

Developing a common strategic approach for Member States to support the digital transformation of Europe's cultural heritage sector

Recommendations, September 2019

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Executive Summary

During the Romanian Presidency, Europeana held a meeting with high-level policymakers to discuss the challenges and opportunities of preparing a common European approach for Member States to locally support the digital transformation of cultural heritage. The meeting aimed to highlight the impact of exposing cultural heritage online, and to provide a platform to discuss the importance of national strategies and infrastructures.

During the meeting, delegates were invited to share their own perspectives with each other through a series of structured workshops, and to listen to a range of presentations and panel discussion from invited experts.

The principal challenges for all countries are identified as the scaling up of facilities to be more effective, efficient and enable collections to be linked together to facilitate use.

Together, delegates developed a broad set of recommendations for developing a common strategic approach.

National strategies give impetus to the digital transformation of the European Cultural Heritage sector, and should:

- Articulate the impact of its implementation
- Be supported by a policy environment that facilitates the necessary changes
- Be transparent and measurable.

Integrating the adoption of international standards enables digital transformation and should be supported by:

- Local translation of standards and supporting resources
- Pan-sector events to facilitate knowledge-sharing.

Facilitating co-creation engages stakeholders to deliver sustainable and effective mechanisms towards achieving digital transformation and should be supported by:

- Ensuring local cultures, traditions and perspectives are shared
- Nurturing personal and collective responsibility for success
- Providing opportunities for the professional advancement of skills and knowledge.

To facilitate the implementation of the recommendations, delegates identified a series of actions for Ministries, the Europeana Initiative and cultural heritage institutions to undertake.

Setting the context

The Europeana meeting under the Romanian Presidency aimed to highlight the impact of exposing cultural heritage online, and to provide a platform to discuss the importance of national strategies and infrastructures to the digital transformation of the cultural heritage sector.

The discussions held during the meeting in plenary and through facilitated workshops were designed to result in a set of recommendations that identify the practices, infrastructure and activities that are core or desirable components of a national strategy that supports the digital transformation of the sector.

The principal challenge for all countries was identified as the scaling up of facilities to be more effective and efficient and to enable collections to be linked together to facilitate use. During the workshop, delegates discussed and identified a wide range of actions and outcomes that should be addressed in a national approach, to address this common challenge.

These elements were provisionally grouped into three broad clusters to facilitate a plenary review of the outputs of the workshop including a prioritisation exercise. Following the workshop, the elements and clusters were refined into preliminary recommendations, and shared with delegates through a consultation exercise inviting their feedback. A further round of refinement and consultation resulted in these recommendations.

Each recommendation is supported by core components that serve to show how a national strategy can take steps towards achieving it. And in the absence of strong national strategies and infrastructures that reflect all of these components, they are embellished with examples from across the EU cultural heritage sector that showcase one or more component.

[Find out more about the workshop.](#)

To understand better the current state of play in Member States, we asked delegates in Romania to discuss these grouped outputs in relation to their own countries and knowledge. We compared the perceived priority level of each element with the state of implementation from the perspective of the delegates. The results were varied, showing us that overall the components were highly valued, but not completely implemented.

The findings from this session have been integrated into the recommendations, serving to showcase the good practice and implementation of the recommendations from across eight Member States.

The recommendations

A note to these recommendations: To keep the recommendations succinct and readable, we have referred to 'national strategies' as the policy instrument, whilst recognising that throughout the EU the terms used to describe the appropriate instruments vary. The term 'national strategy' is used in the context of these recommendations to describe an approach which sets the goals, priorities and parameters for supporting the digital transformation within the Member State. In some Member States this may also be referred to as a framework or policy.

National strategies give impetus to the digital transformation of the European cultural heritage sector

A published strategy establishes the roadmap for the Member State, and it is a driver of change to transform the sector.

A national strategy should:

- Articulate the impact of its implementation
- Be supported by an enabling policy environment
- Be transparent and measurable.

A strategy delivers a roadmap identifying the scope, parameters and priorities for the digital transformation of the cultural heritage sector. It considers the impacts - the changes in people or groups within society - it is aiming to achieve, and sets out the path to achieve them. This roadmap enables the Member State to achieve economies through focusing knowledge and available resources, scaled towards a common EU-wide goal.

A funded policy environment which is designed to enable the desired changes identified in a national strategy will support its implementation across the Member State, and cohesions with EU-wide development. Working cross-sectorally to jointly programme and implement change and innovation projects saves money, effectively utilises developing knowledge and skills, and produces results that are suitable for cross-sector application.

Example: copyright rules that support the digitisation efforts of cultural heritage institutions; mandates for the building of centres of expertise and infrastructures; competence centres for digitisation.

