



ACTIVITY REPORT 2020

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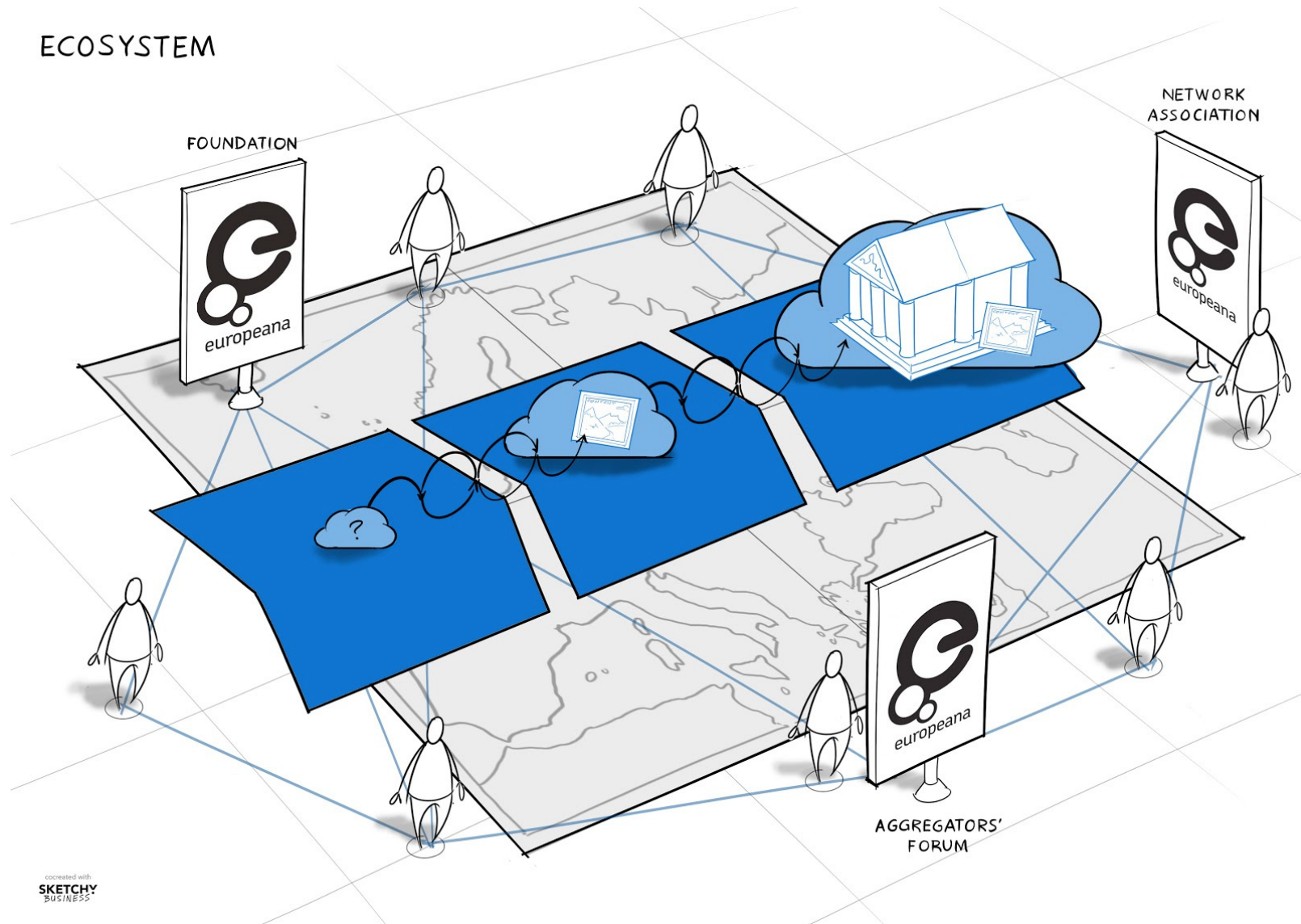
1. INTRODUCTION

The Europeana ecosystem builds on a [network of national, thematic and domain aggregators](#) enabling cultural heritage institutions (CHIs) to share their content with Europeana and open it up to new audiences. Aggregators work with thousands of cultural institutions and collectors to gather authentic, trustworthy and robust data and make it accessible to Europeana, and from there to education and research infrastructures, creatives, developers and the general public. An important source of expertise, aggregators offer advice and support in digitisation, content description, metadata mapping, licensing, media formats accessibility, multilingualism and in domain and subject vocabularies.

The Europeana Aggregators' Forum (EAF) coordinates all activities required for the effective functioning of a pan-European, cross-domain aggregation ecosystem at operational and strategic level. At operational level, accredited aggregators ensure the development and uptake of standards and frameworks and have an active role in shaping the aggregation process and outcomes. At a strategic level, the EAF functions as an advocacy body for pan-European aggregation.

Finally, we collaborate closely with the [Europeana Network Association \(ENA\)](#), and together with the Europeana Foundation (EF), we work towards the overall strengthening of the Europeana initiative.

