

# Information Society and Culture Linking European Policies



Information Society  
and Media



European Commission



**The Information Society brings important benefits for cultural heritage. To help ensure this promise is fulfilled, the Information Society Policy Link initiative is linking Information Society projects with relevant European policy-makers in areas as diverse as digital libraries, access to cultural and scientific collections, virtual representations of cultural objects, multilingual content, and community heritage.**



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## Challenges for Culture and Multilingualism

Europe has a rich and diverse cultural heritage. Preserving this heritage for future generations, while enriching it with contributions from our own time, constitutes one of society's most important tasks.

Future developments here are being shaped by two immutable drivers: the advent of globalisation and the intensified development of information and communication technologies (ICTs). As well as bringing Europeans closer to other cultures around the world, globalisation has awakened citizens' interest in their own cultural identity – local, regional, national and European. At the same time, the growth of knowledge-driven, digital networks is encouraging us to think about culture, cultural exchange and artistic expression in new ways.

Consequently, we are seeing the rise of digital culture – or DigiCult - as a new paradigm allowing for closer interaction amongst artistic, academic, historical, scientific and cultural communities within Europe and across the world. DigiCult contributes to Europe's heritage for future generations and enriches the processes of culture-building and knowledge exchange. It also reinforces ties amongst communities and enables us to bridge the "digital divide" by making cultural information and opportunities accessible to all.

Digitisation is a key staging post for Europe to be able to exploit its cultural and scientific resources in the new digital world. Digitisation – the conversion of cultural assets into digital form – contributes to the conservation and preservation of heritage and scientific resources. It also creates new educational opportunities and provides a rich basis for the development of new digital content and services. And, not least, digitisation offers citizens improved access to their local and community heritage.

This new context presents major challenges for Europe's cultural institutions. With conventional resources being digitised and others being "born digital", European archives, libraries, museums and other cultural actors are finding themselves custodians of both analogue and digital collections. The new technologies open up opportunities for reaching traditional and new audiences in ways that were unimaginable a decade ago. But to integrate and manage these technologies effectively cultural institutions have to adopt innovative working practices and methods. At the same time, they are at the core of the emerging challenge of preserving digital content for the future.

Having long been overlooked, the economic and social significance of the creative arts is now widely recognised. The creative industries have a key role in preserving Europe's linguistic and cultural diversity. As well as being vehicles for social and artistic expression, the creative arts are major drivers of tourism and regional economic development. At a time when multimedia digital content is a major growth market, harnessing the creativity of artists, creative enterprises and cultural media centres is of prime importance for Europe.

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## Cultural & Multilingualism Policy

Since its inclusion in the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, cultural cooperation has become an important Community competency.

In this context, the seven-year Culture 2000 Programme (2000-2006) aims to encourage creativity and mobility of artists, public access to culture, the dissemination of art and culture, inter-cultural dialogue and knowledge of the history and cultural heritage of the peoples of Europe. It contributes to the creation of a shared cultural area bringing people together while preserving their national and regional diversity.

In March 2004 the Commission adopted a Communication entitled "Citizenship in Action", setting out the guidelines for a follow-on programme to replace the present Culture 2000 programme. On the basis of these preliminary works, the Commission presented proposals for a new "Culture 2007" programme, which were submitted to the European Parliament and the Council in July 2004. These are currently being discussed under the co-decision procedure.

The European Union itself has become an important cultural partner. Many projects and activities are run in Europe and around the world at the initiative or with the support of various European institutions. To help citizens find their way around, the Commission has launched the European Culture Portal. This provides a single gateway for information to the many cultural activities receiving EU assistance and is widely used by the general public, cultural operators and local, regional and national organisations.

Further European policies and activities relating specifically to digital broadcasting and digital media are described in the brochure and policy cases on Information Society.

### Where the Information Society meets Culture

The Information Society presents new challenges and opportunities to Europe's cultural industries. Can cultural assets be used to stimulate growth in the Information Society? Can the Information Society make European culture more accessible to more people? And will the Information Society be dominated by one or two languages, or will it be as multilingual and multicultural as Europe is today?

Digital culture requires innovative ways of managing, accessing, interpreting and preserving Europe's rich cultural and scientific heritage. It is about turning information lying in various heritage repositories into active knowledge, readily accessible through new channels, such as the internet or mobile phones, and specific to our needs. Essentially, it is about making heritage available at the click of a mouse.

DigiCult-related research has already yielded advanced, 'intelligent', highly interactive tools and user-centred services based on sophisticated technologies (e.g. virtual, augmented reality etc) that have been applied to various cultural heritage fields, including music, film, drama, architecture and visual arts, thus enhancing the competences and promoting the work of relevant institutions and professionals. At the same time, DigiCult applications have created new opportunities for learning and entertainment among schoolchildren, university students, lifelong learners, art lovers and collectors, tourists and other user groups. The opportunities are limited only by our imaginations!

## Information Society Activities

### Fifth Framework Programme

With a focus on eCulture and eScience (i.e. culture and science in a networked environment), research under ICT for Cultural Heritage Applications (otherwise known as “DigiCult”) aims to establish a lasting infrastructure of technologies, guidelines, standards, human and institutional networks to support and extend the role of Europe's libraries, museums and archives in the digital age.

