

THE ViMM CONTRIBUTION TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BERLIN CALL TO ACTION “CULTURAL HERITAGE FOR THE FUTURE OF EUROPE”

The present document has been prepared by ViMM on the basis of the text of the Berlin Call to Action (in bold) which has been endorsed and signed by ViMM. Throughout this document text has been added (in italic) as an explanation of the ViMM's contribution to the implementation of the Berlin Call to Action from the perspective of digital cultural heritage and related digital technology.

The 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage marks a turning point for Europe's ever-growing movement for cultural heritage documentation, preservation and protection. Europa Nostra and the H2020 Virtual Multimodal Museum Project (ViMM) agree that we must build on this momentum to recognize and unfold the positive and cohesive power of our shared cultural heritage and values to connect Europe's citizens and communities and to give a deeper meaning to the entire European project and that the time for action is now.

This “Berlin Call to Action” was presented at the European Cultural Heritage Summit on 22 June 2018 in Berlin by the 3 co-hosting organisations, namely EUROPA NOSTRA– the Voice of Cultural Heritage in Europe; the German Cultural Heritage Committee (DNK) acting as national coordinator of the European Year of Cultural Heritage in Germany and the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation (SPK) based in Berlin.

ViMM is a Coordination and Support Action and the only project funded under the European Union (EU) Horizon 2020 programme COOP-8 Call from 2016-19 in order to define and support high quality policies, strategic and day-to day decision making, the utilisation of breakthrough technological developments and to nurture an evidence-based view of growth and development impacted by Digital Cultural Heritage (DCH) and virtual museums (VM) in particular

This “Berlin Call to Action” draws its inspiration and legitimacy from the expertise, enthusiasm and engagement of all those women and men who care for cultural heritage (tangible, intangible and digital) and who dedicate their expertise, time and energy, as professionals or volunteers, to ensure the transmission of this heritage to future generations.

The ViMM Manifesto for Digital Cultural Heritage was published also during the 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage. This Manifesto is supported by a Roadmap and Action Plan, following a programme of over two years of intensive consultation and consolidation with key experts from the wide multidisciplinary area of Digital Cultural Heritage. The ViMM Manifesto is directed towards strategic decision makers, funding bodies, professional associations, institutions, practitioners and industries in the Cultural Heritage (CH) sector who share a common interest and concerns in the digital future and who need to act in concert.

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Following the adoption of its Manifesto, the ViMM also decided to endorse and sign the Berlin Call to Action. Following a due consultation with Europa Nostra, the present document explains the contribution which the ViMM Community will make to the implementation of the Berlin Call to Action. The ViMM Community stands

ready to work closely together with Europa Nostra and other European heritage stakeholders in order to take up our shared responsibility to unfold the cohesive power and potential of our shared cultural heritage to advance a more peaceful, prosperous, inclusive and just Europe. We align our vision and action plan in order to assure that rapid and far-reaching developments in digital technology contribute to and enhance the goals of the Berlin Call.

Rapidly emerging technologies will have increasing relevance for Cultural Heritage Institutes (CHI), extending existing formats, exploring new ways of presenting cultural content and expanding institutional capabilities. These are likely to include: artificial intelligence (AI); computer vision; deep learning / machine learning; cloud computing, complex big data in multimedia form and adaptive cognitive methods. New Extended Reality (XR) technologies, in combination with AI, offer more opportunities to interpret and visualise elements of history. AI-enabled automated information extraction on a massive scale is needed to enable mass high quality digitisation. Novel, smart immersive environments are required, that enhance interaction between human and machine activity, together with efficient interfaces for semantic tagging by humans.

The relationship between 'virtual and digital heritage' and 'real heritage', both tangible and intangible, should be strengthened rather than dissociated. The role of digital initiatives in supporting rather than threatening 'physical heritage' should be widely understood. The conceptualisation of holistic documentation (focusing on knowledge and the story) and Virtual Museums should be further developed to generate relevant policies towards research, education, tourism and other key sectors. stimulate investment and inspire novel implementations.

Cultural Heritage Institutions (CHI) should be aware of and informed about technologies which become available to support their requirements. Widely-used platforms continually offer capabilities for smart devices to exploit. The public will only accept XR in the context of cultural heritage, if this technology fulfils their needs, is intelligent, very simple to use, adds value to the personal experience and matches the visitor's expectations of performance.

ACTION 1 DEVELOPING THE EUROPEAN ACTION PLAN ON APPROPRIATE INTEGRATION OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

We call for an ambitious and pioneering European Action Plan for Cultural Heritage as a lasting legacy of the European Year of Cultural Heritage. This Action Plan which is already announced in the recently adopted New European Agenda for Culture, must be prepared carefully and implemented with full involvement and engagement of all relevant public and private stakeholders, including civil society.

