

DataScientia Meeting 2026

Program Details

22nd - 24th July 2026

Program Details
Tentative/Final

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Overview

The **DataScientia Meeting 2026**, to be hosted in South Africa at Durban University of Technology (DUT), will take place **from 22 to 24 July 2026**, followed by a dedicated day of social and networking activities on 25 July. The event marks a significant step in advancing a global dialogue on **Diversity-aware Sovereign AI**; an approach to artificial intelligence that respects cultural diversity, local knowledge, and data autonomy across regions and communities.

Bringing together leading researchers, policymakers, industry experts, and international organizations, the meeting is designed as a **multi-day collaborative platform** combining scientific exchange, policy dialogue, and strategic co-creation. Participants will engage in a dynamic program of talks, workshops, and discussions aimed at shaping the future of inclusive and culturally aware AI systems.

The event will open with an **Opening Ceremony at DUT**, setting the stage for three thematic workshops:

- **Day 1-2 (22 July, 23 July morning) – Diversity-aware AI**

The goal of this workshop is to provide a high level overview, via survey talks, and case studies, of the **state of the art in Diversity-aware AI**, problems and solutions, across the main diverse application domains and case studies across diverse cultures and languages. Talks will present cutting-edge research and interdisciplinary approaches to building AI systems.

- **Day 2 (23 July, afternoon) – Diversity-aware sovereign AI for Africa (Policy & Regional Perspective)**

Building on the scientific foundations of the first workshop, this workshop will shift toward **policy, governance, and regional implementation**, with a particular focus on South Africa and the broader African landscape. Speakers will include representatives from governments, academia, and international bodies, offering insights into current initiatives and strategic priorities. The session will conclude with a multi-stakeholder panel discussion addressing pathways toward African leadership in Diversity-aware sovereign AI.

- **Day 3 (24 July) – The DataScientia Initiative (Collaboration & Action)**

The final day is dedicated to the DataScientia Initiative, focusing on its core pillars: **community building** towards **shared information, education, research, innovation and**. The participants will actively contribute to shaping ongoing and future activities, fostering partnerships, and defining concrete actions for collaboration at both regional and global levels. The session will conclude with a panel Q/A section where the participants will discuss difficulties, open problems, and concrete ways of how to proceed.

- **Day 4 (25 July) – Social Program**

The meeting will conclude on **25 July** with a **social program**, offering participants the opportunity to experience the richness of beautiful South Africa while strengthening informal connections and fostering long-term international collaboration.





Co-creation of a Manifesto on “Diversity-aware Sovereign AI”

A central outcome of the event will be the co-creation of a Manifesto on diversity-aware sovereign AI, developed through structured contributions from leading researchers, senior policymakers, institutional representatives, and international partners. The manifesto will be conceived not as a declarative statement, but as an **evidence-informed and action-oriented framework**, grounded in the discussions and outputs of the meeting.

Its development will draw on the three core pillars of the program: the **scientific evidence presented during Day 1**, capturing the state of the art and key research challenges; the **policy and governance perspectives of Day 2**, reflecting regulatory approaches, public sector priorities, and international cooperation efforts, including contributions from institutions such as the European Commission and African governmental bodies; and the **implementation-oriented work of Day 3**, translating these insights into operational priorities across capacity building, data governance, education, and innovation.

To ensure continuity and impact beyond the event, the manifesto will be accompanied by **concrete follow-up mechanisms**, including the establishment of thematic working groups, the identification of pilot initiatives and joint projects, and its integration into the ongoing activities of the DataScientia Initiative across research, education, and innovation. In this sense, the meeting is designed not only as a forum for exchange, but as a **mechanism for coordination and alignment**, inviting participants to actively contribute to shaping both the conceptual foundations and the practical trajectory of Sovereign AI in Africa and globally.



Programme Outline

This section should define the overall theme of the discussion and talk day by day. You have the flexibility to edit and update the titles of the talks and the speaker names as necessary.

Note that all talk titles are tentative and must be provided by the respective presenter.

