



# The Tracker

CULTURE & PUBLIC POLICY



SEPTEMBER 2020 | ISSUE 1

This monthly Tracker is produced by UNESCO to monitor the role of culture in public policy with regards to the UN Sustainable Development Agenda. It highlights developments within national and regional contexts, as well as emerging debates on culture's contribution to sustainable development. Drawing on a variety of sources, it provides a broad overview of cultural policy trends worldwide at the national, regional and international level and looks at ways in which countries integrate culture into other policy areas.

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## AT A GLANCE

Despite the continued state of turbulence in the cultural sector, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, there have been many developments in the past few months that have instigated a renewed dynamism in cultural policies.

As we see in this month's **Cultural Policy Highlights** section, at the national level new measures and initiatives continue to reinforce countries' response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As countries switch into longer term recovery planning, there have also been several developments that aim to reinforce national cultural sectors in the longer term.

The future of multilateralism is a major theme as the United Nations' General Assembly, which opened on the 22 September, is celebrating 75 years since its foundation. In the **Cutting Edge** section, we explore how culture can support multilateralism, which is currently at a crossroads.

Strengthened cooperation on culture in regional and sub-regional organizations, as well as regional development banks, continues to rejuvenate multilateralism. As part of UNESCO's ongoing monitoring and support, this issues' **Regional Perspectives** section covers the latest developments.

Finally, the section **Culture in the 2030 Agenda** explores multifaceted approaches in which countries capture culture's cross-cutting role in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular through international cooperation. This follows the latest High-Level Political Forum held in July, at which 47 more countries submitted Voluntary National Reviews as part of monitoring progress towards the SDGs. See **Find Out More** for the latest publications.



Ursula Madariaga, Pexels



# CULTURAL POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

This section showcases a selection of the latest developments in cultural public policy. Whilst reactive measures to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the cultural sector are expected to largely guide cultural public policies throughout 2021, there are positive signs that countries are transitioning from recovery measures to longer term strategies to build resilience in their cultural sectors.

In **Senegal**, a draft bill on the Status of the Artist has been approved by the Council of Ministers. The law, which was ten years in the making, will allow artists and other cultural professionals to enjoy the benefits of the national Labour Code in terms of social benefits, protection against risks and the right to healthcare, among others. Senegal also ratified the 2001 Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage, making it the 65th States Party.



Man Bringing Radio (uncoveredlens)

In the **United Arab Emirates**, Abu Dhabi's Department of Culture and Tourism has formed a Women's Council to oversee strategies, policies and plans relating to the development and leadership of Emirati women within the organization.

**Somalia**, on July 23, officially ratified the UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972), as well as the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003). All African countries are now States Parties to the World Heritage Convention.

The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports of **Morocco** has launched a special national fund of 11 million dirhams (US\$ 1.2m) to support editorial companies, libraries, authors, and cultural associations as part of its recovery plan after confinement.

In **Nigeria**, the Director-General of the National Council for Arts and Culture has inaugurated thirteen Sub-Committees under the National Creative Industry Committee to identify sectoral challenges and recommend action plans that will galvanize the sector to improve service delivery, potentially including tax waivers.

In **Viet Nam**, the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism has received approval for a database programme which will publish valuable Vietnamese literary and artistic works from the tenth century to the year 1945.

In **Italy**, the Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities and for Tourism, in collaboration with the National Agency for Business Development (under the Ministry of Economy) have launched a content marketing call to the select 6 creative projects that promote local tourism. 180,000 euros have been allocated to finance the winning proposals.

The Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth of **Singapore** has announced additional measures to strengthen its arts and culture ecosystem, including programming pilots of small-scale performances, operating grants and enhanced support for freelancers.

Chan + Hori Contemporary





# CULTURAL POLICY HIGHLIGHTS



The Ministry of Culture of the **Kingdom of Saudi Arabia** has launched a comprehensive "cultural database" questionnaire for professionals in the cultural sector. The platform, the first of its kind in the country, will be used to design strategic cultural projects and promote communication with artists and cultural professionals.

Art Gallery (51countriesandcounting)

The Minister for Culture and Minister of Finance of **Sweden** have announced the country's largest cultural budget ever. The investment of an additional SEK 3.4 billion in culture will contribute to supporting cultural infrastructure throughout the country, and includes SEK 1 billion to restructure and restart cultural activities.

