Hello. My name is Mariken Teeuwen, senior researcher at Huygens Institute in Amsterdam, Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences. I will talk to you about a eCodicesNL, a virtual manuscript library for the Netherlands.

The Netherlands is small, but has a surprisingly high number of public collections with medieval manuscripts. In these collections stunning manuscripts are kept from all periods of the Middle Ages. Many of these collections are rather invisible: they are not digitized, only partly digitized or only accessible via websites that are difficult to consult.

eCodicesNL is a new research initiative in which we strive to emend this situation: we want to digitize collections, deliver descriptions that are structured in such a way that they can be consulted and shared by an international audience and offer access to the aggregated collections through one user-friendly interface.

The development of the infrastructure for this new project poses many choices: which models do we follow? Which standards can we use? How do we give collection holding institutions the tools to keep their information up-to-date? There has been in the past a focused effort to collect descriptions of manuscripts in a central database: MMDC, Medieval Manuscripts in Dutch Collections. It was published in 2007 and, as you can probably guess, it is now in trouble. The data collection is still very useful, but its digital infrastructure is not. It can no longer be updated or maintained and the search interface is only half working.

The model that we intend to follow is e-codices Switzerland. We think that this is a project with all the necessary elements: high quality and complete digitizations, high quality descriptions, structured in a fashion that allows for high quality searching, and an excellent interface. Just as e-codices Switzerland, we aim to embrace IIIF for the images, and XML-TEI for the descriptions, to allow for optimal sharing and interoperability. We also aim for a similar approach to copyrights.

As for the workflow, however, things will be different. A central storage and redaction as in the Swiss model will not be our aim. The aim is rather to empower the collections, if possible, to host their own images and to maintain their own sets of metadata and to create a central point of access. So we invest in creating templates, forms and protocols, and translation tables from their cataloging system to ours and perhaps also back again. We hope then that after initial phase of hard work, the system will be maintained by all and thus be relatively low maintenance.

In this initial phase we visit collections with a mobile digitization lab to create new images we aggregate the metadata available at the collections and in MMDC. For the development of the digital infrastructure we collaborate with our own software department, and with Christoph Flüeller and his team, the architects of e-codices Switzerland and Fragmentarium.

All this is complicated and time-consuming: it would be easier and faster to do things ourselves, rather than consulting and convincing all the stakeholders all the time. But in the end it will deliver two key things: it will make the project affordable, because one doesn't need a permanent staff looking after the metadata, and sustainable because it will be carried by many rather than one single institution.

Thank you for listening and please contact us with suggestions and or questions!