

Detailed description of the project

Project aims and objectives

EMBARK project focuses on enriching and preserving of cultural heritage by integration of dispersed pieces of this heritage, such as original manuscripts, old writings, monographs, historical books etc. and by meeting the educational needs of cultural and young professionals. The research will concentrate on Balkan Slavic relations and common culture, aiming at preparation of electronic full text editions of collected historical documents and their integration within Manuscriptorium (www.manuscriptorium.com) as a contribution to European digital library. Participating libraries will organize four exhibitions of selected and digitized compound historical documents in question. The project focuses also on developing solutions for better conservation and preservation of cultural heritage and provides training opportunities for cultural and young professionals in order to improve their knowledge and gain more skills and experiences in the process of digitalization and other best practices related.

Integration of Balkan Slavic cultural heritage

By arrival of the Slavs in the Balkan, the process of integration of both cultures has started. Spread of Slavs to the Balkan left many features in their cultural heritage as they continued to use Slavonic speech, developed an alphabet and literacy and practiced their own customs. In process of time this specific historical cultural heritage (manuscripts, old writings, historical books, paintings etc.) was physically preserved by different ways on various places, such as churches, monastic libraries and other ancient depositories. Despite of this many of historical documents and artifacts were dispersed. Integration of dispersed collections of Balkan Slavic common history is very important from educational point of view as well as with the view of cherishing and preserving of our cultural heritage. This intention also corresponds with European project “Slovo: Towards a Digital Library of South Slavic Manuscripts“ dealing with integration of South Slavic Monastic Culture by means of information technologies.

Project intends to make dispersed collections available to wider public by integration the existing digitized compound documents through various digitalizing methodologies, techniques and tools and make accessible as well as contribute to Manuscriptorium digital library. On that account, the teams of cultural professionals from all participating countries will meet and work on aspects of historical documents preparation within Manuscriptorium and on the virtual presentation of digitalisation, from physical and technical preparation of manuscripts and writing materials to comparing approaches, knowledge, techniques and methods used in each country. The teams will help establishing criteria for digitalization of manuscripts, such as unifying description of texts, automatic text recognition, comparisons, peculiarities of old manuscript traditions, possibilities of public access and other methodological and technical criteria of manuscript digitization.

EMBARK will explore the current practices existing in European libraries (to be compared with those used in other sectors of cultural heritage), in order to guarantee their interoperability with the structure of the European Digital Library. The very important step is to build up a good operational working group of experts belonging to the EMBARK network and identify and describe existing digitized resources and access tools. The project objective is also to gather experiences from libraries and other heritage domains, to be complementary to the resources already integrated into Manuscriptorium.

Training of experts and young professionals

There is a demand among libraries on European level to conduct systematic exchange of knowledge and experiences in the topic especially involving libraries not actively involved in digitisation area. EMBARK offers a solution, which takes into consideration the training needs of the professionals, the cultural characteristics of the participating countries and the existing best methodologies and technologies in the field.

Each partner organisation will develop a national concept to be followed within the framework of the project. Partners will organise daily workshops and meetings, where common approaches will be agreed on that will serve as standard for contemporary and future cultural professionals and manuscript scholars. Common trainings will result in series of publications/ textbooks in manuscript preservation methodologies, best practices and creation of joint digital resources, elaborated by each team. Partners will conduct networking activities not only between themselves, but also with several other cultural organisations all over Europe, which might be interested to join into the discussions about methods for preservation of cultural heritage.

Partners' cooperating network will include 3 cultural experts and minimally 2 young scholars from each of partner country who will be organized into 4 teams, participating in mobility activities. Each team will be trained in a topic designed by each partner and related to preservation and digitisation of cultural heritage, such as e.g. creating of distributed compound digital documents; testing of TreeTagger – lemmatization tool and best practice of its use; testing of writing/entering Cyrillic non-Unicode characters and best practice of this work; preparing of e-editions (full-texts of historical documents with translation into alive language) with representation according to individual pages and lines and XML conversion etc.

European added value

A key long-term objective of this project is to preserve and converse digitalized compound historical documents and contribute to European digital library by their integration within Manuscriptorium and as well as introduce process of digitalization and other techniques and methodologies used for working with manuscripts to cultural organizations across Europe. We see the European added value in partnership of similar teams from 4 different countries involved in this proposal as a giant stride towards achieving the project outcome and supported by a strong dissemination potential, which will encourage future co-operation between different players. This partnership scheme was set up with a great care and will be the most efficient in exchange of experience on a European level.