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It must also be holistic and interconnected with other key EU policy agendas and priorities, fully in line with the recent conclusions of the EU Council and European Parliament. We refer to objectives and policy areas such as social cohesion, regional development, urban development, rural development, environment, maritime and tourism policies, sustainability agenda and climate change adaptation, research and innovation, digital policy, education and skills and, of course, the youth. This Action Plan should furthermore also have a strong external dimension since the European Union must take global responsibility and reach out to partners across and beyond the borders of the EU. The Action Plan should therefore be coherent with the Council of Europe's Faro Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society and its recent European Heritage Strategy for the 21st century, and with the UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

Society is increasingly dependent on and driven by digital technology: CHI must adapt and become engaged with this development. Citizens are not only consumers of DCH but should be enabled to participate actively and develop a sense of ownership of their cultural assets. There is a need to identify in more depth the target audiences who can benefit from DCH, in order that well adapted products can be created. The entire education system, social minorities and local enterprises are among them.

By focusing on interaction and conceptual design, CHI will be able to offer diversified, collaborative, tailored experiences and novel exhibition design with user-oriented perspectives. Among the most effective user experiences in CH are those created by combining virtual and real worlds, incorporating knowledge of the past and a stimulating story.

EU and other initiatives, programmes and projects should carry out evaluations which study feedback on issues such as: audience appreciation, understandability and usability of technology applications; impact on participation and revenues; and the expectations of the wide, multidisciplinary audiences, professionals and curators.

A vast amount of cultural assets, highly valuable for historical research, are 'born digital', through the recording activities of individuals using smart devices and social. The management and preservation of this represents a daunting task. Private born-digital archives create held by CHI create further research needs to define authenticity and for intensive curation, long-term preservation policies and quality standards, access rights and ethics. Many specific endeavours to archive, curate and make available certain types exist. The dissemination of best practices can play a vital role in stimulating plans for the sustainable future preservation of born digital content.

ACTION 2 RECOGNISING HERITAGE AS A PRIORITY FOR EUROPEAN POLICIES AND FUNDING

In support of the future European Action Plan for Cultural Heritage, we call on the EU institutions to fully recognize cultural heritage as a strategic priority in the up-coming policy programmes and the EU's new multi-annual financial framework (2021-2027). As the "Cultural Heritage counts for Europe report" evidenced, Cultural Heritage is a resource that enhances the sustainability of various societal efforts.



It contributes to the much-needed investment in Europe's human and cultural capital and in promoting Europe's values. At the same time, we all commit to continue raising the awareness of the multiple values and benefits of cultural heritage for Europe. This is particularly important in view of the upcoming European Parliament elections in May 2019, and the subsequent appointment of the new European Commission.

It is critical to Europe's economy and society that the significance of DCH is described and well understood, to ensure the necessary strategic investment and sustained funding at all levels. While there is an apparent demand for DCH in general, resources may be lacking for its creation, management and promotion. There is a gap between investments in implementation of digital projects on the one hand and 'backbone' or infrastructural actions, on the other. These needs remain largely unquantified and further study is needed at institutional, regional, national and Pan-European level to ascertain their extent and identify widely applicable remedies. The adoption of efficient, easily accessible, low-cost techniques, where available, will remain important.

Advances must not be limited to larger institutions which already have greater resources and opportunities for grant-capture. The much larger number of smaller cultural institutions, which have a high impact on local communities and their economies, very often have difficulty in securing expertise, infrastructure or funding for innovation. The realisation of their full potential in a future sustainable way can be substantially assisted through targeted new pan-European and/or regional initiatives.

Policies for the incentivisation of funding from both public and private sources should be developed, including a mixture of direct public subsidies, tax incentives and encouragements for private funding, sponsor visibility, crowdfunding etc. Collective investments are likely to be needed, since few individual institutions could make them on their own.

ACTION 3 BRIDGING LOCAL, NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN

The various levels of governance are key to unleashing the full potential of cultural heritage as a strategic resource for society, economy, culture and the environment. Therefore, we call on all States, Regions and Cities in Europe to continue to develop holistic and ambitious policy and action plans for cultural heritage over the next decade. We also urge them to enhance their dialogue and cooperation with relevant European and international organisations as well as with civil society, in order to ensure that the policy and action plans adopted by various levels of governance – from local, national to European – complement each other, are coherent.

The cultural heritage sector should be fully engaged in a generational switch towards a process of Digital Transformation (DT) consistent with other EU modernisation policies. Organisational change is needed to make the most of modern technology: managements should prioritise and lead this, gaining support from the responsible public sector authorities, and monitored progress according to measurable indicators, wherever possible.

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ACTION 4 SAFEGUARDING AND TRANSMITTING THE IRREPLACEABLE

Cultural heritage is unique and irreplaceable. Yet it is often vulnerable and even endangered. Therefore, it is our collective task to preserve this treasure so as to transmit it for further enjoyment and (re)use to future generations. We must boost the necessary human and financial resources and invest in skills and capacity building in order to ensure proper preservation, development and transmission of our heritage, both physically and digitally. In this process we must fully involve international organisations such as the UNESCO, ICOMOS, ICCROM, ICOM, NEMO, etc. creative industry, universities and the research community, to develop innovative business models and stimulate creative synergies between heritage and the arts. We should also recognize the value of intangible expressions of our heritage which are constantly evolving and enriching our society and living environment.

