



REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA  
MINISTRY OF CULTURE

**Ms. Roxana Mînzatu**  
Executive Vice-President  
Social Rights and Skills, Quality Jobs and Preparedness

**Ms. Hadja Lahbib**  
Equality, Preparedness and Crisis Management

**Mr Glenn Micallef**  
Commissioner for Integration and Fairness  
Youth, Culture and Sport

European Commission

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**Solution for the long-term preservation of  
digital cultural heritage in a location outside  
the country's borders**

Honourable Vice-President Mînzatu  
Honourable Commissioner Lahbib  
Honourable Commissioner Micallef,

I am delighted to extend my warmest congratulations on your appointment as the members of the new Cabinet of European Commissions, which carries immense responsibility and opportunities for the **resilience** of our societies. I am confident that through different EU policies your leadership will make a significant contribution to the shared goals and priorities of the European Union during the new mandate, and I would also like to contribute to this discussion.

In this spirit, I would like to bring your attention to the topic Estonia attaches great importance, namely the **long-term preservation of digital cultural heritage in a location outside the country's borders**.

Cultural heritage plays a significant role in the European Union (EU) by fostering a shared sense of identity, promoting social cohesion, supporting economic growth, and enhancing cultural diversity. The preservation and promotion of Europe's cultural heritage is crucial for maintaining a sense of continuity between the past, present, and future. The EU's approach to cultural heritage also includes a strong focus on digital preservation, which is becoming increasingly important in ensuring accessibility and safeguarding heritage for future generations.

EU's responsibility to contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States and to conservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage of European significance is manifested in the

article 167 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. It is also tackled in the European framework for action on cultural heritage (2018) and Council Conclusions on risk management in the area of cultural heritage (2020) and Council Conclusions on the protection of cultural heritage in conflicts and crises (2021). We appreciate very much the significant initiatives taken by the Commission and member states so far, e.g. support for digitalisation, standards for the digital preservation and reuse of cultural heritage, Europeana, Twin it!, The Common European data space for cultural heritage and The Cultural Heritage Could, support from Creative Europe and European Horizon programmes dedicated to cultural heritage; European Cultural Heritage Days in cooperation with the European Council etc.

Nevertheless, we see the necessity for further steps in contributing to preservation of our common digital cultural heritage at EU level. The recent report by Special Adviser Sauli Niinistö “Safer Together Strengthening Europe’s Civilian and Military Preparedness and Readiness” (2024) refers to the general need for comprehensive preparedness in EU with the list of vital societal and governmental functions to be protected at all costs from both natural and human-induced disaster. I believe European cultural diversity is a vital element for safeguarding our common resilience in our societies.

The current geopolitical situation where the world is facing the highest number of conflicts since the Second World War and especially the war in Ukraine has exposed just how ephemeral European cultural heritage is. But it needn’t be a war that poses a risk to our digital cultural heritage – the risks posed to the invaluable material might be much more mundane, ranging from cyber-security issues to natural and man-made disasters.

Thus, in our opinion, the long-term preservation and data back-up of European cultural heritage is a crucial topic with a clear pan-European dimension. While we feel the urgency and would be poised to act also on our own, acting together as EU is more sustainable in the long term to secure a safe cross-border storage space for our digital heritage.

We feel that the issue of the long-term preservation and data back-up of our digital cultural heritage is one of the vital societal elements possibly contributing to the upcoming EU Preparedness Union Strategy with a clear goal to put European cultural heritage as heart of our society’s resilience. We have started consultations with other member states, and I have called together a dedicated horizontal working group to work on practical solutions both nationally and internationally. I am ready to contribute more to the discussions and further analysis at the EU level to arrive at the best possible solution.

We also call on the Commission in its next work programme and in EU’s next financial framework to explore developing a common solution on EU level for the long-term preservation and data back-up of strategically important and most significant digital cultural heritage. We would be delighted to meet with you and provide further insight into Estonia's perspectives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Heidy Purga', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right and downwards.

Heidy Purga  
Minister of Culture