

**Human Rights in Immersive Realities (XR)
Freedom of Expression, Justice, Children's Rights and Well-Being**

Date: 18 May -19 May 2026

Venue: Council of Europe - Room 1, Palais de l'Europe, Strasbourg

*Jointly organised by the Council of Europe (CDMSI) and the European Metaverse Research Network (EMRN)
Under the auspices of the Monaco Presidency of the Committee of Ministers*

Concept and rationale

Immersive technologies such as virtual, augmented and mixed reality (XR) are increasingly shaping how individuals communicate, express themselves, interact with public authorities and participate in democratic life. While these technologies offer new opportunities for creativity, inclusion and participation, they also raise emerging challenges for human rights, democratic values and the rule of law.

Building on the 2023 [Council of Europe- IEEE report](#) on the Metaverse and the [Feasibility Study](#) on Freedom of Expression in Immersive Realities adopted by the Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI), this conference is conceived as a concrete follow-up to one of the study's key conclusions: the need to continue and strengthen the Council of Europe's alerting and awareness-raising function vis-à-vis member States at a stage when immersive technologies are still evolving.

Through an innovative and forward-looking format, the conference aims to raise awareness, deepen understanding and support anticipatory action on the human rights implications of immersive realities.

It brings together policy and legal perspectives from the Council of Europe and the European Court of Human Rights with interdisciplinary research contributions selected through an EMRN-led Call for Papers, linking institutional expertise, academic research and practical experience. Particular attention is given to the participation of young researchers and emerging voices. The conference fosters cross-sectoral dialogue within the Council of Europe on themes already addressed in CDMSI work, including freedom of expression, children's rights, justice, non-discrimination, bioethics and health, and complements this with an experiential dimension through XR demonstrations. These hands-on sessions will allow participants, including policymakers and diplomats, to directly engage with immersive technologies and better understand their embodied and societal impact, supporting informed discussion and policy-relevant reflection.

The conference also contributes to the consultation process towards a New Democratic Pact, by addressing how emerging technologies may affect democratic participation, trust in information spaces, inclusion, human dignity and the effective enjoyment of human rights.



Agenda

08:30 - 09:00 Registration and Welcome Coffee

09:00 - 09:30 Opening Session

General moderator: Rodica Ciochina, Freedom of Expression and CDMSI Division, Council of Europe

- **Gabriel Revel**, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Monaco to the Council of Europe
- **Aikaterini Polyzou**, Chair of the Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI)
- **Mel Slater**, European Metaverse Research Network (EMRN) Coordinator

09:30 - 09:50 Keynote speech: **Anna Austin**, Jurisconsult, European Court for Human Rights

09:50 - 11.00 Session 1 - Freedom of Expression in Immersive Realities

Moderator: **Elena Brodeala**, Freedom of Expression and CDMSI Division, Council of Europe

Speakers:

- **Brittan Heller**, Stanford University, Council of Europe expert (*online*)
- **Ali Bozkaya**, Lawyer, Freedom of Expression Specialist, European Court of Human Rights
- **Mark McGill**, Senior Lecturer in the School of Computing Science, University of Glasgow, *Wearable, Everyday AI+Augmented Reality: Perceptual Mediation, Harms, and Governance*
- **Tehilla Shwartz Altshuler**, Head of Democracy in the Digital Age Program; Senior Fellow, Israel Democracy Institute, Jio Institute, Mumbai, India - *From the Metaverse to the Editable World: Rethinking Freedom of Expression in Phygital Reality*
- **Ruta Kazlauskaitė**, PhD in Social Sciences, Researcher, Academic Disciplines of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Helsinki Hub on Emotions, Populism and Polarisation - *Immersive Propaganda as Grievance Storyliving*

11.00 - 11:45 Coffee Break & XR Demo Area Open

Experiencing Immersive Realities - XR Demonstrations& Poster session, guided by EMRN researchers

11:45 - 12.45 Session 2 - Children's Rights, Safety and Protection of Vulnerable Users

This initiative is a contribution towards the

New Democratic Pact for Europe



Moderator: **Naomi Trewinnard**, Sexual violence against children (Lanzarote), Children's Rights Division, Council of Europe

Speakers:

- **Victoria Baines**, Tech Policy, Trust & Safety, Cybersecurity Professor of IT, Gresham College
- **Radan Šafařík**, member of the Gender Equality Commission, former Vice-Chair of the Committee of Experts on Artificial Intelligence, Equality and Discrimination (GEC/ADI-AI), Director of the Gender Equality Department, Czechia
- **Beckett LeClair**, MBCS, Cyber & 'AI' Technical Expert - *Applying Child Rights to Product Design Through Co-Created Ethical Principles*
- **Sylvia Xueni Pan**, Goldsmiths, University of London - *Embodied VR for Children: A Cross-Disciplinary Agenda for Future Research*

12:45 - 14:30 Lunch Break & XR Demo Area Open

14:30 - 15:45 Session 3 - Justice, Law and Jurisdiction in Immersive Environments

