

## Online Workshop

# Protecting and Promoting the Diversity of Cultural Expressions in the Context of AI

Digital Workshop on the occasion of the UNESCO World Day for Cultural Diversity

*A cooperation of the German-speaking National Commissions for UNESCO from Austria, Germany, Luxembourg, and Switzerland*

**16. May 2024, 2:00 – 4:30 p. m. (CEST), via ZOOM**

How can the discoverability of diverse forms of cultural expression be improved? How can the value of artistic work and human creativity be strengthened? How can AI technologies be used in the cultural sector to promote cultural and economic diversity? We will explore these and other questions in the workshop discussion "Protecting and promoting the diversity of cultural expressions in the context of AI". The UNESCO National Commissions from, Austria, Germany, Luxembourg and Switzerland will bring together different international perspectives from the cultural sector. Exciting keynote speeches by Hito Steyerl (artist) and Peter Knees (UNESCO Chair on Digital Humanism) will initiate our discussion. In addition, we will work with you and selected experts in four focus groups to develop approaches on how the diversity of cultural expressions can be protected and promoted in the context of AI.

[Registration](#) for the workshop is possible until 14 May 2024.

Working language German and English. The Keynote speeches will be translated into English.

## Background Information

In November 2021, the [UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence \(AI\)](#) was adopted by all UNESCO member states. The recommendation is the first global, international legal instrument in this important future field and dedicates a full chapter to the use of AI in the cultural sector.

It also sets out guidelines on how states should respond to the changing work environment in the cultural sector brought about by AI technologies. To utilise the potential of AI for the cultural sector, UNESCO member states are called upon, inter alia, to

- train cultural professionals in AI and other digital tools,
- sensitise small and medium-sized cultural institutions to AI tools,
- influence tech companies in favour of cultural diversity (e.g. with regard to the visibility and findability of content) and
- support the use of AI in museums, galleries, libraries and archives.

These recommendations are in line with the objectives of the [UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions](#). They are

intended to contribute to the implementation of the Convention even under the changed conditions brought about by AI technologies.

The workshop discussion is part of a series of talks organised by the German Commission for UNESCO on the impact of AI technologies on art, culture and the creative industries. Following a kick-off event in October 2023 on "[Artificial intelligence in art and culture - potentials and risks](#)" (GER) and a workshop discussion in March 2024 on "[How is \(generative\) AI changing work in the cultural sector?](#)" (GER), the series will be continued with this cooperation of the four German-speaking National Commissions for UNESCO in May 2024 on the occasion of the UNESCO World Day for the Diversity of Cultural Diversity.

The goal of the workshop discussions is to connect different perspectives from practice and science, culture, business and politics and to jointly develop ideas on how AI systems can enrich the cultural sector.

## Programme

- 2:00 – **Opening Discussion with**  
2:10 p.m.
- **Simone Beck** (*Video message*), President of the Luxembourg Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO
  - **Maria Böhmer**, President of the German Commission for UNESCO
  - **Barbara Stelzl-Marx**, Vice-President of the Austrian Commission for UNESCO
  - **Thomas Zeltner**, President of the Swiss Commission for UNESCO

- 2:10 – **Keynotes: Diversity of Cultural Expressions in the Context of AI**  
2:50 p.m.
- Promoting the diversity of cultural expressions requires an enabling environment and regulatory framework for creative work and participation.
- How can the discoverability of diverse cultural expressions be improved? How can the value of artistic work and human creativity be strengthened? How can AI technologies be used in the cultural sector to promote cultural and economic diversity instead of contributing to further centralisation/homogenisation? What (new) models and AI applications are currently being developed? How can the influence of large internet platforms exercising power through algorithmic and machine learning systems be curbed? What regulatory measures and structural changes are needed at national and international level to achieve this?

- **Prof Dr Hito Steyerl**, professor for experimental film and video and co-founder of the Research Center for Proxy Politics at Berlin University of the Arts
- **Prof Dr Peter Knees**, UNESCO Chair for Digital Humanism, Vienna University of Technology

2:50 – **Breakout Sessions**  
3:35 p.m.

