

# Scottish Music EDIA Manifesto

# PREFACE

Scotland's cultural identity is shared. It belongs to – and is influenced by – everyone who calls Scotland home.

I'm writing this preface a week ahead of the Scottish Music EDIA (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility) Manifesto being published. Mid-June in Scotland often tends to be bleaker than most of us would hope, but this year the bad weather is a fitting backdrop for the discomfort, disgust and disillusion that many of us have felt, particularly over the last week.

On most days I feel proud of Scotland, and proud to be Scottish. I see us as an outward-looking, progressive, welcoming and compassionate country, and I know that many of us like to think of Scotland – and Scottish society – in this way. But earlier this week, a crowd gathered at the top of Buchanan Street in Glasgow, looming over the city and forming the darkest cloud of the summer. They poured onto the streets, many wearing balaclavas, and ignited appalling scenes of racist, anti-migrant violence and intimidation.

What looked like a dystopian nightmare was instead footage of my home city. Somewhere so close and familiar looked and felt so distant. Seeing the Scotland flag used and weaponised to promote discrimination and division brought a deep sense of shame for many of us.

In the days that have since followed, I've been thinking a lot about the concept of Scottish exceptionalism – the belief that, in contrast to others, we are a more liberal and egalitarian country. Many of us – particularly those involved in music and culture – would like to think this is the case, and many of us (myself included) would say that it is these values that underpin the modern definition of 'Scottishness'. But there's more than one version of Scotland, and to not hold the mirror up at the unflattering angles prevents us from seeing ourselves fully. It prevents us from recognising – and being honest about – the work that still needs to be done, both collectively and individually. It prevents us from becoming the country and society we already often pride ourselves on being.

This Manifesto has been in development since 2024 and aims to drive equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility (EDIA) across Scotland's music industry. Our culture is our collective story, and as a sector, we have a responsibility to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to be part of shaping it.

This work isn't new. Across Scotland, individuals, organisations and communities have been challenging inequality and working to widen access for many years – often without recognition or support. The Scottish Music EDIA Manifesto seeks to build on that work – joining the dots and providing a co-designed, shared direction for what comes next. To be publishing it now feels not only fitting, but essential. We implore you to engage in it, and to become a signatory and passionate champion at a time where that collective visibility and active allyship really matters.

Whether you're an individual or organisation, a record label or educator, based in the central belt or in the highlands – this is for you and for all of us. This Manifesto has been shaped through discussion, challenge and reflection. That process has drawn on sector-wide research, paid consultation and the lived experience and insights of all who contributed to it. It's required us to question assumptions, sit with critique and discomfort, and to be honest about where both the SMIA as an organisation and Scotland's music industry as a whole needs to do better.

We know we have a long way to go, and in publishing this Manifesto, we commit to doing this work long-term. We're not coming at this from a moral high ground, and we don't intend to appropriate work that's been done for so long by others – mainly by people who are the most marginalised. Instead, we recognise our unique position as a trade body and membership organisation, and both the influence and power that we hold due to this. We commit to being active allies, and this is about us stepping up to that plate.

As part of our ongoing work to strengthen, empower and unite Scotland's music industry, we want to centre EDIA as the foundation for all industry development initiatives. We're committed to an attitude of humility and respect, and we want to learn and be better. We know that, at times, it will not be easy. We know that we will have to hold uncomfortable truths. But we know it is work that we need to do, and we invite everyone working across Scotland's music industry to do it with us.

What emerged from the development of this Manifesto is not a fixed solution but a set of principles which provide a values-led foundation for how we, as a sector, should make decisions, how we behave and how we treat one another; particularly in moments of change and uncertainty. If we can truly adopt and embrace what's set out in this document, I'm confident we'll be better for it – as individuals, as an industry and as an invaluable part of Scottish culture and society.

I've learned so much from everyone who's contributed to this work. I'm incredibly grateful for what's been developed collectively, and I look forward to us learning more together as a sector in the weeks, months and years ahead.

