

Winter landscape, Voutilainen, Erkki, Finnish Heritage Agency, Finland, CC BY

# EUROPEANA 2021

## Impact Assessment Report, July 2022

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

**Europeana 2021** was the Europeana Initiative's annual conference which took place in 2021. As in 2020, participants at this wholly online conference - from Europe and across the world, from the Europeana Network Association and beyond, from many different professions and ranges of experience - met and were united by a shared interest in digital cultural heritage. This is the third report reflecting on the impact of Europeana's annual conferences.

Europeana 2021 explored how the cultural heritage sector can recover, rebuild and grow in a post-pandemic world. It did so through a mix of keynote speeches, debates, social events and workshops. **70% of the programme for Europeana 2021 - over 30 sessions across three days - was co-created with cultural heritage professionals** across the sector who responded to a call for proposals.

## Methodology

Following the phases of the Impact Playbook methodology, we approached the impact assessment of Europeana 2021 as follows, building on past assessments conducted in 2019 and 2020.

We identified stakeholders (beneficiaries) of the conference and prioritised two, the general attendees and speakers at the conference. We created a change pathway for both stakeholders. We wanted to measure similar aspects to past years, including network development, learning outcomes and indications that participants would make a change in their work as a result of the event. We also assessed satisfaction and captured feedback that could help shape future events Europeana delivers to support the sector.

### Post-event questionnaire

We shared a post-event questionnaire with all attendees in November 2021, with separate questions for speakers. We had a response rate of approximately 25%.

Despite the good response rate, we found a bias in the responding sample: more Network members responded to the survey than non-network members, which may increase the likelihood of positive bias (that is to say, that those with positive comments were more likely to respond or that Network members were, overall, more likely to respond). We therefore advise that the data presented in this report should be seen as optimistic reflections on the outcomes generated for conference attendees.



## Longitudinal questionnaire

In March/April 2022, we shared a longitudinal (follow-up) questionnaire with attendees of Europeana 2021. This was the first time we had taken such an approach to assessing the impact of the annual conferences. We received 50 responses, which represents a low response rate compared to the questionnaire shared almost immediately after the conference. However, such a response rate was not unexpected - in past impact assessments, namely our research into the impact of our national aggregation workshops for heritage institutions<sup>1</sup>, we also received low response rates. Of those that responded, we also saw a bias in that more Network members responded to the survey than non-Network members. This, however, does not mean that the data are not useful. We report on them bearing in mind that they represent a small and likely active segment of our Network and sector, whose views should still be taken into account.

## Findings

- 1,685 people registered for Europeana 2021 from 86 countries. 49% of those who registered had never been to any Europeana event before and 53% were not Europeana Network Members. This represents significant reach and growth compared to the first all-digital conference, Europeana 2020, and the last in person conference held in Lisbon in 2019.
- For the first time, we investigated attendee participation in the conference in more detail. We learned that the majority wanted to attend live to some degree, but almost 60% (including some of those who attended live) rely on having access to the recordings. 10% only wanted to catch-up afterwards, for example, due to schedule clashes or time-zone issues. People attended for an average of 7.5 hours (just over one day).
- 81% of questionnaire respondents who were not Network members reported that the conference motivated them to become a member (an increase from 69% in 2020). We found slightly higher growth in Network membership compared to the previous months, but not significant enough to suggest that the conference was a big driver of Network growth.
- Europeana 2021 created opportunities to strengthen and expand a professional network. More participants at Europeana 2021 report strengthening their existing network or expanding their network (48% on both counts), compared to 2020 (38% and 44% respectively). In addition, 81% of those attending feel like part of a community around digital cultural heritage (an increase from 74% in 2020). There was no growth in the median number of contacts made or contacts that attendees might collaborate with in future. Some participants also seemed uninterested in digital networking formats, noting that it is a struggle to build connections when meeting digitally.
- Satisfaction with Europeana 2021 was high. The satisfaction of general attendees was, at 86% satisfied or completely satisfied, slightly higher than participating speakers at 83%. 89% of those attending Europeana 2021 reported that the

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<sup>1</sup> Read the report in full on Europeana Pro:

<https://pro.europeana.eu/post/impact-assessment-report-national-workshops>



conference had value for them in some way either personally or professionally and 91% enjoyed themselves. Participants were most satisfied with the organisation of the event and the quality of the programme with few participants reporting being dissatisfied or completely dissatisfied in any of the conference aspects measured.

- 80% of those who responded to the Europeana 2021 questionnaire reported gaining skills or knowledge that they can use in their work or professional setting (an increase from 77% in 2020). 72% report being inspired to change how their organisation uses digital cultural heritage and 63% report the same inspiration for change relating to open digital cultural heritage. However, only 59% report being more able to make a change in their organisation or otherwise professionally. This is similar to 2020, where 49% of participants reported feeling more able to make a change as a result of the conference. There are numerous barriers in place which may get in the way (e.g. status in an organisation). Attendees shared some feedback and recommended that the event could be more participatory, in-depth and focussed on training.

## Conclusions and recommendations

Europeana 2021 was held completely online for the second time and there were high levels of satisfaction from both speakers and attendees. This was in spite of the online format, which, as some participants emphasised, struggles to replace face to face interaction. Nonetheless, the feeling of being part of a community around digital heritage increased from previous years.

Learning and capacity building outcomes increased in all instances measured. Even more participants report learning something that they could use in their work but, as in the past, report not being able to make a tangible change. Though barriers to creating change in heritage organisations exist that are beyond Europeana's control, we should also consider prioritising programming that takes the participant beyond discussion to concrete mechanisms for change.

### Recommendations

- The Europeana Network Association should exploit the annual conference to drive Europeana Network Association growth - there is potential.
- The Europeana Network Association Members' Council and Membership Working Group should address the relatively high figure of those who are unsure if they are Network members or not.
- Future events should continue to try to balance interactivity and training with high-level discussion in order to lead to tangible change that participants can implement in practice.
- We should reconsider the strategy for putting videos on Europeana Pro after the conference.



## **Validation and next steps**

The interpretations presented here will be shared with Europeana Foundation colleagues who organised the Europeana 2021 conference, with the selection committee, and with the ENA Members' Council.

