HEC-rapport: 'Kwaliteitszorg digitalisering in Europa'
managementsamenvatting

In opdracht van DEN heeft Het Expertise Centrum (HEC) in het najaar van 2007 onderzoek gedaan naar kwaliteitszorg voor digitalisering van cultureel erfgoed in Europa. Voor een twaalftal landen is uitgezocht welke organisaties belast zijn met deze kwaliteitszorg, of er overheidsbeleid is geformuleerd, en welke instrumenten daarbij worden toegepast. Ook heeft HEC enkele Europese grensoverschrijdende initiatieven voor kwaliteitszorg beschreven. Het (Engelstalige) rapport wordt door DEN gebruikt om de Nederlandse aanpak te spiegelen met initiatieven in andere Europese landen.

Hieronder volgt de volledige managementsamenvatting. Het rapport kan ook in zijn geheel (57 pagina's) als PDF worden gedownload.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Many European countries have been involved in digitisation of cultural heritage over the past years. Digitisation takes place in all cultural heritage sectors such as (collections of) museums, libraries, archives, archaeological findings and landscapes.

In The Netherlands the "quality assurance" in digitisation of cultural heritage has become a topic of interest. Quality assurance is defined as: "the efforts to digitise and disclose, with the highest quality and with the highest level of efficiency, cultural heritage using ICT tools to make them accessible for a wide audience and other heritage institutions."

Digitaal Erfgoed Nederland (DEN) has been working on a "self-regulating quality assurance system for the digitisation of cultural heritage" since 2005. DEN aims to give the system an international dimension. To investigate this aim, DEN commissioned the Centre of Expertise (HEC) to: "Investigate the current state of affairs in the area of quality assurance as far as this relates to the digitisation of cultural heritage in Europe".

The general observation is that momentum is building in Europe with regard to quality assurance in the area of digitising cultural heritage. All countries acknowledge the importance of the issue of quality assurance although the level in which it is followed up with action still differs. Most countries have an organisation that deals with aspects of quality assurance (see conclusions for an overview), regularly combined with funding schemes that support institutions in their digitising efforts.

Analyses has taken shape along six topics related to the research question:
- National policy developments for quality assurance
- Cross border initiatives
- Cross sectoral or sector policy
- Standardisation

- Organisational set up
- Instruments

Many countries indicate that they are working on quality assurance in digitisation of cultural heritage although often there are no official policies (yet). Germany and Sweden are examples were a policy is under construction. The processes aiming at developing quality assurance give room for bottom-up experiences and are often based on these. Another important input is the work done at the European level for instance in Minerva and the former National Representatives Group (NRG), since 2007 transformed into the Member States' expert group on digitisation and digital preservation. At the European level the key document is the Dynamic Action Plan 2006–2010 for the EU coordination of the digitisation of cultural and scientific content.

Cross border activities dealing with quality assurance are dominated by European projects. MINERVA eContentplus plays a key role, its guidebooks are widely used and the country reports and best practices form a basis for high quality and efficient digitisation efforts. The European EPOCH Network is providing the necessary research as well as a meeting place for institutions. The network is more academic, whereas MINERVA operates at (central) government level. The development of a European Digital Library (EDL), a flagship project of the European Union, is also an important development. It pushes forward the need for digitisation and agreements on quality. All countries have committed to the EDL and the concept is translated to the national environment.

Two cross border initiatives between member states have been identified: The Knowledge exchange including Germany, The Netherlands, Denmark and the UK and (parts of) the Nordic Cooperation (Finland, Sweden, Danmark, Iceland, Norway). Both initiatives are of a voluntary nature and have the form of a network.

Many initiatives start from the individual cultural sectors. The cross sectoral developments follow later when it becomes clear that many developments and aspects of the work are similar across sectors. Most countries have a collaboration in the Archives, Museums and Libraries (ALM) sector. Standardisation follows this pattern, and especially the Minerva guidelines seem to have had a big impact. Many countries translated them into their respective National language and have made them available to the institutions. Countries also indicate that they interpret the Minerva guidelines and make them more specific.

Quality Assurance for digitisation of cultural heritage, is a public sector affair. Often Ministries and cultural heritage institutions are closely involved or spearheading the initiatives. The instruments that are used are more or less similar in all countries and include, typically, websites, guidebooks, trainings and seminars. In some countries, for example Belgium, there are also courses available; these are sometimes mandatory if financing is received (in Sweden, for example).