**Robert Kilpatrick**  
**CEO and Creative Director**  
**Scottish Music Industry Association (SMIA)**

Tasked with developing a strategy that would help make the Scottish music industry a more 'equitable, diverse, inclusive and accessible place for all', the SMIA's EDIA advisory group met regularly between 2024 and 2026 to debate, dissect and conjure up what that elusive musical utopia might look like (and how it could be achieved). What specific policies, guidelines and resources were required to get us there? Who needed to be involved in these transformative actions? How would we communicate these ambitions in a way that was inviting to all and not just those already invested in matters of equity, inclusion and social justice?

It's not that we think anyone in the sector actively sets out to exclude, discriminate or allow unsafe conditions for workers and audiences, but the pressures of a creative industry as fast-paced, competitive and precarious as ours means that things can (and often do) go wrong. I wouldn't be so bold as to suggest that we've landed on the perfect solution to abolishing all inequalities in music, but the group have made thoughtful, sincere efforts to develop resources that we believe are valuable and useful to the sector. Inspired by initiatives like the Keychange pledge for gender equality, the Black Lives in Music charter and the UK Music 10 Point Plan, all of which invite music organisations to make specific commitments that enhance their own EDIA practices, we hope the SMIA EDIA Manifesto and Action Framework will do the same for our music communities here in Scotland.

The African American author, activist and educator Toni Cade Bambara is known for saying that cultural workers, particularly those who have experienced exclusion or oppression, have a duty to 'make the revolution irresistible'. While I can't promise that this Manifesto and Action Framework is irresistible in the sense of being alluring or glamorous (what policy documents are?!), I believe that they are full of heart, imagination and good intentions. Most importantly, the Manifesto and Action Framework have the capacity to be revolutionary. A fairer, more equitable Scottish music industry is attainable, but requires action from individuals, small-medium enterprises, and most importantly, large commercial music businesses. We invite you all to take the Action Framework guidelines on board: 1) choose one area relating to EDIA to develop each year, 2) engage in the range of resources offered by the SMIA to support you in doing so, and 3) provide feedback on that experience to help the SMIA understand your successes and challenges. Creating musical environments that are safe, joyful and inclusive should be irresistible. Who wants to stand in the way of that?

**Jayne Stynes**

**Chair, SMIA EDIA Advisory Group (2024-26)**

**The Scottish Music EDIA (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility) Manifesto and Action Framework is a shared vision and a practical commitment to building a more equitable, accessible and inclusive Scottish music industry by 2030. The Manifesto sets out the values and principles that should guide this vision. The Action Framework, which sits alongside it, translates those principles into concrete, proportionate steps. Together, they are designed to build on and strengthen EDIA work that is already happening across Scotland's music ecosystem.**

**By signing this Manifesto, organisations and individuals are committing to the following pledges:**

1. To uphold care as a foundational principle embedding it in policy, day-to-day work and interactions, creative decisions and long-term planning.
2. To act on our interconnectedness and work collectively to address disparities across Scotland's music ecosystem.
3. To treat Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility (EDIA) as essential to our work, and foundational to the Scottish music industry's creative and economic vitality.
4. To build a music industry where feedback is welcomed, transparency is practised and power is used responsibly.
5. To recognise and celebrate our diversity, actively widen access, and create spaces where people with varied lived experiences can participate, belong and shape Scotland's music industry.

**This is for everyone working in Scottish music**, regardless of background, genre, geography or where they are in their EDIA journey. It is an invitation, not a mandate or declaration of perfection. Signing means making a public commitment to the values it contains and to taking meaningful, achievable steps towards work that is learning-led, ongoing and collective – proportionate to your capacity and context.

# INTRODUCTION

In 2024, following an open application process, the Scottish Music Industry Association (SMIA) appointed an Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility (EDIA) Advisory Group to develop a shared vision and action plan for the Scottish music industry, focused on reinforcing and expanding the sector's commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility by 2030. The following Manifesto and its accompanying Action Framework were developed over eight bi-monthly meetings, and through sector-wide consultation conducted in line with Fair Work principles. The feedback we received directly shaped what you are reading, including strengthening the focus on proportionality, clarifying the relationship between the Manifesto and the Action Framework, and making clear that this work is intended to build on existing EDIA activity across the sector rather than duplicate it. This document is not a finished endpoint. It is part of an ongoing process of collective listening, challenging, learning, strengthening and revising, and it will continue to evolve as the sector does.

