

**DE** **BIAS**

## Detecting and Cur(at)ing Harmful Language in Cultural Heritage Collections



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## The DE-BIAS Vocabulary



# Where can bias occur?

- The **linguistic** level: words used to describe an object in a collection (title, description and other metadata)
- The **visual** level: the representation and imagery of an object or the object itself
- The **relation** between both



- Source layer
  - Terminological
  - Nominative
- Additional metadata
- Digital deliberation
  - Incl. crowdsourcing



# To keep in mind

## Bias on the linguistic level

- Linguistic bias might also be in what is NOT said or described
- Linguistic bias is not translatable from one language into another
  - A term might be contentious in one language but its direct translation into another is not (or there is no direct translation)
  - A contentious term from one language and cultural context might have been adopted in another language and cultural context but is used with a different connotation





# Vocabulary co-creation with communities



- **Migration and Colonialism:**  
Congoese Community (KU Leuven)  
Surinamese Community  
(Netherlands Institute for Sound & Vision)
- **Gender and Sexual Identity**  
Queer Community in Rome and London  
(European Fashion Heritage Association)
- **Ethnicity and Ethno-religious Identity**  
Jewish Community  
(DFF - Deutsches Filminstitut & Filmmuseum)



# Sources used in the vocabulary

- Wereldmuseum et al., eds., “Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector,” 2018, [https://amsterdam.wereldmuseum.nl/sites/default/files/2021-04/words\\_matter.pdf.pdf](https://amsterdam.wereldmuseum.nl/sites/default/files/2021-04/words_matter.pdf.pdf)
- Cultural Heritage Network Terminology (CHNTUK) & Inclusive Terminology; comprehensive list of EDI sources, language guidance, critical cataloguing etc. [CHTNUK \(culturalheritageterminology.co.uk\)](https://culturalheritageterminology.co.uk)
- Homosaurus, an international linked data vocabulary of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) terms, <https://homosaurus.org/>
- The Decolonial Dictionary, <https://decolonialdictionary.wordpress.com/2019/05/08/adventure/>



# Sources used in the vocabulary

- Holocaust Lexicon, Yad Vashem,  
<https://www.yadvashem.org/de/holocaust/lexicon.html>
- American Jewish Committee, The Translate Hate Glossary,  
[https://global.ajc.org/files/ajc/upload/AJC\\_Glossary.pdf](https://global.ajc.org/files/ajc/upload/AJC_Glossary.pdf)
- Queer Glossary, Bowling Green State University,  
<https://www.bgsu.edu/content/dam/BGSU/multicultural-affairs/documents/queer-glossary.pdf>
- Disability Language Style Guide 2021;  
<https://ncdj.org/style-guide/#mentalillnessmentaldisorderlanguageguide>,  
Stanford University 2024
- etc.





# From spreadsheet to knowledge graph

Albinism refers to a group of inherited disorders that results in little or no production of the pigment melanin. The type and [...]

Albino

Use with caution.

