

SCOPING NOTE

ORBICOM 2026 ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

MIL AND UNESCO 80 SESSIONS · UNESCO CHAIRS

Communicational imaginaries in a fragmented digital world

OCTOBER 26-30, 2026

UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC À MONTRÉAL

ORGANIZERS



PARTNERS



CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES

ORBICOM 2026

Towards a Common Research
Agenda for the UNESCO Chairs
on MIL (2027-2031)

1. Context

Contemporary digital transformations are profoundly reshaping the relationships between media, technology, and democracy. The platformization of information environments, the acceleration of information flows, and the fragmentation of audiences foster both civic expression and the spread of misleading content, influence campaigns, and disinformation, undermining the conditions necessary for pluralistic public debate, as outlined in the conference concept note attached to this invitation. Artificial intelligence plays a central role in these transformations: by shaping the ranking, visibility, and circulation of content, it raises major challenges for democratic governance, particularly regarding transparency, algorithmic bias, and accountability. The UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (2021) calls for these challenges to be addressed through respect for human rights and human oversight. These issues also align with UNESCO's Guidelines for the Governance of Digital Platforms (2023), which advocate a multistakeholder approach that reconciles freedom of expression, access to information, and efforts to combat disinformation. Finally, they concern cultural and linguistic diversity online, which UNESCO's Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace (2003) places at the heart of an inclusive information society, an issue of particular importance to the Francophone world.

To address these challenges, UNESCO invites its network of Chairs to engage in collective reflection through its document entitled Towards a Common Research Agenda for the UNESCO Chairs on Media and Information Literacy (2027–2031). This document recognizes that Media and Information Literacy (MIL) is entering a new phase driven by artificial intelligence and the increasing complexity of information ecosystems, calling for renewed international and interdisciplinary research. Rather than seeking to standardize the research programs of individual Chairs, UNESCO proposes a shared framework to facilitate the development of comparative data across regions and inform its normative work. This approach aligns with the objectives of the ORBICOM 2026 Conference: to examine the regulation of digital platforms and its implications for human rights, highlight challenges related to cultural and linguistic diversity, and explore the role of media literacy in fostering critical thinking and digital citizenship. These two perspectives, UNESCO's research agenda and ORBICOM's priorities, shape the sessions presented below.

The participation of UNESCO Chairs in ORBICOM 2026, organized around a plenary session on October 27 and two thematic workshops on October 28 and 29, provides an opportunity to bring UNESCO's proposed priorities into dialogue with regional expertise from the Global South and Global North. The aim is to contribute to the common research agenda for 2027–2031 and inform the synthesis document envisioned by ORBICOM, potentially taking the form of a White Paper or the Montreal Guidelines on Technology, Media, and Democracy in the Age of AI.

2. Objectives of UNESCO Chairs' Participation

- 1 Contribute to the further development of the five research priorities proposed by UNESCO.
- 2 Foster dialogue among the regional expertise of UNESCO Chairs.
- 3 Identify interdisciplinary research directions and opportunities for scientific collaboration.
- 4 Formulate recommendations to inform the common research agenda for 2027–2031.

3. Schedule of the MIL and UNESCO 80 Sessions

ORBICOM 2026 Annual International Conference · MIL and UNESCO 80 Sessions

Tuesday, October 27

10:45 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

MIL 1/4

UNESCO CHAIRS MIL CONFERENCE

Presentation of the Common Research Agenda 2027–2031

Chaired by Sylvie Coudray, Director of the Division for Freedom of Expression and Media and Information Literacy, representing UNESCO Director-General Dr. Khaled El-Enany · Moderation: Magda Fusaro

Chloë Salles (Europe)

Amy Parent (North America)

Josep Fortó and Nadia Azzouz (Europe)

Abdellatif Bensfia (Africa)

Nurul Akqmie (Asia)

Wednesday, October 28

3:30–5:00 p.m.

MIL 2/4

WORKSHOP 1 · MIL AND UNESCO 80

AI, Governance, and Measuring the Impact of MIL

Moderation: Manuel Guerrero (to be confirmed)

Maria Fasli (Europe)

Juan Ramos Martín (South America)

Suraj Olunfesi Adekunle (Africa)

Fernanda Bonacho (Europe)

Giancarlo Carbone de Mora (South America)

Thursday, October 29

10:30 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

MIL 3/4

WORKSHOP 2 · MIL AND UNESCO 80

Inclusion, Youth, and Multistakeholder Cooperation

Moderation: Destiny Tchéhoulali

Moutoré Yentougle (Africa)

Malvina Eugenia Rodríguez (South America)

Paul R. Carr (North America)

Lampros Stergioulas (Europe)

Etienne Damome (Europe)

Thursday, October 29

4:15–5:00 p.m.

MIL 4/4

MIL WEEK RECOMMENDATIONS

Synthesis and Recommendations Session

Chaired by Magda Fusaro and Destiny Tchéhoulali

4. UNESCO's Five Priorities

ORBICOM 2026 Annual International Conference · MIL and UNESCO 80 Sessions

PRIORITY 1

Rethinking Media and Information Literacy in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How is generative AI transforming information practices?
- How can cultural and linguistic diversity be preserved in AI systems?
- What new competencies should be integrated into Media and Information Literacy (MIL)?
- What governance frameworks should be developed?
- How can citizens be trained to identify AI-generated content and assess its reliability?

