

Expression of Interest

for project partnership under

Call 3 of the CIP - ICT Policy Support Programme
Digital Libraries – 2.3 Digitising content for Europeana (Pilot B)

Overview of National Context

The management of public cultural material in Malta falls under the remit of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport (MEDC) and of the various entities it encompasses.¹ The overall coordination within the Ministry is carried out by the Culture and Audiovisuals Unit, which forms part of the Office of the Permanent Secretary, while the key MEDC contributors to the process of digitisation of cultural material are the following: National Archives of Malta, Libraries Department, Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, Heritage Malta, Malta Council for Culture and the Arts, University of Malta, Public Broadcasting Services. Furthermore, the Department of Information² (Office of the Prime Minister) and the Broadcasting Authority³, hold substantial material of cultural relevance, some of which has already started to be digitalised. As the entity responsible for the implementation of the Smart Island – The National ICT Strategy 2008-2010⁴ and the Government of Malta's entire ICT policy and planning functions, the Malta Information Technology Agency⁵ will be a partner, together with the IT industry and content providers, such as those mentioned above, to assist in developing a system that encourages the creation of digital content.

The Relevance of Maltese Partners for a CIP Digital Libraries Project

A few of the entities mentioned above are being highlighted below in terms of the collections they own and/or manage, and with a view to contributing content for digitisation and online dissemination.

Superintendence of Cultural Heritage - The Cultural Heritage Act of 2002 identifies the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage as the statutory body responsible for the development and management of a National Inventory of Cultural Property in Malta. In 2007, the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage launched the CHIMS (Cultural Heritage Inventory Management System)⁶ which aims at creating a knowledge-based context for understanding, managing and disseminating data concerning cultural heritage. CHIMS targets all aspects of cultural life as highlighted in the Cultural Heritage Act, namely movable and immovable objects of artistic, architectural, historical, archaeological, ethnographic, palaeontological and geological importance. Populating CHIMS is one of the the Superintendence's top priorities in terms of developing a web-based cultural heritage management tool and its participation in this project shall be focussed on this aspect.

¹ www.culture.gov.mt

² www.doi.gov.mt

³ www.ba-malta.org

⁴ www.mita.gov.mt/files/Downloads4.pdf

⁵ www.mita.gov.mt

⁶ www.culturalheritage.gov.mt/page.asp?p=3126&l=1

Heritage Malta - Heritage Malta is the national operating agency for museums, conservation practice and cultural heritage, created by the Cultural Heritage Act in 2002. The agency is entrusted with the management of museums, sites and their collections, while since 2005 it was also charged with the take over of the former Malta Centre for Restoration to become the national agency responsible for conservation. The collections managed by Heritage Malta (excluding the sites themselves) consist of items of relevance to Natural History (around 10,000 items), Fine Arts (around 10,000 items), Ethnography (around 3,000 items), Maritime and Military History (around 7,000 items), and Archaeology (over 100,000 items). Heritage Malta is currently working on the development of a digital collections management system which can both benefit from and contribute to achieving the aims of this project.

Department of Libraries (National Library of Malta) - In its capacity as National Library, the mission of the *Bibliotheca*, as it is more commonly known, is to acquire, catalogue and preserve manuscripts and all printed books, as well as periodicals and journals issued in Malta. Among the treasures held in the *Bibliotheca* are the archives of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta, consisting of the documents produced and received by the Chancery of the Order since its origins until the end of its rule in Malta (1798) amounting to almost 7,000 volumes. The Library also holds around sixty incunabula (books printed before 1500), 1600 volumes of Library manuscripts (including fourteenth and fifteenth century codices), and a collection of maps and plans ranging from the 16th to the 20th century, amongst others.

National Archives of Malta – The objectives and functions of the National Archives are defined in the National Archives Act (no. IV of 1990) and are primarily focused on collecting, preserving and organising public records and making them available for study and research purposes. The main repository of the National Archives comprise the nucleus of the former Palace Archives, Valletta, augmented by records brought over from various Government departments. These documents date back to the early days of British rule (early 19th century). The Archives also hold a collection of film and video documentaries related to Malta's history.

Malta Council for Culture and the Arts (MCCA) – The MCCA holds a large repository of digital and non-digital photographic material related to the events it has been organising since its establishment in 2003. These relate mainly to the Malta Jazz Festivals, the Malta Summer Arts Festivals, the Malta Mediterranean Folksinging Festival, the Malta Carnival and the Notte Bianca events.

