Europeana - next steps

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution on "Europeana - the next steps", in response to the Commission Communication on the subject.

The text adopted in plenary had been tabled by the EPP, S&D, ALDE and Greens/ALE Groups as an alternative motion for a resolution to replace the motion for a resolution contained in the own-initiative report tabled by the Committee on Culture and Education.

A key step in preserving and disseminating Europe's cultural heritage: Parliament welcomes the development of Europeana, and stresses that the European digital library, being available to everyone from afar, constitutes a tool for the democratisation of culture and will therefore allow a very wide section of the public to access rare or old documents in Europe’s heritage whose conservation renders their consultation difficult.

Targets and objectives: Members call for Europeana to reach a stock of at least 15 million different digitised objects by 2015. Noting that France alone has provided 47% of Europeana's total number of digitised objects to date, they regret the uneven contributions from Member States to the content of Europeana, and strongly encourage them and other cultural institutions to cooperate closely in digitising works as well as to speed up the rate of digitisation of cultural content in order to reach the goals set (10 million documents in 2010). Parliament stresses the need to consider ways of encouraging cultural institutions to conclude agreements with rights-holders to make works accessible on a multi-territory basis and to foster the development of a competitive environment with the participating of online booksellers, thus helping to spread Europe’s cultural heritage. It encourages the Commission to assist in finding ways and means of drawing Member States' attention to the fact that users of Europeana are seeking major works available in their national collections but not through Europeana.

Benefits: the resolution emphasises the potential economic benefits of digitisation, as digitised cultural assets have an important economic impact, especially on culture-related industries, and underpin the knowledge economy, all the while bearing in mind the fact that cultural assets are not standard economic goods and must be protected from excessive commercialisation. Europeana should be one of the main reference points for education and research purposes.

Access for everyone: Members stress the need for the design to be user friendly and also take into account the needs of disabled people. Member States are asked to remove intra-EU barriers to access to some parts of Europeana content. The Commission and Member States are also asked to take all necessary steps to avoid a knowledge gap between Europe and non-EU countries and to ensure full access for Europeans to their own cultural heritage in all its diversity, as well as facilitating access for the whole world.

More and better content for Europeana: Members encourage content providers to increase the diversity of the types of content for Europeana, especially audio and video content, paying special attention to those forms of expression belonging to oral cultures and to those works which deteriorate easily, while respecting intellectual property rights.

- ***Public domain content and access***: Parliament is convinced that public domain content in the analogue world should remain in the public domain in the digital environment even after the format shift. Guarantees must be given to ensure that digitisation activities have a non-exclusive status, so that these activities do not lead to the appearance of ‘new rights’ derived from the digitisation

process, such as, for example, an obligation to pay for the reuse of works in the public domain. Members also recommend that the Commission asks digital content providers to certify websites referenced by Europeana.

- ***Copyright issues***: Members stress that solutions should be found for Europeana to offer in-copyright works, particularly out-of-print and orphan works, while complying with laws governing intellectual property and preserving the legitimate interests of rightholders. They endorse the Commission's intention to establish a simple and cost-efficient rights clearance system" working in close co-operation with all the stakeholders. They urge the Commission and Member States to adopt legal provisions designed to ensure that digitisation processes by themselves do not bring about any 'sui generis' copyright. These discussions should also address the issue of whether legal derogations should be introduced for the digitisation of orphan works by public institutions. With regard to its Communication on Copyright in the Knowledge Economy, the Commission is asked to:

    - submit a legislative proposal on the digitisation, preservation and dissemination of orphan works which would put an end to the current legal uncertainty, in accordance with the requirement for diligent search for, and remuneration of, rights-holders;
    - develop a European database of orphan works understood to be protected works whose rightholders are unknown or cannot be located, despite documented serious searches being made which would make it possible to exchange information on the ownership of rights and thereby reduce costs incurred in making diligent searches for rights-holders.

- ***Technologies***: Members welcome the continued use of open source software in building the Europeana collection and point to the need to develop technologies to ensure long-term and sustainable digital preservation, interoperability of access systems to content, multilingual navigation and availability of content and a set of unifying standards. They recommend that the Commission and partner institutions in the private sector find IT solutions – such as read-only and copy protect formats – for digitised material available on the Europeana website that is subject to copyright.

Financing and governance issues: the resolution states that creating a sustainable financing and governance model is crucial to Europeana's long-term existence and that the role of the immediate stakeholders in the process of establishing such a governance model is crucial.

- ***Sponsorship and public - private partnerships***: in order to meet the high costs of digitisation and time pressures, new methods of financing must be developed, such as public-private partnerships, provided that the latter comply with rules on intellectual property and competition while furthering access to works via cultural institutions, ensuring digitised files will be freely available to libraries with no time limits. Members recall that the involvement of private partners in the digitisation process must not lead to the creation of private monopolies. They stress that sponsorship is an interesting alternative for Europeana insofar as it offers an opportunity to fund not just digitisation activities but also the management of copyright payments for out-of-print, orphan and copyrighted works, as well as putting them online.
- ***EU and public financial support***: a substantial part of the financing should come from public contributions, such as contributions from the EU, Member States and cultural organisations. Members propose that Europeana's digitisation process be interpreted as part of the Lisbon strategy and that a separate budget line be established in the next Multiannual Financial Framework, but recommends that the project continue to look for revenue streams in order that it become self-financing in the longer term. They note that only EUR 6.2 million has been earmarked to date for Europeana for 2009 to 2011, and they call for the next Multiannual Financial Framework to provide for several times more funding than that available to Europeana hitherto. Parliament proposes that a review of the funding arrangements for Europeana be carried out by Parliament, in conjunction with

the Commission, as early as 2011, with a view to finding a sustainable financing model for the project for 2013 and beyond. A move to the public-private funding structure would maximise the potential of the site.

- ***Information and awareness raising***: Parliament proposes to organise a funding and advertising campaign entitled” Join Europeana" in order to heighten awareness of the issue, and recommends that part of the resources earmarked for Europeana should be devoted to promoting this library. It asks the Commission to launch a media and online campaign for popularising the Europeana site, directing traffic from European servers to Europeana sources as the main location for accessing data in digital form.
- ***Governance***: Parliament believes that cultural institutions must continue to play a major role in the governance of the Europeana project, and calls on them to collaborate in order to avoid duplicating works digitised. It wants to ensure that a competent authority is designated at national level for the purpose of managing the digitisation process, to raise awareness of the Europeana project among libraries and to collect existing digital material directly from providers. Lastly, it recommends to the Commission that it research the possibility of establishing a European body to coordinate the involvement of national authorities in monitoring the digitisation process, copyright payments to authors and other issues relevant to the Europeana project.