



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

Climate change is the defining challenge of our time and the role of culture in climate action has long been underestimated and underutilised. The cultural sector is already beginning to feel the negative impact of climate change. Yet, natural and cultural heritage, museums, living heritage, artists and the entire cultural sector represent an untapped wellspring of potential to enhance global action.

The **Cultural Policy Highlights** section features the latest measures at the national level.

In the **Cutting Edge** section, we explore how 2021 could be a decisive year in stepping up culture's contribution to the climate change agenda. From actions to reduce the rate of climate change, adapt to its impact and change attitudes, culture is an important tool to tackle this society-wide issue. Its contribution to shaping values in the global debate, as well as translate global ambitions to locally-adapted solutions is urgent, now more than ever.

The **Regional Perspectives** section covers the latest developments at the regional and sub-regional level, including actions to green the cultural sector.

Member States have included in their Voluntary National Reviews efforts to adapt to climate change through culture, which are explored in the **Culture in the 2030 Agenda** section.

See **Find Out More** for news on the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, including the latest inscriptions and the launch of an advocacy tool.



World Heritage site Venice, Italy Getty Images



# CULTURAL POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

This section showcases a selection of the latest developments in cultural public policy from UNESCO Member States. 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.



lessor42

The first digital museum of Africa was inaugurated at the French Institute in **Côte d'Ivoire** on 27 November. This initiative, entitled "Micro-folies", was launched by the Ministry of Culture and Francophonie in coordination with French cultural institutions, including La Villette cultural park. Over a thousand artworks are available for viewing and the Ivorian authorities hope to increasingly feature local creations.

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism of **China** has announced the establishment of a national archaeological research centre under the National Cultural Heritage Administration. Modelled on the national centre of underwater cultural heritage, the new centre will focus on the excavation, study and preservation of cultural relics, with a view to contributing to global research.

In **Algeria**, the Ministry of Arts and Culture has disclosed plans for a draft law to guarantee the rights of artists and cultural professionals. The law would also regulate the working relations of the various stakeholders in artistic fields and ensure regular coordination meetings for its implementation.



mglobalaffairs

The Ministry for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht of **Ireland** has published the country's first ever national cultural policy framework: Culture 2025 – A National Cultural Policy Framework to 2025. It sets the direction for Government policy across the cultural sector, including the arts, the Irish language and the creative, heritage and audiovisual sectors.

In **Costa Rica**, the Community Museum of Yimba Cájic in the Indigenous community of Rey Currá, has been reopened following a three-year closure due to a tropical storm. The museum is a repository of knowledge about the ancient history of the community, safeguards its traditional expressions and practices, and provides economic opportunities for local artisans.



thecostaricanews



# CULTURAL POLICY HIGHLIGHTS



East-West Ghana All-Stars

The Ministry of Tourism Arts and Culture of **Ghana** has announced an insurance scheme for cultural professionals, to cover accidents in the line of work. The scheme, the first of its kind in the country, takes effect on 1 January 2021. The first-year premium will be funded by government and subsequently self-paid by members from 2022.

In **Egypt**, a reinforced collaboration between the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education has seen the inauguration of the country's first artisan technical school for applied technology, and the opening of a Folklore Museum at the National Arts Academy. The Higher Institute of Arabic Music has also been reopened following renovation works. The new facilities are part of the country's sustainable development strategy.



el-mastaba



adequatetravel

The Department of Culture, Art and Historical Heritage in the Lunda Norte province of **Angola** has launched an appeal for the population to collaborate in the preservation of historical sites and monuments in order to boost the tourism industry. Next year, the Department will carry out an inventory and restoration of monuments and sites – which include a museum, obelisk and church - with a view to having them classified as sites and monuments.

The Ministry for Culture and Tourism of **Turkey** has published its Cultural Industries Support and Incentives Guide in order to inform cultural and creative industry representatives about all available state support to the sector. It has also launched a "Cultural Industries Platform" to facilitate exchange among stakeholders in the cultural and creative industries.

The Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture of **Malaysia** has announced a detailed recovery plan in its efforts to reinvigorate the national economy through the tourism sector. The strategy focuses on boosting domestic tourism and includes collaboration with a major crafts retailer to boost sales of Malaysian crafts.



The **Kenya** School of Government is working with the Kenya Film Classification Board to design a curriculum to address the shortfall of skills of potential young filmmakers. The initiative aims to support jobs and wealth creation. The nine-month training, scheduled to begin in January 2021, will see 50 youths enjoy a full scholarship.



# CULTURAL POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

The **Bahrain** Authority for Culture and Antiquity has announced the Made in Bahrain initiative that seeks to promote traditional crafts, boosting sustainable creative industries and cultural tourism, as well as safeguarding intangible cultural heritage practices.



TradeArabia News Service



The Ministry of Culture, Information, and Tourism of **Kyrgyzstan** has announced a project to strengthen the management of culture and cultural industries within the country. The project aims to provide a centralised cultural management digital platform for the public administration, digitise cultural resources for the wider population to access and boost jobs in the cultural sector.

MehmetO, Shutterstock

The Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism of **Italy** has announced a further 345 million euros intended to support its cultural and tourism sector. Measures include direct support to workers without social security protection, tax incentives for film production, and support for cultural institutions and the book industry.



Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism

In **Argentina**, the Ministry of Culture and the National Bank of Argentina have signed a framework agreement for cooperation and collaboration, to strengthen the country's cultural industries sector. The aim is to promote equitable inclusion, improve cultural productivity and boost the export of cultural goods and services.



Amanda Leigh Lichtenstein

In **Tanzania**, the Ministry of Information, Culture, Arts and Sports has announced measures to help increase royalty collection for artists and increased the penalty for piracy. It has also directed the institutions that regulate the arts sector in the country to provide free legal advice to artists to help protect their interests.



# CULTURAL POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

The National Secretariat of Culture of **Paraguay** has launched the first national digital platform of historical sites. The interactive platform, called Renda, includes a geolocation system, historical information and a photo gallery to raise-awareness of the country's cultural heritage.



Donyanedomam, Getty Images

The Ministry of Culture of **Saudi Arabia** has launched a Fashion Incubation Programme with the aim of supporting Saudi creative entrepreneurs to become pioneers in the local, regional and international fashion markets.

The Ministry of Employment and Labour of the **Republic of Korea** has announced that artists under work contracts who earn a monthly income of at least 500,000 won (\$460) will be eligible for coverage under the amended Employment Insurance Act. This will extend unemployment and maternity benefits to freelance artists.

In **Malta**, the Ministry for National Heritage, Arts and Local Government has launched its first Regional Cultural Strategy with the aim of strengthening the role of culture in building stronger and more cohesive communities, as a catalyst for sustainable development. Its scope includes issues of digitalisation, well-being and environmental awareness.



Alexandra Pace

The Ministries of Culture and Education of **El Salvador** have launched a cultural education programme on the national television channel that aims to boost quality education for children and youth. The "Aprendamosencasa" (Let's learn at home) initiative will include content on museums, archeological sites and artistic expressions, as well as teaching the country's indigenous language.



Ministerios de Educación y de Cultura, El Salvador

The National Arts Council and the Ministry of Culture of the **Slovak Republic** have launched a register of professional artists and other cultural professionals to bolster its support and technical systems in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Bolivia** has inaugurated a new Ministry of Culture, Decolonisation, and Depatriarchalisation to promote cultural policies for cultural, economic, and social development that reflect the diversity of the country.



# Culture: the ultimate renewable resource to tackle climate change



World Heritage site Venice, Italy Getty Images

**The clock is ticking to halt the devastating impact of climate change.** According to the [World Meteorological Organization](#), 2020 will be one of the three warmest years since records began. Oceans continue to heat and sea levels are rising, posing a particular threat to coastal settlements and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Disasters such as drought, floods and cyclones are becoming more frequent and more severe, leading to food and water scarcity. The societal impact is great, with potential conflict, economic upheaval, migration and the destruction of communities' very way of life.

**The year 2020 was set to be a “make or break” year, marking 5 years since the adoption of the [Paris Agreement](#),** whereby 195 countries and the European Union agreed to limit gas emissions and keep the global temperature rise to under 1.5°. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to the postponement of the 26th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) - [COP 26](#) - (now scheduled for November 2021 in the United Kingdom), and the [UN Biodiversity Conference](#) COP 15, (scheduled for May 2021 in China). Nevertheless, United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, called for “[bold climate action](#)”, at the UN Climate Action Summit in September. His report refers, for the very first time, to the effects of climate change on cultural heritage in all its forms (from built to natural heritage and living heritage). Crucially, it entrusts UNESCO with the leadership role to drive research, analysis and action to sensitize Member States and mobilize action to step up protection and conservation efforts, as well as concerted measures for mitigation and adaptation.



**Climate change is a complex issue, standing at the crossroads of science, ethics, society, education and, of course, culture – a dimension that has for too long been under-valued.** Not only is climate change having a profound impact on culture – from the destruction of heritage, the disruption of artists livelihoods and the potential devastation to traditional ways of life – culture can also bring invaluable lessons to strategies to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Both mitigation - reducing or preventing the impacts of climate change - and adaptation - adjusting to its now inevitable consequences - are the key pillars of global climate policy, working towards Goal 13 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda, as well as contributing to all 16 other goals. UNESCO, as the only UN agency with a mandate to span culture, the sciences and education, is uniquely positioned to respond to push the boundaries of culture's transformational power.

**UNESCO has been stepping up its efforts.** Building on its overall [Strategy for Climate Action 2018-2021](#), UNESCO has recently set up a Reflection Group on Culture and Climate Change, which brings together experts from academia, international organizations and civil society to explore concrete ways to enhance the role of cultural and natural heritage, intangible cultural heritage and the creative economy, in tackling climate change. More broadly, the cultural sphere is also a space for dialogue, encompassing diverse worldviews and cultural values, so that societal change can radiate from our museums, cultural centres, cities, schools and traditional communities. Given the urgency of the climate crisis, the need for culture as a vital resource has never been greater.

