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Address by the Deputy Minister of Culture of the Republic of Cyprus, Dr Vasiliki Kassianidou, at the Digital Heritage Summit 2026, yesterday

From: [Deputy Ministry of Culture](#) & [Secretariat of the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the EU 2026](#)

27/05/26 07:35 | [Speech / Address](#) | [European affairs, Culture, Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the EU 2026](#)



It is an honour to welcome you to the Digital Heritage Summit 2026 here in Lemesos. An event held under the auspices of the Deputy Ministry of Culture and the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU). The Cyprus Presidency is anchored in the vision of an EU that is stronger, more resilient, socially cohesive and strategically autonomous. A Europe that invests in people, in memory, in creation and in culture.

During its Presidency, Cyprus aims to strengthen the bonds within the Union, by promoting culture as a vital instrument of political cohesion and a powerful expression of our shared European identity.

As a result of our excellent collaboration with member states of the EU Council, the Commission and the European Parliament, our Presidency has completed two important tasks for culture: the partial general approach for AgoraEU in the Council of Ministers of Culture and the provisional agreement on the Joint Declaration of the European Commission, the European Council and the European Parliament based on the Culture Compass prepared by Commissioner Micallef. The joint declaration bears the motto "Europe for Culture – Culture for Europe". Next week, we will host the Informal Meeting of the EU Ministers of Culture, in Lefkosia during which we will deliberate on two particularly timely and significant issues, especially in the context of current geopolitical, technological, and societal challenges: the safeguarding of cultural rights and the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural goods.

We are therefore very pleased that the Digital Heritage Summit, featuring keynote speeches by distinguished scholars and addresses by representatives from EU institutions and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), as well as international institutional partners, takes place here during the Cyprus Presidency. The summit represents far more than a scientific conference. It is a strategic European and international platform where policy, research, technology, innovation and culture converge to shape the future of our collective memory and identity in the digital age.

Today, we stand at a historic turning point: Artificial Intelligence, Extended Reality, Digital Twins, Big Data, cloud infrastructures, quantum technologies and next-generation networks are transforming every sector of our societies at unprecedented speed. Cultural Heritage cannot remain at the margins of this transformation. On the contrary, Digital Cultural Heritage must become one of the foundational pillars of Europe's digital future, strategic autonomy and cultural sovereignty.

The Digital Heritage Summit demonstrates that Europe continues to lead globally in the preservation, protection, digitisation, interpretation and reuse of cultural heritage. It brings together world-leading experts, universities, research centres, European institutions, ministries, museums, archives, libraries, industry leaders, small and medium-sized enterprises, start-ups, policy-makers and young innovators under one common vision: to ensure that the memory of our past becomes an active, intelligent, and trusted component of our future.

A major challenge – and at the same time a major opportunity – for this Summit is how we can collectively contribute to shaping the future Horizon Europe policy in the domain of Digital Cultural Heritage and, of course, in the AgoraEU programme. This discussion is critically important for all of us. As a Deputy Ministry, and in the

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framework of the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the EU, we want to listen carefully and learn from this multidisciplinary community how Europe can support, coordinate and sustain the ecosystem that works tirelessly for the authentic documentation, preservation, interpretation and transmission of our common past.

The key word here is authenticity. In the era of Artificial Intelligence and synthetic content, authenticity, scientific validity, provenance, trustworthiness and ethical responsibility become essential pillars of our digital future. Europe must ensure that its digital memory remains original, reliable, sovereign, secure, inclusive and sustainable.

For many years, digitisation was mainly focused on the creation of digital collections and repositories. Nowadays, however, we are entering a completely new era – the era of Heritage Intelligence. This means moving beyond passive digital libraries, towards dynamic, semantically enriched digital ecosystems capable of supporting scientific research, education, innovation, policy-making, sustainability, tourism, social resilience and intercultural dialogue.

The future lies in the creation of Memory Twins and Heritage Digital Twins, where high-fidelity 3D documentation is combined with historical knowledge, oral traditions, environmental information, scientific data and AI-driven analysis. Through this approach, heritage becomes a living digital entity capable of supporting predictive conservation, immersive education, cultural diplomacy, creative industries and evidence-based decision-making.

At the same time, Europe faces major and interconnected challenges. Climate change, natural disasters, armed conflicts, illicit trafficking of cultural goods, cyber threats, misinformation and technological dependency create enormous risks for our cultural memory. This is why Europe must invest in sovereign infrastructures capable of protecting our digital heritage for future generations.

The transition toward European sovereign infrastructures such as the European Collaborative Cloud for Cultural Heritage and the EURO-3C federated cloud represents a strategic necessity. Our digital memory cannot depend indefinitely on fragile local servers or on non-European commercial infrastructures. We must ensure the long-term preservation of authoritative “Golden Copies” of our cultural assets in resilient, interoperable and trustworthy European infrastructures.

Another critical challenge is the expertise gap. Europe needs a new generation of Heritage Intelligence professionals, who are capable of combining advanced technological knowledge with deep curatorial, historical, ethical, legal and scientific understanding. We need multidisciplinary collaboration among engineers, archaeologists, architects, historians, computer scientists, museum professionals, archivists, librarians, educators, artists and creative industries.

This Summit sends exactly this message: no single discipline alone can preserve the memory of humanity. Only through multidisciplinary cooperation can we create sustainable, interoperable, resilient and trustworthy digital ecosystems for culture.

The Digital Heritage Summit is a unique opportunity to discuss and plan the future European Knowledge Hub for Digital Cultural Heritage – a future ecosystem where science, policy, education, innovation, creativity, entrepreneurship and cultural diplomacy can converge for the benefit of society.

Europeana, the European Data Space for Cultural Heritage, the European Collaborative Cloud, TwinIt!, and many other flagship European initiatives have already demonstrated that Europe can lead globally in this field. Now we must ensure their sustainability, long-term impact, interoperability and future evolution.

The challenge ahead is therefore not only technological. It concerns how future generations will understand the past, how societies will preserve memory, how democracies will defend authenticity and truth, and how Europe will protect and promote its cultural identity in the digital century.

At the same time, we must recognise that Digital Cultural Heritage is no longer a scientific field. It is rapidly becoming a strategic horizontal domain that supports innovation, competitiveness, education, tourism, regional development, social inclusion and Europe’s global cultural influence.

The ideas, recommendations, collaborations, and visions emerging from this Summit can help shape future European priorities and contribute substantially to future policy directions under Horizon Europe and AgoraEU.

For this reason, we, as a Deputy Ministry, are very much looking forward to receiving your feedback with the key outcomes and strategic results of this Summit. We will review your conclusions carefully and will seriously consider them as part of the broader outcomes and legacy of the Presidency of the Council of the EU.

To conclude, I would like to express my gratitude and warm congratulations to the organisers of the Summit – the UNESCO Chair on Digital Cultural Heritage at the Cyprus University of Technology, which in cooperation with Heritage Malta brought together major European and international partners to exchange ideas, strengthen collaborations, inspire innovation and work towards a resilient, inclusive, sovereign and intelligent European ecosystem for Digital Cultural Heritage.

We are looking forward to working together so that the memory of humanity remains accessible, authentic, protected and meaningful for generations to come.

Thank you very much.

(EK/AS/MS)

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