The report and its recommendations for relevant groups (e.g. the ENA Membership Working Group, the Climate Action Community) will be shared directly by email, with an offer for a follow-up meeting.





## Europeanana 2021 Key Data

Take a look into our key impact findings from our last event!



### Community and Networks

Europeanana 2021 created opportunities to strengthen and expand a professional network

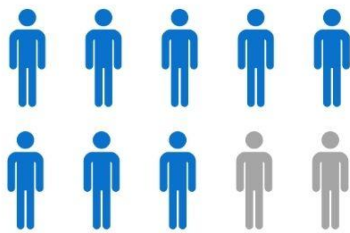


*'I was honoured to be part of Europeanana 2021 - a professional event which not only gathered the best professionals but addressed the most important issues in the cultural field and society at present time.'*

- Speaker at Europeanana 2021, Network member for more than five years



### Network membership



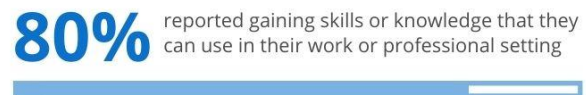
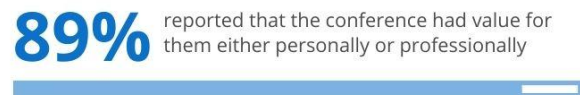
**8** out of **10**

of respondents who were not Network members indicated that the conference had motivated them to become Network members



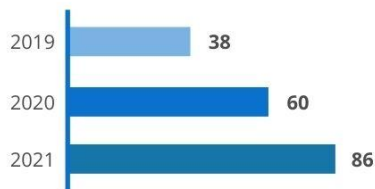
### Learning and creating change

There were even higher levels of participants enjoying themselves and a high sense of personal professional value if compared to 2020



### Country representation

Join colleagues from across the world at Europeanana's annual conference!



Number of countries represented in the Europeanana annual event along the years



Density of Europeanana 2021 participants  
1  170

Figure 1. Infographic summarising the key data from the Europeanana 2021 conference impact assessment.

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## **Acknowledgements**

Many thanks to Gina van der Linden, Tamara van Hulst, Nicholas Jarrett, Georgia Evans, Zuzana Malicherova, and to the representatives of the Europeana 2021 programme committee and Europeana Members' Council who reviewed it.





## Introduction



**Figure 2.** Main Europeana 2021 branding and image.

Europeana 2021 was shaped around five conference themes (Diversity and inclusion; Participation; Climate action; Digital Public Sphere and Data Spaces; Collaboration) spread across three days:

- **Day 1** Putting values at the heart of Europe's digital future
- **Day 2** Exploring sustainable digital transformation
- **Day 3** Technology as a driver for social change

This report comments on the impact that Europeana 2021 is expected to have by convening the Europeana Network Association and a broader network of those interested in digital heritage. It does so first by introducing the methodology followed and then sets out what we learned about conference participants (e.g. the percentage of Europeana Network Association members attending and where they came from). The findings report on data gathered in a survey sent almost immediately after the conference in 2021 and in a longitudinal survey sent in 2022. Comparisons are made between the data collected in the annual conferences in 2020 and 2021. Finally, we narrate what we think the impact of Europeana 2021 was in the conclusions and also share recommendations to be taken into consideration in future events, annual conferences and impact assessments.

## Methodology

Looking at the impact assessment approach, we considered economic impact alongside networking and learning outcomes, as well as collecting insights into the tangible actions people take after attending the Europeana annual conference. In doing so, we followed a similar approach to past years. Unlike in 2019 and 2020, we did not conduct



an assessment of the environmental impact caused by Europeana 2021 as there were no new data sources or approaches to follow that would allow us to improve on the (already variable) estimations presented in the impact assessment of Europeana 2020.

Following the steps outlined in the Europeana Impact Playbook, our methodology was as follows.

## Design

1. With the main project organisers, we brainstormed stakeholders of the Europeana 2021 conference. These stakeholders were as follows:
  - Attendees of the conference (general audiences)
  - Attendees of the conference (ENA members)
    - Of which a sub-part includes those most heavily involved in Europeana, e.g. Members' Council or Board, EAF, TFs, WGs etc
  - Speakers/presenters at the conference
  - European Commission representatives\
2. We created a change pathway for conference participants (both ENA and non-ENA members). We also decided to investigate the experience of the speaker/presenter/workshop leader at the Europeana 2021 conference for the first time.<sup>2</sup>

## Measurement

1. At the **registration stage**, we didn't ask any specific questions relating to the conference themes. The themes were too broad and at the time of writing, we are unable to compare pre- and post-activity quantitative data (e.g. confidence ratings).
2. A **post-event questionnaire** was created. Questions were drawn from the questionnaire from 2020, improvements to the [Standardised Question Bank](#), new thoughts about the impact of convening (e.g. based on the [Europeana Network Association Impact Assessment report 2021](#)) and new areas where Europeana colleagues identified knowledge gaps.
  - a. Due to the limitations of our conferencing software, we sent the conference post-event questionnaire to all those who registered for the conference (noting that not all participated). We invited those that did not attend the conference to complete the survey as well.
    - i. We added in a new question to account for this: *Did you attend the conference or do you plan to catch-up with the recordings after the event?*
  - b. The post-event data were collected by sending a SurveyMonkey questionnaire to all registered participants.

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<sup>2</sup> There is no change pathway for this stakeholder as the questions we asked them were exploratory in nature.



- c. We collected 204 responses, which gave us a response rate of approximately 25%.<sup>3</sup>
3. Whether the Conference had a positive influence on the growth of Network membership was measured by collecting the level of membership several weeks before and after the conference. This was the first time we could collect such measurements.<sup>4</sup>
4. A **longitudinal survey** was shared in March/April 2022. This was a short questionnaire which asked questions relating to how the participant attended the conference (e.g. live or catching-up afterwards), whether they watched videos after the event, and whether they have been able to apply what they learned into their professional context.
5. All data were analysed in Excel.