## **Loading the dice: the climate change threat to culture**

**For several years, we have witnessed how climate change increasingly puts culture in peril.** World Heritage sites - from the Cordilleras' Rice Terraces of the Philippines to the Galápagos Islands of Ecuador, from the Neolithic monuments of the Orkney Islands in UK to the Forest of the Cedars of God (Horsh Arz el-Rab) in Lebanon – are already significantly negatively affected by changing climatic conditions. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) also reports in its recently published [World Heritage Outlook 3](#), that climate change is the biggest threat to natural World Heritage properties, highlighting that a third of the 252 natural World Heritage sites are at risk. Changing weather patterns are also putting severe pressure on natural heritage. In 2018, fires destroyed more than 80,000 hectares of forest and grassland in the [Mount Kenya National Park](#); almost half of the area of the UNESCO World Heritage site. Many marine World Heritage sites are tropical coral reefs whose exposure to bleaching events is increasing at such an alarming rate that [experts warn that coral reefs are likely to disappear by 2100 unless CO2 emissions drastically reduce](#). Increased ocean temperature and acidification also pose a threat to marine biodiversity, as well as underwater cultural heritage sites.



**Cultural World Heritage sites are also exposed to the threat, as many ancient buildings and sites were designed for a specific local climate.** Around 130 sites, such as India's Elephanta Caves, are at risk from rising sea levels, and changes in the Adriatic Sea have already damaged hundreds of buildings in Venice, Italy. Historic buildings and monuments are vulnerable to climate-related damage from extreme wind and rainfall whilst building foundations can be undermined and climate fluctuations inside buildings can cause mould, rot and insect infestations. Changes in temperature and water interactions are particularly important for earthen architecture, and many such sites – for example the Djenné mosque in Mali – are at risk from climate change. Furthermore, the conditions for conservation of archaeological evidence may be degraded due to increasing soil temperature. Overall, since 2010 the World Heritage Committee has examined at least 170 state of conservation reports for 41 World Heritage properties in 33 countries to monitor specifically the impact of climate change on their Outstanding Universal Value as part of the statutory reactive monitoring process.

**Climate change is also disrupting socio-cultural aspects of our lives.** Many communities around the world have been forced to change the way they live, work, worship and socialize, whether in small traditional villages or large mega-cities of over 20 million inhabitants. Least developed countries (LDC) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are among the most vulnerable and often most directly exposed to the consequences of climate change. The havoc wrought by cyclones and hurricanes in recent years in Caribbean and Pacific SIDS is particularly emblematic of extreme weather events that threaten the traditional way of life of communities. It is not just the traditional knowledge of these societies developed over centuries through interaction with their natural surroundings that is under threat. All aspects of their intangible cultural heritage – values, oral traditions, performing arts, social practices and festive events – are in jeopardy, and their disappearance would impoverish all of humanity, while at the same time, weakening communities' ability to draw on their cultural resources to fight against climate change and adapt to its consequences. In extreme cases, whole communities may end up being forced to migrate abandoning their cultural heritage, both built and living.

World Heritage site the Galapagos Islands, Ecuador. goway







**There is also an economic cost of the impact of climate change on culture.** For example, following the Tropical Cyclone that struck Vanuatu in 2015, the estimated costs required for the rehabilitation of the cultural sector was estimated at USD 1.4 million. This included the reconstruction of the libraries, arts centres, historical buildings and churches in Port Vila, as well as the Roi Mata's Domain – a World Heritage site. Climate change also threatens the diversity of cultural expressions and the cultural and creative industries, with the loss of economic opportunities damaging the livelihoods of artists and cultural professionals. It is estimated that the costs of cancelling the 2017 Dominica World Creole Music Festival following a hurricane was USD 2.3 million. Many countries, including the SIDS, rely on cultural tourism to support their economies. Globally, coastal tourism is the largest component of the sector, which will be heavily affected by rising sea levels, coastal flooding, beach erosion and worsening storm surges. As noted in a UNESCO 2016 publication, published with the UN Environment Programme and Union of Concerned Scientists, [World Heritage and Tourism in a Changing Climate](#), a 1-metre sea-level rise would be likely to inundate up to 60 per cent of the Caribbean region's tourist resort properties.

**In addition to the direct impact of climate change, cultural and natural heritage sites may also, paradoxically, be impacted by large sized infrastructure projects intended to foster ecological transition.** Green energy infrastructure such as dams or wind power plants, in particular, can impact the authenticity or integrity of World Heritage sites, particularly cultural or natural landscapes, thus jeopardizing their Outstanding Universal Value. The current acceleration of public investment towards green infrastructure is likely to exacerbate these cases, requiring comprehensive approaches to tackle complex trade-off, involving competing priorities.

World Heritage site Cordillera Rice Terraces, Phillippines. Leonid Andronov / Getty Images





### **Culture: the untapped wellspring in mitigation efforts**

**Yet, culture is not a passive victim of the consequences of climate change: it is a huge untapped wellspring of potential in efforts to mitigate its impact and adapt in its wake.** Natural World Heritage sites, for example, are ecosystems on land and at sea that act as “carbon sinks” to extract greenhouse emissions. UNESCO-designated sites, including UNESCO Biosphere Reserves, Global Geoparks and World Heritage properties, protect approximately 10 million square kilometres of cultural heritage and biodiversity around the world – the equivalent of the size of China. Many of the natural heritage sites, such as the Central Amazon Conservation Complex - the largest protected area in the Amazon Basin- serve this critical function. A 2014 International Union for Conservation of Nature study found that an estimated 5.7 billion tonnes of forest biomass carbon is stored within natural World Heritage sites in the pan-tropical regions of the world alone. Well-preserved forests and coastal habitats can help provide vital ecosystem services, including natural protection against storms and floods.



