

*EUROPEAN ENCYCLOPEDIA CONFERENCE 2024, OSLO, NORWAY,
MAY 15–16*

Organised and hosted by the *Great Norwegian Encyclopedia*, the third European Encyclopedia Conference was held in Oslo on May 15–16 2024 and brought together encyclopedia editors and publishers from eleven countries.

The first gathering of professionally edited national encyclopedias took place in 2019 in Brussels, when the first European Encyclopedia Conference, organised by the *Great Norwegian Encyclopedia*, the European Parliamentary Research Service and the Mission of Norway to the European Union, was held. The second conference, organised by the Miroslav Krleža Institute of Lexicography, took place in 2022 in Zagreb.

The focus of the 2024 conference was to explore how encyclopedias have developed over time, spotlighting both challenges and milestones, including the growing role of artificial intelligence (AI) in shaping how content is created and accessed.

Along with the representatives of general encyclopedias from Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Italy, Latvia, Montenegro, Norway, Slovakia, Sweden and Ukraine, the conference was attended by Naja Bentzen, a senior policy analyst in the European Parliament, and Michael Coates, a postdoctoral fellow from the University of Idaho, USA. Furthermore, a number of invited speakers, representatives of the Norwegian and Danish academic and professional communities, addressed the attendees with a series of topics relevant for professional encyclopedia publishers.

On 15 May, Erik Bolstad, chief editor of the *Great Norwegian Encyclopedia*, gave a welcome address, introducing the conference and presenting the *Encyclopedia* and its achievements. In her keynote ‘Encyclopedias as vehicles for knowledge diplomacy in an era of information disorder’, Naja Bentzen emphasised the important role of encyclopedias in bridging the gap between the academia and various publics, thus facilitating knowledge communication between different stakeholders. After the talk, the representatives of newly participating encyclopedia publishers presented their institutions and encyclopedias. Alla Kyrydon, director of the Ukrainian State Research Institution ‘Encyclopedia Press’, presented the *Great Ukrainian Encyclopedia* as well as the other editions of the Institute. The long-lasting tradition

and rich legacy of the Institute of the Italian *Encyclopedia Treccani* was presented by Giovanna Fazzuoli, head of the Institute's international projects. Short presentations of other participating encyclopedias followed; editors and publishers exchanged experiences regarding the state of national encyclopedias, and the achievements and challenges they faced since the last meeting in Zagreb in 2022. Erik Henz Kjeldsen, chief editor of *Lex – The Danish National Encyclopedia*, informed the participants of the progress of the complaint case to the EU Commission related to the prioritising of Wikipedia by the dominant search engine, Google, and to the necessity of equal access to validated information. Subsequently, Christian Doelemann-Lassen from Denmark, search engine optimization specialist and chief commercial officer at IHH Nordic, gave a talk on encyclopedias and search engines, in which he suggested certain improvements aimed at increasing visibility. At the end of the first day of the conference, Michael Coates gave a talk on the history of encyclopedias, with emphasis on the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*.

The second day of the conference, May 16, started with two talks on the effect of AI and language models on encyclopedias, given by Bente Kalsnes, professor at Kristiania University College in Oslo, and Erik Bolstad. Bolstad gave an overview of the current large language models and AI services, and discussed their potentially enormous consequences on how we write and perceive facts. It is likely that most Europeans will read more AI generated text than humanly generated text within a year or two; the upcoming changes to Google's search, where the users will be shown an AI generated text instead of the search results currently displayed, will be a major contributing factor. Professor Kalsnes warned that AI could be misused in political contexts. This was followed by a talk on language models and copyright, in which Arne Vestbø from the Norwegian Non-Fiction Writers and Translators Association pointed out some important principles of respecting copyright in the new technological environments. Thereafter, Nataša Jermen, assistant director for research and inter-institutional cooperation at the Croatian Miroslav Krleža Institute of Lexicography, made an introduction to the talk on encyclopedias as channels for scientific publishing and the possibility of recognising encyclopedia articles as scholarly publications in research evaluation systems, given by Gunnar Sivertsen, professor emeritus at the Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education in Oslo. The possibility of cooperating with Wikimedia using Wikidata was discussed with Mathias Schindler, volunteer at Wikimedia Deutschland, who joined the session online. Subsequently, new Norwegian and Swedish children's encyclopedias were presented. Guro Djupvik, editor at the *Great Norwegian Encyclopedia* and project manager of the children's *Little Norwegian Encyclopedia*, introduced this new project, whose launch was planned for autumn of 2024, while Låtta Skogh, editor in Swedish *National Encyclopedia*, presented their encyclopedia for schools.

Finally, a meeting of the European Encyclopedia Network was held under the chairmanship of Bruno Kragić, general director at the Miroslav Krleža Institute of Lexicography and chief editor of the *Croatian Encyclopedia*. Tatiana Šrámková, director of the Slovakian *Encyclopedia Beliana*, and Erik Henz Kjeldsen, chief editor of *Lex*, were elected as vice-presidents, and further activities of the Network were agreed upon. The working part of the conference programme concluded with the discussion on the potential projects for cooperation.

Attending the conference at the premises of the *Great Norwegian Encyclopedia* provided a unique opportunity for European encyclopedia publishers and editors to meet the team of 16 editors who manage 200,000 articles and 1,200 external experts, and who, working together, have made this *Encyclopedia* one of the country's most visited websites. The sessions were designed to spark discussion and foster collaboration, and the gathering offered an opportunity to connect, share insights, and inspire each other for future endeavours.

On May 17, the participants were invited to join their Norwegian hosts in celebrating the Norway's National Day, which commemorates the signing of the Norwegian Constitution in 1814.

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