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Inspiring History
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Position on the Consultation on Digital for Cultural Heritage

Preserving cultural heritage for future generations and making this available for use is happening increasingly through digital means. Many archives, museums, libraries and galleries have digitised their collections since the European Commission published its [recommendations on digitisation and online accessibility and digital preservation of cultural material](#) in 2011. These digital collections are a valuable source for different types of users, such as educators and researchers, and have enabled curators to present and use their collections in new ways. Europeana has played a key role in this digital transformation. It has become a network of professionals who are learning from each other, it has been able to set standards that make transnational cooperation possible, and is making it possible for third parties, such as EuroClio, to access the digital collections from cultural heritage institutions, through one means. Through Europeana, Europe is leading the digital transformation in the cultural heritage sector internationally. The Europeana Data Model has served as an example for initiatives such as the [Digital Public Library of America](#), and Europeana took the initiative to start [rightsstatements.org](#) in which a consortium is working to make it easier for users to understand what they can do with a digital object they discover by providing simple and standardized terms that summarize the copyright status of objects in their collection, as well as how those objects may be used.

In order for Europe to continue this leading role in the digital transformation, the European Commission needs to further support and invest in Europeana, and the individuals and organisations that support its development.

The main reason why we believe investing in digital transformation is important, is that we see a lot of potential for use of digital heritage in the field of education. Digital heritage has the potential to enrich learning and research in various ways and can make quality education more accessible to all learners. Digital heritage is also needed for citizens to develop themselves as more active and critical, especially as they access more and more information online and through digital means. Because the Covid-19 pandemic has greatly accelerated the need for modernisation and digital transformation of education



and training systems across Europe. The European Commission, Parliament and Council are planning to work on digital education, and are calling for new strategic partnerships in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. [We believe that Europeana should be part of these plans.](#)¹

In the meantime, we have to recognize, however, that the full potential of use of digital heritage in the field of education, has not yet been reached. To change this situation, EuroClio has helped to develop the [Europeana for Education Recommendations](#)², identified what Europeana and Cultural Heritage Institutes can do to [make their digital collections fit for education](#)³, but also worked with Europeana to develop [Historiana](#), as a tool that educators can use to access or create eLearning Activities with digitised cultural heritage.⁴ Together with Europeana, we have developed over sixty source collections (with sources that are contextualised, cleared for copyright, and enriched with relevant metadata for educators), developed over 40 eLearning Activities, developed a [teachers guide](#)⁵, and offered dozens of online and face to face trainings on the use of digital heritage in education.

From this background, we have reviewed the 2011 Commission Recommendations on the Digitisation and Online Accessibility of Cultural Material and Digital Preservation, and familiarized ourselves with the [Position paper](#) made by the Europeana Foundation, Europeana Network Association and Europeana Aggregators Forum (from hereon the Europeana Position Paper)⁶.

¹ EuroClio's Position on the Digital Education Action Plan 2020 is available here:
<https://euroclio.eu/EuroClions-Position-on-the-Digital-Education-Action-Plan-2020>.

² The Europeana for Education Policy Recommendations (2015) are available here:
<https://pro.europeana.eu/post/europeana-for-education-policy-recommendations>

³ The Europeana Fit for Education case study (2020) is available here:
<https://euroclio.eu/Europeana-Fit-for-Education-Case-Study>

⁴ More information about Historiana is included at the end of this document.

⁵ The Historiana Teachers' Guide is available here: <https://www.euroclio.eu/Historiana-Teacher-Training-Guide>

⁶ The Joint position by the Europeana Foundation, Europeana Network Association and Europeana Aggregators Forum is available here:
<https://pro.europeana.eu/page/europeana-initiative-position-consultation-on-opportunities-offered-by-digital-technologies>



You can find our recommendations below:

Recognise and emphasise the value of digitised heritage in education

Although the 2011 Recommendations are listing developing learning and educational content as one of the possibilities for re-use, there is little recognition of the educational value of digitised heritage in the rest of the document. Luckily, the value of education is recognized in the Europeana Position Paper and existence of the [Europeana Education Community](#).⁷

Revive the ambition to give access to all public domain materials on Europeana

The first priority that was listed by the Comité des Sages in the [New Renaissance Report](#), was “ensuring wide access to and use of digitised public domain material”. They called for all public domain material to be available via Europeana by 2015. The [2011 Commission Recommendations](#) mentions “webhavesting”, which could be a way of doing this.

The ambition to make the public domain material available via Europeana, has not been reached and seems to be missing from more recent policy documents. This is problematic, because educators who are used to using popular websites, such as Wikipedia and Google Image Search, are likely to opt out from using Europeana, when they cannot find the sources they know are in the public domain on Europeana. Therefore, we recommend to reconsider this aim and see what can be done to help users find and use digital public domain in meaningful ways.

Promote the use of licenses that allow educational use

For items that are not yet in the public domain, member states and cultural heritage institutes should be encouraged to make them available via open licenses or through the “[In Copyright - Educational Use Permitted license](#)” that Europeana developed with its international partners through the

⁷ More information about the Europeana Education Community can be found here:
<https://pro.europeana.eu/page/europeana-education>



RightsStatements.org initiative.⁸ With an easy(ier) access to copyrights free and well documented resources, the possibilities to create one's own content and engage others' are strengthened.

