

## The Digital Heritage Summit 2026 in Limassol was completed with great success

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With the participation of leading scientists, researchers, policymakers, representatives of European institutions and leaders of the cultural and technological community from around the world, **the Digital Heritage Summit 2026**, which took place in Limassol from 25 to 29 May 2026, was completed with great success.

The only leading Pan-European event on digital cultural heritage was held in collaboration with **Heritage Malta** and was under the auspices of the **Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the European Union**, the **Deputy Ministry of Culture** and in collaboration with the **Europeana digital library**, while it was organized by the **UNESCO Chair for Digital Cultural Heritage of the Cyprus University of Technology (TUCT)**, in collaboration with Heritage Malta.

This year's event was a special edition of the internationally recognized EuroMed 2026 conference, which is considered one of the most important international forums for research, innovation and policy-making in the field of digital cultural heritage.

During the five days of the Summit, innovative applications and strategies were presented that highlight the transformative role of digital technologies in culture, education and society.

The focus was on issues such as the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning and Knowledge Graphs, XR technologies and immersive experiences, the transition from "Digital Twins" to "Memory Twins", the reuse of 3D cultural heritage data, the protection of cultural heritage from looting and illegal trafficking, risk management and resilience to climate change, as well as long-term data preservation and open access to knowledge.

The holding of the Summit during the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the EU gave particular political and strategic importance to the organization, strengthening Cyprus' role as a European hub for cooperation and innovation in the field of cultural heritage and digital technologies.

The program kicked off on May 25 with the **Europeana Network Association** event titled "Building Cultural Bridges, Shaping Shared Futures," which focused on collaboration and shaping common strategies among European cultural heritage communities.

The official opening of the Summit took place on May 26, with high-level greetings from Dr. Lina Kassianidou, Deputy Minister of Culture, Dr. Konstantinos Kleovoulou, Director of Research and Innovation of the Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy, and Dr. Marinos Ioannidis and Dr. Athos Agapiou of the UNESCO Chair and Research Center for Digital Cultural Heritage "Mnemosyne".

The focus was on the importance of digitizing cultural heritage, the use and reuse of digital cultural data, as well as the prospects of persistent virtual worlds and artificial intelligence.

The Hackit4EU Hackathon, which took place on May 27 and 28, attracted particular interest, bringing together researchers, programmers, creators and cultural professionals in an intensive collaborative process of exploiting and reusing high-quality 3D cultural heritage data.

The conclusion of the Summit on May 29 included a keynote address by Eleanor E. Fink on "The Making of Object ID and its Implementation," as well as a roundtable discussion on the role of digitization in addressing the illicit trafficking of cultural goods.

The Digital Heritage Summit 2026 was attended by distinguished figures from the European Commission, international organisations, universities, museums and research centres. Among them were Rehana Schwininger-Ladak, Deputy Director-General for Data, Interactive Technologies and Digital for Culture and Education at the European Commission, Dr. Anne Bajart, Head of Unit for Interactive Technologies, Digital for Culture and Education at the European Commission and Dimitris Skouridis, Chief Scientist of the Republic of Cyprus.

The presentation of the European project **EUREKA3D-XR**, which utilizes advanced 3D digitization and augmented/virtual reality technologies to highlight Europe's cultural heritage, also had a particular impact.

The centerpiece of the presentation was the digital representation of the Church of Saint Neophytos in Paphos and the interactive experience that allowed visitors to interact with a 3D digital form of Saint Neophytos, which narrates his story and life through VR and artificial intelligence technologies. This innovative

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and me through AR and artificial intelligence technologies. This innovative application impressively highlighted how new technologies can transform the cultural experience into an experiential, interactive and globally accessible experience, connecting the past with the possibilities of the future.

The Digital Heritage Summit 2026 was held in collaboration with leading European organizations and initiatives, including Europeana, European Commission (DG CONNECT), AI4LAM, Eureka3D Competence Center, Eureka3D-XR, Time Machine Organisation, HERITALISE, STECCI, IMPULSE, ECHOES and many other international partners.

The success of the event confirmed the potential of Cyprus as an international center of dialogue, research and innovation in the field of digital cultural heritage and highlighted the importance of European cooperation in shaping a sustainable, open and technologically advanced future for culture.

The Digital Heritage Summit 2026 left a strong legacy with the message that technology, when used responsibly and with vision, can preserve collective memory, national identity, enhance access to knowledge and create new ways of connecting societies with their cultural heritage.



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