

EUROPEAN POLICY ON DIGITISATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE FROM 2005. ONWARDS

UDC 930.85:004.9](4-672EU)

Aleksandra Marinković¹, Aleksandra Mirić², Filip Mirić³

¹College of Applied Technical Sciences, Niš, Republic of Serbia

²Institut de Recherche sur l'Architecture Antique (IRAA), France

³Faculty of Law, University of Niš, Republic of Serbia

Abstract. *Protection of cultural heritage is not just a matter of legacy and reverence we owe to our ancestors but also a way to preserve our national identity. The preservation of cultural diversity of European countries is one of the most important goals and a condition for its further valorisation. New information technologies offer great opportunities to digitise cultural heritage, to save it from oblivion and to make it available for future generations. In the period from 2005 to 2014, the European Union authorities adopted a number of important legal documents aimed at establishing a common framework for digitisation of tangible and intangible national heritage, in full observance of the cultural differences between the EU Member States. In this paper, the authors provide an overview of the most important legal documents in this field and highlight the importance of digitisation for the process of protection and popularization of cultural heritage. The authors suggest that the presented recommendations and guidelines that constitute a normative framework for the digitisation of cultural heritage may be very useful in the process of harmonizing Serbian legislation with the EU recommendations in this area.*

Key words: *cultural heritage, digitisation, cultural policy, EU.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The diversity of cultures in the European Union countries is recognized as one of the most important assets of the EU identity. Cultural diversity has been identified as an issue of substantial value for the EU member states. By recognizing and popularizing the distinctive features of other cultures, they may acquire knowledge about different traditions, customs, history and languages of other members states. The intercultural dialogue, which is encouraged within the European Union, is important not only for strengthening ties between the member states but also for a critical examination of methods for popularizing one's own

Received March 23rd, 2016 / Revised April 19th, 2016 / Accepted April 20th, 2016

Corresponding author: Aleksandra Marinković, MSc. (Arch.), Lecturer, College of Applied Technical Sciences, Aleksandra Medvedeva 20, Niš, Republic of Serbia; E-mail: aleksandra.marinkovic@vtsnis.edu.rs

culture. In that context, the focal point of the EU cultural policy is the valorisation of tangible and intangible traces of diverse cultural heritage, which are reflected in the constantly changing and evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions of the European peoples.

According to the Getty Foundation's "Digital Art History" research initiative, the term "digitisation and online accessibility of heritage" has become a shorthand reference to the potentially transformative impact that digital technologies hold for the discipline of tangible and intangible cultural values. Advanced technologies are making research data more widely accessible, allowing scientists to ask and answer new questions.¹ Every year, Europe's museums, archives and libraries and Member State Governments expend considerable time, effort and resources to digitise their tremendously rich and diverse collections, both to aid long-term preservation and to drive new models of public engagement (Poole, 2010:1).

Digital content is available to the general public in a growing number of devices. Digitisation of cultural heritage is a challenge and a new approach to presenting the content of cultural institutions to general public. Encouraging dialogue of different cultures and cultural heritage protection is a thread that weaves through the development policy of the EU Member States, the legislation of most EU member states and the provisions of numerous international conventions. There are several important legal acts and standards which provide the normative framework for digitisation of cultural heritage in the European Union (Sotirova, 2012:24). This issue is very important for cultural development of EU member states as well as for creating common cultural policy in the EU.

2. THE EU NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR DIGITISATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

In this part of the paper, we will present only the most important legal documents containing provisions relevant for digitisation of cultural heritage, adopted by the competent EU authorities in the period from 2005 to 2014.

2.1. Communication from the Commission to the EU Parliament, the Council, the EU Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - i2010 : digital libraries

The beginning of the digitisation process was described in *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - i2010 : digital libraries* of 2005. This process requires a common effort at the level of the EU Member States, whose efforts on digitisation and digital preservation are at present very much fragmented, and at the Community level. A successful response to the challenges involved can speed up digitisation, increase the accessibility of information and ensure the long-term preservation of digital content. The Commission invites the European Parliament and the Council to endorse the presented approach and Member States to join the efforts at Union level to make digital libraries a reality across Europe.²

¹ *The Getty Foundation, Digital Art History*, <http://getty.edu/foundation/initiatives/current/dah/index.html> , Accessed 12 March 2016.