Scotland's music industry is home to extraordinary creative talent. It is also a place where that talent often goes unrecognised, where participation is repeatedly shaped by barriers that have nothing to do with skill, and where the industry has not always reflected the full diversity of the people who make it what it is. This was evidenced through our discussions and consultations, but more importantly, through issues that have been consistently and repeatedly documented across the sector over time. These barriers are not abstract, new, or unknown. They are the daily reality of people working in this industry, who shape what Scottish music is and what it could become.

This Manifesto responds to the barriers that continue to limit full participation in our industry. These include, but are not limited to, barriers relating to accessibility, class, religion, caste, race and ethnicity, age, nationality and immigration status (including those in the asylum system), neurodiversity, sexuality and gender. Our goal is to encourage reflection on working practices, spark dialogue, learn together, and support meaningful change across the sector.

Alongside the **Manifesto**, we have also created an accompanying **Action Framework**, outlining the commitments that both the SMIA and signatories will make to build skills, improve practice and support more accessible and equitable working cultures across Scotland's music industry. Both documents recognise that organisations, collectives and individuals vary in capacity and geographic context. They also acknowledge that organisations and collectives differ in size. Work around equity, diversity, inclusion and access must be proportionate and achievable for everyone involved, from DIY spaces and volunteer-run groups to large institutions.

This is an important step towards committing to EDIA in specific, grounded and meaningful ways – weaving these principles into the everyday fabric of Scotland's diverse music ecosystems.

**We invite individuals and organisations to sign this manifesto and take part in creating a Scottish music industry where everyone – regardless of identity or background – can participate fully, fairly and safely.**

## We define:

**Equity** as recognising that people and communities face different barriers, and therefore, need different levels of support, resources, collaboration and dialogue to be fully valued and included. Equity means identifying these barriers and removing them by resourcing people proportionately to address disparities. Although '**equality**' is the traditional "E" in EDIA, we foreground equity in our definitions. This is because equality is not possible unless our different starting points are addressed. Equality remains vital, but can only be achieved with equity.

**Diversity** as recognising the full spectrum of voices and talents in all parts of our industry, and reflecting this pluralism in what we create and participate in. Acknowledging that each individual stands as unique, beyond collective labels, with varying intersections of experiences and identities. An industry that reflects this breadth – in who it employs, who it platforms and who it includes in decision-making – is a stronger, more creative and more resilient one. Recognising diversity is not enough on its own and has to be accompanied by an active commitment to dismantling the structures that have historically excluded people in the first place.

**Inclusion** as going beyond visible representation and ensuring audiences and workers feel respected and valued regardless of their identity. It's about engaging in an evolving practice of co-creation and collaboration. It requires ongoing attention to the conditions that allow people to contribute fully, and a willingness to change those conditions when they fall short.

**Accessibility** as an active practice of uprooting physical, sensory, environmental, social, economic and systemic barriers – holistically, and on a structural level. Rooted in the social model of disability, it is recognising that it is societal barriers, not a person's impairment or difference, that prevent full participation.

## Informed by care



EDIA must be grounded in an attitude of **care** – for one another, for our communities and for the culture we are creating together. Care is not a neutral word, and has a history in feminist, queer and decolonial thought. Care is and has been disproportionately expected from women and genderqueer people, Black people and people of colour, and other marginalised communities. People who undertake the work of care often do so without recognition, choice or compensation. This context needs to be reckoned with, even when institutions use the language of care.

We use this word intentionally, and in full awareness of the weight it carries. In saying this work must be grounded in an attitude of care, we draw on a tradition where care is not merely politeness. Instead, it includes accountability, the willingness to be challenged and the responsibility to challenge in turn. It means prioritising collaboration over the exploitation of people or the environment, and taking accountability for our actions when necessary. This is sometimes referred to as non-extractive practice. It also means ensuring that the labour of this work does not fall disproportionately on those already affected by the barriers it seeks to address.

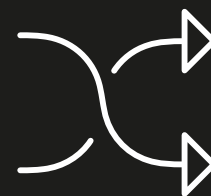
We believe that **all** organisations, as well as bands, individual artists, music creators, practitioners, freelance professionals and sole traders, should centre a commitment to care for the people they work with. This includes care for staff, colleagues, collaborators, audiences and communities.