**UNESCO-designated sites protect approximately  
10 million square kilometres  
of cultural heritage and biodiversity around the world**

**World Heritage sites can also act as learning laboratories for the study and mitigation of climate impacts, being places to test resilient management strategies.** For example, in 2017, UNESCO published the first global scientific assessment of the impact of climate change on World Heritage coral reefs and the following year launched an initiative to establish an effective strategy for climate resilience in five coral reefs inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List: the Rock Islands Southern Lagoon (Palau), the Lagoons of New Caledonia (France), the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System (Belize), the Ningaloo Coast, and the Great Barrier Reef (Australia). Cultural World Heritage sites, particularly World Heritage Cities, can also act as observatories of climate change and laboratories for climate adaptation, experimenting with sustainable, low carbon solutions to issues such as housing, transportation or urban conservation. Medinas for example, - dense, walkable, mixed-use settlements specific to Arab cities, such as the World Heritage city Fez in Morocco - can offer lessons for the environmental sustainability of cities. Likewise, local professional practices that use local techniques and materials for urban conservation and regeneration are also conducive to the ecological transition.



**Whilst World Heritage Cities can bring vernacular wisdom to encourage the sustainable use of natural resources, cities are also at the forefront of innovation and creativity in the transition to more responsible production and consumption patterns.** Cities account for more than 75% of global greenhouse gas emissions and, to combat this trend, several of the 246 members of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network demonstrate how cities can adopt more sustainable practices or spark debate about climate change. For instance, the Creative City of Chengdu, China (Gastronomy) has worked to exchange coal with clean fuel in 4,000 of its local restaurants. In the United States of America, Austin (Media Arts) and Paducah (Crafts and Folk Art) are finding creative solutions to recycle and upcycle waste materials. In Australia, Melbourne (Literature) is using literature and writing as a tool to help communities gaining a better comprehension of the challenge of climate change and Seoul, Republic of Korea (Design), which is aiming to be a zero-waste city by 2030, opened the world's largest cultural complex dedicated to upcycling in 2017.

**Efforts are also being made by the creative sector to re-shape production processes and lessen its carbon footprint.** Book printing has a significant impact on forests, whilst cinema and music festivals are often energy intensive, and artists' increasing use of digital technologies results in high energy consumption, as well as electronic waste. The 2018 UNESCO Reshaping Cultural Policies report laments that whilst awareness of environmental and sustainability issues has increased among Member States, this has not always translated into cultural policies that are more mindful of climate change. It does, however, cite as good examples Finland's comprehensive Cultural Environmental Strategy and the Rocking the Daisies Music festival in South Africa, which achieved an 80% reduction in its carbon footprint through the use of biodiesel generators and eliminated harmful grey water and recycling trash.

World Heritage site, Fez, Morocco. bestourism





### Future-proofing: culture for adaptation

**The effects of climate change are already being felt around the world and culture provides answers to adapt to this new reality.** Living heritage, in the form of local and indigenous knowledge, is a particularly vital source of resilience, through traditional food security strategies or water and land management techniques. For example, the Kalasha people of the Hindu Kush mountain ranges of Pakistan use an ancestral meteorological and astronomical knowledge system called "Suri Jagek", to help predict weather patterns, plan their harvests and raise livestock. This practice, inscribed on the [UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding in 2018](#), and other such practices can help communities to respond collectively to these increasingly volatile weather patterns and ensure the continuity of their way of life. Similarly, following Tropical Cyclone Pam that devastated the Pacific Island of Vanuatu in 2015, it was discovered that the traditional [nakamal buildings](#) built with modern materials and techniques suffered greater damage than nakamals built using local materials and traditional building skills. This traditional know-how can guide local planning to make communities more resilient.

**The Paris Agreement recognises that climate action must "be based on and guided by [...] traditional knowledge, knowledge of indigenous peoples and local knowledge systems".** It was precisely in this vein that the [Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform](#) was set up as part of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process to enhance capacity building and knowledge sharing. UNESCO's [Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems programme](#) (LINKS) also advocates for the inclusion of local and indigenous knowledge in climate science and policy processes from the local level to the global level. LINKS has been influential in ensuring that local and indigenous knowledge holders and their knowledge are included in contemporary science-policy-society fora on issues such as biodiversity, climate change, natural disaster preparedness and sustainable development. Enhancing the linkages between scientific and technical knowledge and local knowledge systems multiplies the possibilities of finding robust solutions to the climate crisis. The roll-out of the [UNESCO Culture.2030 Indicators](#) will also provide evidence base, particularly through the indicator on "Climate Adaptation and Resilience", intended to assess at the national or local level measures undertaken to foster climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Traditional nakamal buildings, Vanuatu. maison-monde





**Given the vital role of diverse knowledge systems, UNESCO continually alerts on the erosion of cultural diversity, intrinsically linked to biodiversity – whose degradation is accelerated by climate change.** The 2001 UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity clearly emphasises the link between culture and nature, highlighting that “cultural diversity is as necessary to humankind as biodiversity is to nature.” Languages are particularly important and an estimated 5000 of the world’s 7000 languages are indigenous languages, many of which appear on the UNESCO Interactive Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger. It is estimated that one of the world’s languages disappears every two weeks. When a language vanishes, it represents the loss of a whole worldview and an entire system of knowledge, practices and know-how.