In **Chile**, the Ministries of Labour and Culture have launched 3,000 free training scholarships for performing arts, music, design and audiovisual professionals. These scholarships range from teaching new business models, including social skills, to sector-specific training in the fields of music, theatre, design, animation and video games.



The National Government of **Panama** has created a new inter-institutional commission to promote heritage and tourism in the historical complex of the Old Town of Panama City, a UNESCO World Heritage site, and one of the main tourist attractions in the country. The commission brings together experts in infrastructure, services, transportation, environment and culture.

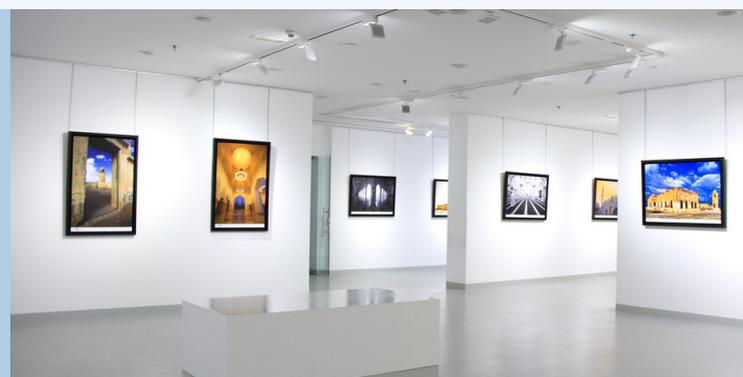
Old Town, Panama (arturogi)

In **Algeria**, the Ministry of Culture has announced the publication of the first issue of the cultural magazine "Inzyahat", under the banner "the idea of change", with the aim of enhancing the reach of Algerian cultural content.

In **France** the Ministry of Culture has announced a Recovery Plan worth 2 billion euros, to reconstruct the cultural sector and reform cultural policies in order to support the resumption of activities and plan for the future.

In the **United Kingdom**, the Arts Council England has released two new reports that demonstrate the value of cultural infrastructure in contributing to local economies and social cohesion. The first is a data report and the second is an evidence review on arts and place-shaping.

Art Gallery (51countriesandcounting)





# CULTURAL POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

In **Colombia**, the Ministry of Culture and the Chamber of Books have joined forces to modernise the sector by creating the necessary tools for the operational and commercial management of editors, distributors and booksellers. This includes creating a digital catalogue of the publishing offer available in Colombia.



Foto Librería-Café Fauno

The government of **Azerbaijan** has approved amendments to its Tax Code, providing fiscal benefits to businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as a one-year exemption from land and property tax to selected sectors, including tourism and cultural facilities.

The Ministry of Culture and Heritage of **Ecuador**, in conjunction with private sector partners, has launched a call for a 'Marathon of Ideas' for the revival of its cultural and creative industries. The objective is to reactivate the country's creative economy and encourage new ventures.



Maori Tribal Art (Tupungato)

Creative **New Zealand** has released a best practice guide for local councils: 'Supporting your arts community through COVID-19: He Waka Eke Noa'. The guide offers ways to support local artists, creative workers, arts groups and organizations during COVID-19 and into the future.

The National Arts Council of **Namibia**, Arts & Culture COVID-19 Relief Fund has approved an additional N\$342,000.00 for the cultural and creative industries. The fund is open to individual artists, cultural workers, groups, and registered organizations.

**Libya's** General Authority on Culture has launched a National Strategic Plan for 2020 to enrich national identity, improve the infrastructure of the cultural and artistic sectors, reinforce policies for creativity and innovation, and ensure stronger dialogue with the private sector and civil society.

**Peru** has adopted its first National Cultural Policy, covering cultural rights, interculturality and diversity, heritage, cultural education and cultural creation. The Minister of Culture described it as "positioning culture as a fundamental element to strengthen democracy and promote development of the country, to achieve the Peru we want."