## Narration

1. The main Europeana 2021 organiser and the impact advisor had a workshop on Miro to create the impact narrative, using the canvas in Phase three and drawing on the tips and good practice shared.
2. The narrative was created and later validated with a wider group of Europeana Foundation colleagues involved in organising Europeana 2021.
3. The impact narrative was updated to include the findings of the longitudinal survey.
4. Infographics were designed to highlight key parts of the impact narrative.

## Evaluation

1. The methodology is naturally evaluated as part of the next conference's planning.

## Limitations and validity of the sample

The sample of responses from the post-event and longitudinal surveys is biased towards Network members responding, as shown in table 1 below.

	Europeana 2021 conference registration data	Post-Europeana 2021 conference questionnaire data	Longitudinal questionnaire data
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<sup>3</sup> 797 of those who registered attended at least some part of the conference and there were 204 responses to the post-conference questionnaire. The number 797 includes those who attended the conference but the questionnaire data suggested that 10% of participants registered only to have access to the videos after the event.

<sup>4</sup> A baseline measurement for growth is not available in 2020 because at the time the conference was being held, the Network membership list was being updated (i.e. with inactive/non-responsive Network members being removed) as a result of the 2020 Membership campaign.



Network member	33%	47%	58%
Not a Network member	53%	41%	34%
Unsure	14%	11%	8%

**Table 1.** Demonstration of the proportion of Network members registering for the conference vs responding to the surveys.

Roughly half of the Network members who completed the post-conference survey also reported attending the Europeana 2021 Annual General Meeting (AGM) held separately on 3 November 2021. 318 Network members registered for the 2021 AGM and 165 attended on the day.<sup>5</sup> This indicates that those responding to the post-conference survey represented an active segment of Network membership. This is even more so the case for those who responded to the longitudinal questionnaire.

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<sup>5</sup> Data drawn from Eventbrite and Zoom.



## About conference participants

### Number of registered participants

1,685 people registered for Europeana 2021. This is a small increase compared to 2020 (where 1,650 participants registered).<sup>6</sup> We can see the significance of the reach of a digital conference when we compare this to the 238 professionals who attended Europeana 2019 in Lisbon.

### Network membership and familiarity with Europeana events

**49% of those who registered had never been to any Europeana event before.** 18% had been to other events and 29% reported having attended past Europeana conferences. 4% were unsure.

Similarly, **53% of those who registered for Europeana 2021 were not Network members** (a rise from 48% in 2020). 33% report being Network members (much lower than in 2020, when 52% of those attending were Network members). 14% of those who registered were unsure. We should investigate if low registration (proportionally) of Network members represents a lack of interest in the annual conference amongst Network members.

### Global representation

Professionals from 86 countries registered to attend Europeana 2021. This is a significant increase from 2020 (where 60 countries were represented in the registration list) and 2019 (38 countries).

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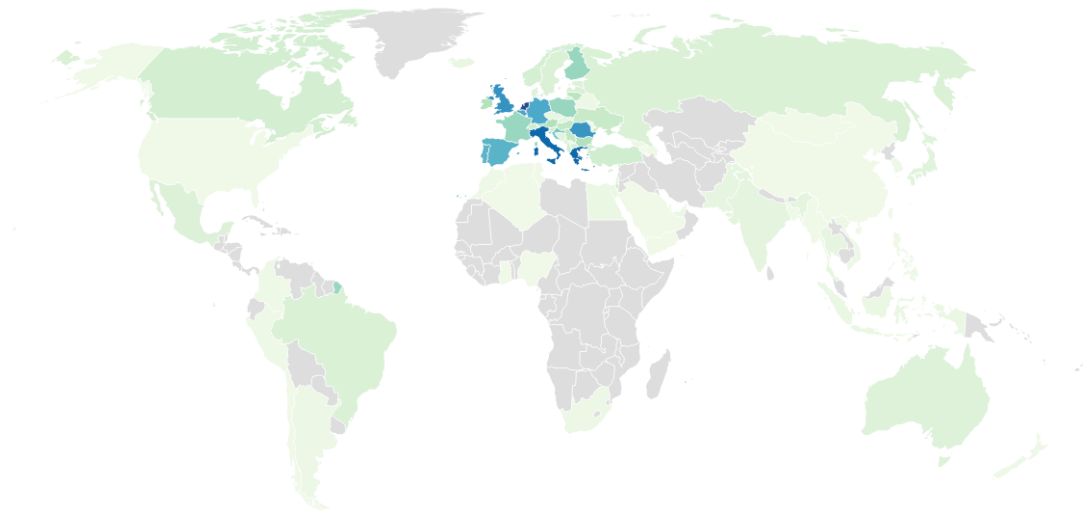
<sup>6</sup> Note that since Europeana 2020 we have been able to be more accurate in reporting who attended the conference due to improvements in our methodology and Zoom functionality.



## Registered attendees of Europeana 2021

The map shows registered attendees of Europeana 2021, who represent 86 countries (in 2020, only 60 countries were represented).

Density of Europeana 2020  
participants



Source: Europeana 2021 registration data • Created with Datawrapper

**Figure 3.** Map demonstrating the global representation of Europeana 2021 registered attendees.

The five most represented countries were as follows: The Netherlands, Greece, Italy, the United Kingdom and Romania. Germany and Spain were not in the top five most represented countries, unlike in 2020.

### Access requirements

Few access requirements were given, and only one related to the accessibility of the event in terms of having a disability (a request to ensure that the sound is good). Other comments given by participants relate to the timing of the event, in terms of time zones and other scheduling conflicts. Many participants requested that the recordings should be available afterwards, supporting the finding above that many participants plan to catch up online. These data and other data relating to accessibility captured in past events have been shared with the internal Europeana accessibility cross-team.

### Participation rate

In the impact assessments of our digital events or activities, we have often discussed the attendance rate vs the registration rate. The former is always lower, often significantly so. There are a number of reasons for this, including, for example, the timing of the conference (e.g. timezones, conflicting schedules, length of the event), digital fatigue caused by an overwhelming number of digital events and screen time due



to the pandemic, and the preference of some to catch-up (pick and choose) afterwards instead of live.

47% of those who registered to attend Europeana 2021 attended live. We are now better able to track actual attendance due to improvements in Zoom functionality and our methodology. This aligns with and is stronger than some other digital events, where between one third and half of participants might normally attend.

