UNESCO PERSIST

Community Engagement Guidelines

The UNESCO PERSIST (PERSIST) is an initiative of the UNESCO Memory of the World (MoW) Programme, set up to ensure long-term access to the World's Digital Heritage by facilitating development of effective policies, sustainable technical approaches, and best practices in managing digital artefacts, from sustaining use of digital software to storing and maintaining accessibility of digital content selected for its enduring cultural significance.

PERSIST aims to mobilize the community of stakeholders and provide a focal point for initiatives concerned with critical issues such as long term use of software for access to digital content and principled ways of selecting digital content for preservation.

PERSIST activities are organized in three main areas: Content, Technology & Research and Policies, and engage a broad community of stakeholders to create and promote preservation guidelines and best practices, policy recommendations, and sustainability models for the preservation and long-term use of the World's Digital Heritage.

Stakeholder Community

Preservation of Digital Heritage is a serious concern of modern societies as digital technologies proliferate across all aspects of human life from public services to cultural, educational, and scientific endeavors.

PERSIST brings together producers and users of digital technologies to work on strategies, policies and solutions to ensure a long future for valuable digital assets. It works closely with the ICT industry, open source community, memory institutions, museums, digital arts community, professional associations, scientists, educators and scholars to increase the awareness and mobilize experts who can advise and identify best approaches to the preservation of Digital Heritage.

With the UNESCO's reach to over 200 member states and associate members, PERSIST enables the community efforts to have an international reach and impact.

Governance

PERSIST is coordinated by the PERSIST Steering Committee that works with the UNESCO MoW Secretariat and the UNESCO MoW International Advisory Committee to propagate

recommendations, guidelines, and policy proposals to the representatives of the UNESCO member states for approval, adoption, and deployment.

The Steering Committee members include a Chair of the overall PERSIST activities and Chairs of three focus areas referred to as PERSIST Workgroups:

– *POLICY:* Considering recommendations, policies, and legal frameworks for ensuring effective life-cycle management of digital technologies and digital content
– *TECHNOLOGY & RESEARCH:* Considering technological issues, research advances, and economic sustainability of tools, methods, and services for storage, preservation, and use of digital artefacts
– *CONTENT:* Establishing recommendations and guidelines for selecting, managing, curating, and disseminating digital content of cultural, educational, and scientific value.

PERSIST Activities

PERSIST is based on the work of volunteers. It does not provide funds for activities or engagements. It assists the volunteers in raising funds through different means, e.g., collaborating on proposals for research and innovation funding, assisting with the impact strategy, and providing letters of support that confirm the relevance of proposed activities to the PERSIST mission and objectives.

PERSIST Community Projects. PERSIST fosters proactive and call-based engagements of the Community by publishing:

– Open calls for proposals, inviting community members to recommend and undertake activities in an area the consider important
– Thematic calls for proposals, to respond to identified challenges.

Proposals need to be sent for consideration to the PERSIST Workgroup Chairs who then organize the review of the proposals by the Steering Committee to be endorsed and connected with other PERSIST initiatives.

PERSIST Coordinated Initiatives. The PERSIST Steering Committee uses two main instruments to coordinate and direct efforts towards preparing issues for recommendations to the UNESCO and for releases to the broader community:

- *Expert Committees*, comprising experts who are invited or volunteer to advise PERSIST and the UNESCO on a specific issue, e.g., licensing issues and legal frameworks for providing access to legacy software.
- *Task-forces*, comprising individuals who are invited or volunteer to work concertedly towards a specific objectives and outcomes, e.g., a guidelines for digital content selection.

Community input and information dissemination are facilitated through:

- Consultation meetings for small group consultations with selected representatives of the stakeholder community.

- Workshops, seminars and training courses to facilitate collaboration and build capacity in specific areas.
- Symposia for broad consultation, dissemination of information and community engagement.

PERSIST Partnerships. Professional organizations can engage with PERSIST through a formal procedure of becoming:

- *Affiliate partner*, a status granted to the organization with complementary activities that are contributing to the same cause. For example, a professional organization of computer scientists may consider a strategic alliance with PERSIST and, through joint activities, increase the awareness and promote the PERSIST cause among its professional community.
- *Associate partner*, a status granted to organizations and teams who wish to engage on a joint task, for a given period of time. For example, a university may apply for funding to develop a method for tracking provenance of scientific data and organize events through the PERSIST Community network.

DETAILS

Activities

Expert Committees

Expert Committees are approved by the Steering Committee. They are responsible for advising on issues within their competence. The reports and recommendations of the Expert Committees are presented to the Steering Committee for consideration of further action.

Members of Expert Committees are specialists serving in individual capacity or representing non-governmental organizations. The duration of an Expert Committee is two years and may be extended by the Steering Committee as required. There are no restrictions on the nationality or affiliation with UNESCO member states of individuals serving on the Expert Committee.

Taskforces

Taskforces are set up to accomplish a specific objective, within a set time period, or to advise on the preparation or implementation of specific actions. The members of the Taskforce submit their findings in the form of a report to the Expert Committee, Workgroup Chairs, or the Steering Committee, depending on the initially agreed scope of activity.

A Taskforce can be convened by the Executive Committee or individual Workgroup Chair based on the objectives and outcomes. The members of a taskforce serve in their private capacity or as representatives of organizations they are affiliated with. There are no restrictions on the nationality of the individuals affiliated with the taskforce.

Meeting and Events

Seminars, workshops, and training courses

Objectives of seminars, workshops, and training courses are to enable participants to acquire knowledge of a subject of interest to UNESCO or to give them the benefit of experience gained in a specific field. The results are generally recorded in documents or publications and do not call for any decisions on the part of UNESCO bodies or Member States.

Seminars, workshops, and training courses are organized in coordination with Workgroup Chairs upon securing funding. Participants are invited by the organizers and serve in private capacity or represent the organizations they are affiliated with.

Consultation Meetings and Symposia

Objectives of Consultation Meetings and Symposia are to exchange information within a given speciality or on an interdisciplinary basis. Such meetings do not necessarily lead to the adoption of conclusions or recommendations. The communications presented at them may be published, with or without a summary of the discussions.

Consultation Meetings and Symposia are convened by the Steering Committee pursuant to the programme approval and securing the funding.

Participants are specialists, taking part in a private capacity or representing organizations they are affiliated with. They are designated individually by the organizers, by an invitation, or admitted through other procedures agreed by the organizer.

Partnerships

PERSIST recognizes the need to coordinate activities with organizations that pursue similar and complementary activities. Partnership is facilitated by a mutually agreed Memorandum of Collaboration (MoC) that outlines the scope of joined activities.

Affiliate Partners

The Steering Committee invites or responds to proposals for strategic partnership with organizations that share the value and the mission of PERSIST. It approves the MoC with the Affiliate Partner that may include activities such as joint promotion, fund-raising and joint taskforces to accomplish specific objectives.

Associate Members

Organizations can apply for a status of Associate Member by demonstrating that their activities meet pre-specified requirements. PERSIST can provide official feedback and letters of support for specific activities, to assist Associate Members in gathering resources for activities that are aligned with the objectives and governing principles of the PERSIST initiative.