PRIORITY 2

Understanding and Measuring the Impact of Media and Information Literacy

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What indicators can be used to assess the impact of MIL?
- How can the effects of MIL on information-related behaviours be measured?
- How can results be compared across regions?
- What methodological tools should be developed?
- How can the impact of MIL on trust in information and the ability to counter disinformation be measured?

PRIORITY 3

Promoting Inclusive and Equitable Media and Information Literacy

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How can MIL be adapted to different cultural contexts?
- What barriers hinder equitable participation?
- How can the visibility of cultures and languages be strengthened?
- What models can foster inclusive MIL?
- How can local and Indigenous knowledge be integrated into MIL programmes?

PRIORITY 4

Adapting Media and Information Literacy to Young People's Evolving Information Practices

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How do young people use AI?
- What new competencies should be developed?
- How can pedagogical approaches be adapted?
- What emerging challenges should research address?
- How can young people be involved in designing MIL initiatives intended for them?

PRIORITY 5

Building Multistakeholder Ecosystems for Media and Information Literacy

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What models of cooperation should be developed?
- How can comparative research projects be encouraged?
- What mechanisms can facilitate knowledge sharing?
- How can UNESCO Chairs strengthen their contribution to public policy?
- How can media organizations, digital platforms, educational institutions, and civil society be engaged in sustained collaboration around MIL?

5. Invited UNESCO Chairs

ORBICOM 2026 Annual International Conference · MIL and UNESCO 80 Sessions

Plenary Conference · Tuesday, October 27

Moderation: Magda Fusaro

Chloë Salles

UNESCO Chair in International Communication, Université Grenoble Alpes

Europe Priority 1

Amy Parent

UNESCO Co-Chair in Transforming Indigenous Knowledge Research Governance & Rematriation, Simon Fraser University

North America Priority 3

Josep Fortó and Nadia Azzouz

UNESCO Chair in Information Technologies: Education and Solidarity-Based Development. The Case of Small States, Andorra

Europe Priority 3

Abdellatif Bensfia

UNESCO Chair on Media, Communication and the Culture of Peace in the Digital Age, ISIC Rabat

Africa Priority 2

Nurul Akqmie

UNESCO Chair on Social Practices in Intercultural Communication and Social Cohesion, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (Institute of Ethnic Studies, KITA)

Asia Priority 3

Workshop 1 · Wednesday, October 28

Moderation: Manuel Guerrero (to be confirmed)

Maria Fasli

UNESCO Chair on Analytics and Data Science, University of Sussex

Europe Priority 1

Juan Ramos Martín

UNESCO Chair in Communication, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Faculty of Communication and Language, Bogotá

South America Priority 2

Suraj Olunifesi Adekunle

UNITWIN Cooperation Programme on Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue (Autonomous University of Barcelona; Universidade de São Paulo; University of Lagos)

Africa Priority 2

Fernanda Bonacho

UNESCO Chair on Communication, Media and Information Literacy and Citizenship, Lisbon

Europe Priority 2

Giancarlo Carbone de Mora

UNESCO Chair in Communication and Culture of Peace, Lima

South America Priority 3

Workshop 2 · Thursday, October 29

Moderation: Destiny Tchéhouali

Moutoré Yentougbe

UNESCO Chair in ICT and the Development of Higher Education in West Africa, University of Kara, Togo

Africa Priority 3

Malvina Eugenia Rodríguez

UNESCO Chair in Public Communication for Social Justice, Human Rights and Territorial Development (COMUNIC.AR), Argentina

South America Priority 3

Paul R. Carr

UNESCO Chair in Democracy, Global Citizenship and Transformative Education (DGCTE)

North America Priority 2

Lampros Stergioulas

UNESCO Chair in AI & Data Science for Society, Head of AI & Data Science research group, The Hague

Europe Priority 5

Etienne Damome

Chaire UNESCO Pratiques émergentes en technologies et communication pour le développement (PETCD), Bordeaux

Europe Priority 4

6. Expected Outcomes and Opportunities

ORBICOM 2026 Annual International Conference · MIL and UNESCO 80 Sessions

Expected Outcomes	Opportunities for Collaboration
✓ Further develop the five priorities proposed by UNESCO. ✓ Identify shared priorities and regional specificities. ✓ Foster international scientific collaboration. ✓ Formulate recommendations for the Common Research Agenda 2027–2031.	✓ International research projects. ✓ Comparative studies. ✓ Joint publications. ✓ Sharing of methodologies and best practices. ✓ Contributions to UNESCO's future initiatives.

Conclusion

This series of sessions represents a collaborative step toward further developing UNESCO's research priorities by drawing on the expertise of UNESCO Chairs and the ORBICOM network. By bringing together the international plenary conference of UNESCO Chairs on October 27, the two thematic workshops on October 28 and 29 addressing the five priorities, and the MIL Week Recommendations Session on October 29, it provides a structured framework for translating regional dialogue into concrete contributions to the Common Research Agenda 2027–2031.

The discussions held from October 27 to 29 are intended to inform UNESCO's ongoing collective efforts to develop the Common Research Agenda for UNESCO Chairs on Media and Information Literacy (2027–2031), while strengthening ORBICOM's role as a platform for international scientific dialogue on issues related to media, artificial intelligence, and democracy.