✓ denotes confirmation from the speaker; including talk title and abstract

July 22nd – (Open to Public)

Opening Ceremony Coordinated by: {???			
Talk #	Time	Talk Title	Duration (minutes)
T1	08:00	Registration for the Event	1 hour
T2	09:00	Opening Ceremony	45 min
T3	09:45	Introduction to the Workshop Theme <i>By Fausto Giunchiglia</i>	15 min

Workshop on Diversity - aware AI – Day 1 –						
Talk #	Time	Talk Title	Presenter(s)	Online / In person	Duration (minutes)	Institute
session theme AI for X Session Chair: { ?? }						
T4 ✓	10:00	Accelerating scientific discovery with agentic AI <i>[Ai for science]</i>	Owen Queen	In Person	30+10	Dept. of Computer Science, Stanford University
T5 ✓	10:40	Capturing patient diversity across molecular and clinical phenotypes with foundation models <i>[Ai for Health]</i>	Valentina Giunchiglia	In Person	30+10	Imperial College London, Harvard University



T6	11:20	Tentative Title: ? <i>[Ai for society]</i>	Matteo Busso	Online	30+10	University of Trento
T7 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12:00	Tentative Title: ? <i>[Ai for Culture]</i>	Hao Xu	In Person	30+10	Jilin University
	12:40	Lunch Break			50 min	ALL
	13:30	DUT Lab Facilities Tour			1 h 30 min	ALL
session theme Diversity-aware AI Session Chair: { ?? }						
T8 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	15:00	Language Diversity, Dialectal Pluralism and Grassroot Digital Technologies	Professor Aimé Sègla	In Person	30+10	University of Abomey-Calavi
T9	15:40	Language diversity – a linguistic point of view	Prof Paul Oye Taiwo	In Person	30+10	University of Ibadan
	16:20	Coffee Break			20 min	ALL
T10 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	16:40	AI design and knowledge diversity – potentials, conundrums and research questions	Gertraud Koch	Online	30+10	University of Hamburg
T11 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	17:20	Co-Designing for Pluriversal (diversity-aware AI)	Rachel Charlotte Smith	?	30+10	Aarhus University
	19:00	DAY END				



July 23rd (morning) – (Open to Public)

The program is currently being defined. Below is the tentative non-confirmed list of speakers. More are likely to be added from the African Scientific Community.

Workshop on Diversity-aware AI – Day 2 –						
Talk #	Time	Talk Title	Presenter(s)	Online / In person	Duration (minutes)	Institute
session theme Case studies in diversity-aware AI technology Session Chair: { ?? }						
	08:50	WELCOME	Dr Oyenyi Alimi	In person	10	Durban University of Technology
T12 ✓	09:00	Diversity-aware Word Sense disambiguation model for South African Languages- A case study of Sesotho sa Leboa	Dr Daniel Masethe	In Person	30+10	Tshwane University of Technology
T13 ✓	09:40	Diversity-aware Data Collection for South African languages Word Sense Disambiguation-enhanced Machine Translation - A Case study of English-Setswana Machine Translation	Dr Tebatso Moape	In Person	30+10	University of South Africa
T14 ✓	10:20	Diversity-aware Namibian Languages Lexicon Development	Prof Winschiers -Theophilus / Indongo, Naftali	?	30+10	Namibia University of Science and Technology, Namibia
	11:00	Coffee Break			20 min	ALL
T15	11:20	Tentative: { A Large Lexical database on Language Diversity }	Gabor Bella	?	30+10	IMT – Atlantique
T16	12:00	Diversity-aware Generative AI	Davide Cavicchini	In Person	30+10	University of Trento
	13:00	Lunch Break			1 hour	ALL





July 23rd (Afternoon) – (Open to Public)

The program is currently being defined. Below is the tentative non-confirmed list of speakers. More are likely to be added from the African Scientific Community.

Workshop on “Diversity-aware Sovereign AI for Africa” <i>Present and future</i>						
Talk #	Time	Talk Title	Presenter(s)	Online / In person	Duration (minutes)	Institute
	14:00	WELCOME	Dr Robyn Thompson	In Person	10	Durban University of Technology
T17 ✓	14:10	Diversity-aware Sovereign AI for Africa in Perspective	Prof Sunday Ojo	In Person	25+5	Durban University of Technology
T18	14:40	African Diversity-aware Sovereign AI: Higher Education Perspective	Prof Oludayo Olugbara	In Person	25+5	Durban University of Technology
T19 ✓	15:10	African Diversity-aware Sovereign AI: Socio-Ethno-Linguistics of African Languages Diversity	Prof Moufoutaou Adjéran	In Person	25+5	University of Abomey-Calavi, Benin Republic
	15:40	Coffee Break			20 min	ALL
T20	16:00	African Diversity-aware Sovereign AI Capacity Building	Prof Pius Owolawi	In Person	25+5	Tshwane University of Technology
T21	16:30	African Diversity-aware Sovereign AI: EC Perspective	Vincenzo Lorusso	In Person	25+5	Policy Officer EU-Africa Cooperation on Science, Technology and Innovation, European Commission, DG RTD
T22	17:00	“Chinese + AI” Training in Africa: From Language Bridge to Citizen-Generated Data for Person-Centric AI.	Lin Wu	In Person	25+5	Confucius Institute, DUT
T22	17:30	*Panel Discussion –Diversity-aware Sovereign AI for Africa	Dr Tebatso Moape (Anchor)	In Person	1 hour	University of South Africa
	18:30	Day End				ALL