² See more: *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - i2010 : digital libraries (SEC(2005)*

2.2. Council Conclusions on the Digitisation and Online Accessibility of Cultural Material, and Digital Preservation

A large number of legal documents in the field of digitisation of cultural heritage were adopted in 2006. In *Council Conclusions on the Digitisation and Online Accessibility of Cultural Material, and Digital Preservation (2006)*, the Council of Europe invites member states: to reinforce national strategies and targets for digitisation and digital preservation; to contribute to the European digital library- a multilingual common access point to Europe's distributed cultural heritage; to improve framework conditions for digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material and digital preservation; to reinforce co-ordination within and between Member States on related issues, and to contribute to an effective overview of progress at the European level.³ This document also included a detailed plan of activities in the field of digitisation of cultural heritage.

2.3. Commission Recommendation of 24 August 2006 on the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material and digital preservation

The importance of digitisation of cultural heritage was particularly pointed out in the *Commission Recommendation of 24 August 2006 on the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material and digital preservation*. Digitisation is an important means of ensuring greater access to cultural materials. In some cases it is the only means of ensuring that such material will be available for future generations. Thus, many digitisation initiatives are currently being undertaken in the EU Member States, but efforts are fragmented. Concerted action by the Member States to digitise their cultural heritage would lend greater coherence to the selection of material and would avoid overlapping in digitisation. It would also lead to a more secure climate for companies investing in digitisation technologies. Overviews of current and planned digitisation activities and quantitative targets for digitisation would contribute to the achievement of those objectives.⁴

2.4. The Commission Decision of 27 February 2006 setting up a High Level Expert Group on Digital Libraries

The Commission Decision of 27 February 2006 setting up a High Level Expert Group on Digital Libraries defines conditions for setting up a High Level Expert Group on Digital Libraries.⁵ These expert groups are important because they would ensure cooperation of experts specializing in diverse scientific areas from many countries, in an endeavour to improve protection of cultural heritage in EU member states.

1194} {SEC(2005) 1195}, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:52005DC0465> , Accessed 12 March 2016.

³*Council Conclusions on the Digitisation and Online Accessibility of Cultural Material, and Digital Preservation (2006/C 297/01)*, [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52006XG1207\(01\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52006XG1207(01)&from=EN), Accessed 13 March 2016.

⁴*Commission Recommendation of 24 August 2006 on the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material and digital preservation (2006/585/EC)*, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32006H0585&from=EN>, Accessed 14 March 2016.

⁵ See more: *Commission Decision of 27 February 2006 setting up a High Level Expert Group on Digital Libraries*, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32006D0178&from=EN>, Accessed 15 March 2016.

2.5. The Conclusion of Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council and the European Economic and Social Committee on scientific information in the digital age: access, dissemination and preservation

The legal document titled *The Conclusion of Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council and the European Economic and Social Committee on scientific information in the digital age: access, dissemination and preservation* indicates that access to dissemination and preservation of scientific information are the major challenges of the digital age. Success in each of these areas is of key importance for European information society and research policies. Different stakeholders in these fields have differing views on how to move towards improvements for access, dissemination and preservation. Within this transition process from a print world to a digital world, the Commission will contribute to the debate among stakeholders and policy makers by encouraging experiments with new models that may improve access to and dissemination of scientific information, and by supporting the linkage of existing preservation initiatives at European level. The Commission invited the European Parliament and Council to debate the relevant issues on the basis of the Communication discussed here.⁶

2.6. The Resolution of 27 September 2007 on i2010: towards a European digital library

In 2007, the European Parliament adopted the *Resolution of 27 September 2007 on i2010: towards a European digital library*. The EU Parliament recommends setting up (in stages) a European digital library in the form of a single, direct and multilingual access point for the European cultural heritage. The main aim of this Resolution is to endorse the establishment of a European digital library and uphold the idea of Europe unified in diversity. Thus, governments of EU member states should encourage their museums to digitalize their archives in order to enable free access to all those who are interesting in cultural heritage. Cooperation between member states is very important in this process.⁷ Digitisation of cultural heritage is an on-going process of great importance in the digital era.

2.7. European Digital Library EUROPEANA

Europeana is a common European Digital Library of EU member states. The *Council Conclusions of 20 November 2008 on the European Digital Library EUROPEANA* specify that the creation of the European Digital Library EUROPEANA, which is an online common multilingual access point to digital cultural material from the whole of Europe (books, newspapers, photographs, films and audiovisual works, documents from archives, museum works, architectural and archaeological heritage, etc.) provides an excellent opportunity to

⁶ *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council and the European Economic and Social Committee on scientific information in the digital age: access, dissemination and preservation*, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:52007DC0056> , Accessed 15 March 2016.