Weaving in Peru (Smwimages)



# COVID-19: a reset button for a culture-driven multilateralism?



AtnoYdur, Getty Images

“**T**he massive closure of concert halls, opera houses, bookshops, theatres, World Heritage sites and museums was unthinkable a few months ago.” Addressing the 130 Ministers of Culture from across the world gathered for an exceptional online ministerial meeting convened by UNESCO on 22 April 2020, Audrey Azoulay, UNESCO Director General, captured the unprecedented disruption to the cultural sector generated by the pandemic. The global lockdown has brought to light the fundamental role of culture and education to get through times of crises. As they were suddenly faced with the interruption of economic and social life and made to cope with a very uncertain future, people around the world voiced clearly their aspiration to culture, not only to find comfort or entertainment, but more essentially their need for culture to connect with others and build a meaningful understanding of the fast-evolving global context. By engaging large-sized policy measures to expand online culture, governments thus acknowledged that ensuring equitable access to culture for all, including most vulnerable populations, was a critical responsibility for public policies as well as an essential right for their citizens. **Underscoring this critical function of culture in our societies and placing this aspiration at the core of the public policy agenda, was one of the key necessities of the current crisis.**



**While bringing out the essential role of culture in our lives, the pandemic also served as a reality check, starkly exposing preexisting faultlines and vulnerabilities within the cultural sector.** As millions of artists and cultural professionals were abruptly left out of work, the necessity to consolidate social security to build a more resilient and thriving cultural sector was particularly highlighted. With many cultural venues and institutions now facing permanent closure, putting cultural diversity at risk, renewing and stabilizing their economic models emerged a key priority. As international travel was put on hold, the dependence of the cultural sector on the tourism industry and the need to forge more inclusive and sustainable tourism models was made more pressing. Likewise, although the accelerated shift to online culture highlighted the opportunities brought about by the digital revolution – in terms of access to culture or innovation – it also unveiled the glaring reality of social inequalities and the digital divide.

**The extent of the disruption thus calls for a profound rethinking of cultural policies, to forge a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable cultural sector.** Cultural policies should encompass in a more systemic manner contemporary challenges of sustainable development and harness new opportunities. In that perspective, the need for cultural policies to embrace the full potential of the opportunities brought about by the digital transformation revealed the urgency of expanding digital cultural content, as well as ensuring wide access and diversity of cultural content. What is at stake, in particular, is to meet a growing demand, to shape innovative ways to bridge cultural resources and citizens worldwide and to build on culture's potential to enrich quality education and make it context and content-relevant.



**Today, we have a surplus of multilateral challenges and a deficit of multilateral solutions. [...] In an interconnected world, we need a networked, inclusive multilateralism.**

ANTÓNIO GUTERRES  
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS



**This necessity to profoundly reshape the cultural sector towards its recovery and resilience calls for a renewed global dialogue.** By convening the online meeting of Ministers of Culture in April last, UNESCO fulfilled its core function as a UN agency to provide a platform for international dialogue on culture and public policy. The massive mobilization of Ministers not only confirmed this shared aspiration for global discussion and concerted action – as Member States acknowledged that the scope and complexity of the crisis required international collaboration and could not be addressed by countries in isolation – but also the shift towards a more sustained presence of culture onto the global political agenda. In the aftermath of the UNESCO online meeting of Ministers of Culture, interministerial dialogues on culture significantly flourished across all continents, gaining momentum through numerous ministerial fora dedicated to culture at the regional level by regional or sub-regional intergovernmental organizations over the last few months. This surge in interministerial dialogue on culture – a dialogue which was already commonplace in the field of economics or education but less frequent in the field of culture – is equally unprecedented.

**The recognition of the transformative force of culture in societies – reflected by its increased presence in interministerial dialogue – opens new pathways to renew the multilateral system as a whole.** While the pandemic has shaken the very foundations of multilateral cooperation – further exacerbating existing tensions and challenges – it has also clearly revealed the deep interconnections and interdependence between countries. In a very uncertain, unregulated global environment – marked by the climate urgency, widening inequalities and increased conflicts – multilateral dialogue is more needed than ever before. What culture has to bring, in that context, is its power to bridge people and countries, offering more inclusive, participative and collaborative patterns, to foster mutual understanding and forge a renewed paradigm for multilateralism, which places human dignity at its heart.