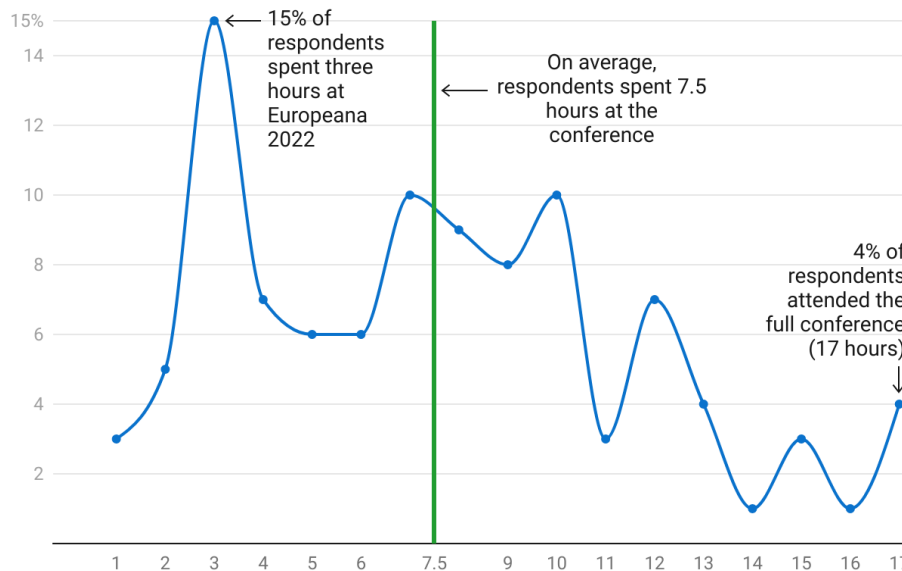
## Participation format - during and after Europeana 2021

In the survey of the registered audience of Europeana 2021, we asked how they liked to participate. The results were as follows:

- To attend the conference live (42%)
- To plan to catch up afterwards (10%)
- A mix of both (48%)
- Other (no responses)

This shows that the majority (90%) of those who completed the survey were interested in attending the conference live at least to some extent. This gives us an indication that the focus on convening our audiences live is still important, even in a digital format. The average length of attendance at the conference was 7.5 hours, which equates to over one day of the programme in total. The most commonly chosen responses were 3, 7 and 10 hours (15%, 10% and 10% respectively).

### Hours spent at Europeana 2021



The Y axis shows the percentage of attendees who reported spending this time at the conference. The X axis shows the number of hours possible.

Source: Europeana 2021 post-event questionnaire • Created with Datawrapper

**Figure 4.** Chart showing the hours spent at Europeana 2021: the average attendance was 7.5 hours, and the largest group of attendees (15%) spent 3 hours at the conference.





At the same time, almost 60% of our audiences suggest that they rely on the post-event recorded videos being made available. Though it was a small sample that likely represents the most active part of the Network, 84% of those responding to the longitudinal questionnaire suggested that they had watched a conference video since Europeana 2021. Viewing figures drawn from Youtube in December 2021<sup>7</sup>, however, suggest that this is unlikely to be the case.

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<sup>7</sup> Drawn from an internal report. The report shows that few of the videos have been watched completely and that viewing figures are lower than what conference attendees report.



## Findings

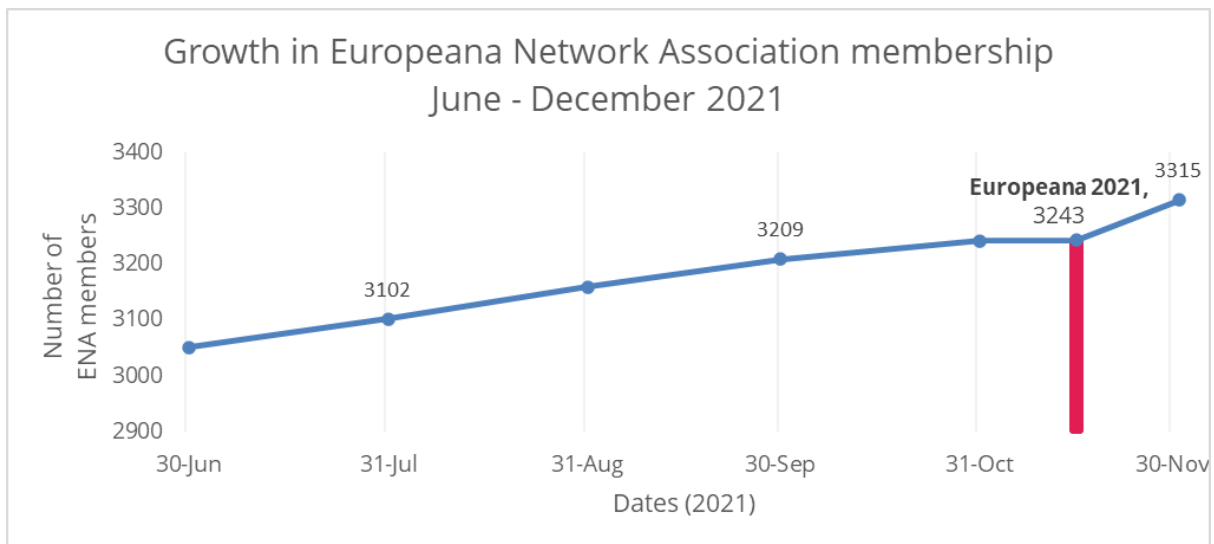
### Expanding the Europeana Network Association

81% of those who attended Europeana 2021 but who were not Network members indicated that the conference had motivated them to become Network members. This is a positive finding, and an increase on the motivation rate we recorded in 2020, where 69% of non-Members reported being motivated to become members.

*I was postponing becoming a member for too long. Motivated for a longer while, the conference just pushes me even more to "just do it".*

Not an ENA member, motivated to become a member

When we look at the data concerning network growth in November/December 2021, however, we only see a slightly higher rate of growth in Network membership in later November 2021 compared to the months previously.



**Figure 5.** Chart showing growth in Europeana Network Association membership across the months before and after Europeana 2021, with the aim of showing if growth in the Network was linked to the participation of non-members at Europeana 2021.