The project activities will result in developing a strong network of professionals who will continue to encourage uptake and the production of culture-oriented digitalisation projects beyond the end of the EMBARK. The selected co-organizers special skills in project administration, digitalization functionality, cultural professionalism, etc., make for a far better project than would be possible without European co-operation.

Project activities

EMBARK work plan will consist of eight main activities (work packages), covering 20 months from September 2010 until April 2012.

The project will include following activities:

1. Project management
2. Research on Balkan-Slavic/Central-European topic
3. National mobility concepts
4. Mobility of professionals
5. Integration of documents within Manuscriptorium
6. Presentation of the final work
7. Dissemination
8. Evaluation

WP 1 Project management (M1 – M20)

Project management will be led by the Project Coordinator who will make sure that the schedule of the project is being followed and the objectives of all the activities and tasks are being fulfilled. The National library in Prague will be responsible for coordinating the project's work and monitoring progress in order to maintain focus on successful delivery of the expected results and on the accomplishment of the objectives,

on time and to budget, including activity planning and day to day management of the consortium, its communication and activities, communication with and reporting to the Agency, management of project finances and payment procedure etc. The project coordinator will organize kick-off meeting, where partners will set up outlines of detailed specification of common work, project concept, educational aspects, conditions of common communication and all aspects for smooth implementation of project.

WP 2 Research on Balkan-Slavic/Central-European topic (M1 – M5)

The scope of research work will be to define the common cultural concept. This strategy will be used in each country with slight modifications according to national requirements. The common concept ensures that the general framework of the research and evaluation will be based on the same principles. The research in each participating country will be conducted to analyze Balkan-Slavic relations and their common culture, which arose in the past by penetrating Slavs to Balkan. Various content of Balkan-Slavic cultural heritage will be identified and the rules of document gathering will be defined. The research outcome will contribute to the development of electronic full text editions of integrated documents, individual exhibitions ideas, establishment of base of digitalized documents for Manuscriptorium and evaluation framework of project activities. Research outcome development will be coordinated by Veria Central Public Library (VCPL). In order to involve more organizations across Europe to find more sources of digitized documents, a list of stakeholders will be compiled in each partner's country. The stakeholders' database will be very useful for possible cooperation, as well as from financial, educational or promotional point of view. The database will involve all stakeholders of the SLOVO project as well. VCPL will be responsible for compilation of this database.

WP 3 National mobility concepts (M5 – M8)

Each participating cultural organization will develop a national concept of learning program for hosted cultural professionals in order to improve knowledge and gain more experiences and skills in developed conceptual topic. The particular national concept program can relate to training of various techniques and methodologies in preservation of cultural heritage, such as e.g. process of digitalization in creating of distributed compound digital documents; testing of TreeTagger – lemmatization tool and best practice of its use; testing of writing/entering Cyrillic non-Unicode characters and best practice of this work; preparing of e-editions (full-texts of historical documents with translation into alive language) with representation according to individual pages and lines, XML conversion and other related topics.. The part of this work package will be also searching for European institutions, which might be interested in cooperation with partners' organizations within working on their national mobility projects.. Compilation of the database of these institutions will be under responsibility of Veria Central Public Library and overall work package will be coordinated by National library in Prague.

WP 4 Mobility of professionals (M7 – M13)

At the beginning of this project activity, the organization of professionals' mobility will be planned, respecting both working and social aspects, including finding the ways of communications, tasks and roles, health and safety, working environment, planning and recording, policies and procedures a.o. in order to ensure smooth running of mobility projects. Each partner organization will address at least 2 universities focused on preservation of cultural heritage to be participated within mobility projects. 3 cultural experts and minimally 2 young professionals/students selected by each partner organization will travel during four weeks within project mobility to each partner country in order to be trained in national program, developed by host organization. The mobility will be organized in turn, first in Czech Republic, where one expert from Bulgaria, one from Greece, one from Serbia and also young professionals/students from those countries will be trained. After four weeks, the second mobility of experts and young scholars will be held in Bulgaria, third one in Greece and fourth one in Serbia. All together 12 cultural experts and minimally 8 young professionals/students will be involved in mobility projects in order to gain practical experiences, which can be beneficial in their educational carrier. At the end of training, each team will elaborate methodological textbook and best practices from training program, useful also for other interested European cultural institutions, and continuing future common cooperation. Mobility of professionals will be coordinated by National Library in Prague.