Importantly, we understand care not as passive or performative, but as active: playful, pluralistic, challenging the status quo and welcoming constructive criticism, especially from marginalised perspectives. Care also involves approaching dialogue with generosity and openness, so people can exchange feedback constructively. We believe it is possible to demonstrate an attitude of care for the communities we work with alongside any commercial interests that may exist.

In practice, care might involve co-creating safer spaces policies with those directly affected, ensuring complaints processes are genuinely accessible, or distributing EDIA responsibilities equitably across a team. It can also mean prioritising the safety and wellbeing of marginalised communities in decisions about who is platformed, acknowledging and addressing power imbalances rather than smoothing them over, and centring those who have experienced harm. Crucially, it includes being honest about shortcomings and actively working to address them. Care can and will look different across contexts, but we believe it must be **intentional, ongoing and embedded** across all levels of creation and operation within the music industry.

**We pledge to uphold care as a foundational principle, embedding it not only in policy, but in day-to-day work and interactions, creative decisions and long-term planning.**

## Scottish Music as Interconnected Ecosystems



We recognise the Scottish music industry as a network of interconnected ecosystems, where individuals and small, independent, DIY and volunteer-led communities shape culture alongside larger institutional and commercial organisations. This includes communities in rural and island Scotland, where geographic distance from the central belt (and major UK music industry hubs like London) compounds existing systemic barriers which affect funding, infrastructure and visibility. Each part of this landscape contributes to the richness and diversity of Scotland's musical life.

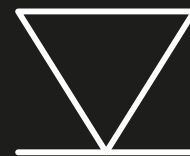
At the same time, we acknowledge that access to power, resources, and decision-making opportunities is not always evenly distributed. Smaller or marginalised groups – especially in rural and remote areas outwith Glasgow and Edinburgh – can face barriers to full participation. For the industry to thrive, every part must be valued and supported, with clear, practical ways for people to contribute to and influence its future.

This involves reflecting on how those with greater influence in the industry can exercise their structural responsibility and actively support those with less, and how we can challenge imbalances and build relationships rooted in fairness, accountability and mutual care. What each part of the sector contributes must reflect the power and resource it holds. A volunteer-run collective, a grassroots music venue and a major institution are not equivalent actors, and they should not be treated as such. This does not mean expectations around this work should be lowered. Here, proportionality is about making sure that the responsibility of doing this work is approached and distributed in a way that corresponds to capacity, access and influence. Those with more stable funding, larger teams, greater decision-making power or significant individual influence are in a position to do more, and we encourage them to do so. For smaller organisations, grassroots groups and individuals working independently, meaningful engagement with this work will look different – that is not only acceptable, but expected.

Recognising both our differences and our interconnectedness can lead to stronger, more reciprocal collaboration between the different parts of the music industry, and can create more opportunities to learn from one another.

**We commit to being part of a collective effort to address disparities that arise from an unequal distribution of influence and resources in the Scottish music industry. This includes engaging in shared learning, exchanging resources, amplifying underrepresented voices, and building more equitable ways of working together across the sector – recognising that a more representative industry is stronger for everyone within it.**

## EDIA as Essential and Foundational



We strongly believe that embedding EDIA is essential to a thriving Scottish music industry. It strengthens creativity, innovation and long-term economic growth.<sup>1</sup> It also supports individual artists, music creators, practitioners, freelance professionals, sole traders, bands and organisations to remain relevant and resilient in a rapidly changing environment. It is key to the richness and vibrancy of the sector. Organisations which embrace EDIA-forward practices are better positioned to engage diverse audiences, respond to change and sustain their relevance over time.

Evidence increasingly points to the value of greater inclusion. For example, UK Music's March 2026 'Black Music Means Business' report<sup>2</sup> highlights how expanding access for Black artists and professionals has contributed to new sounds, new markets and wider cultural reach. While experiences differ across communities, this reflects a broader pattern: widening participation can strengthen creativity, support innovation and open up new economic opportunities.

For Scotland, this means that a more equitable, diverse, inclusive and accessible music industry is better positioned to remain competitive. By investing in emerging talent from working-class backgrounds, removing barriers for disabled artists and addressing other forms of inequality, the sector can build a stronger and more sustainable foundation for future growth.