We are able to ascertain potential reasons for why motivation doesn't translate into action. Firstly, it is not an explicit objective of the annual conferences to grow ENA membership. Furthermore, some of the open text responses suggests that that non-ENA members not know about the Europeana Network Association, what membership looks like, or how to become a member:

- *Not sure if private individuals are able to join or just institutions*
- *most probably, depending on the impact given on my job activities*
- *I've been interested in Europeana for quite some time but not sure what requires to be in ENA...*
- *I don't know what it will bring me*



## Strengthening and growing professional networks

Compared to 2020, more participants at Europeana 2021 report strengthening their existing network or expanding their network (48% on both counts, compared to 38% and 44% respectively in 2020). In addition, 81% of those attending feel like part of a community around digital cultural heritage (an increase from 74% in 2020).

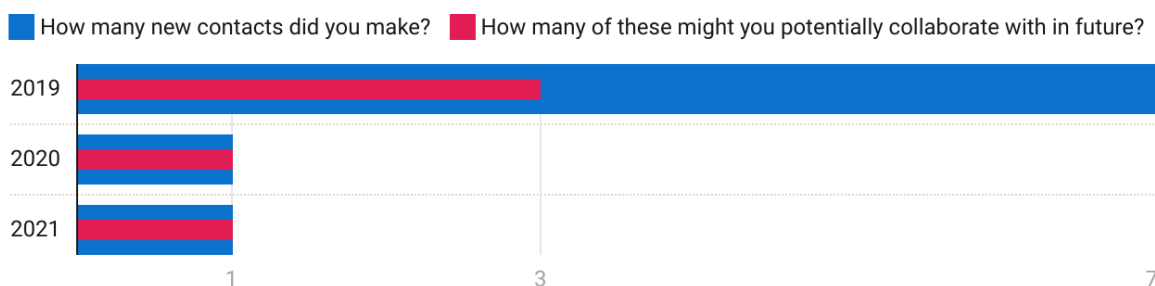
*The inspiring keynotes and parallel sessions helped me reignite my motivation for my work, something that has been lacking lately, not because I don't love the job I'm doing, but because almost two years of pandemic often made me feel that things remain at a standstill and every day is the same. Being part of the Europeana conference made [me] feel connected to a group of excited professionals, with great passion about what they do, which reminded me of why I am a professional in the cultural heritage sector in the first place.*

Network member for 0 - 2 years

In 2019 (conference in Lisbon) and 2020 (online conference), we tracked network development by asking attendees to report first how many new contacts they made and second, how many of these contacts they were likely to collaborate with in future. We saw a significant drop between the 2019 in person and 2020 online events. In 2021 we also found a low median number of new contacts made - in fact, to the same extent as in 2020.

## New contacts made and likelihood of collaboration - Europeana 2019, Europeana 2020 and Europeana 2021

The chart below compares the median value of participants' reported new contacts made, and estimation of the number of these contacts with whom they might go on to collaborate.



Source: Combination of data from Europeana 2019, 2020 and 2021 post-event questionnaires • Created with Datawrapper

**Figure 6.** Chart showing that, like in 2020, participants made few contacts as a result of attending Europeana's annual digital conference.

*I enjoyed very much the feeling of belonging and I was very happy to be part of this event.*

Attendee, unsure of membership status, motivated to become a Network member



## Creating value for speakers

*I have been taking part at Europeana events since 2012...I was honoured to be part of Europeana 2021 - a professional event which not only gathered the best professionals but addressed the most important issues in the cultural field and society at present time . Always a great event !*

Speaker at Europeana 2021, Network member for more than five years

10% of those who responded to the post-Europeana 2021 questionnaire were speakers or presenters. 83% of speakers were satisfied or completely satisfied with their experience at the event. Motivations to apply as a speaker or to host a workshop at Europeana 2021 varied, with open text responses to this question as follows:

- The size of the conference audience (reach)
  - *The broad reach*
  - *large and interested audience*
  - *big audience*
- Sharing ideas with the sector
  - *sharing good practices among the network*
  - *[...] inspire people with our project*
  - *Outreach and collaboration opportunities*
  - *[...] strong potential to exchange ideas/network*
  - *An invitation to share ideas*
- Part of their involvement in the Europeana Initiative
  - *I wanted to showcase the work we've done at Europeana in the past year*

Some speakers were contacted directly by Europeana to speak at the conference (e.g. *I was contacted due to previous fruitful experience and collaborations with Europeana-Pro.*).

## Feedback from speakers

Open text responses from speakers at the conference suggested that their experience could have been improved if they had invested more time preparing their (pre-recorded) presentation (something which Europeana cannot control); some would have liked the audience of their workshop to have been bigger; and to have had more information about their audience (i.e. about who was in the digital room).

## Building capacity and creating change

80% of those who responded to the Europeana 2021 questionnaire reported gaining skills or knowledge that they can use in their work or professional setting (an increase from 77% in 2020). 72% report being inspired to change how their organisation uses



digital cultural heritage and 63% report the same inspiration for change relating to open digital cultural heritage.

When we asked a similar question at a later date in the follow-up questionnaire, we learned that 56% of participants report using something they learned at Europeana 2022 in their work or otherwise professionally. This suggests that in the short-term, people are learning valuable information and are inspired to make changes, and perhaps to be expected, implementing change takes more time.

The following open text responses from the question relating to professional and personal value exemplify some of these statistics:

- *I identified areas need to change to my organisation's approach to open digital cultural heritage*
- *I strongly believe in the project of open digital cultural heritage and plan to something in this regard, attending Europeana 2021 helped strength my resolve.*
- *I got a lot of input for my recent work within the digital heritage.*
- *I feel encouraged to take actions in my orgnization. Thanks for that!*
- *Got perfect example of practical usage*
- *Change my mind and inspired me*
- *Gained useful knowledge.*
- *Inspiration and knowledge transfer is the key word over here!*
- *These annual meetings keep me up to date and always present fresh ideas and solutions.*
- *As I am working on national project of digitization of cultural heritage I feel strongly motivated to bring new ideas and work on presenting our results not only on national level but European.*
- *It has been great to listen to inspiring colleagues and hear about their projects and practices. I'm looking forward to watch some more videos and take the inspiration into my daily work.*

In the short-term after the conference, however, only 59% report being more able to make a change in their organisation or otherwise professionally. This discrepancy is similar to 2020, where 49% of participants reported feeling more able to make a change as a result of the conference.