Usability of DCH means putting it into a specific context to create a meaning for the user, emphasising the historical and cultural background of what is presented. Improving contextualisation will have an important bearing on policy, research, innovation and education. This depends not only on the quality of the visual representation, but also of the metadata, the related story and associated knowledge.

Emerging open interoperable frameworks and standards which support, create and share DCH should be fast-tracked. However, current standards should also be preserved and continuity through backward-compatibility should be sustained. Standards should be targeted towards improving collaboration, co-creation and longevity of access rather than protecting data against disclosure. They need to be agreed internationally and especially with CEN, so that digitised content and the related metadata becomes seamlessly accessible in the long term to all. The EU, in cooperation with international organisations, academia and research bodies should agree a pan-European action plan with a realistic time frame for the development of necessary standards. We recommend the establishment of a new CEN Committee on Digital Heritage.

An ethical framework of 'virtual values' is needed to underpin DCH strategies and development, and to provide CHI personnel with a comprehensible direction. Attention should be paid to monitoring the implementation of this framework as well as to the applicable privacy requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

ACTION 5 INVESTING IN QUALITY HERITAGE-LED REGENERATION

We must ensure and enable adequate investments, public and private, into quality heritage-led regeneration of our neighbourhoods, cities and countryside based on creativity, innovation and adaptive re-use; inspired by the principles of high-quality "Baukultur" as formulated in the Davos Declaration adopted at the very beginning of the European Year of Cultural Heritage; and enriched by the active participation of citizens and their communities and civil society organisations. In this context, we welcome creative and respectful interaction between the protection of the built heritage and contemporary contributions to our built environment, which contribute to the heritage of tomorrow.





Meaningful missing parts of cultural heritage objects that are only partially preserved, could be reconstructed while building 3D-objects, requiring holistic documentation of historical knowledge to enhance their meaning and incorporating elements of intangible heritage.

ACTION 6 PROMOTING BETTER KNOWLEDGE AND DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

Cultural heritage must be given a much bigger importance in education activities – both formal and informal – for all ages. This will stimulate stronger public engagement for the safeguard and transmission of our cultural heritage. Special attention must be given to history education and heritage interpretation placed in a broader context of Europe's past, present and future. This will equip Europe's citizens and especially our children and the youth, with the necessary tools for gaining a deeper understanding of the on-going encounters and exchanges within Europe as well as between Europe and other cultures of the world. All of these activities will help build more respectful and meaningful relationships between people and the places where they live, work or visit. This will also facilitate a better understanding, respect and inclusion of new inhabitants in Europe.

The accelerated development of ICT does not yet correspond to an effective capacity of DCH practitioners to work with available tools. In the current transition of CHI, professional and vocational training for those in work, together with continuous development of new curricula, syllabi and courses incorporating DCH at undergraduate and postgraduate level, are vital requirements. Training offers, accompanied by meaningful certification, should be stimulated, addressed to the different CH target groups and their position in the 'digital workflow'. Interdisciplinary approaches are needed to address all the needs and skills required for DCH.

The question 'who needs to be trained, for what purpose and at what level' should be directly addressed, from a lifelong learning perspective, not least within the programmes supervised by DG EAC. European initiatives such as Erasmus+ and national policies within the spirit of the Regional and Structural Funds should address systematically the training of students, teachers, professionals, curators, administration and governance staff. It should also support training of the public and communities to enhance the quality of co-creation processes.

Mass digitisation across Europe will provide a strong basis for many critical developments. An EU strategic action plan is needed for massive high-quality 3D digitisation, holistic documentation and availability. The role of Europeana as the central platform and flagship initiative for DCH, should be expanded, by incrementally increasing the amount and quality of 3D, interactive animations and XR content. Structured and well harmonised data is central to the future of DCH. Quality standards such as the FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable) data principles should be prioritised.



ACTION 7 BUILDING ON THE MOMENTUM

The European Year of Cultural Heritage has strengthened the policy momentum and wide mobilisation for cultural heritage in Europe. We must now consolidate and further improve the synergies between the widest possible range of public and private stakeholders including relevant European and international organisations and civil society. To achieve this, we need to find an adequate formula for a more permanent platform for gathering knowledge, capacity building and coordinating advocacy for cultural heritage in Europe.

The ViMM community strongly supports the setting up of such a platform which should also contribute to the monitoring of progress achieved as a follow-up of the European Year of Cultural Heritage.

CHI should be open-minded, working together with creative producers to provide virtual applications and products that promote CH beyond the limitations of a physical museum or site. Through greater openness to partnerships, the heritage sector should collaborate more, as part of the broader cultural sector to reach out to the public.

The EU should give further impetus through its policies, funding programmes and initiatives to the Open Culture movement, promoted e.g. by Europeana and wider adoption of Open Access policies and frameworks for digital data. Digital cultural information should be based on internationally accepted open formats and metadata standards, such as the ones provided by Europeana. An open approach will enhance the benefits to creative industries and strengthen developments such as Citizen Science, Crowdsourcing and Open Science. Web accessibility, within the provisions of European legislation, should be adopted and promoted by the whole CH sector.

SIGNATORIES to "CULTURAL HERITAGE FOR THE FUTURE OF EUROPE"

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