



Evaluation of the Memory of the World Programme

(Resolution 36C/COM CI/DR.2)

Executive Summary

The survey was prepared in response to Resolution 36C/COM CI/DR.2, adopted by the 36th session of UNESCO's General Conference. The Resolution had been submitted by Poland and co-sponsored by more than 50 countries. It requested the Director-General to initiate an overall evaluation, including through surveys among Member States, and an in-depth reflection on the modalities of strengthening the Memory of the World (MoW) Programme and its impact.

The survey was prepared and carried out by the Communication and Information Sector (CI), Division of Knowledge Societies (KSD). The questionnaire was distributed during the CI Information meeting with UNESCO Member states on 8 February 2012. It was subsequently sent to MoW Committees worldwide and announced and distributed via a news item on the CI's website. The CI Sector received a total of 25 replies.

The questionnaire proposed five major subjects for overall analysis. These included the following:

1. Challenges and solutions related to the impact of the technological advances for documentary heritage
2. Challenges and solutions related to the preservation and accessibility of documentary heritage
3. International cooperation, advocacy and promotion of the MoW Programme
4. Strengthening the MoW Programme
5. MoW resources

Regarding the first thematic area on the 'Challenges and solutions related to the impact of the technological advances for documentary heritage', several respondents underlined the importance of raising awareness about the impact which technologies have had on preserving and making documentary heritage accessible. One respondent proposed the establishment of a separate category of inscriptions for countries that have overcome technological challenges in the preservation of their documentary heritage.

For many respondents it was crucial to raise awareness about the impact of technology in the public sphere, to disseminate advice and expertise as well as to create recommendations for long-term policies. Other suggestions included: policy development at country level in order to assist in designing state policies and strategies in the area of preservation as well as encouraging the use of appropriate technology and its best practices, including encouraging the use of appropriate technology and promoting open access technologies.

Technological, economic and legal challenges were identified as key priority issues for documentary heritage and its accessibility. Cultural and professional challenges were also highlighted; particular concerns were voiced regarding the lack of cooperation among institutions for private records and IT specialists.

With respect to the second thematic area: 'Challenges and solutions related to the preservation and accessibility of documentary heritage', a major challenge which most countries were facing was the lack of funding, and as a result, preservation and accessibility of the national documentary heritage as a whole was compromised. The lack of IT infrastructure, as well as of qualified personnel and access to suitable training as a means of developing appropriate technical skills were also stressed. Developing a national digitization concept and designing public policies and strategies for preservation of documentary heritage were considered to be very important by respondents. Legal and institutional concerns linked to copyright issues were also voiced. For many, challenges existed regarding the preservation of private sector archives.

Most of the respondents acknowledged that adequate measures for capacity-building were not in place in their countries. Many noted that a limited number of institutions –usually national institutions- provided storage and physical access, this however was often insufficient. The importance of educational and training programmes and an adequate legal framework in digital preservation were highlighted.

Regarding the accessibility of documentary heritage, the majority of respondents indicated that physical access was often easy and available; many also indicated that digital and online access were also assured. In some cases problems were noted in the coordination of digital activities on a national level, the lack of IT specialists and of adequate infrastructure and legal frameworks that would enable access via digital copies. Particular problems were mentioned concerning audiovisual collections where adapting to new technological evolutions posed economic, technological, ethical and professional challenges.

For the third thematic area on 'International cooperation, advocacy and promotion of the MoW Programme' many described different levels of cooperation and involvement in the MoW Programme and its structure. Some highlighted problems experienced in communicating with the regional structures of the Programme and problems in the structure and functioning of their national committees. Very few had submitted joint nominations as their Committees were focusing on establishing a national register; they did not, however, exclude this possibility for the future. Those who had submitted a joint nomination found it to be a more time-consuming process than for a national nomination.

As for MoW's role in relation to other initiatives and activities of specialized NGOs in documentary heritage issues, replies were divided into two major categories. Firstly, on the international level, the importance of MoW maintaining a more active role and participation with the relevant NGOs was stressed. Also forming partnerships with various cultural initiatives and supporting policy development in the areas of culture and heritage were suggested. Secondly on the regional, national and local levels, respondents expressed their desire that MoW should support more specific projects aimed at the preservation and safeguarding of documentary heritage.

Other forms of international cooperation which were suggested included the development of regional and, to some extent, national capacities and cooperation and providing support for the organization of regional workshops and seminars in identifying items of common heritage. Other suggestions included sharing experiences and best practices, supporting common projects between countries, organizing and encouraging participation in seminars, trainings, internships and developing communication and publicity products.

In the fourth thematic area 'Strengthening the MoW Programme', although some respondents noted that given the current resources available, the Programme operated efficiently and with remarkable success, it was stressed that additional and adequate resources were needed in order to organize proper monitoring, follow-up and support of the institutions with documentary heritage inscribed on the International Register. Others expressed the wish that support, guidance and the organization of workshops be given to

countries worldwide in order to boost participation of the nomination process in different regions. Some respondents also stressed that closer links needed to be established between UNESCO's cultural heritage programmes and their registers whilst others observed the need to restructure or create a separate MoW website.

Replying to the question whether the status of MoW should be altered, a core category of respondents touched upon the issue of whether alteration of the status should result in a Convention. All respondents advised that careful and profound reflection and analysis about the benefits and the risks of changing the status of the Programme should be undertaken prior to formulating a recommendation. An international Declaration or Recommendation was also mentioned as options that could strengthen the Programme and the status of documentary heritage. Some of the respondents stressed the need to improve the MoW status on a regional and national level by reinforcing regional and national committees.

The majority of respondents replied positively to strengthening cooperation between MoW and other UNESCO programmes, particularly with the 2 main UNESCO heritage programmes where forces could be combined to ensure publicity and to establish common links. A few respondents mentioned possible advantages from working closer with IFAP, especially in policy advice concerning access and digitization of documentary heritage and with WDL in the promotion of items inscribed on the MoW registers.

Finally, regarding the fifth thematic area related to the 'MoW resources', and the expectations from the MoW Programme in terms of financial support, three major categories emerged from the replies. These include capacity building measures for professionals, supporting small specific projects on regional and national levels and supporting the functioning of certain national committees or institutions in need. Most respondents felt that the MoW Programme was in need of additional human and financial resources at international and national levels in particular.

A majority reiterated the need for MoW to support committees financially in order to fund project activities and support the mobility and the training of experts. Others stressed the importance of raising awareness at governmental levels and in reinforcing the links between the international and the national parts of the Programme.

The overwhelming majority of respondents expressed their readiness to share information, experiences and advice with other Committees. They also highlighted the need to organize regional or subregional meetings, workshops and trainings within their geographic areas in order to improve communication between them and encourage the submission of nominations.

In response to the question of increasing funding and marketing products, greater cooperation with the media was suggested as were the creation of an attractive website, greater cooperation with Europeana and The European Library, the creation of historical and scientific documentaries, publications, exhibitions and the establishment of an annual membership fee for each country members of the Programme.

Finally, respondents reiterated the need for the Programme to gain greater visibility in UNESCO, internationally but also at a regional and national level.