**Each nation has its history, its culture, the challenge is to mobilize this diversity to build a collective intelligence.**

AUDREY AZOULAY  
DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF UNESCO



**Looking forward, the disruptive impact of the pandemic on the cultural sector acts as a wake-up call to remind us that culture is a fundamental transformative force in our societies,** which should be placed at the forefront of policymaking. Culture allows us to mobilize and stimulate values of solidarity, equality and mutual respect that are critically needed to build a more sustainable and resilient future. Those values are enshrined in UNESCO Culture Conventions, which have translated this humanistic vision of societies into normative instruments, thus forging concrete tools for this culture-led multilateralism. The cultural sector is also likely to renew the modalities of policymaking towards more inclusive, participative patterns. The momentum set by the UNESCO-led ResiliArt movement – that has hosted some 163 debates in 64 countries since it was launched in April – is one of such illustrations by which culture can stimulate dialogue between policymakers and the civil society, thus laying the foundations for a renewed, multilayered multilateralism.



UNESCO Forum of Ministers of Culture, 19 November 2019

## REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Following the extraordinary meeting of Ministers of Culture of the African Union in May to discuss "the crucial and essential role that the arts, culture and heritage sector can play" in curbing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, an action plan was developed to support the sector in Africa; including social security schemes to curb the impact of COVID-19 on cultural workers.

UNESCO and the African Union are in the process of developing a Cooperation Framework Agreement that would open the way for greater cooperation to reinforce cultural policies on the continent. Furthermore, the African Union Commission has designated 2021 as a Year of Arts, Culture and Heritage, meaning that culture will become a major priority area in the coming months.

A Memorandum of Understanding has also been signed between Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and UNESCO. The UNESCO-ECOWAS Joint Action Plan on COVID-19 will be implemented in all the 15 Member States and jointly managed by both UNESCO regional offices in Abuja and Dakar in the countries under the purview of each office. The project is to support identified cultural creators and artists to produce and disseminate COVID-19 related content to support the fight against the pandemic in the West African sub-region, in collaboration with with Member States, through the National Commissions for UNESCO and Ministries of Culture.

The African Development Bank, hosted a discussion on 3 September on rebuilding the African fashion industry. The African Development Bank's Fashionomics Africa initiative works with professionals in the textiles and accessories industry, including creative professionals, to grow their businesses.



## REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

The explosion in the port of Beirut, capital of Lebanon, on 4 August not only resulted in the devastating loss of life and damage to vital infrastructure but also damaged sites of cultural heritage and artistic districts. Many regional organizations and international organizations working in the cultural domain expressed their condolences and solidarity with Lebanon. On 11 August, the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) and several other organizations co-signed a [statement of solidarity](#), whilst the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) also [appealed](#) to the international community for support to cultural and heritage institutions. UNESCO convened two emergency coordination meetings, together with several regional and international partners, to support the reconstruction and recovery of Beirut's cultural heritage and cultural life, particularly through its historic heritage buildings, museums, galleries and other infrastructure of the creative economy, as part of the Organization's initiative "[Li Beirut](#)" (For Beirut, in Arabic). Three ResiliArt debates have taken place to spur dialogue on recovery efforts.

ICESCO, in July, convened an [international virtual conference](#) on combatting the illicit trafficking in cultural property, with several ministers and experts in the field. The worsening trend in crimes of illicit trafficking in cultural property and the growing e-markets and auctions on social media require developing relevant legislations, conventions, and joint efforts to set the code of ethics to deal with these cultural properties. Egypt offered to host a future conference on the issue.

ALECSO held a [remote session](#) of the Conference of Archaeology and Cultural Heritage in the Arab World in September, at which the UNESCO Category II Regional Centre for World Heritage (based in the Kingdom of Bahrein) participated. The discussion led to a set of recommendations, including the continuation of capacity-building programmes for rapid intervention teams, developing a crisis plan and establishing a team to coordinate between regional and international heritage organizations. The flooding of a number of historical monuments and archaeological sites in Sudan, also a member of ALECSO, was a reminder of the need for concerted action, and ALECSO [offered its full support](#) in tackling the disaster.