Help users find and use materials more easily

There should be more attention in the Recommendations for the needs of the users of digital heritage, such as publishers of educational resources and researchers. Through our work with Europeana, we have learned that different groups of users have different needs in terms of data-quality and meta-data. Enrichment should happen with specific users in mind.

This is already on the radar of the European Commission. Indeed, in 2017, the European Commission [launched a specific call](#) to co-finance projects and activities that would

- provide tools for end users to highlight, share or enrich material accessible through Europeana, such as tools to list personal favourites, share discoveries on social media, upload personal memorabilia or enrich descriptions (crowd-sourcing); or
- produce concrete examples of re-use of the material accessible through Europeana in other sectors, such as in research, education, creative industries or tourism.⁹

In addition, the Europeana Re-Use grant has enabled us to [create new ways for history educators to create, share and use eLearning Activities](#) with content from the Europeana collections¹⁰, but also helped other platforms that make use of Europeana, such as the [Transcribathon](#), to further develop.¹¹ Support for such initiatives should be part of future recommendations.

Targeted support to promote the (re)-use of Europeana will help to create an ecosystem where it is increasingly beneficial for people and organisations to contribute and make use of Historiana. This support is needed, to tailor Europeana to the needs of these different users groups.

⁸ More information about the “In Copyright - Educational Use Permitted” license can be found here:

<https://rightsstatements.org/page/InC-EDU/1.0/?language=en>

⁹ More information about the CEF-TC-2017-3: Europeana call is available here:

<https://ec.europa.eu/inea/en/connecting-europe-facility/cef-telecom/apply-funding/2017-cef-telecom-call-europeana-cef-tc-2017-3>

¹⁰ More information about the Opening Up Historiana project, that EuroClio led with the financial support of the Connecting Europe Facility, can be found here:

<https://pro.europeana.eu/post/presenting-the-opening-up-historiana-project>.

¹¹ More information about the Transcribathon can be found here: <https://transcribathon.com/en/about/>



Ensure diversity and inclusion in the collections

The Comité des Sages, envisaged in the [New Renaissance Report](#) in 2011 that Europeana would become *the* reference point for European culture online. The Commission Recommendations, however, only included quantitative targets for Europeana. The Europeana Position Paper, mentioned both quantitative and qualitative targets. This shift towards quality is necessary for Europeana to reach its initial goal.

The overrepresentation of items from some countries and underrepresentation of items from other countries in the Europeana collections was already mentioned in the 2011 Commission Recommendations. The Europeana Position Paper recognizes that this issue has not been resolved yet. This trend is strengthened when you are looking for sources that meet certain quality criteria (such as image size, availability of transcribed texts, and licenses).

Future support for digitisation should help to make sure that the collections of Europeana are as diverse as its people and history. Because of the biases that exist in collections that are often created through a national lens and made by the majority, this means that extra effort is needed to include heritage from national, cultural, religious and linguistic minorities, women's history, and marginalized communities.

Libraries, archives, galleries and museums should be supported to digitise items in their collections that help to fill the white spots, to provide relevant information about their resources both in English and in their own languages and add metadata that are matching the needs of users.

Acknowledge and address the need for curation of the Europeana Collections

In order to ensure that the Europeana Collections are truly inclusive and reflective of Europe's past, curation is needed. This is no easy task, because people disagree about history and how it should be presented, but the realisation of the [House of European History](#) by the European Parliament, shows that it is possible. The people involved in the development of the House of European History, could be asked for advice on the development of Europeana. At the same time, Europeana can build on the experiences of the [Europeana XX project](#), in which the history of the 20th Century is presented with



sources from Europeana.¹²

Create an overview of the content that is already available

The [2011 Commission Recommendations](#) mention that an overview of the content available on Europeana should be developed. While such an overview exists, it is not yet helping users to find the sources that they are looking for, nor to judge whether the content is actually there. To support the curation efforts, it is important to know exactly what content is in Europeana, and which content is missing.

I hope that these inputs are useful and remain at your disposal in case there is anything EuroClio can do to further develop or realise these recommendations.



14 September 2020

Steven Stegers
Executive Director

¹² More information about the Europeana XX project can be found here:
<https://pro.europeana.eu/project/europeana-xx>



About EuroClio

EuroClio, the European Association of History Educators, was established in 1992 with support of the Council of Europe to build bridges between history education professionals from all parts of the then recently reunited Europe. EuroClio inspires and empowers educators to engage learners in innovative and responsible history and citizenship education. It does so through research, the design of educational resources in cross-border teams, offering opportunities for professional development and network, and outreach and exchange.

euroclio.eu

About Historiana

Historiana is an online resource developed by EuroClio, Webtic and Use Media with Europeana and history and citizenship educators from Europe and beyond. Historiana offers free access to historical content resources that are curated, contextualized and licensed for educational use, teaching and learning resources that are piloted, peer-reviewed and free to adapt, and the digital collections from Europeana. In Historiana, educators can find, create, copy and adapt eLearning Activities, using a variety of interactive tools, which they can share with their students and colleagues. Several museums, archives, and teacher training institutes have joined Historiana and are making their own resources available to use.

Historiana.eu