

# Making digital content in Europe more accessible and user friendly

*The eContentplus programme focuses on stimulating the development of digital content for services in areas of public interest - geographic information, cultural, scientific and educational content.*

The Information Society brings a wealth of benefits to European citizens and the European economy – more efficient companies and administrations, a more creative working life, improved healthcare, better education and training, to mention but a few. These benefits all derive from digital content and services. Digital content and services are a crucial stimulus to the development of high-speed, mobile communications in Europe and a potential source for new jobs.

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## Barriers to growth

Some barriers are technological, organisational or legal (intellectual property rights, digital rights management), and some have a strong global component. Others are specific for Europe, such as the cultural and linguistic barriers, which prevent the sector from developing a Single Market and achieving economies of scale.

The eContent Programme (2001-2005), part of the EU's answer to these challenges, is now followed by the eContentplus programme (2005-2008).

## eContentplus (2005-2008)

The mid-term evaluation of eContent found that it achieved substantial benefits, compared with the resources allocated: *"eContent catalyzed the collaboration of many market players to undertake a number of projects that would not have been realized otherwise with the same depth or breadth."* The evaluation recommended a follow-up programme with a somewhat narrower scope and tighter focus to optimise impact.

eContentplus therefore focuses on areas of public interest, namely geographic information, cultural, scientific and educational content, where European

digital content would not be developed, or would be developed at a slower pace, if left to market forces alone.

## Main principles

eContentplus has an **enabling role**: it contributes to creating better conditions for accessing, using, reusing and exploiting digital material, based on which added-value products and services can be built across Europe. It will help stakeholders realise the full potential of digital content: *content providers* will be able to increase the use and re-use of their material; *content users* will be able to find and use digital content, irrespective of location or language. This will create a better environment for investment and innovation.

*The overriding principle is to maximise the impact on as many actors as possible, not just programme participants.*

While production of digital content is left to the market and, where appropriate, other specific Community initiatives, eContentplus focuses on methods, tools and processes related to the design, development, access and distribution of high quality digital content.

eContentplus activities:

- promote pan-European information infrastructures for the re-use of digital content by private companies and end users;
- showcase the advantages of methods, processes and operations for achieving higher quality, greater efficiency and effectiveness in the creation, use and distribution of digital content;
- integrate multicultural and multilingual aspects in all digital content activities in Europe.



## Focus on 3 target areas

To maximise its impact, the eContentplus programme addresses areas which are of public interest:

### i) Geographic information

eContentplus stimulates the aggregation of existing national datasets of core geographic information into cross-border datasets. This will create new opportunities for building new information services and products on high quality geographic data.

### ii) Educational content

eContentplus encourages the emergence of **the structures and conditions necessary** (organisational, business, technical) to support pan-European learning services that can significantly increase multilingual access to quality digital content and its use in different educational and academic contexts.

**iii) Digital libraries** (cultural and scientific/scholarly content)

eContentplus supports the development of interoperable **digital libraries** (i.e. collections and objects held by cultural and scientific institutions) and supporting solutions that facilitate the exposure, discovery and retrieval of these resources.

## State of play

The European Parliament and the Council adopted the eContentplus Programme in March 2005.

The programme will run for 4 years (2005-08) and has a budget of € 149 million.

The work programme and first call for proposals were published in September 2005.

A second call for proposals is planned to be published in July 2006.

## Related initiatives

eContentplus is part of the Commission policy i2010 "A European Information Society for Growth and Employment" and contributes to the achievement of the objectives of the "i2010 Digital Libraries" initiative.

eContentplus also builds on:

- the Directive on the Harmonisation of Copyright and Related Rights in the Information Society (2001/29/EC);
- the Public Sector Information Directive (2003/98/EC): adopted in 2003, which provides a set of rules on the reuse of information resources held by public sector organisations like the National Land Survey and the Tourist Boards, e.g. maps and tourist information.

## See also:

- Fact sheet 18: Safer Internet and Safer Internetplus: Making the Internet a safer place
- Fact sheet 35: i2010 – A Practical policy framework for achieving economic growth and jobs

## All fact sheets can be found at :

[http://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/factsheets/](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/factsheets/)

## Further information

- **eContentplus:**  
<http://europa.eu.int/econtentplus/>
- **i2010:** <http://europa.eu.int/i2010/>
- **Europe's Information Society: Thematic Portal:**  
[http://europa.eu/information\\_society/](http://europa.eu/information_society/)
- **Information Society and Media Directorate-General:**  
Av. de Beaulieu 24, 1160 Brussels  
[info-desk@ec.europa.eu](mailto:info-desk@ec.europa.eu)  
[http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/information\\_society/](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/information_society/)