Person with albinism

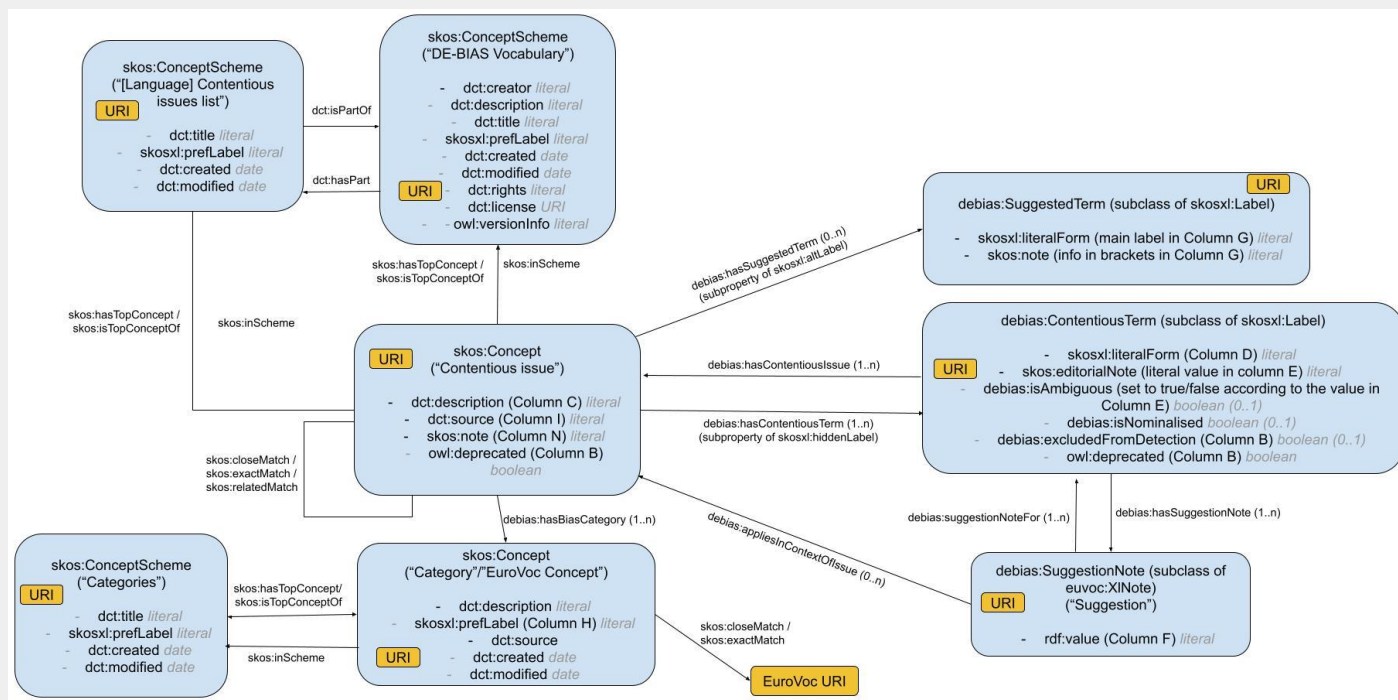
(Dis)Ability

National Center on Disability and Journalism, "Disability Language Style Guide", 2021.  
<https://ncdj.org/style-guide/#/mentalillnessmentaldisorder>.