***Topic 1: Access to Cultural Content (Working language German)***

Impact of generative AI on the protection, promotion and access to diverse cultural content:

- How is generative AI currently being used in the production, mediation and distribution of art and culture? Which aspects need to be considered? Which opportunities are there? Which areas need support or improvement?
- What (new) skills are required from all stakeholders involved and how/by whom can these be taught?
- Where does AI open up new access points, especially for marginalised/underrepresented groups, and contribute to the democratisation of art and culture?
- What obstacles does AI create to access? And what (promising) approaches already exist to remove these obstacles?
  - **Yasemin Keskintepe**, Curator and Art Historian, specialised in the influence of digital technologies on society through science and art in exhibition practice
  - **Isabelle Hamm**, scientist, University of Cologne, research focus: Museology, digital art education, virtual exhibitions / art presentations in digital space

***Topic 2: Protection of Artistic Freedom Rights (Working language German)***

Artistic freedom rights in the face of the use of algorithms and AI applications:

- To what extent do large internet platforms influence cultural content? To what extent do they act as censoring players?
- How can social and economic rights and personal rights of cultural practitioners be protected globally in the face of AI?
- How can a balance be achieved between artistic freedom and digital (state) control of AI?
- How do recommendation algorithms affect the audience's freedom of choice and democratic principles? What impact does this have on disadvantaged/marginalised/discriminated groups?
- How can technical innovations help to ensure that artistic freedoms are upheld online? What skills do artists and audiences need?
  - **Prof Dr Rostam Neuwirth**, Professor of Global Law, University of Macau
  - **Gernot Schödl**, Managing Director of the Austrian Copyright Initiative, *tbc*

### ***Topic 3: Cultural and Linguistic diversity (Working language English)***

In the context of homogenisation trends, AI can increase the standardisation of cultural content. For example, the small languages could be put under further pressure and our (especially linguistic) way of expression could be 'standardised' (e.g. through certain preferences of translation services):

- What can AI do to ensure that diverse and local content is available and findable in different languages online?
- How do we ensure that AI contributes to, rather than jeopardises, the diversity of cultural expressions across the value chain (production/ distribution/ reception/ etc.)?
- How diverse is cultural content selected by algorithmic systems?
- How can AI tools contribute to the discoverability of local and regional content?
- How can AI companies be incentivised to develop AI applications that strengthen minority languages and local cultural content?
- What opportunities does AI offer, especially for multilingual countries and indigenous and minority languages? And what positive real-world examples already exist?

— **Dr Idris Abdulmumin**, Postdoctoral Fellow of the Data Science for Social Impact Research Group, University of Pretoria; Lecturer at the Department of Computer Science, Ahmadu Bello University

— **Prof Dr Heritiana Ranaivoson**, Research Professor at imec - SMIT - Vrije Universiteit Brussel and Member of the UNESCO-Reflection group on the diversity of cultural expressions in the digital environment

### ***Topic 4: Structures of Inequality between World Regions and within Societies in the Context of AI in the Cultural Sector (Working language English)***

The challenges and opportunities of AI in the arts, culture and creative industries are also intensively discussed among actors of the so-called Global South. AI can help re-define relationships or exacerbate existing inequalities in the field of culture, both between regions and within our societies.

- How does the use of AI affect the visibility and representation of cultural expressions from the Global South and from marginalized communities, BIPOC individuals, and those who have little or no access to AI resources and tools (overcoming existing access barriers/digital divide)?
- How can AI tools help make cultural content from regions and minoritized and indigenous groups with difficult market access more visible and accessible?

- How do we ensure that profits flow to the Global South as well as to marginalized groups of society when AI systems access relevant content?
- What new structures of inequality should be considered in cultural cooperation between the Global South and the Global North?

— **Michael Michie**, Co-founder of Everse Technology Africa

— **Dr Tiara Roxanne**, Scholar and Artist in AI Ethics

3:35 – **Presentation of Ideas and Discussions**

4:20 p.m.

— Speakers from the Breakout Sessions

4:20 – **Conclusion and Outlook**

4:30 p.m.