## #LIBEIRUT #FORBEIRUT REBUILDING AND REVIVING HERITAGE, CULTURE AND EDUCATION

Following the devastating twin explosions in Beirut, Lebanon, on 4 August 2020, UNESCO has been mobilizing leading organizations and experts from Lebanon and abroad in an effort to coordinate emergency and longer-term measures to safeguard the city's severely damaged education system and cultural heritage and to revive cultural life.

[DONATE TO INITIATIVE](#)



## REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

The 15th Coordinating Conference of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) convened on 17 June with the participation of over 100 delegates. This year, all sectoral bodies and three ASEAN pillars are conducting a mid-term review of the ASCC Blueprint 2025 implementation, a review on the sectoral work plan 2016-2020 and are also developing the work plan for the next five-year period. The overarching objective of the Strategic Plan for Culture 2016-2025 is "to deepen an ASEAN mindset and facilitate intercultural dialogue among the peoples of ASEAN through the engagement of various stakeholders in raising awareness on, and appreciation for, the histories, cultures, arts, traditions and values of the ASEAN region". On 23 June, Ministers of ASCC Council endorsed the proposals forwarded by the Viet Nam chairpersonship.

**“Culture plays a very important role in achieving dynamism in the ASEAN Community where it aims for a dynamic and harmonious community that is aware and proud of its identity, culture, and heritage with the strengthened ability to innovate and proactively contribute to the global community.**

ASEAN Strategic Plan for Culture and Arts  
2016-2025.

The National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) of the Philippines, has launched The Philippines ASEAN Digital Art Contest 2020, with the theme, "Imaging ASEAN Amid COVID-19". As part of its commitment to ASEAN in this 2020 Year of ASEAN Identity, the NCCA calls on Filipino citizens to express their emotions, feelings, ideas and thoughts through digital art that reflect the cultural uniqueness and identity that is shared by ASEAN Member States.

The Asian Development Bank continues to place great emphasis on the tourism sector, for example, through its policy paper "Reviving Tourism amid the COVID-19 Pandemic", published in September. However, many initiatives tend not take into account the vast potential of enhancing heritage, creativity and festivals for boosting domestic tourism, or through planned sub-regional travel bubbles.

## REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

# LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

The Latin American and Caribbean region has been highly engaged with post-COVID UN Response and Recovery planning in the past few months, at the level of individual countries. In addition, progress has been made through regional organizations, such as the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) first ever statistical exercise on the cultural sector, and two policy papers on the cultural sector being produced by the Central American Integration System (SICA). All of these initiatives benefit from the support of UNESCO, particularly through field offices within the region. Furthermore, the Regional Office of Culture for Latin America and the Caribbean UNESCO launched a survey to identify, and disseminate good practices on how cities are preparing to activate heritage and creativity as tools for urban resilience during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The instrument also intends to accelerate the implementation of the New Urban Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Organization of Iber-American States (OIE) celebrated World Indigenous People's Day, on 9 August. The OIE took the occasion to recall regional progress, particularly the agreement in 2019 to create the Ibero-American Institute of Indigenous Languages that will be based in Bolivia, as agreed at the First Meeting of South-South Cooperation.

In June, Iberomuseos launched a database for museums. This resource is intended to disseminate the impact that this health crisis is causing in institutions of the region, as well as serve as a reference model for countries that are developing guidelines.

In the Caribbean, the Minister of Sports, Culture, National Festival and the Arts of Antigua and Barbuda reiterated his country's commitment to hosting the fifteenth edition of CARIFESTA in 2021. He made the remarks during the Eighteenth Meeting of the Interim Festival Directorate (IFD), which was held by video conference on 22 - 23 July 2020. CARIFESTA XV is expected to be held in August 2021 under the theme 'One Caribbean. One Environment. Diverse Cultures.'



The Cultural and Education Committee of the European Parliament is pressing for an earmarking of 1-2% of EU expenditure to flow to culture and media measures. Their proposals have received the support of the current German presidency of the EU Council.

