# Dynamic Action Plan

## for the EU co-ordination of digitisation of cultural and scientific content

# 1. Introduction

The eEurope 2002 Action Plan recommended the creation of a co-ordination mechanism for digitisation programmes across Member States. In 2001, representatives and experts from Member States met under the Swedish Presidency, supported by the European Commission, and agreed the Lund Principles[1] that established priorities to add value to digitisation activities in ways that would be sustainable over time. The accompanying Lund Action Plan recommended actions to support progress for the period until 2005. The Lund Action Plan is being implemented by a group of National Representatives (NRG) and successive Presidencies, and benefits from several projects and research networks, including the highly successful. Minerva[2] and Digicult[3] projects.

As many of the barriers identified within Lund continue to exist, one of the Council's priorities for the 2005-2006 Work Plan is to proceed with coordination through an updated action plan as a follow up on the Lund actions[4]. On 14 November 2005, the Council reaffirmed the validity of the Lund Principles, and recognised digitisation of cultural and scientific heritage to be of strategic importance in:

(a) providing rich and diverse digital resources that support education and research, tourism and the creative industries;

(b) enabling digital access by all citizens to national, regional and local cultural heritage of Europe;

(c) advancing the European Digital Libraries initiative.

This importance is also recognised by ongoing investments by the Member States, and by the Commission's Communication "i2010 – Digital Libraries"[5].

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[1] see www.cordis.lu/ist/digicult/lund-principles.htm

[2] see www.cordis.lu/ist/digicult/projects_all.htm

[3] see www.digicult.info

[4] Council Doc. 13839/04, cult 102

[5] COM(2005) 229 – i2010

Together, these will build upon Europe's rich heritage and combine multicultural and multilingual environments with technological advances and new business models.

# 2.  General Objecives

Europe's cultural and scientific knowledge resources are a unique public asset forming the collective and evolving memory of our diverse societies. Resource discovery, accessibility, usability, interoperability authenticity, quality and trust by all users of the Information Society are essential requirements for the delivery of digital cultural information and services.

In an increasingly broadband-enabled society, relevant and useful digital content and services provide bridges to enable social inclusion, promote learning and overcome the digital divide. Cultural institutions such as libraries, museums, archives and natural and environmental heritage bodies are essential contributors of digital content, but they need to be mobilised and effort must be co-ordinated to make best use of existing technologies and to contribute to the creation, use and delivery of local cultural content that meets the needs of all citizens.

To realise the vision of a European Cultural Information Space, six objectives are pursued through this updated action plan, acknowledging and building upon the previous set of Lund Principles:

(1) **Providing strategic leadership** in a dynamic and changing environment in which rapid technological and economical developments are taking place.

(2) **Strengthening co-ordination** and forging stronger links between Member States' digitisation initiatives, EU networks and projects.

(3) Continuing efforts in **overcoming fragmentation and duplication** of digitisation activities and maximising synergy.

(4) Assessing and **identifying appropriate models**, funding and policy approaches to sustain development and long-term preservation strategies.

(5) **Promoting cultural and linguistic diversity** through digital content creation.

(6) **Improving online access** to European cultural content.

# 3. Action areas

## A. Users and content

Users need to benefit more from the networking of cultural knowledge, as the implementation of technologies enables the development of a European Cultural information space. They need to be facilitated to find easily and use cultural content and to contribute their own knowledge and experience, becoming active citizens in information societies.

**Key issues:**

- Preventing duplication of digitisation efforts.
- Developing and sharing user-needs analyses for cultural content and service.
- Mandating quality standards for content and services.
- Recognising cultural content as a driver for eLearning and the creative industries.
- Ensuring that IPR mechanisms maintain a balance between enabling access and use whilst respecting the rights of creators.
- Engaging audiences in re-use and content production.
- Mobilising cultural institutions to make best use of existing technologies to enable digital access by all citizens.

**Immediate actions 2006-2007:**

(1) Bringing together national and European digitisation initiatives to establish a European Common Information Space, including the TEL and Michael / MICHAEL Plus projects
   **a.** to develop and maintain online registries of digitised collections in each Member State;
   **b.** to ensure the linking of these registries to establish an online European Cultural Information Space;
   **c.** to identify through this activity the gaps in content provision and emerging digitisation needs on a European level;
   **d.** to incorporate this analysis into priority-setting within national digitisation initiatives.

(2) Develop flexible monitoring mechanisms to demonstrate the authenticity, performance and security of the deployment of digital cultural content and services.

(3) Assess the impact of models that:
   **a.** ensure a fair balance between intellectual property rights and access;
   **b.** support accessibility for those with disabilities;
   **c.** promote the use of digitised content.

