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Digital Agenda: Europeana gives online access to over 14 million examples of Europe's cultural heritage

Anyone in the world can now access over 14 million digitised books, maps, photographs, paintings, film and music clips from cultural institutions across Europe through Europe's digital library Europeana. Launched in 2008 with two million objects, Europeana has already passed the initial target for 2010 of 10 million objects. Today, the Reflection Group ("Comité des Sages" - Maurice Lévy, Elisabeth Niggemann, Jacques de Decker) set up by the Commission to explore new ways to bring Europe's cultural heritage online ([IP/10/456](#)) is addressing the EU's Council of Culture Ministers and the European Parliament's Committee on Culture. The Comité des Sages' report is due to be published at the beginning of 2011.

Neelie Kroes, Vice President of the European Commission for the Digital Agenda said: "Europeana is a great example of how cooperation at European level can enrich all of our lives. 14 million objects available online is good news for all internet users who want to have access to cultural material from Europe's libraries, museums and archives. But Europeana could be even better if more cultural institutions digitised their collections and made them accessible through this European portal. I trust the *Comité des Sages* will soon give us ambitious recommendations to speed up that process."

Europeana was launched as a prototype in November 2008 as Europe's gateway to allow internet users to search and get direct access to digitised books, maps, paintings, newspapers, photographs, film fragments and all sorts of audiovisual documents from Europe's cultural institutions. More than 14 million of these items, along with music clips, are now accessible through www.Europeana.eu, well above the Commission's initial target of 10 million works for 2010.

New items added this year include a Bulgarian parchment manuscript from 1221 witnessing to history of the Bulgarian language; 'Catechismusa prasty szadei', the first Lithuanian book, published in 1547; a 1588 copy of Aristotle's 'Technē rētorikēs' in ancient Greek and Latin; paintings by the 17th century Dutch painter Jan Steen; the complete works of German authors Goethe and Schiller; 1907 footage of festivities for the Danish Constitution Day; and a series of pre-World War I photographs of the Glendalough monastery in Ireland (see [MEMO/10/586](#) for more examples).

Digitised photographs, maps, paintings, museum objects and other images make up 64% of the Europeana collection. 34% of the collection is dedicated to digitised texts, including more than 1.2 million complete books that can be viewed online and/or downloaded. The texts cover thousands of rare manuscripts and the earliest printed books (incunabula) from before 1500. Video and sound material represents less than 2% of the collections. Much of the material accessible through Europeana is older, i.e. out of copyright, items, due mainly to the difficulties and cost of rights clearance to digitise and give access to in-copyright material (even for material that is no longer commercially distributed or out-of-print) or material whose potential right-holders are unknown (orphan works).

All EU Member States have contributed items to Europeana, but input is still uneven. France is still the largest contributor (18% of total items). Germany has increased its share to 17%. To ensure Europeana represents a true cross-section of Europe's cultural heritage, it needs further quality material from all Member States.

The potential for using Europeana in schools was demonstrated by entrants in the recent [eLearning Awards](#) organised by European Schoolnet. The [winning project](#), from Portmarnock Community School in Ireland involved pupils creating their own blogs about figures from history using digital resources.

Next year Europeana intends to experiment with user-generated content and will invite users to contribute material to Europeana around the theme of World War I.

Currently, Europeana has two virtual exhibitions running. 'Reading Europe' presents a rich choice from Europe's rare books and literary works. The 'art nouveau' exhibition shows the potential of bringing together cultural material from different countries.

Background

Europeana www.europeana.eu is a collaborative endeavour of Europe's cultural institutions. Over 1500 cultural institutions from across Europe are contributing digitised material. It was launched as a prototype, in November 2008 and initially it had 2 million cultural objects available online ([IP/08/1747](#)).

The Europeana office is hosted by the National Library of the Netherlands in Den Haag. It is run by the Europeana Foundation and is 80% financed by the EU. At its launch in 2008 it was overwhelmed by the unexpected user interest and had to close for a month.

See [MEMO/10/586](#) for more information about Europeana.

Europeana content by country
(percentage of the total number of objects in Europeana contributed by different countries)

EU Member States	Percentage
France	17.98%
Germany	17.10%
Sweden	9.69%
Spain	8.85%
The Netherlands	7.89%
Italy	7.03%
Ireland	6.47%
United Kingdom	6.14%
Poland	2.81%
Belgium	1.45%
Greece	1.40%
Finland	1.31%
Slovenia	0.98%
Austria	0.32%
Estonia	0.27%
Romania	0.17%
Slovakia	0.15%
Denmark	0.11%
Portugal	0.11%
Bulgaria	0.08%
Czech Republic	0.08%
Hungary	0.07%
Lithuania	0.05%
Luxembourg	0.04%
Latvia	0.01%
Cyprus	<0.01%
Malta	<0.01%
European collections without an attribution per MS, e.g. from European projects	2.91%
Non-EU countries	
Norway	5.76%
Others	0.85%