**“Culture is not a luxury that we can only afford when times are good. Art and culture are essential when it comes to tackling societal problems (..), fostering innovation and reflection, broadening empathy, creating space for debate.**  
**EU Commissioner for Culture and Media, Ms Monika Grütters (1st September 2020).**

In September, the European Commission launched a new call for proposals worth €1 million to support artists, cultural organizations and institutions in the EU Outermost Regions, as well as in the Overseas Countries and Territories, in recognition that the cultural sector of these places have been badly hit. The projects will aim at safeguarding, supporting and fostering local and indigenous culture, popular arts and practices, as well as the ancestral culture, improving cultural dialogue and promoting the dissemination of cultural and creative works, especially through digital technologies.

Due to the effects of the coronavirus crisis, the European Commission proposed to give Rijeka (Croatia) and Galway (Ireland) the possibility to extend their year as 2020 European Capitals of Culture until 30 April 2021. The Commission also proposes to postpone the year in which Novi Sad (Serbia) is due to host a European Capital of Culture from 2021 to 2022 and the year in which Timisoara (Romania) and Elefsina (Greece) will hold the title from 2021 to 2023.

The EU also published a report entitled “European Cultural and Creative Cities in COVID-19 times: Jobs at risk and the policy response”. Using statistics from Eurostat and the Joint Research Centre’s Culture and Creative Cities Monitor, the report identified highly vulnerable cultural jobs and creative cities. It also examined the wide-range of policy measures introduced by both national and city governments to maintain Europe’s “cultural capital.”





## MONITORING THE VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS: THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION OF CULTURE

Culture is not only a sector of activity in itself, but also a transversal, intrinsic component across the public policy spectrum, acting as an enabler to accelerate sustainable development processes. While culture does not have a dedicated Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) in the 2030 Agenda, it is reflected across many of the goals and targets including those on sustainable cities (SDG 11), decent work (SDG 8), reduced inequalities (SDG 10), climate action (SDG 13), gender equality (SDG 5), innovation (SDG 9), and peaceful and inclusive societies (SDG 16).

This transversal dimension of culture in public policy making is increasingly reflected in the Voluntary National Reviews submitted by Member States. These reports, which countries are invited to provide to monitor their progress in the achievement of the SDGs, are key indicators of public policy priorities and commitments at country level, and draw a global picture of the ways in which countries envision a more sustainable future. Out of the 205 reports submitted between 2016 and 2020, some 119 made substantive reference to culture in relation to all 17 SDGs, highlighting the growing recognition of the transversal role of culture for sustainable development by the Member States themselves.

Each month, this section presents a selection of initiatives on a particular theme to highlight the transversal role of culture in public policy. Of all the VNRs submitted from 2016-2020, around a third of countries mention an international dimension to their cultural policies. This month, we extract some innovative examples of how they are harnessing culture in diplomatic strategies or for international solidarity.

➤ Since 2016,  
**205**  
VNRs were submitted by

**169** countries

➤ **63%**  
**OF THE 47**  
countries that submitted  
their VNR in 2020

have successfully  
integrated culture by  
mentioning concrete  
policies and initiatives.

In line with the United Nations Decade of Action, UNESCO called upon Member States in the first session of the SDG Moment to continue to harness the transversal potential of culture in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Click to consult the flyer >>>



**CULTURE**  
**A TRANSFORMATIVE**  
**FORCE FOR**  
**SUSTAINABLE**  
**DEVELOPMENT**



“ Throughout history, culture has been able to bring creative responses to the challenges of our times.

AUDREY AZOULAY  
Director-General of UNESCO



## CULTURAL DIPLOMACY TO ADVANCE PARTNERSHIPS AND PEACEBUILDING

For the **United Arab Emirates**, the Expo 2020 (since postponed) is an important national priority for international exchange "showcasing innovation and culture". Since 2010, the **Omani** Programme for Cultural and Scientific Cooperation offers students from several other countries the opportunity to study in the country's public and private higher education institutes. **Andorra** every two years brings together painters from around the world for an artistic workshop (organized through the National Commission since 2008) called Art Camp and **Serbia** also promotes the mobility of artists. **Qatar** aims to promote inter-civilization dialogue, the coexistence of different religions and cultural exchanges with Arab countries, in particular. The significance of hosting the European "Capital of Culture" is highlighted by **Malta** and **Serbia**, and **Bahrain** draws attention to its hosting of the "Capital of Islamic Culture." **Greece** cites a 2015 conference on "Religious and Cultural Pluralism and Peaceful Coexistence in the Middle East", which focused on violent extremism against religious and cultural communities, and the deliberate destruction and looting of religious and cultural heritage. The conference resulted in the establishment of the Centre for Religious Pluralism in the Middle East. **Kenya** draws attention to its role in implementing culture for peace and conflict-resolution component of the Peace-Keeping Mission in Somalia.