⁷ See more, *Resolution of 27 September 2007 on i2010: towards a European digital library (2006/2040(INI))*, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT%20TA%20P6-TA-2007-0416%200%20DOC%20XML%20V0//EN>, Accessed 15 March 2016.

showcase the cultural heritage of the Member States and to provide access for everyone to that heritage.⁸

In a short period of time, *Europeana* has established itself as a reference point for European culture on the Internet. It reflects the ambition of Europe's cultural institutions to make the common and diverse cultural heritage more widely accessible to all. Further efforts that build on the achievements already made and a close collaboration involving all stakeholders are necessary in order to fulfil the promise of easy online access to books, paintings, maps, photographs, newspapers, film clips and audio from across Europe. This paper has outlined the key challenges that will determine the further development of *Europeana* and has formulated a series of issues for debate to which stakeholders are invited to react.⁹

In the *Council Conclusions of 2010: Next steps for Europeana*, the Council of Europe called upon the EU members to make public-private partnerships in order to enable the functioning of EUROPEANA- a European digital library.¹⁰ Possibilities of using Internet platforms for digitisation of cultural heritage are explained in the Europeana strategy: “*We transform the world with culture-Europeana 2015-2020*”. This strategy has a provocative title but, more importantly, it is aimed at ensuring a functional system of protection of cultural heritage.¹¹

2.8. Commission Recommendation of 27 October 2011 on the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material and digital preservation

The *Commission Recommendation of 27 October 2011 on the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material and digital preservation* stipulates the basic principles of preservation of cultural heritage in the global information era. The Digital Agenda for Europe seeks to optimize the benefits of information technologies for economic growth, job creation and the quality of life of European citizens, as part of the Europe 2020 strategy. The digitisation and preservation of Europe's cultural memory which includes print (books, journals and newspapers), photographs, museum objects, archival documents, sound and audiovisual material, monuments and archaeological sites is one of the key areas tackled by the Digital Agenda.¹²

2.9. Commission Recommendation of 27 October 2011 on the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material and digital preservation

Another important document in the process of making the European cultural heritage available to all interested individuals is a strategic plan titled *Mapping of Cultural Heritage*

⁸ *Council Conclusions of 20 November 2008 on the European Digital Library EUROPEANA*, [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52008XG1213\(04\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52008XG1213(04)&from=EN), Accessed 16 March 2016.

⁹ *Europeana - Next Steps*, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:52009DC0440>, Accessed, 16 March 2016.

¹⁰ SEE MORE, ANNEX OF EUROPEANA - NEXT STEPS, AVAILABLE AT TIMELINE OF DIGITISATION AND ONLINE ACCESSIBILITY OF CULTURAL HERITAGE, [HTTPS://EC.EUROPA.EU/DIGITAL-SINGLE-MARKET/EN/NEWS/TIMELINE-DIGITISATION-AND-ONLINE-ACCESSIBILITY-CULTURAL-HERITAGE](https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/timeline-digitisation-and-online-accessibility-cultural-heritage), ACCESSED, 16 MARCH 2016.

¹¹ For more detail, see „*We transform the world with culture-Europeana 2015-2020*”, <http://strategy2020.europeana.eu/>, Accessed 17 March 2016.

¹² *Commission Recommendation of 27 October 2011 on the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material and digital preservation*, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2011:283:0039:0045:EN:PDF>, Accessed 17 March 2016.

actions in European Union policies, programmes and activities, adopted in 2014, which contributes to the development of a strategic approach to the preservation and promotion of European heritage. This strategic plan provides the basic principles governing future action, creating expert groups and cooperation, protection of cultural diversity, and other legal issues. Although this is a strategic document, it is very important because it shows the directions of EU cultural policy.¹³

This brief overview of legal documents relevant for digitisation of cultural heritage shows the intention of all significant EU authorities to create an effective and self-sustainable digitisation system which would provide for the protection of cultural heritage in European Union. It has not been our intention to present and analyze the entire normative framework in this area but rather to point out to the most important legal documents pertaining to the digitalisation of cultural heritage.

3. CONCLUSION

Digitization of cultural heritage is a result of multidisciplinary research and collaboration of scientist and artist, which includes the use of various forms of information technology and computer science. The creative use of different forms of digitised heritage certainly includes greater access to information, dissemination and communication with general public of different levels of knowledge and interest. In this paper, we have presented the recommendations concerning the creation and digital publishing of cultural heritage knowledge, adopted by the EU from 2005 onwards.