Challenges faced in the digitisation of cultural Material in Malta

The Ministry responsible for Culture in Malta has been coordinating the efforts by the various agencies concerned in order to identify the key challenges faced by the process of digitisation of cultural material, with a view to maximising Malta's presence online and its contribution to the Europeana initiative. To this effect, preliminary assessments have been made to identify planned and required investments in digitisation equipment, digital storage facilities, human resources capacity building for cataloguing and digitisation, and the appropriate financial resources required for this exercise.

One of the main challenges faced in this effort arises from the fact that different entities have different procedures, capacities and facilities to put digitised material online, depending on

whether they are authorities, autonomous entities or government departments. National coordination in this matter ensures that there is an equitable distribution of facilities and resources between the users, since these variables are in no way connected to the amount and value of cultural material each contributor can put online.

Agencies and entities are well aware of the fact that the digitisation process is a very laborious and time consuming exercise, requiring dedicated resources and a clear identification of specific digitisation projects and their concomitant demand on financial, human and technical resources. While there remains scope to invest more in the continuous professional development of catalogue and collections managers, conservation experts, librarians and archivists, there is also ample scope for collaboration with a number of academic and higher educational institutions that can provide support for such digitisation projects depending on the nature of the cultural material involved (film, artefacts, documents, etc.). This can also be elaborated within the context of international collaboration projects.

In terms of technical requirements, digital storage issues appear to be among the most critical in the whole digitisation process for many entities, mainly due to the high costs involved. Coordination and exposure to international practices in the use of equipment for digitisation and for digital storage will be of direct benefit to the stakeholders, also in view of the fast rate of technological innovation in this sector. This is also linked to issues of long-term digital preservation of cultural material.

Malta's ICT Strategy and Digital Libraries

The Malta Information Technology Agency is the national entity responsible for the implementation of Malta's second ICT Strategy (Smart Island 2008-2010). This strategy makes explicit reference to the development of IT in the field of cultural management. Stream four of the policy identifies three relevant targets which match the overall objectives of the projects to be approved under the current ICT Digital Libraries call for submissions:

Objective 4.2 Promoting digital libraries. We will set in train a programme to establish national, regional and local public libraries into digital nodes, providing not only content but also access to the full suite of digital services.

Objective 4.3 Malta-relevant content programme. Together with publishers, broadcasters, the ICT sector and content-providers, we will work to increase the quantity and quality of Malta-relevant content. We will also work with NGOs to help them set up an interactive on-line presence.

Objective 4.4 National digital archives project We will set up a digital archives framework as a virtual platform for the storage, tagging, presentation and discussion of Malta's archives, including those of the National Library, the Department of Information and Public Broadcasting Services Ltd. This will be extended to provide other cultural and heritage archival services.

The Strategy also aims at increasing by 200% the Malta-relevant content on the internet by 2010.

Aim of Expression of Interest

The current CIP Digital Libraries call is framed within the European drive to make as much cultural material from as many sources as possible accessible online through the EUROPEANA portal. The specific objectives of the Pilot B 2.3 Digitising Content for EUROPEANA require that

- Material to be digitised must be held by cultural institutions from different European countries and be of interest to a broad public
- projects are selected through a thematic approach, demonstrating added value of bringing the selected content from different countries together in Europeana
- Digitised content should be made available to citizens through Europeana immediately after digitisation
- Digitisation should result in a critical mass of complementary content or add further European value to already digitised collections

The participation of Maltese public entities responsible for the management of public cultural material shall be guided by the following principles:

- cultural material shall be selected for digitisation on the basis of strategic digitisation priorities identified by the entities themselves, thus ensuring that full complementarity between the national and the European relevance of the project;
- digitised content shall be made compatible with entities' own online sites, the national inventory system (CHIMS) and the Europeana parameters, thus ensuring the maximisation of resources and the avoidance of duplication;
- the material selected for digitisation shall be selected in line with the following general categories which can serve as collaborative themes with the project partners:
 - o Material representing contemporary arts and culture
 - o Historical and artistic material from the colonial period 18th and early 19th century
 - o Material focussing on the 16th-18th century period broadly corresponding to the presence of the Knights of St. John in Malta
 - o Cultural heritage material from archaeological sites and museums.

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