This might be due to the short-term time-frame in which we ask the question. We also learned about numerous barriers in place which may get in the way of implementing change, including level of position/ability in an organisation to make change, and the depth of practical knowledge gained, as illustrated in the open text responses below.

- *It was important and informative in many ways. However, I could not directly maintain that participating [in] this event would make me want to 'change everything' or give the status to do so.*
- *listening to the speakers was valuable as you always learn something new. but it will not be easy to implement any of it at my work, because my boss is a control freak*



*and not open to new ideas (unless they come from them). I've learnt a lot and am enjoying the new knowledge anyway! :)*

- *Sometimes it just felt like advertisement rather than anything that was meant to reach further than that*
- *I would appreciate workshops in addition to rather theoretical talks*
- *The afternoon workshops were not using digital opportunities to make them participatory. In one of the workshops I could even not understand what the title had to do with the content offered*

While we therefore see an improvement in the figure relating to introducing a change after the conference, this should still be something that is interrogated more closely. The question wording, relevance and understanding should also be tested, and we should also consider when we ask the question (as changes take time to implement). More in-depth qualitative research might also shed light on this statistic.

## High satisfaction with Europeana 2021

The satisfaction of general attendees of Europeana 2021 was, at 86% satisfied or completely satisfied, slightly higher than the speakers at 83%, and overall, a very high rating<sup>8</sup>. We found an increase in those reporting to have enjoyed themselves at the conference (91% compared to 86% in 2020).

Furthermore, 89% of those attending Europeana 2021 reported that the conference had value for them in some way either personally or professionally. This is a similar rate to 2020, where this was reported by 88% of attendees. The open text data that accompanied this statistic is reported in relevant sections of this report.

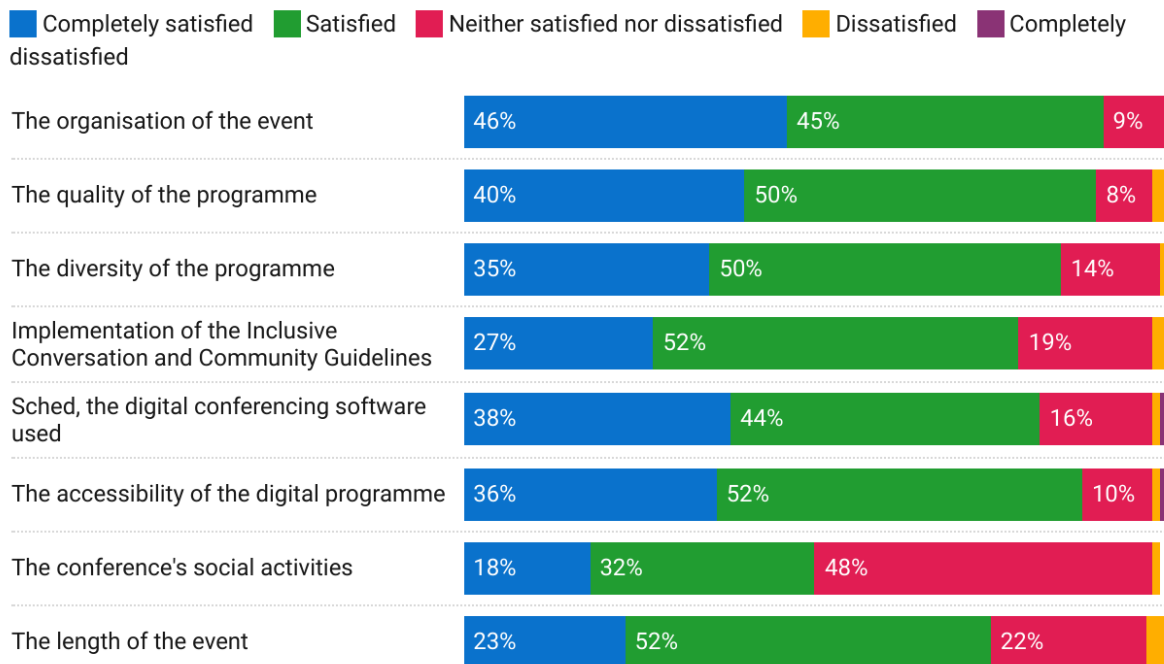
General satisfaction with the conference was high, as can be seen in figure 7 below. We see that:

- Over 90% were satisfied or completely satisfied with the organisation of the event and the quality of the programme, with over 85% satisfied or completely satisfied with the diversity of the programme and the accessibility of the digital programme.
- Dissatisfaction levels (combining both dissatisfied and completely dissatisfied ratings) were low across all measures.
- There was a higher degree of neutrality (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied) relating to the conference social activities (48%) and the length of the event (22%). This suggests that these are areas to improve.

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<sup>8</sup> We consider this a very good rating when compared against our 75% benchmark (where higher means very high satisfaction).

## General satisfaction with Europeana 2021



Source: Europeana 2021 post-event questionnaire data • Created with Datawrapper

**Figure 7.** Chart showing satisfaction with different elements of Europeana 2021.

We asked participants about whether Europeana 2021 had met, exceeded or not met their expectations. The results were broadly positive to the question about meeting or exceeding expectations, with 41 positive comments out of 52 open text responses. The things that people enjoyed most were the keynotes and workshops (both significant parts of the programme).

- *Keynote on Friday. I will probably send the summary to a friend as well.*
- *Pier Luigi Saco's talk was absolutely brilliant but generally speaking, most talks exceeded my expectations*
- *I loved the professionalism of the people that took the floor, their passion for what they spoke*

Attendees also reported positively on the organisation and format of the event:

- *All have been very well designed for digital context*
- *Keynotes were amazing, the digital conferencing tool has passed with flying colours, the schedule was organised really well. Enough time for breaks and little in-betweens. Great job! I really enjoyed the event*
- *Great speakers, professional organizers, excellent event*

Where responses that were not explicitly positive were recorded, these were either not applicable or unclear, with only a few comments reporting dissatisfaction with the fact that the conference had to be held online, rather than elements of the conference organisation or content:





- *Online events make it more difficult to arrange dedicated space to attend. I've enjoyed the parts I was able to attend but did not get immersed.*
- *It was an online meeting and it partially met [m]y expectations. However, I would enjoyed more a in-presence meeting, with the possibility to have more interaction*



**Figure 8.** Image generated on databasic.io, showing the main key words in the response to the answer about meeting or exceeding participants' expectations.

