



# F oreword

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Since the Internet has become widely used and mass adoption of the Internet-related technologies has become a reality, access to cultural heritage has changed significantly. In this new age of digital revolution, the forms of engagement and the ways people experience and are able to enjoy and use culture have developed and improved greatly. Without a doubt, online presence is an opportunity to attach a higher value to our common European cultural heritage, which should gain well-deserved prominence and become our competitive advantage on the global market. In this respect, the EU contribution to providing wider access to digital cultural content through Europe's online cultural gateway – Europeana – needs to be considered as meaningful.

We are currently witnessing that more and more industries rely on digital content. Specifically, high quality online content is becoming an essential component for the success of a diversity of innovative companies. Digital cultural heritage content in this puzzle presents itself very often as an innovative stimulant and driver that fosters creativity. This feature makes it an especially valuable asset not only for individual users, but also for businesses, and in particular for the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI). Bearing that in mind, as well as the fact that CCI is expanding rapidly with strong economic potential, it is not an exaggeration to say that digital cultural heritage should be increasingly regarded as making a real positive contribution to the economy that can even increase during the next few years.

However, bringing cultural content online and its subsequent creative exploitation, either by individual users or by companies, remains a challenge for several reasons, including financial (e.g. cost of digitisation), legal (e.g. clearing copyright status of works), technical (e.g. quality of the digitised material) or more fundamental (e.g. reluctance to open up digitised material). That is the reason why the EU has long been undertaking various actions to support and facilitate digitisation and online accessibility of Europe's cultural heritage material. That includes funding actions through a number of EU projects as well as legislative initiatives, e.g. Commission Recommendation 2011/711/EU on the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material and digital preservation that promotes open cultural data and creative reuse.

I am delighted to see that the current issue of "Uncommon Culture" is dedicated to the important aspect of creativity in the context of the value and potential that cultural heritage brings to the table. After reading this issue of the magazine, the question of how to make the best use of digital cultural heritage to embrace and facilitate creativity should be easier to answer.

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*The views expressed in the foreword are the sole responsibility of the author and in no way represent the view of the European Commission and its services.*