**The culture sector itself needs to adapt and UNESCO is also stepping up its support for culture climate change resilience through capacity-building.**

In May 2014, UNESCO published a practical guide to Climate Change Adaptation for Natural World Heritage Sites for site managers to support more sustainable practices and adaptation strategies. UNESCO also directly lends support to communities to safeguard their living heritage, such as through the international assistance provided to the pastoralist Samburu community in northern Kenya, which is under stress due to the rapidly changing environment of the Biosphere Reserve where they live. In 2018, UNESCO launched an ambitious, transversal project in the Lake Chad Basin - in partnership with the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the African Development Bank - which aims to safeguard and enhance natural and cultural resources in order to reduce poverty and promote peace. Decreases in rainfall dwindled Lake Chad water levels and the local region has been plagued by conflict and insecurity. One of the BIOSphere and Heritage of Lake Chad (BIOPALT) project objectives is to support the bordering countries of Cameroon, Chad, the Central African Republic, Niger and Nigeria in preparing the dossier to nominate the lake as a World Heritage site, which involves updating and improving knowledge of Lake Chad’s natural resources, and building capacity for the management and protection of these resources.

Saruni





Developing disaster risk reduction strategies for cultural heritage and supporting culture in emergencies is also increasingly predominant in UNESCO's work. UNESCO strongly engages with the UN Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and has contributed to the 2010 publication on Managing Disaster Risks for World Heritage. The UNESCO Culture Conventions in relation to World Heritage and intangible cultural heritage are also reinforcing mechanisms to ensure that management strategies are adequate. At regional level, particularly in the Caribbean and Pacific, UNESCO field offices are highly engaged with disaster planning efforts, showing a significant recognition of the importance of culture for communities in times of crisis. When disasters do occur – such as earthquakes, fires and extreme weather events – UNESCO has the capacity to work closely with the UN Country Teams to carry out Post-Disaster Needs Assessments for culture to assess damage and address needs. This methodology has been deployed, for example, to assess damage in the wake of Tropical Cyclone Gita that struck the Kingdom of Tonga in 2018 causing damage to several historical buildings and cultural heritage sites, including those on the Tentative List for World Heritage and was funded by the UNESCO Heritage Emergency Fund.

### **Behavioural change: culture as a compass**

**Tackling climate change is fundamentally an ethical issue.** Responses to climate change that do not take ethics into account have the potential to devastate entire communities, create new paradigms of inequality and uneven distribution, and render more vulnerable those who have already found themselves uprooted by climate change related disasters and conflicts. Climate change necessitates a values-based approach, one that is rooted in equity, justice and solidarity. In 2017, UNESCO Member States adopted a global Declaration of Ethical Principles in relation to Climate Change and continues to advocate for a values-based approach, under the slogan "Changing Minds Not the Climate". Education is key, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG target 4.7) explicitly mention equipping learners with the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including culture's contribution. UNESCO's Education for Sustainable Development Programme focuses on sustainable development issues, such as climate change and biodiversity by encouraging responsible actors who resolve challenges, respect cultural diversity and contribute to creating a more sustainable world.





Greenland's Ilulissat Icefjord (Denmark), a World Heritage site. Maria Sahai

**Museums, cultural institutions and heritage site interpretation centres can be key actors for raising awareness and promoting dialogue around climate action.** They can particularly illustrate the ways in which past human experiences of climate change can inform our responses to climate change today, including underwater archaeological sites of past civilizations that have already succumbed to previous, natural climatic changes. By being examples of climate change impact and possible response, World Heritage sites can stimulate awareness-raising more broadly. For instance, the World Heritage site of Greenland's Ilulissat Icefjord (Denmark), is one of the fastest-melting and most impressive glaciers in the world and is a place where visitors can see spectacular landscapes at the front-line of global climate change.

**Artists play a particularly important role in raising awareness,** whether by photographers documenting the wonders of the natural world, films about climate change or youth theatre initiatives to engage young people. The Culture Fund of Zimbabwe Trust, for instance, has been working on a collaborative arts and environmental sustainability programme since 2012 to raise awareness of products and productions that showcase how arts and culture can tackle environmental issues. Culture also helps people shape the narrative around climate change as a key tool for storytelling and can be a means of helping communities cope with anxiety or loss of one's culture in relation to climate change.

The Klimahaus climate change museum, Germany. Klimahaus Bremerhaven





### Charting the way forward

**Despite the unique position of culture to bolster mitigation, adaptation and behavioural change efforts in the fight against climate change, it has so far been underestimated and under-utilized.** Culture is not systematically integrated into the United Nations Convention on Climate Change (1992) nor the Paris Agreement (2015), the two main instruments guiding international policy-making. One of the main, urgent tasks of UNESCO's new Reflection Group on Culture and Climate Change and the recently launched initiative on Cultural Heritage and Climate Change is to work with the International Council on Museums and Sites (ICOMOS) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to ensure the integration of culture into the global climate agenda, including Assessment Reports and Special Reports of the IPCC, the UN body tasked with assessing the science related to climate change. A lack of data, research and peer-reviewed publications on the linkages between culture and climate change remain a significant barrier, requiring significant investment in human resources and research. Developing this body of research would, furthermore, help countries integrate culture - particularly the role of natural heritage sites as sinks for greenhouse gas emissions - into their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to the Paris Agreement, which are legally-binding country action plans for meeting climate change targets. Integrating culture into regional strategies, policy papers or dialogue mechanisms will also reinforce climate action.