***Panel Discussion – Diversity-aware Sovereign AI for Africa***Coordinated by: Prof Sunday Olusegun Ojo**Anchored by: Dr Tebatso Moape, UNISA; Rappertoire: Lindelweyiziswe Manqele/Freedom Khubisa***UPTO 5 PEOPLE ONLY**

#	Name	Affiliation
1	Prof Winschiers-Theophilus / Indongo, Naftali	Unesco Chair (Digital Technology Design with Indigenous People), NUST, Namibia
2	Prof Pius Owolawi	AI Institute of South Africa Hub, TUT
3	Prof Mammo Muchie	University of Gondar, Ethiopia
4	Vincenzo Lorusso	Policy Officer EU-Africa Cooperation on Science, Technology and Innovation, European Commission, DG RTD, European Commission
5	Margherita Trestini	Apodissi
6	Prof Moufoutaou Adjéran	University of Abomey-Calavi, Benin Republic



24th – (Invitations Only)

The talks listed below are currently tentative and will be finalized in the coming days.

The “DataScientia Initiative” workshop						
Talk #	Time	Talk Title (topic)	Presenter(s)	online/ In person	Duration (minutes)	Institute
	09:00	WELCOME	Fausto Giunchiglia	In Person	10	University of Trento
T01 ✓	09:10	The DataScientia Initiative: Towards Diversity-aware Sovereign AI	Fausto Giunchiglia	In person	20	University of Trento
T02 ✓	09:30	DataScientia Journey in the South African Context	Sunday Ojo	In person	25+5	Durban University of Technology
T03	10:00	The UniTrento experience - Competitions? { Talk title here }	Andrea Bontempelli	Online	25+5	University of Trento
	10:30	Coffee Break			15 min	ALL
T04	10:45	The ZCST experience - Competitions? { Talk title here }	Li Dalin	In Person	25+5	Zhuhai College of Science and Technology
T05	11:15	The ZCST experience - MOOCs? { Talk title here }	Li Zi?	In Person	25+5	Zhuhai College of Science and Technology
	12:00	Lunch			1 hour	ALL
T06	13:00	The Mongolian experience - TBD { Talk title here }	Amarsanaa Ganbold	??	25+5	National University of Mongolia
T07	13:30	The Jilin University experience - Research collaboration - TBD? { Talk title here }	Hao Xu	In person	25+5	Jilin University
T08	14:00	The Kazakhstan experience - Joint Projects Collaboration - TBD? - { Talk title here }	Zhanat Nurbekova	??	25+5	Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University
T09	14:30	The iLog Data Collection - TBD? { Talk title here }	Michael Kizito	In person	25+5	Makerere University



	15:00	Coffee Break			30 min	ALL
T10	15:30	Tentative: The Language Data Collection { Talk title here }	Hadi Khalilia	??	25+5	Palestine Technical University
T11	16:00	The DataScientia Community - Role of Universities and society	Ali Hamza	In person	25+5	University of Trento
T12 ✓	16:30	Disseminating DataScientia for Impact: How to Join?	Margherita Trestini	In person	20	Apodissi
T13 ✓	17:00	*Panel Discussion - DataScientia: towards Sovereign AI	Margherita Trestini	In Person	1 hour	Apodissi
	19:00	DAY END				

***Panel Discussion - DataScientia: towards Diversity-aware Sovereign AI**
Coordinated by: Margherita Trestini

#	Name	Affiliation
1	Li Zi	Zhuhai College of Science and Technology
2	Sunday Ojo	Durban University of Technology
3	Fausto Giunchiglia	University of Trento
4	Michael Kizito	Makerere University
	?	?