Moderator: **Daniel Schmidt**, Council of Europe, European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ)

- **Marek Świerczyński**, Member of the Advisory Board on Artificial Intelligence (AIAB) of the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ); Professor at Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, Warsaw - *Jurisdiction and applicable law in XR cross-border situations*
- **Matthieu Quiniou**, Member of the Advisory Board on Artificial Intelligence (AIAB) of the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ); Associate Professor at Paris 8 University - *Virtual evidence and deepfakes in XR*
- **Nicolás Barnes**, Director in Mas d'Enric Penitentiary Center - *Virtual Reality and Rehabilitation: A Human Rights-Based Approach for the Treatment of Gender-Based Violence in the Penitentiary System of Catalonia*
- **Christoph Bublitz**, University of Hamburg, Faculty of Law - *Virtual Reality Test for Risk Assessment of Offenders*
- **Mavi Sanchez-Vives**, ICREA, IDIBAPS - *Virtual Reality to Quantify Rehabilitation of Violent Behaviour*

15:45 - 16:05 Coffee Break & XR Demo Area Open

16:05 - 17:05 Session 4 - Health, Ethics and Well-Being in XR

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New Democratic Pact for Europe



Moderator: **Lee Hibbard**, Health Division, Health and Addiction Department, Directorate of Social Rights, Health and Environment, Council of Europe

Speakers:

- **Roberto Andorno**, Associate Professor, at the Faculty of Law & Research Fellow, Institute of Biomedical Ethics, University of Zurich
- **Ana Tokhadze**, Policy Advisor, Digital Development Unit, Directorate General Human Rights and Rule of Law, Council of Europe
- **Verity McIntosh**, Digital Cultures Research Centre, University of the West of England, Bristol, United Kingdom - *Workers' Rights, Health and Safety, and Employer Responsibilities in Immersive Realities (XR)*
- **Yannick Prié**, Full Professor, University of Nantes - *Supporting Recovery with Mental Health Teleclinics in the Metaverse* & **Ketty Steward**, PhD in psychology, Clinical psychologist (CRPPA Nantes CHU) and science fiction writer

17:05 - 17:30 Concluding Session - Next Steps for the Council of Europe

- **Mel Slater**, European Metaverse Research Network (EMRN)
- **Rodica Ciochina**, Policy adviser, Freedom of expression and CDMSI Division, Council of Europe

DAY 2

Date: 19 May 2026

Venue: Council of Europe - Room 2 & Room 3, Palais de l'Europe, Strasbourg

10.00- 12.30: Hands-on with XR devices and Posters session, guided by EMRN researchers and technical facilitators

Demos and Posters Moderator: Alex Fuentes Raventós, Research Assistant, Event Lab, University of Barcelona

Participants will have the opportunity to explore immersive technologies through a series of hands-on demonstrations and research posters presented by EMRN researchers and selected contributors. This interactive session will combine practical experimentation with academic exchange, allowing participants to experience XR applications directly while engaging with researchers on ongoing work related to human rights, ethics, and societal impacts of immersive realities. EMRN researchers and technical facilitators will guide participants through the demonstrations and discussions.



Demos:

- Alex Fuentes Raventós, Research Assistant, Event Lab, University of Barcelona - *Empowering Oncology Patients Through XR Self-Observation and Mixed Reality Exercise*
- Florence Dravet, Professor of Communication, Universidade Católica de Brasília - *From the Forest to the Metaverse: Immersive Experiences and Co-Creation with Indigenous Peoples*
- Jeroen Prinsen, Innovation Consultant, Sound & Dr. Ke Li, Research Associate, University of Hamburg - *XR Policy Lab: Human Rights, Trust and Inclusion in Immersive Realities – PRESENCE XR (Horizon Europe project)*
- Krzysztof Nowakowski, Poznań University of Technology - *Freedom of Expression in Urban Spaces: A VR Platform for Inclusive Civic Participation*
- Stefano Beccaletto, Senior R&D Researcher, i2CAT Media Technologies – *Rebuilding Human Presence in Immersive Realities: Holoportation, Accessibility, and the Future of Human Connection – PRESENCE XR (Horizon Europe project)*

Posters:

- Raúl Ruiz Rodríguez, Assistant Professor of Private International Law, University of Alicante - *Spain - Building the Lex Metaversi: A Regulated Self-Regulatory Approach to Dispute Resolution in Virtual Worlds*
- Olga Maslova, Visiting Researcher, Rehabilitation Sociology, TU Dortmund University - *Immersive Realities (XR) Stress Management for Protection of the Human Right to Mental Health*
- Burcin Genis-Ergün, Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Psychology, University of Umeå - *From Screen to Body: Rethinking Child Safety through the Concept of Embodied Harm in Immersive Environments*
- Danai Mikelli, Oxford Brookes University - *Youth Co-Creation and Ethical Storytelling in Immersive 360° Video*
- René Arnold, Macromedia University - *Overlooked - Presence and Awareness Cues in the Metaverse*