(4) Work towards common quality standards for accessibility and usability and provide support and guidance to enable the development of services that meet these standards.

(5) Assess the role of digital cultural content for boosting eLearning and the Creative Industries.

(6) Promoting best practice examples of the use of technology to support access for all citizens.

## B. Technologies for digitisation

The technological environment in which Europe's digital cultural content industries are taken forward is mainly the result of developments in major ICT industries (telecommunications, network infrastructures, database technologies and personal/business computing). Digitisation initiatives of cultural content holders do not automatically coincide with or take account of innovations driven by scientific or business research and development. Cultural institutions therefore need guidance to take account of the significance of existing and emerging developments in the research and application domains and to ensure that their own research needs are met.

**Key issues:**
- Deployment of new technologies and common standards for digitisation.
- Identification of future research needs and requirements that will enable the development of user-centred services.

**Immediate actions 2006-2007:**
(1) Define common needs for research and tools for digitisation.
(2) Monitor emerging technological developments to provide guidance on digitisation, storage and resource creation.
(3) Ensure a strong voice for the EU cultural and scientific heritage sector in the development of international standards, such as ISO, DCMI and W3C.
(4) Mandate appropriate technical and content standards.

## C. Sustainability of content

European Digital Libraries need the unique assets that Europe's cultural and scientific knowledge resources provide, forming a basis for the development of digital content industries in a sustainable knowledge society. There is a need to identify and remove barriers to the economic sustainability of the creation and maintenance of these digital cultural assets, services and

networks, allied to a need to develop appropriate policy approaches, technological solutions and business models in this area.

**Key issues:**

- Sustainable and reliable digital cultural content and services.
- Suitable funding and business models for digital collections.
- PPPs and private sponsoring of digitisation.
- Open software and standards for digitisation.
- Ensuring that Digital Rights Management systems are developed that enable controlled access to content within specified context and policy frameworks.

**Immediate actions 2006-2007:**

(1) Develop and promote the implementation of funding and business models that support economic sustainability of digital cultural content.
(2) Promote the take-up of effective cost-reduction methods for digitisation by cultural institutions.

## D. Digital preservation

Safeguarding digital resources for the future is a vital part of a sustainable Knowledge Society. Ever larger volumes of information are 'born digital' and their preservation is vital, not just to the cultural sector, but also in critical areas such as eGovernment and eHealth. The issue needs to be tackled on many fronts (technological, research, organisational and operational), but still has not been embedded in service or policy development. Action research is needed to avoid a 'digital dark age'.

**Key issues:**

- Common policies and approaches to direct and implement digital preservation strategies.
- Persistent identification of European digitised resources.

**Immediate actions 2006-2007:**

(1) Stimulate implementation of policies and tools for digital preservation.

(2) Assess the implementation of persistent resource identifiers.


## E. Monitoring progress

Monitoring the implementation of the Dynamic Action Plan is essential to demonstrate the impact of the efforts and investment at European and Member State levels and to track progress towards the creation of the European Cultural Information Space. Changing needs and requirements can be better understood and valued by measuring from a common baseline, using agreed indicators and sharing methodologies. This will enable the identification of the contribution being made through co-ordination, funding, policy implementation and the deployment of research results at national and European levels.

**Key issues:**

- Quantitative accounting of growth and use of digital cultural resources.
- Aggregation of actions and strategies on national and EU-level.

**Immediate actions 2006-2007:**

(1) Quantify the results of digitisation initiatives by delivering standardised data on input/output/use indicators and present these in an annual publication.

(2) Monitor and feedback European efforts and disseminate good practice.

(3) Perform new user-needs surveys.

(4) Identify qualitative and impact indicators for future implementation.

# 4. Implementation

(1) On 16 November 2004, the Council of the European Union agreed to proceed with the coordination of digitisation through an updated European action plan as a follow up of the Lund action plan, to be delivered under UK Presidency[6]. *Member States* are expected to take the necessary steps for the implementation of the action plan at hand.

(2) In line with its mandate as defined by the Cultural Affairs Committee, *the National Representatives Group* (NRG) will be responsible for supporting the implementation of the Dynamic Action Plan within Member States[7].

In that context, NRG will carry out specific actions to:

- monitor progress and impact of the implementation of the Dynamic Action Plan;
- identify new strategic areas and actions by maintaining and updating the Dynamic Action Plan;
- report on initiatives that support the creation of a European Cultural Information Space.

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[6] Council Doc. 13839/04, cult 102
[7] CAC DOC 11107/05