WP 5 Integration of documents within Manuscriptorium (M14 – M17)

This work package intends to broaden the integration of all kinds of historical resources used by libraries and other heritage domains in the uniform digital library interface Manuscriptorium, and as well as to focus on various semantic technologies used in preservation and digitalization of historical documents. It will work on the existing historical resources provided or identified by the network of institutions involved in the project. The workshop in Veria will be held on analyzing and comparing of existing and possible preserving and digitizing tools to access historical resources available for libraries and other cultural heritage institutions and on preparing of electronic full text editions (virtual exhibition) of digitized compound historical documents. Moreover all existing digitalized documents with their classifications and specifications will be analyzed and compared with those in the other sectors of cultural heritage or those available in other European institutions. All collected and selected digitized documents (approx. 30-60 in each country) will be harmonized and integrated into Manuscriptorium digital library. The recommendations for other digitalizing tools/providers in order to facilitate their integration in the digital library and proposals for next developments of the Manuscriptorium will be discussed. This work package will be coordinated by project coordinator (NKP) with support of National library of Serbia in preparation of the virtual exhibition.

WP 6 Presentation of final work (M14 – M20)

The national exhibitions will be organized in four participating countries (Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia) for identified users and interested public. The exhibitions are planned for minimum of 6 weeks and will be organized by librarians' staff with support of university students. The exhibitions will present printed pieces of approximately 20 selected digitalized documents from national collections of Balkan – Slavic common cultural heritage (e.g. historical documents of Quadragesmale by Milicius fo Cremsier, Miroslav Gospel, the Kratovo Four Gospels, Enina Apostolos etc.) accompanied by titles and descriptions, photographs, virtual presentation of wider range of digitalized documents and other useful information, as well as promotion materials such as leaflets, welcome poster, catalogue with CD etc. Each partner will ensure the technical support for exhibition. Local evaluation of the impacts of exhibition outcomes on professionals, historians, critics and also wide public will be conducted in each country with the help of university students. The local evaluation reports will be coordinated by Bulgarian partner.

WP 7 Dissemination (M2 – M20)

EMBARK will try to attract new libraries and cultural organizations to join the network and participate in mobility projects or Manuscriptorium digital library. EMBARK will support newcomers to take part, by promoting interoperable standards and providing a package of best practice examples to motivate new partners to take part. Through further dissemination activities EMBARK will make libraries and cultural heritage institutions aware of the benefits of making available their digital contents through the Manuscriptorium Digital Library. Project coordinator will develop and maintain a website with continual support of National Library of Serbia. The web environment will act as a news and distribution service as well as providing access to all the project's results and acting. Other dissemination outputs, such as leaflets, articles, fact-sheets, project descriptions, specific presentations and other promotional materials will be implemented by each partner. The catalogue, containing physical and content descriptions of manuscripts will be developed by NKP with the aim of making information available to a broad circle of users and scholars working in different areas of cultural, religious and literary studies. Overall dissemination will be coordinated by National Library of Serbia.

WP 8 Evaluation (M5 – M20)

The project activities from each participating region will be collaboratively evaluated and the cultural and learning outcomes assessed through a process of structured interviews, observation and consultation wherever possible. A consistent framework for evaluation, centred on envisaged individual and collaborative project outcomes, will be designed to enable this. A comprehensive evaluation of the outcomes of EMBARK will be conducted, in co-operation with cultural experts and young professional/students, focusing on the impact of the work on learning outcomes on libraries and other cultural organizations, on the impact on the

staff and operations of the libraries involved and on the implications for their future strategies and activities. A part of project evaluation will be organization of final press conference in Bulgaria for policy makers and other cultural professionals across Europe in order to present project outcomes. A conference organization will be led by Bulgarian partner with the support of three other partners. The Bulgarian partner will be responsible for the compilation and production of EMBARK Final Evaluation Report.

Quality of partnership

The goal of the partnership is to ensure that the project objectives will be achieved within the project time and the allocated budget.

