

A CALL FOR TRANSPARENCY REGARDING AI-GENERATED BOOKS

Machine-made products that simulate creative works using generative AI should not benefit from authors' rights legislations or generally be considered as cultural assets.

The European Writers' Council (EWC), the European Council of Literary Translators' Association (CEATL) and the Federation of European Publishers (FEP) are calling on the Member States and the European Commission to:

PROTECT HUMAN CREATED BOOKS – LABEL AI-GENERATED PRODUCTS AND RESERVE THE APPLICATION OF ANY CULTURAL PUBLIC FUNDING TO WORKS CREATED BY HUMANS.

Brussels, 23 April 2025

“Art happens”, as once said the painter James McNeill Whistler. Art happens to human artists, we say.

In view of the shocking proliferation of productions generated by Artificial Intelligence (AI) that try to imitate human art – namely novels, poems, photos, or illustrations, often attributed to fake human creators – the signatories want to express their strong objection to considering these questionable products as works of art. Works of art are solely created by human beings. Therefore, none of these products can be considered as creative works. It should also be emphasised that products not made by humans cannot benefit from specific authors rights and copyright legislations, which is a crucial axiom in valuing works of art.

AI-generated “books” are fakes and often even harmful products that risk draining the legitimate revenue sources of writers, literary translators, publishers and booksellers. The book value chain collectively exists to provide readers with as wide an offer as possible of authentic literary works. However, recently, we are seeing a seemingly uncontrollable influx of fully AI-generated books that harm not only authors, other rightsholders and the book ecosystem, but society as a whole, as they call into question one of the noblest activities of human culture, storytelling and creative writing. The book sector is therefore calling for the support of policymakers to develop a robust system and legal framework for the highest level of transparency around AI-generated products. In addition, there is an urgent need to inform consumers on the matter. To protect and support human creators, writers, literary translators and artists, books should be acknowledged as a “legacy and a core asset of humanity, and a recognition of creativity as a process that helps people express and rethink their ways of being and becoming”.¹

The signatories firmly maintain that only works created by humans should benefit from the special treatment (such as, but not limited to, copyright protection, cultural funding or literary prizes) that literary works enjoy when placed on the market. In addition, we are united in deploring the fact that products compiled by generative AI models were developed through a massive theft of copyright protected works, taken without permission, attribution or remuneration to authors and other rightsholders, and whose existence on the market cannibalises the legitimate source of revenue of millions of writers, literary translators, publishers and booksellers on an unprecedented scale that is already endangering the whole European cultural ecosystem.

¹ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000380474>

The signatories call for an effective transparency obligation for AI-generated products that clearly distinguishes them from the works made by human beings. Besides the societal benefits of a strong transparency requirement for these products, this kind of measure would also bring advantages to readers and consumers, in terms of fairness and choice.

The greatest precautions should be taken to prevent any form of public funding devoted to culture, or granted by Public Administrations to cultural bodies, from being given to owners of software, coders or developers, or producers of AI-compiled books. Special care should be taken to avoid publicly funded libraries buying this kind of products.

Acknowledging all the above, we call for:

- Developing a robust mechanism for transparency around AI-generated products appearing as similar to books, therefore confusing for the public, based on properly identified responsibilities, for better protection of consumers, readers, authors and other rightsholders.
- Taking special measures to avoid that EU public funding from programmes devoted to culture (such as Creative Europe) benefits coders, or GAI companies when it comes to AI-generated products similar to books. This includes, but is not limited to, studying grants, residencies or travel programmes, writing or translation grants, publishing grants, and any kind of publicly funded cultural awards and prizes (we recommend specifying this in the rules of the awards).
- Deploying advocacy initiatives and training programmes at the EU level to promote better awareness among consumers and readers of what is a cultural work and what is a scam product or a non-human compilation.

The European Union must set an example on how human culture should be protected and valued and uphold the fundamental role that books play in protecting democracy, fostering empathy and freedom of speech, and helping citizens to develop critical thinking as well as enjoy a quality source of entertainment and education.

The signatories:

EWC (European Writers' Council) is the world's largest federation representing solely authors from the book sector and constituted by 50 national professional writers' and literary translators' associations from 32 countries. EWC members comprise over 220.000 professional authors, writing and publishing in 35 languages.

CEATL (European Council of Literary Translators' Associations) is an international non-profit organisation created in 1993 as a platform where literary translators' associations from different European countries could exchange views and information and join forces to improve status and working conditions of translators. Today it is the largest organisation of literary translators in Europe with 36 member associations from 28 countries, representing some 10,000 individual literary translators.

FEP (Federation of European Publishers) represents 31 national associations of publishers of books, learned journals and educational materials, in all formats, in Europe. FEP is the voice of the great majority of publishers in Europe.