In the course of the Fifth Framework Programme, 8 calls for proposals were launched in the IST Programme, from which 110 DigiCult projects were selected and granted funding, amounting to a total of €89.7m. These projects brought together 688 partners from 35 countries, representing 506 different organisations and institutions from both the private and public sectors (40% cultural actors, 30% industry and 30% research).

Research topics addressed by FP5 projects included: supporting digital libraries across Europe to network and integrate cultural and scientific collections, preserve and exploit physical and digital assets, and develop new business models. Other major activity areas were: improving access to cultural and scientific assets by the wider public, including schoolchildren and tourists; developing new ways of representing, experiencing and preserving the past through leading edge technologies; and empowering individuals and small groups in local communities to share and document their community heritage.

### Sixth Framework Programme

Research under FP6 is addressed through the Strategic Objectives on Technology-enhanced learning and access to cultural heritage and Access to and preservation of cultural and scientific resources. The aim is to improve the accessibility, visibility and recognition of the value of Europe's cultural and scientific resources, and to develop new forms of cultural experiences. It includes work to:

- Support the emerging complexity of digital cultural and scientific objects and repositories, through enriched conceptual representations, and advanced access methods; and
- Explore how to preserve the availability of digital resources over time, through novel concepts, techniques and tools.

### Other Activities

The eTEN Programme is concerned with the large-scale roll-out of public interest services, primarily in support of the eEurope Action Plan. In this context, eTEN projects address the deployment of eCulture applications and services as one of several areas of common interest for online public services. New forms of business and commerce are also addressed from the point of view of eInclusion.

The eContent Programme supports the production, use and distribution of European digital content and promotes linguistic and cultural diversity on the global networks. One action line aims specifically at enhancing content production in a multilingual and multicultural environment, covering the design, production and distribution of high-quality, multilingual and/or multicultural digital content. Cultural content remains a key priority under the follow-on programme, eContentplus (2005-2008).

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## Next Steps

The research synopses and policy cases presented here represent only the first stage in linking Information Society activities to EU policies. Information Society & Media DG is now working with Education & Culture DG to establish a policy interface to improve synergies.

A virtuous circle should develop, with improved communication between researchers and policymakers ensuring that:

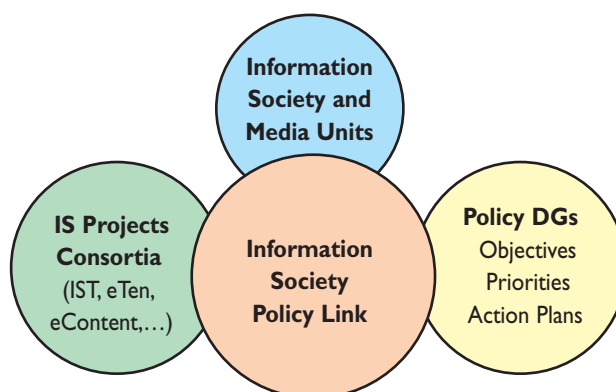
- Information Society & Media programmes better reflect relevant EU policies;
- EU policies better account for Information Society technologies;
- ICTs are better applied to meeting Europe's challenges.

At a later stage, specific actions will be launched addressing policy-makers in national and regional administrations in Member States, European institutions and national parliaments.

## Getting Involved

The *Information Society Policy Link* initiative links policy-makers and researchers in a number of ways, so as to leverage the benefits of Information Society & Media projects for European policies. A variety of activities are planned, including a series of Policy Workshops and events targeted at the European policy community.

Project Consortia play a crucial role in the development of this joint effort, providing a valuable source of information for European policy-makers on relevant technological developments, as well as improving the quality, impact and awareness of their own projects for the benefit of EU policies. Organisations involved in past or present Information Society projects with relevant activities or results are invited to contact the Initiative at the address shown.



## Information Society Policy Link at a Glance

Information Society related actions constitute a considerable effort of the European Union. For instance, Information Society Technologies (IST) research has been the largest thematic priority in the EU's Fifth (1998-2002) and Sixth (2002-2006) Framework Research Programmes. Together they represent an investment of over €7bn in IST research, and are complemented by programmes such as eContent (€100m) and eTEN (€315m), which focus on digital content and eServices deployment respectively.

The projects funded by these programmes offer benefits to all areas of Europe's economy and society. To fully realise these benefits the technologies need to be linked closely to European policy-making in the relevant areas.

**Information Society Policy Link** is an initiative of Information Society & Media DG to identify and reinforce links between its projects and relevant EU policies. More than 3000 projects from Information Society programmes are being analysed, identifying a wealth of concrete results that support EU policies across all of the principal policy domains.

By exchanging information and experiences, the Information Society Policy Link initiative aims to ensure that results from European ICT research provide greater leverage, both in implementing current policies and shaping priorities for the future.

## Further Information

### Information Society Policy Link initiative

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### Europe's Information Society: Thematic Portal

[http://europa.eu.int/information\\_society/](http://europa.eu.int/information_society/)