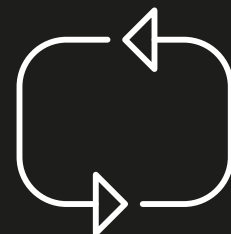
This is especially clear in view of ongoing challenges such as grassroots venue closures and shifting audience expectations. Audiences, funders, staff and other stakeholders increasingly recognise and value organisations that create spaces where people feel safe, welcomed and represented. EDIA is both a moral responsibility and a strategic necessity.

**We affirm that EDIA is not an optional add-on, but a core driver of creative and economic vitality. We are pledging to embed these principles into both the culture and operations of our work.**

1. Dr Stacy L. Smith and the USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative, Inclusion in the Music Business (March 2025) — a study examining the gender and racial makeup of nearly 2,800 executives across 106 music companies, sponsored by Believe and TuneCore. [Read the full report on uscannenberg.org.](https://www.uscannenberg.org/)
2. UK Music, Black Music Means Business: Driving Economic Growth in the UK (March 2026) — a landmark report measuring the commercial, cultural and community impact of Black music in Britain across 30 years of recorded music. [Read the full report on ukmusic.org.](https://www.ukmusic.org/)

See also: Music Week, "The Lowdown on UK Music's Black Music Means Business Report" (17 March 2026), featuring commentary from the report's leads. [Read the Music Week interview.](#)

## Committing to Feedback and Dialogue



We recognise that all music organisations hold some form of power, regardless of their size. Individuals also hold power through the roles they play across the sector – for instance, between promoters and artists, managers and talent, funders and applicants, and peers working together. Power is present in, and informs, everyday relationships.

We believe this power should be acknowledged and used with care. Accountability begins with each of us, and with a willingness to reflect honestly on our own practices, to invite feedback from those we work with and to act on what we hear as best we can.

We encourage organisations, bands, artists, music creators, practitioners, freelance professionals and sole traders to create space for regular, meaningful and non-punitive feedback from those they work with, including staff, freelancers, artists, audiences, unions and partners. This feedback should support shared learning and shape how EDIA practices are developed and improved. Examples for organisations or groups include addressing concerns about late payments, co-creating safer spaces policies or ensuring HR and complaints processes are accessible and easy to navigate. Individuals can also support this work by practising transparency.

Examples include declaring conflicts of interest, explaining the criteria behind recommendations, acknowledging any influence they may hold and outlining the reasoning behind their programming or selection choices. For both organisations and individuals, this can also simply mean being open to challenge and having the willingness to improve.

Transparency is a vital part of this work. Being open about how decisions are made helps build trust, reduce bias and creates fairer ways of working. When we listen well, practise openness, act on what we hear and are willing to be transparent, we help create more equitable and accountable environments where people feel able to speak up without fear of blame.

**We commit to building a music industry where feedback is welcomed, transparency is practised and power is used responsibly.**

## Recognising Diversity of Experience



We know that everyone working in or engaging with Scotland's music sector has different lived experiences, shaped by their identities, backgrounds and circumstances. Recognising diversity is also understanding how power and opportunity are distributed, including who gets to shape the industry and on what terms. Music organisations and individuals share a responsibility to recognise these dynamics and make intentional efforts to move beyond traditional ways of working to create spaces that are welcoming, inclusive and accessible to more people.

Embedding diversity requires rethinking working practices in ways that are proportionate and achievable. It might mean offering daytime or family-friendly events, creating safer and sensory-considerate environments, adapting touring models for those in rural or remote spaces, or changing how roles are structured and advertised. This does not have to result in immediate large-scale operational overhauls; rather, it is about making deliberate and considered decisions that add up over time. These choices are most impactful when shaped in dialogue with the communities they aim to include.

Recognising diversity of experience also means naming what gets in the way of full participation in the industry. Bullying, harassment, sexism, racism, classism, transphobia and ableism – among other issues that perpetuate systemic violence and discrimination – remain barriers to participation in the Scottish music industry. These problems shape who is able to enter and remain in the sector. Creating environments where people can work safely and with dignity is foundational to a thriving industry.