**Culture-based approaches can help shift the focus of climate negotiations from competing interests to shared values and the common good** and UNESCO is increasingly vocal on the international stage in promoting culture for climate action. In 2019, during the PreCOP meeting - a worldwide public consultation for governments and civil society organizations to exchange - UNESCO organised two discussions on the role of culture for climate action and for sustainable cities, the first time that culture was integrated into the PreCOP process. UNESCO also participated in the COP25 in an event organized by Greece at the European Union Pavilion on Climate Change Impacts on Cultural and Natural Heritage; the Day After, alongside the World Meteorological Organization, the United National Social Development Network and ICOMOS. In 2021, culture will be included in the COP26 meeting, as well as the upcoming G20 hosted by Italy where heritage and climate change will be in the spotlight. Furthermore, following the request of the UN Secretary General for UNESCO to take a greater lead in addressing culture and climate change, UNESCO is seeking to establish a Follow-up Committee with the support of UNFCCC and Greece to continue outreach and collaboration towards designing, developing and implementing plans and programmes to help mitigate the effects of climate change on cultural and natural heritage. At the same time, Greece is set to launch a new initiative, endorsed by UNESCO, Addressing Climate Change Impact on Cultural and Natural Heritage that will serve as a flexible mechanism for knowledge exchange between academia, policymakers, institutional partners and the civil society at all levels, which will report to this Committee.





**Culture is the bridge between global ambitions and locally-adapted solutions**, at the regional, national and community level. At a national level, strengthening the synergies between culture and other policy areas will be essential for more comprehensive and effective policy action. Given the fundamentally ethical nature of the climate change issue, culture can enhance human-centred and environmentally sustainable models of society that respect the intrinsic linkages between cultural and biological diversity. Bringing culture into environmental policies, for example, can incorporate communities' practices to construct tailor-made solutions for climate mitigation and adaptation strategies. Climate change is reshaping the entire policy landscape. As such, culture can also propose solutions for diverse policy areas related to, for example, urban planning, food security, poverty reduction and new modes of responsible consumption and production, including for tourism. UNESCO in particular advocates for the inclusion of culture in education systems, not only to nurture the knowledge, attitudes values and behaviours to empower a new generation of global citizens in the face of climate change, but also to spark the creativity and innovation needed for an uncertain future. Supporting youth leadership on climate change through culture-based education resonates and is an important catalyst for citizen engagement.

**Finally, cultural policies themselves should also be reviewed and adapted to accelerate their contribution to climate action.** Currently, they rarely systematically address the issue of climate change - despite the fact that its consequences are already affecting cultural and natural heritage, living heritage and the creative sector - even if there are several examples of Caribbean and Pacific SIDS incorporating issues related to climate and resilience. There is potential to reduce the carbon footprint of the cultural and creative industries, World Heritage site managers have a role to play in ensuring their sites are sustainably managed and stakeholders in the tourism sector can take steps to ensure that culture can be enjoyed in greater harmony with the natural environment, as well as local communities.

Bleaching of coral reefs. XL CATLIN SEAVIEW SURVEY





As such, UNESCO continues to strengthen its policy advice, providing conceptual and operational tools on culture and climate change, particularly through its Culture Conventions. It is currently in the process of updating its 2007 Policy Document on the Impacts of Climate Change on World Heritage Properties to make it more action-oriented and provide concrete guidance for Member States. Furthermore, through its network of field offices, it is also supporting countries to integrate climate resilience into national cultural policies.

**Climate action is a complex issue and culture plays a fundamental role in the mitigation, adaption and behavioural change strategies.** It also serves to root the global climate debate in shared values. UNESCO is already leading the way to ensure that the full contribution of the cultural dimension is increasingly brought to bear but it will take the political will and concerted efforts of Member States, civil society organizations, World Heritage site managers, cultural industry professionals, indigenous community leaders, museum directors, artists, educators, youth activists and global citizens around the world to realise its full potential, and so pass on the guardianship of our fragile blue and green planet to future generations.



Artists, such as Spanish sculpture Isaac Cordal who creates miniature ephemeral street art on societal issues, can help raise awareness about the issue of climate change. Isaac Cordal, BLK River Festival, Vienna, Austria



The members and representatives of Education, Science and Culture of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), met in the capital of Gambia in early December for [an information meeting](#), on future orientations for cultural policies in the sub-region. The ECOWAS Regional Cultural Policy Document - designed to promote and safeguard regional cultural heritage and enhance the professional development of artists and cultural stakeholders - and its accompanying Action Plan 2020-2022 were presented. Representatives also discussed the ECOWAS 2019-2023 Action Plan on the Return of African Cultural Property to their Countries of Origin that provides strategic guidelines for regional and joint action. Both documents were officially adopted in [July 2019 by ECOWAS Ministers of Culture](#), at which a variety of issues were discussed, including data collection, the protection of intellectual property, funding for culture and the establishment of vocational training institutes.

The African Development Bank has launched its first Fashionomics Africa [online contest for sustainable and innovative circular fashion](#). The competition aims to celebrate African fashion brands that will change how we produce, buy, use, and recycle fashion and that encourage a more sustainable change in consumer behavior. Organizers note that the "textile and fashion industry accounts for nearly 10% of global carbon emissions, ranking as the world's second-largest industrial polluter, after the oil sector".