## BUILDING STRONG CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS THROUGH SHARED EXPERTISE AND TRAINING



**Cyprus** cites cooperation through a permanent regional organization. Under its Chairpersonship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (November 2016-May 2017), Cyprus supported the development of the new Convention of the Council of Europe on Offences relating to Cultural Property. It also set up in 2012 an informal network of Law Enforcement Authorities and Expertise in the Field of Cultural Goods, aiming to tackle the illicit trafficking of cultural goods at a national and European level. **Morocco** highlighted the support of the Spanish Cooperation Programme in the development a reference guide on mechanisms to combat illicit trafficking in cultural property, as well as training sessions organized to raise awareness among Moroccan civil servants. **Switzerland** also highlights its commitment to combatting the illicit traffic of cultural property.



## SAFEGUARDING HERITAGE AND EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

**Brunei Darussalam** cites the Heart of Borneo Initiative, a trans-boundary cooperation project, in cooperation with Indonesia and Malaysia, to conserve natural heritage. **Honduras** mentions an initiative that encourages inclusive participation of indigenous people to ensure sustainable development and the protection of natural and cultural heritage in the country's eastern Mosquitia region, in collaboration with the region's Unit of Indigenous and Black Peoples, the UN, Germany and the Swiss Confederation. Meanwhile, the Government of **Liberia** reported the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding with the civil society organization Global Ecovillage Network for an initiative for the regeneration of natural environments, the preservation of cultural heritage and the improvement of the livelihoods of various communities.



## CULTURE PROGRESSING IN OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT AID STRATEGIES

The **Netherlands** refers to projects it supports on cultural diversity, natural and cultural heritage, and digital heritage, as well as its intention to extend its Official Development Assistance (ODA) to projects regarding underwater heritage. **Andorra** cites musical, artistic and cultural education work in Madagascar, whilst **Slovakia** highlights a project to develop youth skills in Georgia (including traditional arts, crafts, organic agricultural business and entrepreneurial skills). **Estonia** mentions three transboundary projects that aim to empower women through handicraft production. **Slovenia** highlights its financing of schooling and mediation projects in post-conflict areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina targeted at building a culture of peace, intercultural dialogue and constructive conflict resolution. **Hungary** targets its ODA on the reconstruction of Christian temples and shrines in the Middle East, as well as the refurbishment of educational and cultural institutions in Ukraine through the Eastern Partnership Programme. **Malta** underscores its Masters scholarships for Palestinian students in Cultural Heritage Management, launched in 2014. Meanwhile, **Canada** highlights a contribution made to UNESCO's Heritage Emergency Fund, that reaffirms "Canada's commitment to the protection of cultural heritage and pluralism in armed conflict".

Two further countries report on support received from international funds: **Bulgaria** has received support from the European-Bulgarian Sustainable Cities Fund for an urban development and cultural heritage initiative, while **North Macedonia** cites the Green Climate Fund set up by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which has as concrete priorities forestry and cultural heritage protection and preservation.

