

European Commission: Implementation Report on the Film Heritage Recommendation

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On 7 December 2012, the European Commission issued a study on “the challenges for European film heritage from the analogue and the digital era”. This study constitutes the third implementation report on the European Parliament and Council’s recommendation of 16 November 2005 on film heritage (see IRIS 2005-6/9 and IRIS 2006-1/4). The first implementation report was released in August 2008, the second one in July 2010 (see IRIS 2010-9/4).

The current report is based on national reports received from Member States in response to a European Commission’s questionnaire sent in July 2011. The report is composed of a general analysis of the situation of film heritage in the European Union and an annex summarizing the situation in each Member State. The general description highlights the best practices put in place in Member States but also points out problems and obstacles encountered by film heritage institutions.

In terms of resources and investments, the report notes that state resources remain stable. However to allow film heritage institutions to properly perform their tasks of preservation of digital film, additional resources (and skills) are required. The study shows that only 1.5% of European film heritage is digitised but that at least 1 million hours of films held by film heritage institutions could still be digitised. The European Commission stresses the importance of digitisation as a pre-condition to online access.

Besides the lack of funding or investment, the European Commission identifies several obstacles to digitisation such as the complexity of copyright and related rights clearance or the formatting and interoperability issues.

One of the consequences of the transition to digital age is also the evolution of the definition of a film, which is not characterised anymore by its production process, recording medium or distribution channel. In that regard, the definition contained in the 2005 film heritage recommendation would need to be updated.

In conclusion, the European Commission notes that only a minority of Member States have adapted to the digital age and devoted additional resources, planning and strategies to digital preservation. The European film heritage is at risk of being lost. The European Commission observes that many opportunities offered by the digital revolution are being missed.

The report does not contain any recommendations but offers general orientations for possible actions. The European Commission will keep monitoring the application of the film heritage Recommendation. Member States should submit their next application report in November 2013, based on a questionnaire that the European Commission will circulate mid-2013. Last but not least, the European Commission is considering a proposal on digital film in 2013 to foster Member States' actions.

Commission Staff Working Document on the challenges for European film heritage from the analogue and the digital era (Third implementation report of the 2005 EP and Council Recommendation on Film Heritage), Brussels, 7 December 2012, SWD (2012) 431 final

http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/sites/digital-agenda/files/swd_2012_431_en.pdf