A strategy that is shared openly and accompanied by clear measurements can motivate and focus the sector. This enables the sector's members to learn from each other, as well as advocate the benefits of the elements within a strategy.

Examples of Member States with national strategies that enact these components are:

- The Netherlands' [Netwerk Digitaal Erfgoed](#)
- Germany's [Competence Network of the Deutschen Digitale Bibliothek](#)
- The Finnish [Ministry of Education & Culture](#)

Integrating the adoption of international standards enables digital transformation

Adoption of international standards requires local environments that create opportunities to learn, share and access resources and expertise.

Adoption of international standards should be supported by:

- Local translation of standards and supporting resources
- Pan-sector events to facilitate knowledge-sharing.

Local translation of resources and documentation drives adoption of standards. Language barriers should be minimised through active support for the translation of essential documentation such as standards and frameworks, making them more useful and more likely to be adopted.

Workshops, meetings and events enable communities to access expertise, share knowledge and learn from each other. Organisations across the sector face common issues and should be provided opportunities to constructively share these issues, co-create solutions and share their own practices. This is achieved by utilising existing networks, and providing funding and support where gaps in knowledge are identified.

Example: The new EU copyright laws harmonise the rules but are also adopted at a local level which leaves open the possibility of differing implementations. Member States should identify how they can support the laws and fund access to expertise according to how they have implemented the directive.

Examples of Member States that have supported the adoption of standards are:

- Italy's translation of the [Europeana Publishing Framework](#) by Culturitalia
- Poland's implementation of [the Polish language Impact Playbook, supported by a series of workshops](#)
- Belgium's [Cultureel ErfgoedStandaarden Toolbox](#)
- The Netherlands' [De Basis](#) curriculum delivered by Digitale Erfgoed Nederlands

Facilitating co-creation engages stakeholders to deliver sustainable and effective mechanisms towards achieving digital transformation

Successful delivery of a national strategy is dependent on full cooperation and collaboration between policymakers and the relevant cultural heritage sector players and communities.

An approach to engaging stakeholders to design and implement a national strategy should:

- Ensure local cultures, traditions and perspectives are shared
- Nurture personal and collective responsibility for success
- Provide opportunities for the professional advancement of skills and knowledge.

A strategy developed by and with the sector leads to its successful implementation. A co-developed strategy represents the culture of each country and accommodates the multiple needs and viewpoints of all stakeholders - from political to institutional - who have a shared interest and motivation towards successfully implementing the strategy.

Nurturing and enabling personal responsibility leads to collective responsibility. The design and implementation of a national strategy requires support from multiple levels of stakeholders within cultural heritage organisations, and from policymakers. Supporting individual participation in communities, events and activities is critical to ensure professionals are motivated and rewarded to implement national strategies.

Providing opportunities for professionals to share and learn builds a skilled and motivated workforce and efficient acquisition of knowledge. A sustainable community supports the development, continuation and replacement of skills, knowledge and expertise across its membership. This contributes towards higher levels of individual responsibility.

Examples of Members States who nurture the components of co-creation and collaboration are:

- Romania's Transcribathon activities, driven by Sorina Stanca
- Finland's Professional Residency Programme, driven by Hanna Lena
- Denmark's championing of the Open Culture movement, driven by Merete Sanderhoff.

Suggested Actions

Member State Ministries

The Ministries who are responsible for

- I. Enabling the digital transformation of the Cultural Heritage sector
- II. Representing the beneficiaries¹ of the digital transformation

- should collaborate with:

- The cultural heritage institutions to design and support the implementation of a national strategy
- Fellow ministerial departments to identify and allocate funding and resources to support the implementation of a national strategy
- Existing networks and institutions, and together create new communities that foster collaboration, knowledge-sharing and good practices, and
- Fund and support networking and community-building initiatives to achieve economies of scale.

The Europeana Initiative

Consisting of the Europeana Foundation, the Europeana Network Association and the Europeana Aggregators' Forum, the Europeana Initiative should advocate for:

- The continued support of its activities that nurture interest, generate momentum, and act as a bridge to foster collaboration between CHIs and ministries,
- The full implementation of pan European standards, framework and resources through participating in projects, training partners, hosting workshops and events
- Wider participation throughout the sector in it's professional and aggregator network opportunities to develop and share knowledge and experience.

Cultural heritage institutions

Cultural heritage institutions from all Member States, and of any size or maturity, should advocate for:

- Direct support to build or participate in cross-domain community working groups that can advocate for and encourage the use of international standards, frameworks and policies.

¹ i.e Ministry of Education, where schools, universities and research institutes are direct beneficiaries of increased access to high quality digital cultural heritage.