**We commit to recognising and celebrating our diversity, actively widening access and working with communities to create spaces where people with varied lived experiences can take part, feel welcome and shape Scotland's music industry – driven by a sense of belonging for all.**

## CLOSING STATEMENT

We believe that organisations and individuals in music should engage with EDIA on an ongoing basis through their hiring, training, programming, collaborations and wider policies and practices. We also recognise that this work takes time, resources and long-term commitment.

**We encourage signatories to view a commitment to EDIA as a continuous process of learning, unlearning and relearning. There is no finished version of this work. This is not about perfect action, or arriving at a fixed destination, but about consistently reflecting, adapting and improving.**

**We call on organisations, as well as individual artists, music creators, practitioners, freelance professionals, sole traders and bands across the sector, to review their EDIA practices at least once a year and to take specific, actionable steps toward improvement in at least one new area annually. These actions should be proportionate to each context and can build on work already underway.**

We recognise that this work can feel daunting, particularly for organisations and individuals working with limited resources. The SMIA's EDIA Action Framework provides practical guidance, examples and resources to support this learning and help translate this Manifesto's values into everyday practice. Signatories are also invited to share their progress, insights and challenges so the sector can learn together in a constructive, non-punitive way.

The same standards the SMIA is inviting others to uphold apply equally to us. This work builds on longstanding EDIA practices that have been led by individuals and organisations across Scotland's music industry, often without consistent recognition or support. Our intention in publishing these documents is to build on that work, and create room to collectively challenge and strengthen the practices the documents call for in turn. As a convenor, the SMIA holds a responsibility to commit to the principles laid out in this Manifesto. This will involve being honest about where change is needed, strengthening our own policies and approaches, and committing to the same iterative, imperfect and ongoing process that this work calls for from the sector.

Signing this Manifesto means committing to its values and taking meaningful, achievable action through the accompanying Action Framework. By joining this collective effort, you help build a Scottish music sector where everyone feels they belong and where equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility fuel not only fairness, but also the creativity, cultural richness and shared joy that come from working across differences.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The publication of the Scottish Music EDIA (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility) Manifesto and Action Framework would not have been possible without the tremendous hard work and support of many stakeholders across the Scottish Music Industry. Since this work began in 2024, the Scottish Music Industry Association (SMIA) has been fortunate to develop these documents and everything surrounding their launch through genuine collaboration and co-design: formal and informal, structured and organic, with people who provided us with their time, expertise and candour at every stage.

Throughout the process of bringing the Manifesto and Action Framework to life, we have been guided by the work of people already engaging in and pioneering EDIA work – communities, practitioners, advocates and thinkers whose labour, most often unglamorous and underacknowledged, has made it possible to imagine something like this at all. In launching this, we are standing on ground painstakingly built by them within this industry, and beyond it.

We are deeply grateful to our EDIA Advisory Group, whose guidance shaped the direction of this work from the outset: Jayne Stynes (Chair), Ailie Robertson, Jim Muotune, Jo D’Arc, Kiana Kalantar-Hormozi and Sof Staune. They gave generously of their time, energy and expertise across every stage of this process.

Our thanks go to our consultees, who spanned the breadth and width of the Scottish music industry and brought perspectives that no single organisation could have formed alone. They gave their time and expertise generously, challenged us and pushed the scope of this work in directions we hadn’t anticipated. Through their contributions, we arrived at a clearer picture of what this sector needs, and a more honest reckoning with what that asks of us.

We would also like to acknowledge and thank both the SMIA Company Board and the SMIA staff team: Robert Kilpatrick (CEO and Creative Director), Aja Garrod-Prance (General Manager), Daria Jaszcz (Marketing and Communications Executive) and – in particular – Vahishtai Ghosh (Equalities and Industry Development Officer), who played an invaluable role in leading the development of this work from the SMIA’s side. We’d also like to thank Bethany O’Connor, who held the post of Equalities and Industry Development Officer when work on the Scottish Music EDIA Manifesto and Action Framework began, and whose efforts laid the foundations for everything that followed.

Finally, we are grateful to the team at Creative Scotland for funding this work and for their partnership, support and guidance throughout this process, in particular, Kim Simpson (Head of Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion) and the full EDI team.

To find out more, and to both read and download  
the Scottish Music EDIA Action Framework,  
visit [smia.org.uk/edia-manifesto](https://smia.org.uk/edia-manifesto)

