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# Cyprus opens European Digital Heritage Summit

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The Digital Heritage Summit 2026, a special edition of the internationally recognised EuroMed conference series, opened today, 25 May, in Limassol and runs to 29 May at the Cyprus University of Technology. Organised by the university's UNESCO Chair on Digital Cultural Heritage and Research Centre MNEMOSYNE, in cooperation with Heritage Malta, and held under the auspices of the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the Deputy Ministry of Culture, and Europeana, it is among the most significant gatherings in European digital cultural heritage this year.

## Building cultural bridges

The summit's opening day begins this afternoon with a dedicated pre-event running from 14:00 to 17:30 at the Cyprus University of Technology's Papadopoulos Building on Themidos Street, Limassol. Titled "Building Cultural Bridges, Shaping Shared Futures: The Power of the Europeana Network Association Community," the session is organised by the Europeana Network Association (ENA) in cooperation with the UNESCO Chair on Digital Cultural Heritage, AI4LAM, and the Cyprus Association of Information Scientists. Its focus is capacity building around Europeana's impact, and it is open and free of charge to all interested professionals.

The ENA brings together more than 6,000 multi- and interdisciplinary professionals, researchers, curators, technologists, educators, policymakers, and creative practitioners, united around the mission of expanding and democratising access to Europe's digital cultural heritage. Its seven expert communities, covering copyright, communications, impact, research, education, climate action, and technology, address real-world challenges including the responsible use of artificial intelligence in heritage work, the protection of collections in times of crisis, and the alignment of digital transformation with broader societal needs.

## The summit

Over five days, the summit will bring together specialists from European institutions, research centres, and international organisations for high-level presentations, keynote addresses, round table discussions, and the Hackit4EU Hackathon, which focuses on the reuse of high-quality three-dimensional cultural heritage data.

Confirmed participants include Rehana Schwinninger-Ladak, Deputy Director of the Data Directorate; Dr Anne Bajart, Head of the Interactive Technologies, Digital for Culture and Education Unit at the European Commission's DG CONNECT; Demetris Skourides, Chief Scientist of the Republic of Cyprus; Harry Verwayen, Director General of the Europeana Foundation; and Dr Ines Vodopivec, Secretary General of AI4LAM. Leading specialists including Xavier Rodier, Gabriele Gattiglia, Xenofon Zavouli, Thomas R. Kline, Mikel Borras, Julia Schnitzer, and Dominik Lengyel, whose work spans digital cultural heritage, artificial intelligence, archaeology, law, and digital technologies, are also among the speakers.

The summit addresses themes including the use of artificial intelligence and extended reality in heritage work, digital twins, immersive storytelling, advanced three-dimensional digitisation, the protection of cultural heritage from looting and illicit trafficking, climate resilience, open access to knowledge, and the ethical use of emerging technologies.

Partner organisations include Europeana, the European Commission's DG CONNECT, AI4LAM, the EUreka3D Competence Center, EUreka3D-XR, the Time Machine Organisation, HERITALISE, IMPULSE, and the pan-European ECHOES project, among others.

The full programme for the Digital Heritage Summit 2026 is available [here](#).

## Saint Neophytos in the digital age

A central showcase of the summit is the European project Eureka3D-XR (2025-2026), co-financed by the EU's Digital Europe Programme, which applies advanced three-dimensional digitisation and augmented and virtual reality technologies to European cultural heritage. Its Cypriot pilot centres on the Hermitage of Saint Neophytos in Paphos, with digitisation extending to objects from the monastery's museum, archive, and library. Two further pilot applications are under way in Girona, Spain, and Bibracte, France.

Using high-precision three-dimensional models and extended reality applications, the project allows visitors to experience the hermitage in a virtual environment and interact with digital representations, including that of Saint Neophytos himself, who appears to emerge from the wall in full three-dimensional form and narrates his story, from his origins through his life and experiences, with interactive questioning available through dedicated devices. The project combines digitisation, documentation, historical research, and artificial intelligence, with the aim of preserving and making heritage globally accessible through immersive experiences.

## Cyprus and digital heritage

The holding of the summit during Cyprus' EU Council Presidency adds institutional weight to a longer-standing positioning of the island as a hub for European cultural cooperation. The UNESCO Chair's invitation to potential participants frames Cyprus not merely as a geographic crossroads but as a living archive of successive civilisations from the Pharaonic and Persian periods through Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Lusignan, Venetian, and Ottoman layers, giving it, in the organisers' words, "a unique authority and responsibility in shaping how heritage is preserved, interpreted, and shared in the digital age."

The summit is intended to strengthen Cyprus' connection to the Europeana Network Association and position Cypriot institutions more actively within Europe's digital heritage agenda, opening pathways to collaborative EU projects, funding opportunities, and knowledge exchange at a pan-European scale.

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