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# ECML guidelines for ensuring copyright authorisation

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## 1. Purpose of the ECML guidelines

These guidelines provide practical guidance for authors of ECML publications (mainly web-based resources) to ensure that all materials proposed for publication respect copyright law and ethical standards. They apply to all types of materials, including text, illustrations, photos, videos, and any other media.

They are based on

- the [Council's dedicated web page on Copyright, licensing & permissions](#), and
- the [Guide to the Council of Europe's publications policy](#) (p. 16, 17, 21),
- the [Council of Europe English style guide](#) (September 2025) and
- the ECML's extensive experience with copyright issues in publishing project results from its project teams and activities.

## 2. General rules regarding copyright

### 2.1. Copyright of a publication

Any intellectual work, by the mere fact of its creation, generates property rights benefiting its author.

The copyright of ECML publications and documents belongs to the Council of Europe, and all related contracts are signed on behalf of the Council of Europe by the Directorate of Communication.

All authors must sign a contract with the Council of Europe, transferring their rights regarding reproduction of their manuscripts in any language and on any medium (print, electronic, online, etc.).

### 2.2. Quotations

#### 2.2.1. Permission required for quotations exceeding 400 words

Before submitting a manuscript, permission must be obtained for any quotations exceeding 400 words from another author, including omitted words in the word count.

Quotes from the same source appearing in several parts of a manuscript also require permission.

## 2.2.2. Quotations from Council of Europe/ECML publications

When quoting from a Council of Europe/ECML publication available in English, French, or another language, ensure that the quotation is taken from the officially published version in that language.

Do not translate the content yourself if a relevant language version is readily available.

Proper credits are required:

- “From [full title of the publication], by [author(s)/editor(s)/department if relevant]. © Council of Europe [year].”
- “From [full title of the publication], [report date, adopted on (date)]. Source: Council of Europe [year].”

Always indicate the page number of each quotation. For bibliographic references, please consult the ECML's official referencing guidelines.

## 2.3. Photographs and illustrations

Permission must be obtained to reproduce photographs, diagrams, images, graphs, logos, illustrations, Internet material, maps, etc. of a third party in order to use these materials for an ECML publication.

Please see below [Point 3.5. Request and document permissions](#).

You must credit the source of any photos if you are not the author or if the photos are not royalty-free.

### 2.3.1. Photos and illustrations from a Council of Europe/ECML website

Graphical elements of a Council of Europe/ECML website are Council of Europe property. Proper credits are required.

Example:

Photo: © Council of Europe (ECML), A framework of reference for pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures, <https://carap.ecml.at>

### 2.3.2. You took the photo yourself

You may publish the photo freely, provided you respect the image rights of any identifiable individuals featured in it.

If photos are taken during an ECML event, obtain participants' consent in advance.

**Example:**

Photo : © [Your name] / Source: [title of your photo]

### 2.3.3. The photo belongs to someone else

Obtain the author's permission or verify the usage license, and credit them properly.

**Example:**

Photo: © [Author's name] / Source: [Title of the photo]

### 2.3.4. The photo is under a free license (Creative Commons, Pexels, Pixabay, etc.)

Even if use is free, attribution of the creator is sometimes required.

1. On Pexels or Pixabay, attribution is not mandatory but strongly recommended.
2. Under Creative Commons licenses (CC BY, CC BY-SA, etc.), crediting the author and the license is mandatory.

See: <https://creativecommons.org/faq/>

**Examples:**

Photo by Jane Doe, under CC BY 4.0 license

Source title, Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-SA 4.0)

## 2.4. Texts or images generated by AI

Only texts that have been drafted, or images created, by a human can be covered by copyright. The publishing industry requires authors to clearly indicate any text or images generated by AI. The AI tools used must be mentioned.

### 2.4.1. You generated the image yourself

You may generally use it freely, without mandatory citation, provided that:

- you comply with the terms of use of the tool (e.g. Midjourney, DALL·E, Canva, etc.);
- the image does not clearly copy an existing work, a protected style, or depict a real person without consent.

**Good practice:** even if not legally required, it is recommended to indicate that the image was AI-generated, for transparency.

Examples:

Image generated with DALL·E

AI creation – by ChatGPT / DALL·E

## 2.4.2. Using an AI-generated image created by someone else

Rights depend on the license chosen by the creator (or the platform).

1. From sites like Lexica or Civitai, verify the usage licenses.
2. From Midjourney, OpenAI, etc., public images can often be reused with recommended attribution.

Example:

AI-generated image – source: Midjourney / © [Author's Name]

## 2.5. Materials created by ECML project teams

Authors and project teams must identify and reference all sources and quotations clearly (see [ECML referencing guidelines](#)).

Failure to comply constitutes plagiarism, which carries civil liability.

## 2.6. Links

### 2.6.1. Links from Council of Europe/ECML websites

No permission is required to link directly to the Council of Europe homepage or other Council of Europe (including ECML) web pages.

### 2.6.2. Links from commercial websites

If you are just providing a hyperlink (URL) to a public page on a commercial website (like a YouTube video), you typically do not need special permission.

But always check:

- Is the linked content freely accessible (no login, no paywall)?
- Are you simply linking, or embedding (placing content from another website so that it appears directly inside your own publication, website, or document, instead of making the reader go to the original website)/reproducing it?

- Do the website's Terms of Service say anything about linking/embedding?
- Are you implying any endorsement (your publication suggesting or implying that the external website, brand, or creator approves, supports, or recommends your work) or affiliation (suggesting a business or official relationship between you and the website or company you are linking to)?