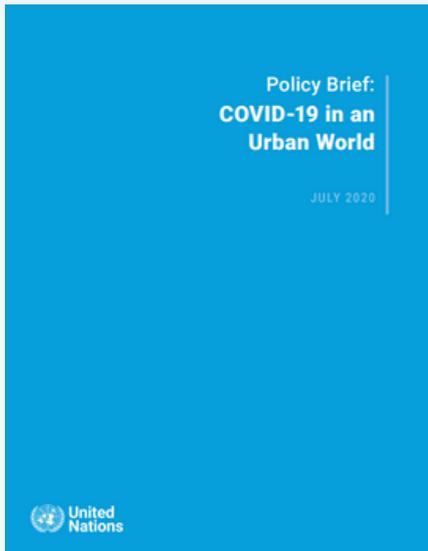


## UNESCO'S CONVENTIONS: SHARED LANDMARKS TO ADVANCE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The UNESCO Cultural Conventions are first and foremost intended as shared instruments to bring together the international community around a set of core concepts and values, reflecting a transformative and humanistic vision of societies. These normative instruments establish fundamental principles of equality and solidarity, which provide common references and standards that result from a worldwide collaborative process. The federating power of these normative instruments is acknowledged by the countries through their regular mention of UNESCO Culture Conventions in the VNRs. Twenty-one countries thus report on their engagement in the UNESCO Culture for Development Indicators (CDIS) and three countries referred to the ratification of international normative instruments related to culture. Furthermore, **Bangladesh**, **Bulgaria** and the **Republic of Moldova** mention intangible cultural heritage related projects. **Bulgaria**, **Democratic Republic of Congo**, **Kyrgyz Republic**, **Micronesia**, **North Macedonia** and **Ukraine** mention natural heritage culture-related projects or sites in the World Heritage List and another four **Bulgaria**, **Morocco**, the **Republic of Moldova** and the **Syrian Arab Republic** make direct reference to UNESCO Conventions.



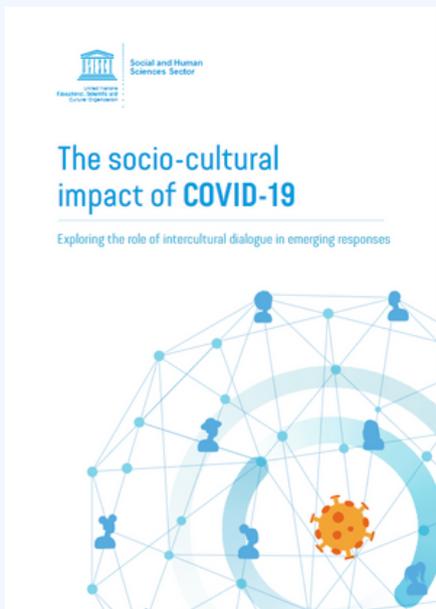
## Recent Publications



### UNSG Policy Brief COVID-19 in an Urban World:

In one of the latest Policy Briefs of the UN Secretary-General, there are references to cultural policies as part of how governments serve as front-line responders in crisis response, recovery and rebuilding.

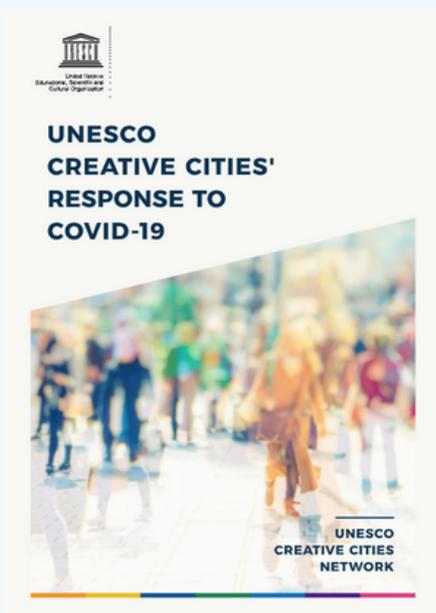
Report available in English & French



### The socio-cultural impact of COVID-19: Exploring the role of intercultural dialogue in emerging responses:

This brief illustrates how proponents and practitioners of intercultural dialogue adapted during the COVID-19 lockdown, with restrictions on almost all forms of direct human contact and mobility. It also explores new forms of ethno-cultural racism, intensified inequalities, and further exposed systematic structural discrimination.

Report available in English



### UNESCO Creative Cities Response to COVID-19:

This publication maps the way in which members of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network used their cultural and creative sectors, as part of the larger response to the pandemic, but also of how they have supported the cultural and creative sector during these challenging times.

Report available in English





FIND OUT MORE...



### Harnessing culture in times of crises:

This Issue Note explores the ways in which culture has been harnessed during the COVID-19 pandemic and other crises to foster more inclusive education and better learning outcomes.

Report available in English, Chinese & Russian



### Freedom and Creativity: Defending Art, Defending Diversity

“Freedom & Creativity” explores issues of artistic freedom, including legal rights, as well as the social and economic rights of artists and cultural professionals.

Report available in English, French and Spanish



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