The developed project management is simple and flexible, consisting of following parts:

Project Steering Committee (PSC) consists of the Project Coordinator together with a Local Project Manager representing each partner country. PSC meets periodically in occasion of the plenary meetings, and in the case of a specific call by the Project coordinator. The Committee will meet four times during the duration of the project. Each member of the PSC will have one vote. It is envisaged that decisions will be taken unanimously wherever possible, or by simple majority in the case of minor disagreements.

Project Coordinator (PC), National library of Czech Republic officially represents the consortium towards the European Commission and is responsible of the correct execution of the contract. PC chairs the Steering Committee and together with all partners support development of the project.

National coordinators (project partners) will be responsible for overseeing the integration and specific actions to be undertaken on national level. All partners declared their commitment to the project objectives and would like to exploit all the possibilities of the partnership.

Sufficient administration and technical support has to be assured by Project coordinator staff.

WP Leaders (project coordinator or partners) will provide an orientation function to the specific Work Packages defined for the EMBARK work programme, in the frame of the general activities of each corresponding Working Groups.

Quality control

WP leader of evaluation will develop an evaluation framework, set up and monitored centrally, but implemented in a decentralized way. Each activity and working group, according to its specific characteristics and objectives, will have its own evaluation resources, directed and customized according to emerging specificity.

Risk management

Continuous assessment and addressing of the risks faced by the project is essential for successful implementation. These factors need to be considered as early as possible to ensure prompt recognition, documentation minimization and reduction to an acceptable level and monitored throughout the project. Critical risk factors can arise during the realization of the project, including both:

- internal factors (such as lack of commitment, poorly defined goals; resourcing problems leading to delays, in appropriate behaviour etc, personal issues or professional issues) and
- external factors (for example lack of target group willingness or capacity to cooperate due to pre-assumptions and extra work, lack of take-up of policy-makers, lack of knowledge in some countries on digitization and other kinds of preservation of cultural heritage).

In order to prevent possible risks or mitigate their impact, the project management will ensure smooth communication between project coordinator with technological support, other partners and end-users, to monitor the progress and to keep up to date with the evolution.

List of project events and meetings

Date	Purpose	Place	No of working days
September 2010	Kick-off meeting	Prague	2 working days
April 2011	Management meeting	Belgrade	2 working days
October 2011	Professional workshop + Management meeting	Veria	5 working days
February 2012	Management meeting	Sofia	2 working days
February 2012	Sofia conference + Exhibitions opening	Sofia	4 working days

Expected level of outputs

All project partners will assure the quality of project outputs by ensuring the co-ordination of extensive documentary peer review mechanisms.

EMBARK will work in joint cooperation with the other European and national cultural organizations, to fully support the development of the Manuscriptorium and thus European Digital Library.

For that purpose EMBARK will:

- survey, gather and integrate together 120 – 240 historical digital documents of the participating partners (30 – 60 each) to be granted to the Manuscriptorium digital library.
- establish the conditions for more libraries and cultural institutions to join the EMBARK network.
- analyse the existing standards and the applications that are already in use or are under development by the partners and will make a shared, consistent and comprehensive set of recommendations/trainings for the content providers participating in the Manuscriptorium Digital Library, but are not yet ready for it. All together 12 cultural experts and at least 8 young professionals/students will be involved in mobility training projects.
- deliver 4 exhibitions in four European cities (Prague, Sofia, Veria, Belgrade), presenting the selected valued pieces of Balkan-Slavic cultural heritage.
- produce leaflets, press releases, standardized project presentations and other promotional materials.
- develop an exhibition catalogue containing physical and content descriptions of manuscripts.
- create a Project website that will enable project partners to share their professional content of good practice case studies with the wide public, as well as users and stakeholders to contribute their own perspectives, progress and achievements.
- organise a final project conference, in Bulgaria targeted at policy makers and representatives of national and European associations in the cultural sector, with a special focus in those countries related to Balkan-Slavic cultural heritage that will provide an additional and wider opportunity to validate, disseminate and promote exploitation of EMBARK outcomes.

