European Heritage Hub Policy Talk

INNOVATE. PROTECT. EMPOWER.
How cultural heritage can make Public AI a reality.

Powered by Europeana
in the frame of the EU-funded European Heritage Hub

Concept and rationale

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is changing how knowledge, culture and history are shaped, accessed and understood. It increasingly influences what we know and how we see the world. This has profound implications for the cultural heritage sector, which has for long served as a trusted and accountable interface to public knowledge and culture. At the same time, the growing influence of AI raises important social, cultural, (geo)political and (geo)economic questions, particularly as technological power is concentrated in the hands of a small number of private actors outside Europe.

Against this backdrop, key questions emerge: **what role should the cultural heritage sector play in the development and deployment of AI? How can it contribute to a more diverse, fair and sustainable AI ecosystem in Europe? Is there an alternative vision for AI - one grounded in the public interest? Can Europe champion such an approach, and how can the cultural heritage sector help enable it? And concretely, what policy changes and investments are needed to make this vision a reality?**

This high-level Policy Talk is organised by Europeana in the frame of the European Heritage Hub EU-funded Preparatory Action, with the vital input of the Hub consortium. Europeana draws on over 15 years of experience in supporting the digital transformation of the sector, including as steward of the common European data space for cultural heritage - a flagship action of the Culture Compass for Europe.

The Policy Talk will explore the vision of building a **truly distinct, European approach to Artificial Intelligence - Public AI - and the role the cultural heritage sector can play in shaping it.** Public AI is gaining traction across the public sector as a more democratic, pluralistic and publicly accountable alternative AI ecosystem. The discussion will be based on the **European Heritage Hub's Policy paper** on the same topic. The paper

outlines the policies and actions needed to make our Public AI vision a reality. Through the Policy Talk and accompanying policy paper, the European Heritage Hub aims to position the cultural heritage sector as a driving force within the broader Public AI movement in Europe. During the Policy Talk, we will jointly advocate for **shared policy priorities, and for the creation of a much-needed European cultural heritage movement for Public AI**, gathered around a shared vision.

Guided by the Paper, the Policy Talk will reflect on challenges and opportunities for Public AI and will put forward policy recommendations on behalf of the European Heritage Hub — as a major heritage advocacy platform in Europe — to inform the forthcoming European Commission **AI Strategy for the Cultural and Creative Sectors** (planned for 2027). It will also reflect on other EU policies and initiatives shaping the future of AI and cultural heritage.

Why this matters for Europe

Europe is currently at a crossroads in defining the kind of AI ecosystem it wants to build. With major policy, technological and investment frameworks now taking shape, there is a unique window of opportunity to position **cultural heritage as a strategic contributor to Europe's AI future - one that is distinct, trustworthy and sovereign.**

The cultural heritage sector has already built critical knowledge, evidence and experience and stands ready to contribute meaningfully to this debate. Foundational references include the Europeana-led paper 'Making Public AI reality: How cultural heritage can lead the way' (2026) and the European Heritage Hub "Call to Action for a responsible digital transition for and with cultural heritage" (2024). For the upcoming **AI Strategy for the Cultural and Creative Sectors** to be effective, it must build on this wealth of knowledge, while recognising the specificities of the cultural heritage sector, and adopt a public-interest approach that addresses both the risks and opportunities of AI.

Objectives and expected outcomes

- Promote the visibility and uptake of the **Policy Paper and its policy recommendations;**
- Jointly advocate for **shared policy priorities,** and set the basis of a European cultural heritage movement for Public AI, gathered around a shared vision;
- Share **evidence, experiences and inspiring practices** from Europe and beyond;

- Promote a **shared understanding** of the cultural heritage sector's role and contribution in shaping Public AI in Europe;
- Put forward a **clearer understanding of the cross-sectoral partnerships needed to advance a Public AI agenda;**.
- Create momentum for **coordinated advocacy and future collaboration** to inform the forthcoming AI Strategy for the Cultural and Creative Sectors and discussions around the next MFF of the EU.