When we ask about what didn't meet participants expectations, there were more positive responses and recommendations than negative responses. Several themes emerged in the data.

First, participants used this opportunity to share recommendations for future events:

- *Would have been nice to see a higher attendance for such an interesting conference.*
- *miss more information about public library/vies*
- *I wish some more philosophical aspects from curators*
- *I was wondering whether it might be useful to have slots at the conference for smaller CHEs to present what they are doing, as many of the more research-focussed projects and bigger institution-led projects are not achievable for the vast majority of CHEs. The real digital transformation would need to happen at that level though, no?*
- *I was not able to attend much [of] the Social Program. Probably it would be good to change it to a round of open discussions around certain topics, so that the community may bring their input and open questions to the community.*

The overlapping or parallel nature of the workshops was not enjoyed by some attendees, in some cases, due to the desire to attend more of the programme than possible (which can be seen as positive feedback on the programme quality):

- *Some presentations overlaped so that one could not attend some of the presentations.*
- *It was a pity that there were so many parallel sessions at some times, especially given how short the conference was.*
- *The only thing that I found problematic was that I wanted to attend many parallel session that was not feasible. It would be better if the congress lasted for a whole week so as to be able to watch more sessions.*
- *i thought it was a shame that i could not attend more sessions - maybe to spread out the lectures and have less long breaks so that no sessions overlap*



## Mixed satisfaction regarding the (necessity of a) digital format

Various open text responses (like those relating to willingness to travel to the conference) exemplify the challenges of developing a network through online participation. We also saw a degree of apathy to the social events at Europeana 2021, with a low number of respondents expressing satisfaction or dissatisfaction - see below). In general, fewer than half (43%) of those responding to the post-conference questionnaire report that the networking opportunities were important to them. 22% suggest that it is not important to them, with the remaining 35% taking a neutral stance. This is reflected elsewhere in the findings.

A very small number of respondents - responding to the question about what, if any, parts of the conference did not meet their expectations - did not enjoy the social activities (e.g. GatherTown). At the same time, other responses welcomed this effort. This polarity is similar to what we found in the impact assessment of Europeana 2020. Nonetheless, in both cases, participants missed having the opportunity to meet their peers in person.

We have seen in the analysis of Europeana 2020's post-questionnaire data that participants appreciated the wider accessibility of the conference (i.e. more attendees could join from a wider geographic area) while acknowledging broader dissatisfaction with the digital format (in relation to networking, digital fatigue, etc). Similar themes emerged in the data captured from attendees of Europeana 2021:

- *It was an online meeting and it partially met by expectations. However, I would enjoyed more a in-presence meeting, with the possibility to have more interaction*
- *F2F [face to face] is really important for engaging and immersing ourselves. I understand that a lot of people feel great with online events but it does not work for me.*
- *It was inspiring but it used to be more in Former times when we were able to talk to each other in the physical space. I am glad that I know some people from Lisbon, Vienna and Milano.*
- *I noticed that the talks were absolutely interesting but the digital format created quite a sense of distance for me.*

Although efforts are put into creating opportunities to network and meet other people, these efforts (and the digital format, which cannot be avoided) are not appreciated or enjoyed by some participants. This is also evident in the limited interest in the social events and the higher neutral ratings in terms of satisfaction and dissatisfaction of the social components of the programme.

## Future conference participation

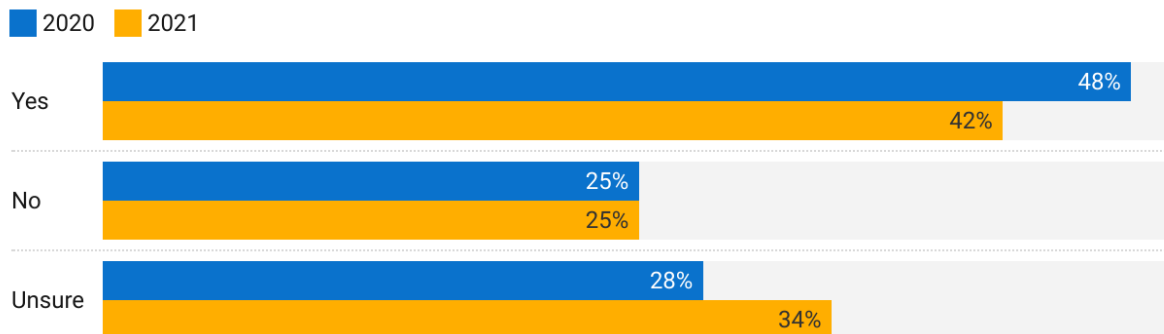
**42% of those surveyed would have travelled to attend Europeana 2021 if it had been in the Netherlands.** 25% said no and the remainder (34%) were unsure. These figures are similar to those captured in 2020, but we see that more people in 2020



would have been willing to travel, whereas in 2021 there was an increase in those who were unsure if they would want to travel.

## Willingness to travel to Europeana annual conferences

The data shown below describe the willingness to travel to the next Europeana 2021 conference, had it been held in the Netherlands.



Source: Europeana 2021 post-event questionnaire data • Created with Datawrapper

**Figure 9.** Chart showing the willingness to travel to future Europeana annual conferences, measured in 2020 and 2021.

In the longitudinal data, we saw that **only 20% were interested in physically attending the event in the Netherlands**, with the majority (56%) preferring to join online (18% were unsure).

This can be exemplified in the open text responses. When we asked respondents to explain their choice, there were several common themes that meant that they would not or were unsure if they would travel to participate.