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2. MAIN AREAS OF ACTIVITY

Our activities in 2020 have covered the following range of areas:

EAF Membership

The EAF has set-up an accreditation process in order to accept new members. New applications for accreditation are evaluated by the EAF Steering Group and approved by the General Assembly of the EAF during the two EAF meetings in Spring and Autumn of each year.

In 2020, one aggregator has received the accreditation, namely [Technische Informationsbibliothek \(TIB\) - AV Portal](#), bringing the aggregators represented in the EAF to 38 (as of December 2020). The up to date list of all accredited aggregators to Europeana, as well as more information about them, can be found on [Europeana Pro](#). Two more aggregators have applied

for accreditation - the national aggregators of Cyprus and Estonia. They will be presented to the General Assembly in spring 2021 for approval.

EAF Governance and alignment with ENA

The EAF was originally established with a light and efficient governance structure: a Steering Group consisting of two representatives from accredited aggregators elected by the General Assembly of the EAF and one representative from the Europeana Foundation.

The Steering Group sets the agenda for the bi-annual EAF meetings, organises and chairs these meetings and ensures participation of relevant members. The Steering Group prepares communications on aggregator relevant aspects for the EAF Basecamp group and asks aggregators for feedback and input on relevant topics. It ensures

visibility and recognition of the role of aggregators in the ecosystem and facilitates and supports the EF in the DSI project. The EF supports aggregators attending the EAF meetings, ensures and safeguards consistent messaging and branding and coordinates with EF staff activities relevant for aggregators, especially in relation to capacity building. The Steering Group regularly holds virtual meetings every one or two months (depending on coordination needs of the EAF) and engages in regular communication exchanges.

In the Spring 2020 EAF meeting, the Steering Group proposed some changes to the EAF's governance, as well as changes to the interaction between the EAF and ENA, in order to allow for a better alignment of these two pillars of the Europeana Initiative. This proposal consisted of adding a third elected member to the Steering Group, and extending the Steering Group's electoral term by one year, in order to be aligned with the terms of ENA Members Councillors. These changes were voted on and approved by the EAF General Assembly during the Spring meeting in May 2020, and following this

decision, a Steering Group of three elected aggregator members (Sara Di Giorgio, Kerstin Herlt and Marco Rendina) is now operating.

To better align the EAF and ENA activities, and facilitate communication between the EAF and the ENA Management Board and Members Council, the Network and Policy Officer in charge of the ENA Secretariat, [Zuzana Malicherova](#), joined the EAF Secretariat. The EAF Secretariat will ensure the closer coordination and collaboration of EAF and ENA activities, based on their common interests. This collaboration will be reflected in the work of the communities, Task Forces, and Working Groups, as well as EAF and ENA communications efforts. The EAF secretariat has started facilitating a regular information exchange and meetings organisation both between the EAF, the ENA Management Board and the Members Council. The first meeting of the EAF Steering Group and ENA Management Board, as well as EAF activity update at the ENA Members Council, took place in March 2020 and will be followed by a second one in February 2021.

EAF and General Assembly meetings

Accredited aggregators come together twice a year for the meetings of the EAF. A General Assembly meeting is part of every EAF meeting. In 2020, one EAF and General Assembly meeting took place in spring (6-7 May 2020) and a second one in autumn (15-16 October 2020).

Following the travel restrictions caused by COVID-19 global health crisis, both EAF meetings have been held completely online.

The EAF 2020 Spring meeting was the first large official assembly in the Europeana Initiative that was run online. The meeting focused on copyright related topics, offering a train-the-trainer [webinar](#) on this theme on the 7th of May. The previous day, the General Assembly met to discuss and vote on the proposed governance changes and the accreditation of a new member (the Technische Informationsbibliothek (TIB) - AV Portal), to hear about recent developments across the Europeana Initiative, and to listen to a series of lightning talks from the members.

The EAF Autumn meeting, held in October 2020, had the usual two-day structure, with a General Assembly on the first day that discussed new Task Force and Working Group proposals, as well as the [‘Recommendations for a European Member States and Commission supported digital aggregation strategy’](#) that was submitted and [presented](#) to the Expert Group on Digital Cultural Heritage and Europeana (DCHE) by Marco Rendina and Fred Truyen at the end of October. On the second day, the meeting focused on the presentation and discussion of the [Europeana DSI aggregation strategy](#), during which Andy Neale, EF Technical Director, presented a development roadmap for Metis and discussed it with the aggregator members.

Moreover, as mentioned earlier, in 2020 the EAF Steering Group started meeting more regularly with the ENA Management Board as well as the EF Board. Beside that, there have been regular updates on EAF activities given at the ENA Members Council meetings, as well as ENA activity updates provided at the EAF meetings.

EAF Task Forces and Working Groups

A further change introduced to the EAF governance structure in 2020 means that the EAF can now directly propose and run its own Task Forces and Working Groups. In order to avoid duplication and possible overlapping, this activity is carried out in close coordination with the ENA secretariat and follows the same procedure and criteria. In 2020 there were a number of proposals to set up a couple of task forces and one working group under the EAF.

The first proposal submitted and approved in coordination with the Europeana Tech Community is a [IIIF working group](#) focusing on IIIF adoption, training, and translation of resources.