Format and duration

- The Policy Talk will be a **fully online, high-level two-hour event** combining political leadership, practical inspiration and strategic dialogue.
- Taking place in the afternoon of **29 September, 16:00 - 18:00 CET**), it will enable participation from both European and international stakeholders.
- It will include 3 complementary elements:
    - **Opening political perspectives,** featuring high-level European and international representatives;
    - **A framing intervention on Public AI,** exploring the concept and reflecting on the specific contribution of the cultural heritage sector;
    - **A high-level moderated discussion,** bringing together voices from the cultural heritage, AI and wider public knowledge ecosystems.

The Policy Talk is guided by the 3 pillars identified by the European Commission as guiding elements of the forthcoming **AI Strategy for the Cultural and Creative Sectors**:

- **INNOVATE -** Harnessing cultural heritage as a driver for a distinctive and competitive European AI approach;
- **PROTECT -** Ensuring fair, ethical and reciprocal partnerships, cultural and linguistic diversity, and respect for European values and rights;
- **EMPOWER -** Enabling people and institutions to shape the AI transition, building skills and AI literacy, and move from a reactive to a proactive role in shaping AI development, deployment and governance.

Draft programme

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29 September, 16:00 - 18:00 CET (fully online)

16:00 - 16:08	**Welcome & context-setting**	
	Welcome and housekeeping **Lorena Aldana,** Head of External Relations and Advocacy at Europeana Foundation, Master of Ceremony representing Europeana and the European Heritage Hub	
	Opening remarks: Why Public AI, why now? What's in for the Hub **Prof. Dr Hermann Parzinger**, Executive President of Europa Nostra, on behalf of the European Heritage Hub	Framing the Policy Talk within the Hub's work, outlining the relevance of the discussion
16:08 - 16:26	**Building Europe's AI future:** *A values-based, human-centred and public-interest approach to AI*	
	Introductory keynote • **Georg Haeusler**, Director for Culture, Creativity and Sport at the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC) of the European Commission	The upcoming AI strategy for the CCS: its objectives, principles, preliminary directions and ambitions for cultural heritage

	Reaction • MEP **Hélder Sousa Silva**, Rapporteur of the European Parliament own initiative Report on Cultural and creative sectors in the age of AI *(tbc)*	Cultural heritage in the age of AI: challenges, opportunities and the vision of the European Parliament
	A global perspective • **Mariya Gabriel,** Assistant Director-General Communication and Information, UNESCO *(video-message)*	The work and vision of UNESCO for people-centred and ethical AI; the Recommendation on the Ethics of AI and its implications for effective policies for AI governance.
16:26 –16:40	**Framing Public AI:** from shared understanding to collective action	
	Exploring the concept and ambitions of Public AI & reflecting on the specific contribution that the cultural heritage sector can make • **Harry Verwayen,** General Director of the Europeana Foundation, also in its role as European Heritage Hub beneficiary and partner	Public AI: how cultural heritage can make it happen in practice. Real-life examples of how Public AI can look like & key building blocks needed.
16:40 –17:40	**High-level dialogue:** Shaping Public AI in Europe & making it happen through cultural heritage	
	• Moderated by **Alek Tarkowski,** Director of Strategy at Open Future Multi-perspective panel • **Luca Cominassi,** Public AI Fellow - Metagov • **Sofie Taes,** Innovation manager for digital transformation in the cultural heritage sector at KU Leuven, Chair of the Europeana Network Association	The discussion will be guided by the Policy Paper's key recommendations. It will explore what role should the cultural heritage sector play in the development and

	• **Céline Geissmann,** Director of the Microsoft Open Innovation Center • **EM Lewis-Jong,** Founder of Mozilla Data Collective • **Giorgos Stamou**, Professor in the School of Electrical and Computer Engineering, National Technical University of Athens, and Representative from the Pharos AI Factory	deployment of AI; how it can advance a more diverse, fair and sustainable AI approach in Europe; opportunities for Europe to champion Public AI, and concretely, policy changes, investments and partnerships needed to make this vision a reality.
17:40 - 17:50	**Audience Q&A** • Moderated by **Alek Tarkowski,** Director of Strategy at Open Future, as part of the High-level dialogue	
17:50 – 18:00	**INNOVATE. PROTECT. EMPOWER. How cultural heritage can make Public AI a reality.**	
	A shared vision and pledge • **Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailović,** Secretary General of Europa Nostra, Project Leader of the European Heritage Hub	Call for endorsing shared policy priorities, and for the creation of a much-needed cultural heritage movement for Public AI, gathered around a shared vision.