For some, the idea of the **cost of attending** was prohibitive:

- *It would be more complicated to justify physical participation to organisation mgmt with travels, accommodation etc involved.*
- *I can't afford the travel*
- *Too expensive*
- *It depends on the conference topic and if my workplace would cover the costs*
- *I likely wouldn't be able to get funding, but if I could, I would definitely go!*
- *Wouldn't have the financial means to do it.*

For others, there were multiple intersecting concerns, including **caring responsibilities** and **environmental sustainability** concerns:

- *Travel budgets are likely to be cut at my institution and preference will be given to online events as part of sustainability efforts*
- *Unless I am speaking at a conference, I will not travel to attend because I am a working mom trying to reduce my carbon emissions*



The **challenge of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic** is still real:

- *In this times of Covid-19, it is very uncertain if one can travel at a specific time.*
- *That would depend on the status of the COVID-19 pandemic [...]*
- *I live in Australia and that would have been difficult with the border closure. I did not make new contacts but will take a closer look at the attendees list again to link via social media - linked in etc*
- *The travelling conditions and health situation are continuously changing and at this moment online connection is still the best solution.*

Others seem to **enjoy online participation**:

- *I do enjoy the digital option of dropping in when I'm free and dropping out for other jobs in my office. As I have been to Lisbon two years ago, I know how great the in-person-conference can be. But it would be a question of planning and the pandemic, of course.*
- *free and online is perfect*

However online participation must be **balanced** with the realities of making new contacts and expanding a professional network. For many, they would prefer to attend in real life if circumstances would allow it:

- *I would have liked it better offline, to meet people in real life, but I understand it was not possible this year.*
- *I would attend if the next conference would be um a hybrid model*
- *I think, meeting professionals is more effective*
- *I live in the United States which means that I have to get up at 3am to attend. If I was in the Netherlands for the conference I would be on the current local time and more alert.*
- *I have difficulty in making contacts in online events, something that does not happen in face to face events.*
- *[...] I am happy with the digital opportunities but am aware that face to face makes a stronger impact. And if people follow the covid rules and had checked codes I certainly [would have] been [p]resent*



## Conclusions

Europeana 2021 was held in a continuing pandemic context, as countries across Europe and the world faced further winter lock-downs and travel restrictions. For this reason, the conference was held completely online for the second time. **Conference organisers were in a position now to know what works and what audiences enjoy the most**, and this is reflected in participants feeling satisfied with the conference. This was in spite of the online format, which, as some participants emphasised, can never replace face-to-face interaction. The new formats for social events being tested were met with mixed responses and some apathy.

Yet online conference formats have many positives, **including being able to reach new voices across the world and to strengthen the sense of a European and global network around digital cultural heritage**. Europeana 2021 attracted many new faces and new voices to Europeana's network around cultural heritage. The conference organisers were delighted to welcome the 1,685 individuals who registered for the conference (a small growth compared to 2020) who represented new voices and new faces. Fewer than half had been to Europeana events in the past or were Europeana Network Association members. Participants were drawn from 86 countries, more than the 60 countries in 2020 and the 38 countries in 2019. Despite Europeana's conferences being designed for European timezones, representation from different continents is growing. The inclusiveness and wide representation at Europeana 2021 was perhaps one of the reasons that despite the online format, the feeling of being part of a community around digital heritage increased from 74% to 81%. We saw that the percentage of non-members wishing to join the Network increased but we didn't see this significantly reflected in the numbers of new Network members joining in the month after the conference. **Motivation to join the Network does not therefore equate to new membership** and this must be explored further.

Nevertheless, perhaps the sense of being part of a community and the extensive programme led to **even higher levels of participants enjoying themselves and a high sense of personal professional value for participants**, when compared to 2020. Even more participants report learning something that they could use in their work but, like in the past, are likely to report not being able to make a change. Though change takes time and there are barriers to creating change in heritage organisations that are beyond Europeana's control, we should also consider prioritising programming that takes the participant beyond discussion to concrete mechanisms for change.

For the first time, we measured how much of the conference participants report attending. We were satisfied with the **average attendance of 7.5 hours**, noting that the flexibility of an online format means that people can drop in and out for the content that interests them the most. This is interesting in two regards. Some attendees were disappointed that they couldn't attend all of the parallel workshops which reflects positively on the programme but also reflects the practical considerations relating to conference length and digital fatigue. Secondly, though almost half of attendees wished



to make use of the video recordings after the conference (and 10% exclusively so), we don't see this reflected in the viewing data for the videos, which are low and certainly don't reflect the numbers we would expect if we go by the survey data. Future conferences, then, could continue to encourage live participation and prioritise publishing those videos that have clear intended learning outcomes.

## Recommendations

- The Europeana Network Association should exploit the annual conference to drive Europeana Network Association growth - there is potential.
- The Europeana Network Association Members' Council and Membership Working Group should address the relatively high figure of those who are unsure if they are Network members or not.
- Future organisers should reconsider the length of the event and the value and formatting of the digital conference social activities.
- The Europeana Network Association Members' Council and Membership Working Group should consider researching the interest in the annual conferences amongst existing Network members.
- Future events should continue to try to balance interactivity and training with high-level discussion in order to lead to tangible change that participants can implement in practice.
- Future impact assessments should consider the language and positioning used around questions that investigate if changes occur after attending the annual conference.
- We should reconsider the strategy for putting videos on Europeana Pro after the conference based on high interest but low engagement.



## About the Europeana Impact Playbook

The European Impact Playbook is being developed for and with cultural heritage institutions around the world to help them design, measure and narrate the impact of their activities. It helps guide professionals through the process of identifying the impact that their cultural heritage institutions have, or aim to have, as the sector works towards creating a shared narrative about the value of digital cultural heritage.

Three of the anticipated four phases of the Impact Playbook have been published alongside tools and a growing library of case studies. Phase one introduces professionals to the language of impact assessment and helps them make strategic choices to guide the design of their impact. Phase two builds on the design brief in the first phase and focuses on data collection techniques. Phase three introduces tips and toops on how to build a narrative around your impact and take it to the audiences that need to see it. Phase four is in development (to be published by August 2022) and will focus on how to narrate impact findings and evaluate the process taken.

Download the Europeana Impact Playbook, find out more and join the Europeana Impact Community by going to [impkt.tools](https://impkt.tools)!





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