

ΒΟΥΛΕΥΤΙΚΕΣ ΕΚΛΟΓΕΣ 2026



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The Digital Heritage Summit 2026 in Limassol: The future of digital heritage and the avatar of Saint Neophytos are in focus



nowroom May 21, 2026, 6:50

Limassol is preparing to transform, from 25 to 29 May 2026, into one of the most important international centers of discussion on the future of cultural heritage in the digital age, by hosting the Digital Heritage Summit 2026.

Thus, it will function as a **European laboratory for the future of cultural memory**, given that the EU now considers digital cultural heritage as a strategic field of European cohesion and cultural strength.

The Digital Heritage Summit 2026, taking place from **25 to 29 May** under the auspices of the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the EU, brings together in Limassol some of the **most important names internationally** in the fields of digital cultural heritage, artificial intelligence, immersive technologies and cultural policy, scientists, researchers, artificial intelligence experts, archaeologists, museologists, XR/VR technologists, representatives of UNESCO, Europeana and major European universities and research centres.

The event is hosted at the Tassos Papadopoulos Building of the National University of Cyprus, which is essentially transformed into a center for European dialogue on how technology is redefining our relationship with history and collective memory. Leading scientists, researchers, artificial intelligence experts, archaeologists, museologists, XR/VR technologists, representatives of UNESCO, Europeana and major European universities and research centers are expected.

The **conference program** includes high-level presentations, XR technology demonstrations, workshops, policy discussions and international collaborations around digital preservation of memory, artificial intelligence in culture, combating the illicit trafficking of antiquities and the future of European cultural diplomacy.

Cyprus as a "laboratory" of the future

It is no coincidence that the conference is taking place in Cyprus. In recent years, the Cyprus Institute of Digital Cultural Heritage and the UNESCO Chair for Digital Cultural Heritage have developed into one of the most important European hubs in the field.

The event also serves as an indirect recognition of the path that the Digital Heritage Laboratory of the National University of Athens under Professor **Marina Tsanikli** has taken, especially after the EU Innovation Award that was

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France remains has taken, especially after the EU intervention award that was awarded to the laboratory in 2018. This year's conference, however, seems to be attempting something even more ambitious: to publicly present the next step in digital cultural heritage. That is, beyond the digitization of monuments, the "live" interaction with the past.

The first day opens with high-level political and scientific discussions around the question "Why are we digitizing cultural heritage?", which operates almost philosophically within the organization.

Central themes include the reuse of cultural data, persistent virtual worlds, the use of artificial intelligence in memory management, immersive narratives, and new forms of cultural experience.

Of particular interest are the two days of **Hackit!4EU**, an **international innovation marathon** (hackathon) dedicated to the exploitation of high-quality 3D cultural data. There, researchers, programmers, museologists and digital experience creators will work on real cultural heritage datasets, attempting to create **new XR applications and new forms of digital storytelling**.

The importance of the organization is also evident from the organizations involved, such as UNESCO, Europeana, the European Commission, AI4LAM, the Time Machine organization, as well as major research and cultural networks in Europe.

On May 25, before the official start of the session, the Europeana Network Association, the European network of digital cultural heritage professionals, is organizing a special public event around creating "cultural bridges" through digital communities and open knowledge.

Among the personalities who will participate is the Swiss **Nadia Magina-Talman**, founder of MIRALab at the University of Geneva, one of the most emblematic figures worldwide in the technologies of virtual anthropomorphic entities and immersive interaction. Her presence takes on particular significance due to her involvement in the **project of the digital revival of Agios Neophytos**, which goes far beyond local or even European data.

Equally important is the participation of Elinor E. Fink, who will give a keynote lecture on the famous Object ID, the international standard for documenting cultural objects that is also used in the fight against the illegal trafficking of antiquities.

"Bringing to Life" Saint Neophytos



The avatar of Saint Neophytos created by MIRALab of the University of Geneva

The most interesting presentation is the digital revival of the Enclave of Saint Neophytos in Tala, Paphos. The project, developed within the framework of Eureka3D-XR, uses 3D imaging, AI and XR technologies to allow Saint Neophytos to **appear before visitors in full 3D** and interact with them.

The team behind the project is already talking about the transition from the "Digital Twin" to the "Memory Twin", a new concept where the monument acquires narrative memory and interactivity.

Nadia Magyena-Talman herself describes an experience where the Saint **"comes out" of the mural and converses with the visitor** through immersive technologies. The visitor is inside the real space of the Enclave, wears special XR glasses and sees Saint Neophytos take on a three-dimensional form and narrates his life.

The avatar of the Saint is based on historically documented visual material and in particular on the portrait painted in 1183 by **Theodore Apsoudis**, when Saint Neophytos was still alive. The visitor can interact with the Saint, select questions through the XR environment and receive answers in real time. The physical monument and the digital environment merge into a single experience.

The grand public demonstration of the digital revival of Saint Neophytos will take place next **Sunday, May 24**, at 10 a.m. after the Divine Liturgy, in the very Convent of Saint Neophytos in **Tala**. There, the immersive experience with the 3D Saint Neophytos that "comes to life" through AI and XR technologies will be presented to the public for the first time.

Then, on **Tuesday, May 26**, as part of the official opening of the Digital Heritage Summit 2026 in Limassol, the overall results of the Eureka3D-XR project will be presented along with two other European case studies from France and Spain, during the special conference "Digital Cultural Heritage in the Age of Artificial Intelligence and Augmented Reality" at the Technical University of Cyprus.

In an era where artificial intelligence is redefining our relationship with knowledge and reality, Cyprus attempts, through a 12th-century Byzantine monument, to show what the museums, monuments and cultural experiences of

the future might look like.

The introduction of the #MemoryTwin concept is a groundbreaking innovation for the electronic documentation of the past in the digital 21st century, opening new paths for humanity, even where it can preserve not only the form, but also the meaning, memory and collective intelligence of cultural heritage in an increasingly digital world.

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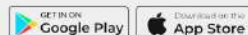


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