i2010: digital libraries

2006/2040(INI) - 16/07/2007

The Committee on Culture and Education adopted the initiative report by Marie-Helene **DESCAMPS** (EPP-ED, FR) on i2010: towards a European digital library. The report recommends setting up in stages a European digital library in the form of a single, direct and multilingual access point to the European cultural heritage. It stresses that, although the long-term aim is to establish a tool that covers all categories of cultural material, such as audiovisual content, the European digital library must initially concentrate on the potential offered by text material that is free of copyright.

To this end, the committee invites all European libraries to make available to the European digital library the works that are free of copyright which they already hold in digital form. Member States are encouraged to continue their efforts and speed up the rate of digitisation of cultural content to achieve a sufficient mass of content. They are also encouraged to draw up digitisation plans at national or regional level, establishing a European map of all digitisation activities, thus enabling synergies to operate while avoiding duplication of the efforts and costs undertaken by many public and private institutions to digitise their holdings.

As regards **financing**, the report points out that, although Community programmes are not able to fund digitisation as such, new methods of financing must be developed, including partnership with the private sector, on the understanding, however, that every effort must be made to prevent digitisation proceeding at different paces in the Member States.

The Report underlines the importance of achieving a **multilingual interface** giving direct access to content that is sought in all European Union languages.

MEPs welcome the establishment of the high-level expert group and in particular supports its proposals to list all orphan and out-of-print works and to develop mechanisms to facilitate the search for copyright holders. They stress that the proposals formulated by the high-level group of experts in its first report primarily concern the book publishing sector, and that a decision on whether to extend them to other sectors should be taken in conjunction with their representatives. They point out that it would be desirable at a later stage for the European digital library to offer, if possible, copyright as well as out-of-copyright documents, while strictly complying with national, Community and international law on intellectual property. Provisions should be made for the on-line browsing of copyright-protected works

through specialised websites providing the security guarantees required by rightholders. These specialised sites could provide access to the whole of a copyright document in agreement with the copyright holders and in return for fair remuneration.

Management and monitoring: the report calls for a steering committee to be set up in which cultural institutions would play a major role, and which would determine the priorities for and the guidelines of the European digital library, while ensuring the coordination, management and monitoring of its activities. It suggests that a Europe-wide coordinating body, equivalent to TEL, be set up for the collections of museums and national archives called upon to handle every kind of digitised material connected with the European cultural heritage, the ultimate goal being integration into the European digital library search system.

Lastly, the report urges that the European digital library be promoted and made visible and accessible through extensive communication at all levels and through the creation of an identifying logo. It recommends in this connection that part of the resources earmarked for the European digital library be devoted to promoting this library among the broadest possible public.