#### Good practice:

Clearly attribute the link, make it obvious it's external, and keep the reproduction of the third-party content minimal (when you are only linking).

If you plan to embed or include more than just the link (e.g. screenshots, large quotes, video segments), then you are likely to need permission.

## 3. Step-by-step guide

The following steps outline the process that ECML authors and coordinators must follow to comply with copyright and licensing requirements when preparing materials for publication.

### 3.1. Plan and identify materials

At the start of the project, identify all materials that will be included in your publication (text, tables, figures, photos, illustrations, videos, etc.).

Indicate which materials are:

- created by the project team;
- provided by the ECML / Council of Europe;
- sourced from third parties or external platforms.

### 3.2. Prefer copyright-free sources or ECML-owned materials

Prioritise using:

- materials created by the ECML project team;
- ECML or other Council of Europe resources;
- content available under free-use licence (e.g. Creative Commons, CC BY, CC BY-SA, public domain, or from platforms like Unsplash, Pixabay, Wikimedia Commons).

### 3.3. Check copyright and licensing status of third-party publications

- Assume materials are protected by copyright unless proven otherwise.
- Check whether the material is
  - in the public domain (explicitly marked “public domain” or “CC0” – Creative Commons Zero);
  - under a free licence (e.g. Creative Commons) and read the terms – only CC0, CC BY, or CC BY-SA allow free reuse;
  - or owned by a third party requiring permission.
- Use materials from platforms that explicitly allow free use (e.g. stock image libraries such as Unsplash, Pixabay).
- Materials from government sources, such as laws or other official publications, may be public domain, but always check national rules.

The absence of a copyright notice does NOT mean the material is free for use.

- If in doubt, contact the website owner or rights holder for clarification.

### 3.4. Identify the copyright holders

Locate the original creator or rights holder for materials not created by the project team or the ECML (Council of Europe).

### 3.5. Request and document permissions

For any third-party material, obtain written permission. To this end you may use the model form to document copyright authorisation (see [Appendix](#)). The model form is intended solely for internal use by the project team. It may be adapted by the team to suit specific contexts as needed. Confirmation that the coordinator has obtained and documented all necessary permissions is sufficient. There is no need to submit the authorisations to the ECML unless requested.

- Please note: Verbal confirmation from copyright holders is not acceptable. Written permission must be obtained and properly documented.
- Clearly indicate in your manuscript whether each external element is:
  - covered by permission; or
  - free for use under a verified licence.

This information shall be provided in comment fields directly linked to the relevant material in the publication document itself.

### 3.6. Attribute correctly

Where attribution is required, include a proper credit line (author + source + licence type).

For AI-generated content, check the copyright status of the tool(s) used and add an attribution note (e.g. “Image generated with [Tool]”).

Example: “Some text and illustrations in this material were generated using Microsoft Copilot. Content is used under [Microsoft’s Services Agreement](#) and is intended solely for non-commercial educational purposes.”

### 3.7. Verify and mark AI-generated materials

Use only AI-generated images if the tool’s terms of use explicitly allow free use for non-commercial educational purposes.

- Verify that generated content does not infringe existing copyrights, trademarks, or personality rights.
- Include attribution where required.  
Example: “AI-assisted content, reviewed by the authors.”
- Include attribution at the end of your publication document in an Acknowledgement section:  
Example: “This publication includes content generated with the assistance of AI tools. All AI-generated material has been reviewed and adapted by the authors to ensure accuracy and alignment with [Council of Europe standards](#).”

### 3.8. Ensuring compliance when submitting texts for publication

When submitting texts to the ECML for publication, each team member is responsible for properly referencing all quotations and sources used in their contribution, and for ensuring that any copyright issues are resolved with documented permissions.

However, the overall responsibility for ensuring compliance with copyright and licensing obligations lies with the project coordinator. The coordinator must include a cover letter of compliance confirming that all necessary copyright permissions have been obtained and documented.

As stated in the annual ECML coordination contracts, project teams are fully accountable for any materials they produce.

## 4. Avoid these practices!

- Using contents (images, texts, etc.) from unverified or unknown sources.
- Copying without explicit permission or licence.
- Using AI-generated content with unclear copyright.
- Copying contents directly from websites, books, social media, etc. without written permission.
- Using images found via search engines (e.g. Google Images) without first verifying that the source permits free use and checking the applicable licence.

## Appendix: Model form to document copyright authorisation

### 1. Project title

[Insert project name]

### 2. Material description

- Type of material (e.g. illustration, photo, text, video, audio, etc):
- Title or brief description:
- Source (website, publication, etc):
- Author/creator (if known):

### 3. Intended use

Publication on the website of the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe

### 4. Copyright status

Is the material explicitly marked as public domain or under a licence permitting free use (e.g. CC0, CC BY, CC BY-SA)?

- Yes (attach evidence or link)
- No (proceed to permission request)

### 5. Permission request

- Name and contact details of rights holder:
- Date of request:
- Method of request (email, letter, form, etc.):
- Permission granted?
  - Yes (attach written permission)
  - No

### 6. Attribution requirements

- Is attribution required?
  - Yes (provide exact credit line):
  - No

### 7. Documentation

- Attach all correspondence and permissions to this form.
- Save this form and attachments with the project documentation.

### 8. Declaration

I confirm that the information provided is accurate and that all necessary permissions have been obtained or verified.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_