to the **Joint Programming Initiative for the cultural heritage** can be definitely beneficial to this.

5. Research and innovation in the digital cultural heritage: an international matter

Research and innovation in the digital cultural heritage is an international matter in its own essence.

Exchange of best practices, common awareness initiatives, as well joint research, development and innovation projects should be constantly launched in cooperation with the other regions of the world, from the Americas to the Far East, from Africa to Australia.

6. Users involvement: the success factor

The involvement of the users in each phase of the research, development and innovation processes is a determining factor for the success of the new ventures. Users should be actively involved into pilots, awareness and training activities possibly on a regular basis, in each project.

This aspect is particularly relevant for the cultural heritage sector that is moving into the technologies very rapidly and therefore is demanding for even a major attention than other sectors in the actual engagement of its users in the innovation processes.

7. Coordination and demonstration actions: a requirement for the sector

The digital cultural heritage sector is new to the ICT.

The last 10 years have seen a revolution in the sector that still needs to be accompanied by coordination and demonstrations actions, able to accelerate the access to the new platforms by targets and to obtain longer and stable commitments from stakeholders.

Communication and advocacy are fundamental aspects for the sector.

³ Not least those funded by the EU under the eContent+ programme and Google.

⁴ For details, see the NUMERIC project final report at http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ict/telearn-digicult/numeric-study_en.pdf