

Statement on Artificial Intelligence

The European Council of Literary Translators' Associations has been observing the rapidly changing landscape of the use of generative AI in the publishing industry, carrying out our own investigations into the issue and co-signing statements by sister organisations. In an evolving debate, here are our beliefs and demands.

No-one left behind: our legal demands

- *Literary translation exists through ART: Authorisation, Remuneration, Transparency**
Any transfer of copyrighted material for commercial use, such as AI training, should always be negotiated by the author as an opt-in clause.
- *Transparency both in the upstream and downstream parts of the publishing process*
Transparency requirements imposed on AI companies should be properly enforced. Similarly, if generative AI is intended to be used at any point of the publishing process, this should be clearly stated on the final product. Each participant in the production chain should then be accountable for their use of AI and be fairly compensated for the specific work they do.
- *No public funding for publishing with generative AI*
Public policies are crucial for the industry: the market alone cannot sustain the vibrant cultural life of a modern country. The economic interests behind AI do not need to be incentivised.

No language left behind: our professional perspective

- *Machines are not translators but 'translatoids'. They do not translate; they generate textual material.*
AI usage standardises translations, impoverishing written cultures and languages in general through, among other things, priming bias (the tendency to be influenced by the first option given to us by the machine) and self-pollution (the machine learning from itself).
- *Every genre deserves a human translation*
The idea that some books are better suited than others to undergoing generative AI processing fosters a dangerous distinction between high literature and every other text, impeding societal development through reading.

- *Every language deserves a human translation*

We dispute the idea of AI as a tool for easier access to minoritized languages. Rather, we warn against the danger of hegemonic languages being used as bridge languages. Without the translators' mediation, publishers will be even more dependent on market mechanisms in choosing what to import.

No book left behind: our humanistic beliefs

- *Literary translation is not transcription*

Literary translators translate texts embedded in their cultural, social, and historical context for readers who are also embedded in their own specific contexts. Translation requires an understanding of these contexts and skill at creative writing. No machine can do this without a significant human effort.

- *Creative acts are what make us human*

It is human to doubt, and machines do not. AI systems offer 'functional' solutions that nobody can retrace or question. People should have the right to create – and be fairly compensated if it is their job – as well as to enrich their minds and souls by enjoying creative works.

- *Literary translation is literary work*

Creative translation should be considered as a national and international literary treasure and deserves to be protected as such. The scraping practices employed for AI training, simply for the purposes of financial gain, violate not only copyright laws but humanity's cultural heritage as a whole.