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The Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) hosted in December a coordination meeting that brought together several directors of Arab film festivals and representatives of film institutions to discuss strategies for mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the industry. Participants discussed ways to harness digital platforms for broadcasting cultural and artistic content, as well as the protection of the rights of artists and creators. A working group was established to draft a roadmap to design practical measures to support the cinema sector of countries in the Arab States.

The Islamic World Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) called for a Global Partnership for Islamic Art for international organizations, government bodies, and associations working in the field of culture and arts to increase their coordination efforts. The goal is to develop a mutually agreed global artistic system on the role of Islamic art in building human civilization and spreading the values of peace. The call was made during the International Virtual Symposium on the Contribution of Islamic Art to Building Human civilization and Spreading Peace Values, held to celebrate the first International Islamic Art Day as designated by UNESCO and its contribution to human civilization. ICESCO has also launched a Virtual Prize for Calligraphy, Patterns, and Miniatures in celebration of the International Day of Islamic Art.

Gaza Documentary Film, Mashable Middle East





The Pacific Community (SPC), during its 10th Nature Conservation and Protected Areas Conference, organized a side event to explore pathways for social and economic development while fostering nature conservation and promoting cultural heritage. In the face of environmental degradation, climate change and biodiversity loss, the event intended to “highlight the urgent need to mainstream sustainable farming practices and to promote traditional knowledge on biodiversity, including the use of plants and soil management”. It also presented how SPC helps foster the preservation of natural resources through activities through the scale-up of community-based ecosystem approaches to fisheries management. Also, in November, the SPC published an updated introductory guide on Cultural Etiquette in the Pacific showcasing the diverse array of cultural knowledge and practices found throughout the 26 countries of the SPC. The booklet, first published in 2005, serves as an educational tool to ensure that the SPC “can continue providing effective service to Pacific communities”.

Ministers and senior officials of the 11 member countries of the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Programme (CAREC) of the Asian Development Bank have endorsed a new long-term strategy, to promote safe, sustainable, and inclusive tourism development in the region, and enhance its attractiveness as a competitive tourism destination globally. The CAREC Tourism Strategy 2030 outlines a long-term plan to capitalize on the sub-region's unique culture, including through building a common brand “Visit Silk Road”. Representatives at the meeting recognized that the sub-region is home to a wide range of historical and cultural heritage sites, unique gastronomy and local traditions, and an underexplored network of cities and natural environments.

allthatsinteresting





## EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

European Union (EU) ministers of culture and the audiovisual sector welcomed the substantial budget increase allocated to the Creative Europe programme for the period 2021-2027, during a meeting in December. The programme will receive a 0.6 billion EUR boost to support to the cultural and creative sector and aims to be more inclusive, focus more on gender equality and provide greater support to the music sector. The Ministers also exchanged ideas on other initiatives to strengthen support to the cultural and creative sector. These included creating an internet portal on funding opportunities for artists and creators across the EU; strengthening the EU legal framework in relation to, for example, copyright; and creating greater synergies with other EU programmes, including the Erasmus+ student exchange programme, Horizon Europe research and innovation programme, Digital Europe and the European Regional Development Fund.

The European Commission has published a new strategy to boost renovation, entitled A Renovation Wave for Europe – Greening our buildings, creating jobs, improving lives, to accelerate progress towards the objective of becoming carbon neutral. The report recognizes that “Europe’s building stock is both unique and heterogeneous in its expression of the cultural diversity and history of our continent” but that most of those existing buildings are not energy-efficient. The strategy, therefore, aims to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals by providing affordable housing while safeguarding cultural heritage.

As part of the programme for Climate Heritage Week (16-22 November), the Climate Heritage Network, in partnership with Europa Nostra and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and with the support of the European Investment Bank Institute, organized an event exploring how heritage can contribute to the European Green Deal. The event, entitled Putting Cultural Heritage at the Centre of the European Green Deal: A preview of the European Heritage Green Paper, was an opportunity to present the paper that is currently being finalized by Europa Nostra and ICOMOS.

Sheppard Robson





# LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Ministers of culture and ministers of education of the Central America Integration System (SICA) officially adopted in November two key strategies: one to enhance the role of culture for regional integration and the other to better integrate culture into education systems. Both were developed with the support of UNESCO. The first, adopted by the Council of Ministers of Culture of SICA, advocates for the contribution of culture to the strengthening of cohesion, dialogue and social understanding among societies, especially relevant in view of the current major challenges faced in the region. Meanwhile, the second, adopted by the Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Education and Culture, helps to foster the appreciation of cultural diversity as a positive force, promoting intercultural dialogue as an effective tool against violence, prejudice, discrimination and all forms of social exclusion. Both strategies incorporate UNESCO's technical guidelines, as well as the Culture 2030 Thematic Indicators.

The second edition of the Great World Forum of Arts, Culture, Creativity and Technology, hosted by Colombia, was held online in November. It brought together Ministers of Culture of Bolivia, Colombia, Argentina, Ecuador, Jamaica, Uruguay, Peru, Panama and Chile, as well as several institutions such as UNESCO, the Southern Market (Mercosur) and the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB), as well as 290 experts from 22 countries in the fields of economics, entrepreneurship and development; technology, creativity, culture and the arts shared their ideas, knowledge and views on the creative economy, around 100 conferences and panels.

