A seated man sharpening a quill pen, Wellcome Collection, United Kingdom, CC BY

ENA STRATEGIC PRIORITIES IN 2025

Updated October 2024

This document updates the previous edition of the Strategic Priorities for the Europeana Network Association (ENA), published in November 2024. The intention is to seek its approval by the Members Council and the ENA General Assembly at their meetings in late 2024 and, if approved, it should form a basis for planning activities in 2025 and beyond. It is anticipated that the Strategic Priorities will continue to be updated annually on a rolling basis.

ENA and the Data Space

The Europeana Initiative is now two years into the operation of the *common European data space for cultural heritage*, which is the contractual responsibility of the Europeana Foundation (EF). Within this context, the concept of the Initiative as a three-pillar construct, bringing together EF, ENA and the Europeana Aggregators Forum (EAF) has continued to develop, The emergence of a model for this cooperation which will enable closer, more integrated and effective working forms part of the data space Implementation Plan, which seeks to help ensure successful delivery of the data space contract in a variety of ways. While remaining a stronghold of the Europeana Initiative, ENA will be especially active in the area of Capacity Building (WP3). Strengthening and fostering skills within our network has become only more important in recent years, now that the data space holds potential for significant acceleration and amplification of capacity building efforts. Furthermore, ENA is closely involved in the data space through the participation of its members in Working Groups and Task Forces.

ENA members have played an integral role during 2023/4 in informing the Visioning Process for the Europeana Initiative and its culmination as the *Visioning and Business Strategy 2030*, which has identified three agreed strategic 'pivots' towards:

- the future development of the data space
- leveraging our participation in other large EU-funded initiatives;
- and reviewing and adapting our Member States engagement mode

ENA representation continues, through its current Vice-Chair, on the Expert sub-group of CEDCHE (Commission Expert Group on the Common European Data Space for Cultural Heritage) which provides an important channel of knowledge and influence in relation to policy issues.

Energising and expanding the networked organisation

ENA has continued to grow in size as Europe's major transversal network of professionals concerned with digital cultural heritage, now reaching about 5.000 members.

The networked organisation and its 'nodes'

ENA's diversity in terms of geographical representation and professional interests remains impressive. Nevertheless - and particularly in view of its engagement with the data space - there remains scope to grow and to achieve greater reach and impact among professionals and other stakeholders in digital cultural heritage. In general, energising the active engagement of a higher proportion of our members, by improving their 'customer journey' and creating satisfying experiences with a clearer personal impact in their daily work, remains an area in which further work is needed.

The Country Groups (CG) initiative, currently involving pilot countries Bulgaria, Slovenia and Italy, is under evaluation but is now integrated in the data space Implementation Plan and appears to hold significant promise for engagement in Member States, supporting the related 'pivot'. ENA will continue to support the development of CG in the light of what is learned from the pilot evaluations. The evolution of a 'bottom up' approach to Member States engagement should not however be limited to the establishment of CG and ENA will continue to promote individual roles in country-based 'ambassadorship', wherever possible.

A key feature of the CG initiative is the opportunity afforded for coordinated activity between aggregators (members of EAF) and ENA members in the context of individual countries. This should throw light on what the potential and effects of such collaboration could be upon the aspirations of EI and the data space to operate as a networked organisation where individuals and organisations employing (some of the same) individuals, work towards agreed goals within a networked environment.

Reaching out

Apart from making ENA and the DS visible and relatable through the CGs, there's a need for us to invest in more direct forms of outreach. Over the past months, we have been taking the opportunity to communicate with network members via the now co-curated, monthly Newsletter. With our first Outreach event scheduled in November, we are taking another step to connect more closely with our existing membership and improve our visibility to new target audiences.

The impact of ENA's new involvement as an Affiliated Entity to EF in important EU-funded projects such as ECHOES (in the Cultural Heritage Cloud initiative) and 3D4CH (the 3D Competence Centre) is as yet unknown, while these projects develop their strategic direction in more depth. Nevertheless, it seems entirely possible that collaboration or integration with other external networks may at some stage enter the agenda. Where risk assessments justify the benefits of such engagements and supporting resources are sufficient, ENA will entertain them positively, within the EI framework. EF's pilot collaboration with the Time Machine Organisation (TMO) may offer similar opportunities.

Strengthening our core

The seven ENA Communities (Climate Action, Communicators, Copyright, Education, Impact, Research and EuropeanaTech) continue to be a driving force for ENA activities and impact and a vital mechanism for the entire Europeana Initiative. We will continue the work, already begun, to establish more productive ways of inter-Community collaboration, to use the potential of the CGs and other outreach activities to support the take-up of outcomes of the Communities' activities and to measure their impact. While we will continue to look into opportunities and occasions to collaborate in Working Groups and Task Forces - either ENA-based, or Initiative-wide - the frameworks and principles will need to be further developed in a systematic and fully transparent way.

ENA aims to constantly review and assess the latest developments and needs in Digital Cultural Heritage, currently including 3D and AI, and to respond to them swiftly. However, the need for tooling which enables the identification of the expertise within the network and which supports peer-to-peer communication in relevant contexts, described in previous editions of the Strategic Priorities, remains outstanding and, although acknowledged, is likely to be subject to budgetary and staff resource constraints at EF in the coming contractual period. Nevertheless, whatever progress is possible on specifying requirements and identifying tools should be pursued actively.

Sustainable funding and governance

A Task Force on Long Term Sustainability , involving EF, Supervisory Board, EAF and ENA participation has recently been established to consider future governance and funding models for the Europeana Initiative as a whole, in the light of the Visioning and Business Strategy 2030 and to address the constant need for EI to assure adequate funding for operations, innovation and networking.

The findings of the Task Force will not be known and validated for some months. Nevertheless, this work should offer important opportunities to address, over a defined timeframe, identified challenges - set out in the 2024 Strategic Priorities and elsewhere - in ENA governance, funding, management and administrative structures and democratic representativity. The results should be geared to strengthening its role and resourcing within a Europeana Initiative that is able to more fully realise in practice the importance of an effectively networked organisation in achieving its goals.

The challenges inherent in ENA's Strategic Priorities are by no means trivial and - needless to say - depend upon the continued commitment of its membership, Communities, Council and Management Board, working together with colleagues across the Europeana Initiative.

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