The second proposal was to revive the work of the Advocacy Task Force in order to work on a set of aggregation policy recommendations to be shared with the European Commission and the DCHE group in autumn 2020. The Task Force was approved and began in the summer. It completed its activities by finalising and delivering the recommendations to

the DCHE group at the end of October.

The third proposal was to set up a task force to work on the 'train the trainer' concept, fostering digital transformation and establishing how training activities can be better developed, structured and effectively promoted. This Task Force will begin at the beginning of 2021.

Finally, a proposal for a Library Working Group, to provide support and a discussion forum for the library community after the end of The European Library (TEL), the domain aggregator for library content, has been approved by the EAF General Assembly. Additionally, an Aggregators User Group has been set up to manage feedback to the EF on its range of products (including the Europeana website, Metis and the Europeana Pro website).

EAF Communications

The EAF uses Basecamp for communication towards and between its members. In order to give the EAF its own public source of information, in 2020, a section dedicated to news relevant for aggregators has been added in the monthly [Europeana Network newsletter](#). If the amount of relevant content grows in the near future, the EAF will consider sending out its own newsletter. There has been a closer collaboration between the ENA and EAF on writing for Europeana Pro news.

Digital transformation in the time of COVID-19

While the Europeana Initiative has been actively supporting the digital transformation of the cultural heritage sector since 2008, 2020 saw a rapid acceleration of digital activities in cultural heritage organisations, as many GLAMs were forced to close their doors due to the COVID-19 crisis. According to a [survey conducted by NEMO in March - April 2020](#), more than 60% of the museums surveyed increased or completely moved their activities online. For cultural heritage institutions around Europe, the

digital transformation has become an imperative.

While an acceleration of digital change is evident and the need for embedding digital practices, skills and literacy is apparent, understanding what interventions are needed to support these changes is not so simple. As lockdowns in Europe began, we worked with the EF and the ENA to research, document and analyse what was the impact of this disruptive process for the CHIs.

The first step of this process was a series of ‘sense-making’ workshops. Twelve representatives of our accredited aggregators took part in a series of webinars run in June on [‘Digital transformation in the time of COVID-19’](#). Facilitated by digital cultural strategists Michael Peter Edson and Jasper Visser, these workshops aimed to help make sense of the impact of COVID-19 on cultural heritage professionals’ personal and professional lives. The [final report](#) from this process provides valuable insights into the different ways that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected people’s work priorities, collaboration and working methods, decision making lines and overall daily routines.

Among the most important insights that emerged were significant digital divides and differences in preparedness' levels between different institutions, and a need to build digital resilience and to blend the physical with the digital in a sustainable way. The COVID-19 crisis also seemed to have challenged the role of CHIs in society by pushing them to take a more active stance in highly relevant societal issues such as racism, gender inequality, online surveillance and climate change.

In parallel with these workshops, the charity Culture24 was commissioned to produce a [report](#) to help develop a shared understanding of what is happening in our sector to support digital capacity. Combining interviews with renowned international experts and desk research, the report looks at what terms like 'digital transformation' mean in practice for GLAM institutions and provides a snapshot of digital capacity building initiatives in the sector.

Both of these processes have now been concluded, resulting in an immense amount of information, insight and inspiration contained in two very rich

[reports](#). The outcomes of these reports have been discussed within the EAF framework, in a dedicated session early in December coordinated by the Europeana Foundation. The session began the process of establishing a dedicated EAF Task Force at the beginning of 2021 with the scope of analysing the needs of the sector and translating them into a capacity building framework to form part of Europeana's strategy.

European Commission's consultation

Between 22 June and 14 September 2020, the European Commission ran an online consultation to investigate the '[Opportunities Offered By Digital Technologies For The Cultural Heritage Sector](#)'. Through the consultation, the Commission aimed to collect sufficient evidence to evaluate the outcomes of its [2011 Recommendation of 27 October 2011 on the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material and digital preservation](#), to understand whether it is still fit to respond to the needs and challenges of the cultural heritage sector in an era of rapid and continuous technological

changes and to assess whether a revision of the Recommendation is needed. The 2011 Recommendations has been driving the Member States' digitisation and digital preservation initiatives and the Member States' support for Europeana. On behalf of the Europeana Initiative, together with the EF and the ENA, we submitted a [common position paper](#) that underlines elements critical to executing the [Europeana Strategy 2020 2025](#) and to realising the potential of digital cultural heritage for the recovery of Europe.

Our main position was that work must be underpinned by a long term approach, that includes sustainable funding structures and which supports:

- coordinated national digital strategies for the cultural heritage sector
- targets for data quality and quantity
- the adoption of standards to enable access, reuse and engagement - particularly in education, research and the creative sector
- capacity-building efforts across the cultural heritage sector
- strong infrastructures that reflect the role of national aggregators and Europeana

We have reiterated this position to the Commission and the Member States, submitting as EAF a recommendation paper to the DCHE Group advocating for renewed support for aggregators both at national and European level in order to help the sector in realising the digital transformation for the full benefit of Europe and its citizens.



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