

Council conclusions of 20 November 2008 on the European digital library EUROPEANA

(2008/C 319/07)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

noting the significant disparities as to the progress of this process in the Member States.

WHEREAS:

- the creation of the European digital library EUROPEANA, which is an online common multilingual access point to digital cultural material from the whole of Europe (books, newspapers, photographs, films and audiovisual works, documents from archives, museum works, architectural and archaeological heritage, etc.) provides an excellent opportunity to showcase the cultural heritage of the Member States and to provide access for everyone to that heritage,
- more generally, digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material of the Member States and digital preservation are essential to highlight that cultural heritage, to inspire the creation of content and to encourage new online services to emerge; they help to democratise access to culture and knowledge and to develop the information society and the knowledge-based economy,

1. UNDERLINES:

- its commitment to the objectives, actions and timetables defined, on the basis of the Commission Recommendation of 24 August 2006 ⁽¹⁾, in its conclusions of 13 November 2006 on the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material and digital preservation ⁽²⁾,
- the importance of undertaking work in the field of digitisation, preservation and availability of content with full respect for Community and international legislation in the field of intellectual property.

2. WELCOMES with interest:

- the European Parliament resolution of 27 September 2007 on 'i2010: towards a European digital library' ⁽³⁾,
- the Commission communication of 3 January 2008 on creative content online in the single market, and
- the Commission communication of 11 August 2008 entitled 'Europe's cultural heritage at the click of a mouse — Progress on the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material and digital preservation across the EU' ⁽⁴⁾, which stresses the progress made in implementing the Commission Recommendation and the Council conclusions of 2006, while highlighting signifi-

3. NOTES with satisfaction:

- the gradual establishment of the EUROPEANA European digital library, reflected in the creation of the European Digital Library Foundation in the Netherlands on 8 November 2007 and the launch of the prototype on 20 November 2008,
- the commitment of the Member States, cultural institutions and more broadly those working on digitisation, the online accessibility of cultural material, and digital preservation,
- the Commission's support for this project and more generally for the digitisation process, in particular through the eContent+ programme and the 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development, the setting up in 2007 of the Member States' Expert Group on Digitisation and Digital Preservation ⁽⁵⁾ and in 2006 of the High Level Expert Group ⁽⁶⁾, and indeed the launching of studies ⁽⁷⁾,
- the conclusion on 4 June 2008 by representatives of libraries, archives, audiovisual archives and right holders, under the auspices of the Commission, of a Memorandum of Understanding on guidelines on diligent search, as regards orphan works.

4. BELIEVES that the success and sustainability of EUROPEANA and, more generally, the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material, and digital preservation processes under way in the Member States will require:

- active sustained support for digitisation and the online accessibility of cultural material and digital preservation, so as to ensure that a diverse and high-quality range of material is available which represents the cultural and linguistic diversity and the richness of intellectual heritage of the Union,
- pursuing the elaboration of concerted practical solutions respecting copyright and related rights, with a view to contributing to the online accessibility of the widest range of cultural material,

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 236, 31.8.2006, p. 28.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 297, 7.12.2006, p. 1.

⁽³⁾ 2006/2040 (INI).

⁽⁴⁾ Doc. 12580/08.

⁽⁵⁾ Commission Decision of 22 March 2007 (OJ L 119, 9.5.2007, p. 45).

⁽⁶⁾ Commission Decision of 27 February 2006 (OJ L 46, 16.2.2006, p. 32).

⁽⁷⁾ Studies on progress in the digitisation of culture within the European Union, on the socio-economic impact of long-term preservation of digital resources, and on the socio-economic impact of public domain resources.

- the development of technologies to ensure long-term digital preservation, interoperability of the access systems to content, multilingual navigation and availability of content, and diverse and high-quality services to the public,
 - the definition of a sustainable economic model for EUROPEANA, and sustained support by all the parties involved — cultural institutions, professionals, Member States and the Commission.
5. INVITES THE MEMBER STATES to:
- actively pursue in a sustained manner the implementation of their national strategies and targets developed in line with the Council conclusions of 13 November 2006 on digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material, and digital preservation, in particular by the definition, in this framework, of quantitative and qualitative targets, and the mobilisation of the corresponding resources,
 - promote synergies between them and between the various institutions involved in the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material and digital preservation processes, in order to enrich the supply of digital cultural material,
 - continue their support, in the context of their national strategies, for the incorporation of digital cultural material in EUROPEANA, particularly by the promotion of interoperability standards, the setting-up or improvement of portals incorporating national content and, where appropriate, by the definition of European themes for the choice of such material, while respecting the priorities of the cultural institutions involved in the project,
 - take into consideration the objective of including protected works in EUROPEANA and, to that end, while respecting the applicable national and Community systems of copyright and related rights, encourage the conclusion of agreements — effective in a cross-border context — between the parties concerned, with the aim of contributing to the digitisation and online accessibility of those works,
 - establish mechanisms to facilitate digitisation and online access to orphan works and to out-of-print and out-of-distribution works, while fully respecting right holders' rights and interests.
6. INVITES THE COMMISSION to:
- encourage and coordinate work to improve long-term digital preservation and the interoperability of the access systems to content, *inter alia* through the exchange of good practice and the dissemination of standards, and support research and development regarding innovative technologies, with a view in particular to assuring long-term preservation of digital cultural material, multilingual navigation and access to that content, and the development of new uses,
 - examine the feasibility of increasing financial support through the existing Community programmes and within the framework of the current financial perspective, for the digitisation of cultural material from the Member States with European added value and contributing to EUROPEANA, while taking account as appropriate of national strategies and targets,
 - on the basis of reports from the Member States, evaluate the progress of and prospects for EUROPEANA's development, including economic and financial aspects, as well as progress achieved within the Member States as regards the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material and digital preservation, and report accordingly to the European Parliament and the Council in 2010.
7. INVITES THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION, within their respective competences, to:
- encourage the development of EUROPEANA and work alongside stakeholders, in particular through the Member States' Expert Group on Digitisation and Digital Preservation, to define an economic and governance model ensuring its success and sustainability,
 - actively promote EUROPEANA in Europe and throughout the world and encourage the establishment of public-private partnerships which might help its development, particularly as regards digitisation and the online accessibility of cultural material and digital preservation.
8. INVITES THE 'EUROPEAN DIGITAL LIBRARY' FOUNDATION to:
- work closely with the Member States, the Commission and the cultural institutions, while respecting their various responsibilities, with a view to defining an economic and governance model ensuring the success and sustainability of EUROPEANA.
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