

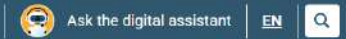
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Keynote address by the Chief Scientist for Research, Innovation and Technology of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr Demetris Skourides, at Twin it! Policy Roundtable: 3D and AI for Europe's Cultural Heritage event, 26 May 2026

From: [Chief Scientist for Research, Innovation and Technology](#)

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The Architecture of Our Shared Future

It is a great honour to join you today at this important policy roundtable during the Digital Heritage Summit 2026.

I would like to thank Europeana, the European Commission, the Deputy Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Cyprus, the Cyprus University of Technology, the UNESCO Chair on Digital Cultural Heritage and the wider European digital heritage community for advancing a mission that is becoming more urgent by the day.

We are here to discuss 3D digitisation and Artificial Intelligence (AI). But this is not only a technology discussion. It is a discussion about memory. It is a discussion about identity. It is a discussion about trust. And increasingly, it is a discussion about Europe's cultural sovereignty in the age of AI.

Digital heritage does not replace the physical experience of culture. It extends it. It protects it. It makes it more accessible, more understandable and more meaningful for future generations.

Europe's Cultural Memory in the AI Age

We must be clear about the urgency. Large Language Models, AI systems, search platforms and digital tools increasingly learn from what is available online.

If Europe's monuments, languages, rituals, religious traditions, archaeological evidence and cultural nuance are not digitised, validated and made available in trusted formats, then future systems may interpret our past through incomplete or distorted sources.

That is why digital cultural heritage is not a secondary cultural issue. It is strategic infrastructure. It is part of Europe's knowledge sovereignty. It is part of Europe's AI readiness. It is part of Europe's education, research, tourism, innovation and public trust agenda. To protect our history, we must become its active digital architects.

Cyprus as a Living Laboratory

For Cyprus, heritage is not abstract. It is visible in our archaeological sites, our Byzantine churches and monasteries, our museums, our castles, our villages, our religious traditions, our maritime heritage and our intangible cultural life.

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Across a small geography, Cyprus carries thousands of years of layered civilisation. This makes Cyprus an ideal living laboratory for digital cultural heritage. It also creates a responsibility.

Cultural tourism and religious tourism are strategic pillars for Cyprus. They connect heritage with education, community identity, regional development, entrepreneurship and sustainable growth.

That is why Cyprus is committed to research and innovation in archaeology, digital humanities, heritage documentation, conservation, digital preservation, 3D digitisation, digital twins, virtual and augmented reality, semantic technologies and data-driven heritage management.

Our ambition is clear: Cyprus should not only preserve its heritage.

Cyprus should help Europe define how heritage is protected, trusted, reused and experienced in the digital age.

From Digitisation to Intelligent Heritage

We are now moving beyond digitisation alone.

The convergence of AI, 3D technologies, digital twins, extended reality, semantic technologies and interoperable data spaces allows us to do much more than create digital copies.

It allows us to document heritage at scale; to analyse complex historical evidence; to reconstruct damaged or lost artefacts; to support conservation; to enrich education; to strengthen cultural tourism; to make heritage accessible to more people.

In simple terms, we are moving: from archives of the past to living systems of knowledge. This is a powerful opportunity, but it also comes with responsibility.

AI, Authenticity and Trust

As our Deputy Minister of Culture, Professor Vasiliki Kassianidou, has rightly stressed, AI-driven reconstructions and visualisations must always be scientifically validated, evidence-based and respectful of authenticity.

This is essential, because cultural heritage is not just data. It is memory. It is identity. It carries meaning across generations.

If authenticity is weakened, trust is weakened.

So Europe must lead with clear principles. We must know what is original. We must know what is reconstructed. We must know what is inferred. We must know what is uncertain.

Provenance, metadata, paradata, validation, transparency and ethical AI must become core elements of digital heritage practice. Responsible AI is not a constraint on cultural innovation. It is what makes cultural innovation trustworthy.

The UNESCO Chair: From Digital Twin to Memory Twin

Cyprus already has powerful examples of this work.

The UNESCO Chair on Digital Cultural Heritage at the Cyprus University of Technology has become a major centre of excellence, advancing research, education, standards, innovation and international cooperation in digital heritage.

Its work on the Enkleistra of Agios Neophytos is especially important. Through high-quality 3D digitisation, immersive Virtual Reality (VR) and Extended Reality (XR), and AI-supported interpretation, the monument is not only digitally documented. It is made understandable, accessible, and reusable for researchers, educators, citizens and visitors.

This work introduces a powerful concept: from digital twin to memory twin. A digital twin captures form. A memory twin captures context. A digital twin shows what exists. A memory twin helps explain what it means. This is the future of digital heritage.

Cyprus is also advancing capacity through initiatives such as Eureka3D-XR, MNEMOSYNE and the Cyprus 3D Digital Cultural Heritage Competence Centre – strengthening standards, training, documentation, immersive access and trusted reuse.

These examples show that Cyprus is not speaking theoretically. Cyprus is building capability.

Skills for Europe's Cultural Future

Technology alone will not deliver this future. People will.

We need a new generation of professionals who can work across disciplines: archaeologists who understand data, museologists who understand immersive experience, conservators who understand provenance, historians who understand digital humanities, engineers who understand heritage structures, computer scientists who understand authenticity and AI specialists who understand culture and ethics.

The integration of AI and advanced digital technologies into cultural heritage creates new skills, new methodologies and new professional opportunities.

This should become a European skills priority. Because the future of digital heritage will depend not only on platforms and funding, but on people capable of connecting science, culture, technology and trust.

From Projects to European Infrastructure

The Common European Data Space for Cultural Heritage gives us the framework to move from isolated projects to shared infrastructure.

That is the real opportunity.

Europe does not only need more digitisation. Europe needs trusted digitisation. Reusable digitisation. Interoperable digitisation. Scientifically grounded digitisation. Digitisation that can serve education, research,

tourism, conservation, creative industries and public engagement.

This is why Twin it! matters. It is not simply a campaign. It is a call to build Europe's cultural memory infrastructure. And Cyprus is ready to contribute actively to that mission.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We stand at the intersection of culture, technology and policy.

For the first time in history, we have tools that allow us not only to preserve the past with unprecedented precision, but to understand it more deeply and share it more openly with the world.

But success will require more than technology. It will require trust. It will require skills. It will require standards. It will require interoperability. It will require investment. And it will require European collaboration.

Cyprus stands ready to play its part. We are not just digitising monuments. We are helping secure the cultural DNA of Europe.

Let us move from aspiration to infrastructure. One dataset at a time. One standard at a time. One trusted digital twin at a time. One memory twin at a time. One breakthrough at a time.

And if we move forward together, Europe will not only digitise its heritage. Europe will define how humanity preserves, understands and experiences its past in the AI age.

Thank you very much.

(GS/KA)

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