

SUMMARY REPORT

The Film Sector on the Frontlines:
UNESCO High-level discussion on AI in the audio-visual industry

19 October 2023
UNESCO Headquarters - Paris, France



©UNESCO/ Cyril Bailleul

On 19 October 2023, UNESCO mobilized key stakeholders in the film sector from around the globe to discuss the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on the audio-visual industry during a high-level discussion at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. Entitled “The Film Sector on the Frontlines”, the event was moderated by France 24 journalist and presenter **Valeriane Gauthier** and included a keynote address by the Chief Negotiator of the Hollywood Actors Strike, SAG-AFTRA National Executive Director **Duncan Crabtree-Ireland**. Over 1000 participants attended the event in person and online, and the recording of the discussion continues to be viewed on UNESCO web and social media platforms.



UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Culture, **Ernesto Ottone R.** opened the discussion with welcoming remarks that reflected on the impact of AI on the culture sector, referred to the recent strikes by writers and actors in the USA, and highlighted UNESCO’s critical role in guiding this global discussion.

Ernesto Ottone R. underscored the vital role the cultural and creative sectors have always played in shaping our societies.

He stressed the aim of the discussion to guide UNESCO Member States, as well as stakeholders from across the cultural and creative industries, in navigating this rapidly transforming digital landscape - and to urge that policies and measures are urgently taken to ensure an ethical use of AI that is beneficial for both artists and culture professionals and our societies at large.

Furthermore, he recognized that balancing the challenges and the opportunities that AI presents for artists and culture professionals, with new tools and markets that can potentially enhance creativity and collaboration, democratize access to creative platforms, and reduce barriers for underrepresented groups, requires careful consideration of ethics, regulation, and a thoughtful approach to the integration of AI in the culture sector. To this end, he recalled the first-ever global standards on AI ethics, the *Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence*, which was produced by UNESCO in 2021 and features culture as a specific area of policy action. He also noted the historic MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration, which calls for the development of principles for the regulation of digital platforms.

In closing, Ernesto Ottone R. stressed that UNESCO understands the need for this urgent global reflection to start by listening to the people on the frontlines those who are calling for greater respect and protection of human creativity, as well as those stakeholders interested in greater opportunities to adapt to AI in the cultural and creative industries. "Their voices are central to today's discussion and the future of our work," he concluded.

Duncan Crabtree-Ireland explained that he felt both excited and threatened by AI. The entertainment industry is at the forefront of this new chapter in humanity history, and the film industry's professionals are most affected by the impact of AI. There are growing concerns about misuse and regulatory limits, as AI will impact all aspects of daily life over the coming decades, including activities related to the audiovisual industry. Indeed, he points out that writers have been the first to introduce the concept of AI into the public consciousness, anticipating its ramifications and potential consequences within contemporary societies through fictions.

AI could be a source of opportunities for the cultural and creative sectors, subject to clear regulations to protect artists against a strict economic approach where studio and powerful corporations will only maximise their profits.

"We are not anti-technology: we're pro-human, and technology must meet people's needs" - Duncan Crabtree-Ireland

Crabtree-Ireland also highlighted the attachment of the public to creativity and human genius. Above all, the public is fascinated by the artistic performance, and not by the automatic compilation of data produced by AI and algorithms. He underlines that priority must be given to protect cultural professionals given the degree to which AI is improving. In this respect, legislators working on these issues have a crucial role to play in building the foundations of a

"Whether through the arts, heritage, or creative industries, culture has the power to unite, inspire, and drive innovation. The rapid development of AI is not only transforming these sectors but also challenging us to reflect upon the ways in which technology can be harnessed for human development and well-being."

Ernesto Ottone R.
UNESCO Assistant Director-General
for Culture

positive future where technology is favorable to creation and artists. He also calls for greater international cooperation on this issue, especially from international institutions such as the ILO, WIPO and UNESCO to work together and ensure that AI serves the interests of humanity.

Implications far beyond the cultural and creative sectors

Participants then shared the diversity of their views and experiences on the impact of AI in the audiovisual industry. For them too, it is essential to establish internationally harmonized regulations to govern the use of AI in CCIs. According to **Michel Gondry**, AI is an issue that goes beyond the cultural and creative sectors, and that we must first reflect on the general notion of work and its value from a global point of view, before considering the specificities of creative work. He also noted that the terminology of artificial intelligence is questionable, as intelligence is an ability that has been inherent to mankind over the millennia.

Protection, transparency and consent

Other aspects were raised by the panelists, in particular the question of consent and the protection of artistic creations. **Angeles Gonzales-Sinde** noted that AI can use the work of artists and other cultural professionals without their prior consent or information. AI risks increasing the risk of plagiarism and reducing authors' rights, particularly in terms of fair remuneration. **Sarah Dearing, McG and Mathilde Pavis** recognize the need for greater transparency and protection for artists in this area and call for better collective bargaining mechanisms, in particular through the insertion of contractual clauses in favor of artists to protect their work and ensure fair remuneration.

Towards the democratization of creation and culture under certain conditions

The panelists also highlighted the opportunities offered by AI as a tool at the service of creation. **Cristóbal Valenzuela** emphasized its power to democratize and share ideas, which would help to unleash the creative power of artists and cultural professionals worldwide. **McG**, for his part, spoke of the sometimes-breathtaking level of quality and precision in the creation and reproduction of sets, periods and characters, thanks to technologies that are increasingly profitable, as Cristobal's Runway video shows. Although these technologies open up exciting prospects for the industry, **Rizwan Ahmad** was keen to point out that not everyone has equal access to these technologies, as Internet access is still complicated in many parts of the world.

Nurturing imagination and authenticity of creation

Yvonne Muinde recognized the creative opportunities generated by AI, but she shared her concerns about its impact on future generations of artists, who may be tempted to easily use emerging technologies to the detriment of know-how, authenticity of artistic work and expertise acquired through practice and imagination.

Recommendations from the discussion highlighted the need for UNESCO and other international organizations to develop inclusive and participatory international guidelines and standards that are human-centered and guarantee:

- **Consent:** artists and cultural professionals should be informed of and consent to the use of their work for training generative AI models;
- **Fair remuneration:** artists and cultural professionals whose work is being used by generative AI tools should be remunerated and their intellectual property rights protected;
- **Transparency:** users of generative AI tools should be aware of the sources used to generate the content they are requesting, notably to avoid unintentional plagiarism. Similarly, works that were generated through AI should be clearly indicated;
- **Cultural diversity:** generative AI models should be trained and corrected to avoid perpetuating biases, stereotypes, gender issues and ensure that diverse and representative stories or images are generated and disseminated.

Continue the dialogue

All the panelists agreed that AI must serve the protection of cultural diversity by ensuring that artists benefit from AI, and that this tool makes it possible to further democratize culture worldwide. To this end, the panelists welcomed this high-level discussion and encouraged further reflection alongside various stakeholders with diverse opinions in order to identify effective regulations and best practices in line with the sector's needs.



With this in mind, the Chief of the Entity for Cultural Diversity, **Toussaint Tiendrebeogo**, closed the discussion by affirming that it is not a question of being for or against this technology, but rather being for human beings. All these reflections are very useful for UNESCO to better support member states in setting up adequate frameworks for the promotion of cultural and creatives industries as well as the protection of artists.

Toussaint Tiendrebeogo announced the creation of a UNESCO group of experts on the diversity of cultural expressions in the digital environment, to exchange knowledge and experience on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions in the digital environment, and to formulate recommendations to be presented to Member States in 2024.