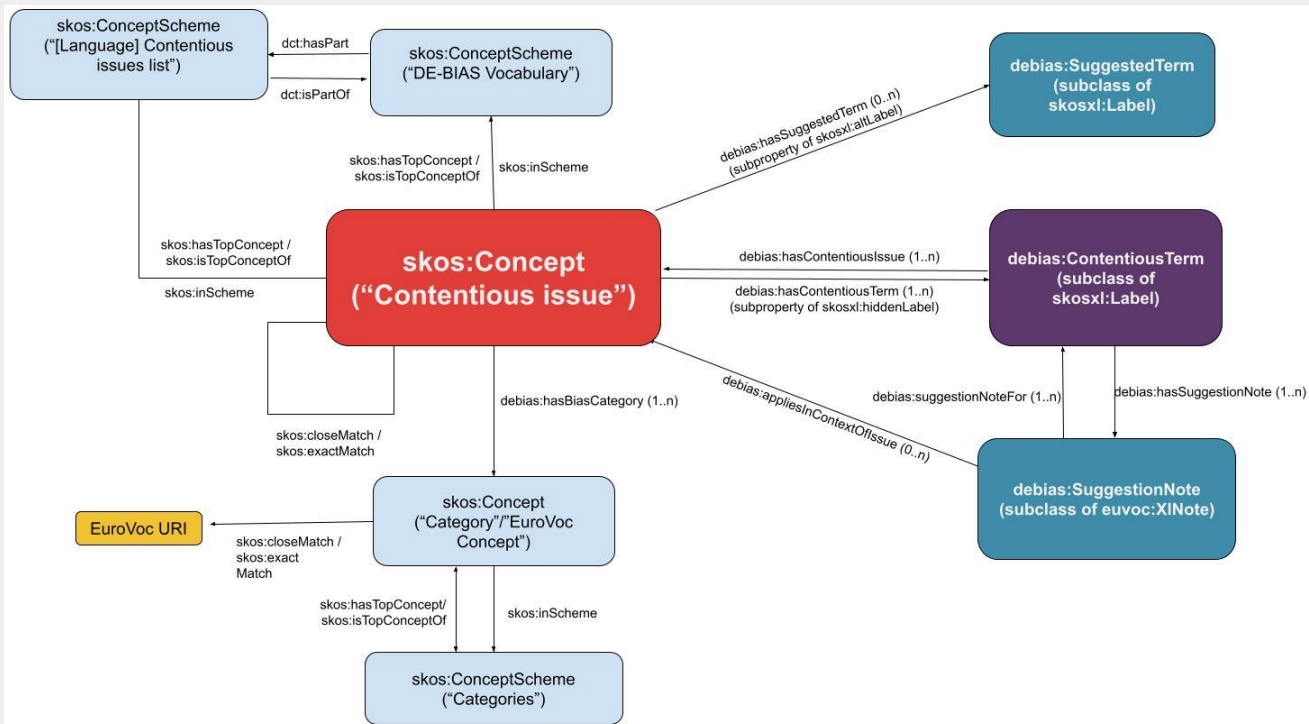
```
8   debias:c_7_en
9     a skos:Concept ;
10    debias:contentiousTerm debias:t_7_en ;
11    debias:suggestedTerm debias:a_29_en ;
12    dcterms:source "National Center on Disability and Journalism
13    dcterms:description "Albinism refers to a group of inherited
14
15  debias:t_7_en debias:suggestion debias:s_3 ;
16    a skosxl:Label ;
17    skos:editorialNote "This term is used in a contentious as well
18    skosxl:literalForm "Albino"@en .
19
20  debias:s_3
21    a skos:Concept ;
22    dcterms:description "Use with caution."@en ;
23    dcterms:description "Nur mit Vorsicht zu nutzen."@de ;
24    dcterms:description "Usare con cautela."@it ;
25    dcterms:description "Gebruik met voorzichtigheid."@nl ;
26    dcterms:description "A utiliser avec précaution."@fr .
27
28  debias:a_29_en a skosxl:Label ;
29    skosxl:literalForm "Person with albinism"@en .
30
```



# Knowledge graph (complete)



# Knowledge graph (simplified)



# Availability of the DE-BIAS Vocabulary



Publications Office  
of the European Union

Knowledge Graph in SKOS

The screenshot shows the Europeana DPO website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'europeana DPO', 'ABOUT US', 'JOIN THE NETWORK', 'DISCOVER THE DATA', and a search bar. Below the navigation bar, there are links for 'About', 'Tools', 'Documentation', 'Blogs', 'News', and 'Partners'. The main content area features a blog post titled 'DE-BIAS - Detecting and cur(at)ing harmful language in cultural heritage collections'. The post is dated 'Posted on Monday November 14, 2022' and has an update notice: 'Updated on Monday December 9, 2024'. The text of the post reads: 'DE-BIAS promotes a more inclusive and respectful approach to describing cultural heritage.' Below the text, there is a date range: '1 January 2023 TO 31 December 2024' and a button to 'Add to calendar'. At the bottom of the post is a photograph of a diverse group of people, with a large graphic overlay that says 'DE BIAS' in white text on blue and red speech bubble backgrounds.

Human-readable version  
per language in PDF





**Website**

[pro.europeana.eu/project/de-bias](http://pro.europeana.eu/project/de-bias)

**Contact**

[project.debias@gmail.com](mailto:project.debias@gmail.com)

**Follow us**

on social media using the hashtag  
#DeBias



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