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on i2010: towards a European digital library
(2006/2040(INI))

Committee on Culture and Education

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on i2010: towards a European digital library (2006/2040(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission communication entitled: ‘i2010: digital libraries’ (COM(2005)0465,
 - having regard to Commission Recommendation 2006/586/EC of 24 August 2006 on the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material and digital preservation¹,
 - having regard to the Council conclusions on the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material, and digital preservation²,
 - having regard to Directive 2001/29/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 May 2001 on the harmonisation of certain aspects of copyright and related rights in the information society³,
 - having regard to the report of 18 April 2007 by the high-level expert group on copyright on digital preservation, orphan works and out-of-print works,
 - having regard to the Commission communication entitled: ‘scientific information in the digital age: access, dissemination and preservation’ (COM(2007)0056),
 - having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report by the Committee on Culture and Education (A6-0000/2007),
- A. whereas through the meeting, exchanging and sharing that culture entails, it can help to bring the European Union into closer contact with its citizens and a true European identity to emerge,
- B. whereas the wealth and diversity of the European cultural heritage ought to be promoted and disseminated as widely as possible,
- C. whereas the Member States and cultural institutions, particularly libraries, have a key role to play in this endeavour at both regional and local level,
- D. whereas account must be taken of the rapid development of new technologies and the resulting changes in cultural practices,
- E. whereas for a large number of people, particularly young people, the Internet has become one of the principal means of access to knowledge and learning,

¹ OJ L236, 31.8.2006, p.28

² OJ C297, 7.12.2006, p.1

³ OJ L 167, 22.6.2001, p.10

- F. whereas in this digital environment it is essential to guarantee access for all to the European cultural heritage and to ensure that it is preserved for the generations to come,
- G. whereas large-scale digitisation and online access to the European cultural heritage is one of the main ways to achieve this,
- H. whereas multilingual access to the European cultural heritage is also a key objective,
- I. whereas coherent policies on digitisation and preservation of digital works must be put in place to prevent the irrecoverable loss of cultural content,
- J. whereas, apart from its intrinsic cultural qualities, digitisation of the European cultural heritage will also benefit other sectors, particularly education, tourism and the media,
- K. whereas mass digitisation of cultural content does not aim to replace or compete with traditional cultural content, but to produce reliable, good-quality, parallel digital versions of such content,
- L. whereas digital technology is also a remarkable tool for disabled people, enabling them to adapt content to their needs,
- M. whereas, however, only a minute part of the European cultural heritage has so far been digitised, and the Member States are progressing at very different speeds,
- N. whereas the public funding allocated to mass digitisation is insufficient for a project of this scale,
- O. whereas digitisation initiatives are very fragmented and most of the experience already acquired at Community level is still misunderstood and does not provide simple, direct and multilingual access to all the works comprising the European cultural heritage,
- P. whereas a 'general public' tool must be put in place to ensure universal and immediate access to the European cultural heritage with no need to travel, and to help speed up digitisation,
- Q. whereas existing European initiatives such as TEL, the European Library, which already provides access to European national library collections, should be used as a basis,

The European digital library, the face of a Europe that is unified in diversity

1. Recommends setting up in stages a European digital library in the form of a single and direct access point to the European cultural heritage;
2. 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;
3. To this end invites all European libraries to make available to the European digital library the works they already hold in digital form;

4. Invites other European cultural institutions, including regional and local institutions, to take part in this project so that it will be representative of the wealth and diversity of European culture;
5. Stresses that the European digital library does not aim to disseminate content exclusively, but to coordinate access to digital works;
6. Urges that common standards based on existing formats are chosen and used and adapted to ensure interoperability of content, which is necessary if the European digital library is to function properly;
7. Encourages the Member States to continue their efforts and speed up the rate of digitisation of cultural content to achieve a sufficient mass of content;
8. To this end, encourages the Member States, together with cultural institutions, to draw up digitisation plans at national or regional level, establishing a European map of all digitisation activities, thus enabling synergies to operate;
9. Encourages close cooperation between the Member States and cultural institutions, and an exchange of good practice with regard to digitising works, making them accessible and digitally preserving them;
10. Stresses that the European digital library will encourage research in the areas of digitisation, interoperability and digital preservation, particularly through skills centres set up by the Commission;
11. 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;

Structure and content of the European digital library – a common, multilingual access point to the European cultural heritage

12. Encourages the setting up of a common interface providing access, via an integrated research engine, to content with guaranteed quality and reliability;
13. Underlines the importance of achieving a multilingual interface giving direct access to content that is sought in all European Union languages;
14. Also urges putting in place innovative, modern features that are suitable for all visitors;
15. Points out that it would be desirable not to limit the European cultural heritage to all the European Union's own works, but also to take account of the cultural contribution of other European countries;
16. Points out that, although the European cultural heritage is largely made up of works in the public domain, it is not limited to this category alone;
17. Therefore points out that a distinction must be drawn between works in the public domain and copyright works, including orphan and out-of-print works, and to provide different

models for each kind of work, suited to each sector;

18. Welcomes 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;
19. Points 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;
20. Underlines that any decision of this sort must be taken in cooperation with all the players involved, particularly publishers and booksellers;
21. Proposes that in the European digital library, users should be able to find any kind of digital documents, in image and text mode, and consult them freely, in their entirety for out-of-copyright works or in the form of extracts for copyright works, with the agreement of the copyright holders;
22. In this latter case proposes that the European digital library acts as a simple conveyor of information;
23. Points out that 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

24. Calls for a steering committee to be set up, based in particular on the Member States' expert group on digitisation and digital preservation and on the high-level expert group mentioned above, which would define priorities and guidelines for the European digital library and would coordinate, monitor and manage its activities;
25. Points out that, if integrated coherently into education systems, the European digital library would make it easier to reach young Europeans and could bring them into closer contact with their cultural and literary heritage, while familiarising them with the new technologies and combating the digital divide;
26. 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;
27. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission, and to the governments and parliaments of the Member States.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The idea of a European digital library originated from six EU heads of state and government, who wanted to allow universal access to the European cultural heritage and to preserve it.

The Commission welcomed this idea and contributed to it through its beacon initiative 'i2010: digital libraries'. The first part of this initiative, the communication of 30 September 2005, analyses the main technical, legal, organisational and financial challenges in connection with this project.

An online public consultation on digitisation, access and digital preservation was also launched, and a high-level expert group was set up to resolve some of the problems raised.

In its recommendation of 24 August 2006, the Commission calls on the Member States to coordinate their efforts to achieve synergy at European level. It suggests establishing a European digital library in the form of a common, multilingual access point to the European cultural heritage.

On 13 November 2006 the Council adopted these recommendations unanimously.

It is now up to the European Parliament to send a strong signal so that this project can become a reality.

Thus, while working on the conceptual and technical organisation of all categories of cultural material, we must proceed in stages and concentrate initially on the potential provided by out-of-copyright text material.