The International Creative Exchange Caribbean Initiative was held online in December to connect Caribbean and European creative and cultural professionals. The initiative aims to provide comprehensive online business to business (B2B) training and market development opportunities for Caribbean artists. It was co-hosted by the South-South Collective from Jamaica and the UNESCO Transcultural Programme, whose objective is to deepen integration between Cuba, the Caribbean and the European Union in the cultural and creative industries.

Luis Gerardo Ayala B





## CLIMATE CHANGE AND CULTURE IN THE VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS

Climate change has its own dedicated goal in the Sustainable Development Agenda – Goal 13 on Climate Action, which covers aspects such as strengthening resilience, adaptation to climate change and awareness-raising. Culture contributes to all of these facets. Several countries in their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) - submitted to the United Nations to monitor progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals - have highlighted the explicit linkages between their cultural and climate change policies. Approaches include enshrining the protection of natural heritage in legal frameworks as part of strategies to tackle climate change, recognising the vital importance of respecting natural and cultural heritage in urban development policies, and harnessing traditional knowledge and natural resources for community resilience.



Strengthening resilience, adaptation to climate change and awareness-raising.

## URBAN PLANNING, CULTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE

As part of its overall strategy to bolster resilience to climate change and improve human habitation, **Benin** has adopted an Operation and Resilient Plan for the Coastal Strip of Benin, which explicitly recognises the natural and cultural value of this coastline. The plan aims to implement a management strategy that protects the coast from frequent floods and erosion - exacerbated by climate change - as well as protect biodiversity. Furthermore, an objective of the plan is to bolster ecotourism. An initiative in **Saudi Arabia**, which is also vulnerable to climate change, aims to better manage freshwater resources in the valley around the capital, Riyadh. The Wadi Hanifa Comprehensive Plan plans to establish a better balance between the needs of the city and the environment. It also aims to better preserve historical and heritage sites which were under threat due to over-exploitation of the water. Other urban planning initiatives in the **Seychelles** aim to preserve the country's natural and cultural heritage from the increase in disasters exacerbated by climate change, including the Victoria Masterplan whose objective is to make the capital a sustainable city. In **Ireland**, the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht is drafting a climate change adaptation plan for the heritage sector and has already published guidance on enhancing the energetic efficiency of traditional buildings and on adaptation and reuse of historic built heritage.





## HARNESSING TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

The **New Zealand** government has reformed the Te Ture Whenua Maori Act of 1991 to adequately safeguard indigenous Maori cultural interests and stewardship of natural resources, which are under increasing pressure due to climate change. In **Australia**, indigenous Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are using traditional knowledge and practices with scientific approaches to undertake Emissions Reduction Fund projects in the north of the country to preserve natural environments from the effects of climate change. Meanwhile, **Ecuador** has launched an initiative called Regreening the Country to reverse deforestation, preserving its natural heritage and contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

**Kyrgyzstan** recognizes the value of traditional knowledge, particularly that of women in rural areas, for the cultivation of traditional crops, medicinal plants and measures to adapt to climate change. As such, it is taking steps to implement the UN Nagoya Protocol which aims to harness traditional knowledge links with genetic resources. **Venezuela** also aims to defend cultural and biological diversity as part of its strategy to address its vulnerability to climate change, under its National Strategy for the Conservation of Biological Diversity. Through its annual Congress on Biodiversity, the government reports that it has strengthened efforts to promote the use of traditional crops from indigenous and afro-descendent people to bolster community agricultural practices.





## PUTTING NATURAL HERITAGE AND CREATIVITY AT THE HEART OF STRATEGIES

In relation to SDG 13, **Portugal's** 2017 VNR highlights that its Constitution recognizes the right to a healthy living environment and to an ecologically-balanced sustainable development. In addition to promoting the principle of solidarity between generations and boosting education on the environment, the State also has the responsibility for "the protection and enhancement of the landscape and ensure nature conservation and preservation of cultural values of historic and artistic interest". **Spain's** 2018 VNR cites its "great natural heritage" and highlights a 2003 law on mountainlandscapes that aims to improve the management of upland areas, partly to adapt to climate change. It also cites a 2007 law on natural heritage and biodiversity, which establishes mechanisms for data collection and the management of valuable natural environments. **Guyana's** vision for sustainable development is enshrined in its Green State Development Strategy-Vision 2040 which includes a strong focus on climate change mitigation. Its 2019 VNR states that for decades Ecuador has recognised its environment and ecosystems as a key feature of its natural heritage and states that many initiatives are being deployed to safeguard and sustainably manage this natural heritage. Meanwhile, **North Macedonia's** 2020 VNR cites plans to implement projects – with the support of the UN Green Climate Fund - to tackle climate change, including projects in the cultural heritage sector. Finally, **Austria** highlights its initiatives using art and culture to contribute to the SDGs, including tackling climate change.





LATEST NEWS



NEW LIVING HERITAGE INSCRIPTIONS

The Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which took place 14-19 December inscribed 32 new elements on the Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists, which now feature elements from a total of 131 States. This year saw the highest number of multi-country nominations, with 14 inscriptions testifying to the ability of intangible cultural heritage to bring people together and promote international cooperation.

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ADVOCACY MATERIAL

LIVING HERITAGE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

This visualization aims to draw out the interconnections between living heritage and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) the international community set for 2030.

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