Direct project outputs:

Output	Name	Due time	Responsible partner
1	Reports to European Commission	M14, M20	NKP
2	Research outcome	M4	VCPL
3	Stakeholders database	M4	VCPL
4	National mobility programs	M8	NKP, All partners

5	Database of cultural institutions interested in national projects	M8	VCPL
6	Project website launched	M5	NKP, NLS
7	Mobility textbooks	M13	All partners
8	Electronic full text editions	M17	NKP, NLS
9	National exhibitions	M19	All partners
10	Exhibition catalogue + CD	M16	NKP
11	Promotional materials (leaflet, local dissemination articles etc.)	M15, M20	NLS, All partners
12	Conference proceedings	M18	IBL
13	Evaluation reports	M20	IBL

Target groups

Project partners have identified several target users. All of them will be mobilized at national level and will be involved in the assessment and validation of project outputs. The main target groups of EMBARK represent: libraries, universities and historical researchers, broad international audience of art and Balkan Slavic history, Balkan-Slavic cultural heritage professionals, local authorities and policy makers, as well as university students and teachers who can be beneficiaries from mobility training concepts within preservation of cultural heritage.

More than 100 visitors, besides common ones, are expected during each exhibition. These visitors represent mainly historians, students, teachers, tourists, but also professionals interested in EMBARK topic. There will be 4 students in each country as assistance for preparation and realization of the exhibition. The final press conference, held in Sofia will attract approximately 60 participants including mostly cultural professionals, policy makers, stakeholders, authorities, as well as representatives from universities and researching institutions, which might use the experiences of EMBARK project and be involved in future project cooperation.

Communication and promotion activities

Dissemination of activities results during and after the implementation of the project

Dissemination and awareness have the overall objective to provide higher visibility to the activities carried out by the project, by disseminating outputs, tools, services, recommendations, guidelines developed by the EMBARK working groups.

The following dissemination activities will be carried out:

- EMBARK website offering all public documentation and other results developed by this project. It will also present the latest news and act as a portal to other European websites concerning digital preservation;
- Information on the project outcomes will be promoted via individual partners' websites that already exist
- Articles, online newsletters, project descriptions and presentations will be focused on the general public, describing the consortium, project objectives, challenges and will be used for the dissemination of project activities and results;
- Developing promotional material: catalogue, leaflets, posters and other production;
- Collaboration with complementary projects (e.g. SLOVO, ENRICH, ATHENA), providing input to and taking into account relevant outcomes
- Organizing EMBARK workshop, 4 exhibitions and final conference to raise awareness and reach the widest possible audience;

- Participation on events (e.g. conferences, meetings, trade fairs, exhibitions;) presenting EMBARK activities on a number of events;

Aside from the digital preservation community, special attention will be paid to libraries, archives, content producers and publishing community. However, exploitation of EMBARK results will go beyond cultural heritage and digitalization sectors and will also focus on the education sector which has a great potential for exploiting project results.

Communication and promotion plan

The Project coordinator will be responsible for ensuring the management of communication within the Consortium. Details about the internal communication strategy will be agreed also during the project kick-off meeting. The majority of day-to-day information (both administrative and technical) will be transferred electronically by e-mail and posted on the project website. The main vehicle for information exchange within the project will be working papers, project meetings. The Project coordinator will establish a project website containing both a public side in order to disseminate the project results and gain feedback and a private side for discussion and document exchange between partners. All partners will be able to communicate difficulties and queries and give advice to the others. All project activities will be introduced on the website, which will provide also the opportunity to launch communication between the project partners, professionals and all other interested visitors.

Sustainability

The effect of a successful sustainable action of the project at European level can be expected by involvement of public libraries in digitalization and thereby contribution to European digital library and on the development of fruitful relationships within learning of partner organizations in preservation of cultural heritage. This will lead to development beneficial for end users, among cultural professional, historians, librarians, memory organizations, publishing companies, research centres, universities and higher education institutions, as well as other stakeholders and cultural organizations in access to and experience of preservation of cultural heritage and informal learning in this domain. By involvement of the university young professionals/students and cultural professionals in various trainings in preservation of cultural heritage, the project results might be used as supplementary material for educational needs of other interested persons or institutions.

EMBARK will seek to sustain the development of a Europe-wide community of practice by making post-project arrangements for at least two further years for the continuation and support of its collaborative web environment. The project partners will also analyze conditions for assuring the continuation of the EMBARK service after the lifetime of the project. The partners intend to create a specific team for planning of the future sustainability of the EMBARK services in the long-term, as well as to open new programs, fields, opportunities for cultural and educational institutions to work together, to enlarge their offers and to open up new ways for integrating different target-groups by enhancing their collaboration-activities.