The main purpose of these recommendations is the preservation of European heritage in the broadest sense of the word. One of the universal goals is to preserve and assure the visibility of the civilizational values. Another important goal is related to the confirmation of national identity and diversification of the EU member states' cultures. The third equally important objective is to enable professionals as well as the general public to have simple and rapid access to the extremely reach online archives of digitised images and texts, to trace patterns and connections once out of sight, and to recover the past in virtual environments.

The presentation of cultural heritage is no longer preconditioned by the availability and accessibility of exhibition galleries. The number of exhibits, their condition and the level of protection are no longer limiting factors. Culture is becoming more and more accessible by virtue of digitisation of cultural heritage which is now available online.

REFERENCES

1. *Annex of Europeana - Next Steps*, available at *Timeline of digitisation and online accessibility of cultural heritage*, <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/timeline-digitisation-and-online-accessibility-cultural-heritage>,
2. *Commission Decision of 27 February 2006 setting up a High Level Expert Group on Digital Libraries*, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32006D0178&from=EN>.
3. *Commission Recommendation of 24 August 2006 on the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material and digital preservation (2006/585/EC)*, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32006H0585&from=EN>.

¹³*Mapping of Cultural Heritage actions in European Union policies, programmes and activities* http://ec.europa.eu/culture/library/reports/2014-heritage-mapping_en.pdf, Accessed 17 March 2016.

4. *Commission Recommendation of 27 October 2011 on the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material and digital preservation*, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2011:283:0039:0045:EN:PDF>.
5. *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - i2010 : digital libraries {SEC(2005) 1194} {SEC(2005) 1195}*, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:52005DC0465>.
6. *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council and the European Economic and Social Committee on scientific information in the digital age: access, dissemination and preservation*, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:52007DC0056>.
7. *Council Conclusions of 20 November 2008 on the European digital library EUROPEANA*, [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52008XG1213\(04\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52008XG1213(04)&from=EN).
8. *Council Conclusions on the Digitisation and Online Accessibility of Cultural Material, and Digital Preservation (2006/C 297/01)*, [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52006XG1207\(01\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52006XG1207(01)&from=EN).
9. *Europeana - Next Steps*, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:52009DC0440>.
10. Europeana Strategy 2020: “*We transform the world with culture-Europeana 2015-2020*”, <http://strategy2020.europeana.eu/>.
11. *Mapping of Cultural Heritage actions in European Union policies, programmes and activities* http://ec.europa.eu/culture/library/reports/2014-heritage-mapping_en.pdf.
12. Poole N., (2010). *The Cost of Digitising Europe’s Cultural Heritage*, London: The Collections Trust.
13. *Resolution of 27 September 2007 on i2010: towards a European digital library (2006/2040(INI))*, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT%20TA%20P6-TA-2007-0416%200%20DOC%20XML%20V0//EN>.
14. Sotirova, K., et al, (2012). Digitization of Cultural Heritage – Standards, Institutions, Initiatives in: *Access to Digital Cultural Heritage, Innovative Applications of Automated Metadata Generation*, Ivanova K. (ed), Plovdiv, pp.23-68
15. *The Getty Foundation, Digital Art History*, <http://getty.edu/foundation/initiatives/current/dah/index.html>.

EVROPSKA POLITIKA DIGITALIZACIJE KULTURNOG NASLEĐA OD 2015. GODINE DO DANAS

Zaštita kulturnog nasleđa nije samo pitanje duga prema našim precima, već i očuvanja nacionalnog identiteta. S druge strane, očuvanje kulturne različitosti naroda Evrope, predstavlja jedan od najznačajnijih ciljeva i uslov za njen dalji napredak i razvoj. Nove informacione tehnologije, pružaju velike mogućnosti da se bogata kulturna baština predstavi u elektronskom obliku i na taj način sačuva od zaborava i učini dostupnom široj publici. Na nivou Evropske unije od 2005. do 2014. godine, doneti su brojni pravni akti sa ciljem da se kreiraju zajedničke mere za digitalizaciju kulturnog nasleđa, uvažavajući pritom kulturne razlike među državama članica. Cilj rada je da se, kroz sumarni prikaz najznačajnijih pravnih akata iz ove oblasti, ukaže na značaj digitalizacije za proces zaštite i popularizacije kulturnog nasleđa. Takođe, autori osnovano ukazuju da preporuke i smernice navedene u pravnom okviru za digitalizaciju kulturnog nasleđa, mogu biti veoma korisni u procesu harmonizacije prava Srbije sa pravom Evropske unije.

Ključne reči: *kulturno nasleđe, digitalizacija, kulturna politika, EU.*