



The Tracker

CULTURE
& PUBLIC POLICY

SPECIAL ISSUE

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United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

This monthly Tracker is produced by UNESCO to monitor 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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CULTURE: A YEAR INTO COVID-19



Pataxó indigenous community
Bahia (Brazil)
Brastock/Shutterstock*

MESSAGE FROM ERNESTO OTTONE R.
ASSISTANT-DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR CULTURE OF UNESCO

It has been one year since COVID-19 was declared a pandemic. It catalysed a year marked by the escalation of a crisis of devastating proportions, impacting heritage and the creative industries, and exacerbating the vulnerabilities and inequalities of the sector at large.



Since then, museums, cultural venues and World Heritage sites have been deeply affected by travel restrictions, lockdowns and physical distancing measures, which have impacted entire communities around the world. Artists and cultural workers are among those who have been – and continue to be – heavily affected by the restrictions and lockdowns. Many freelance workers, the lifeblood of many areas of culture, have been left without work from one day to the next.

At the outset of the pandemic, UNESCO took decisive steps to combat the impact on the culture sector through strengthening global policy dialogue and promoting the continued access to culture. In April last year, when UNESCO convened 130 ministers of culture in an online meeting to discuss the pandemic's impact on the sector, it activated and laid down the foundations for an ongoing global policy dialogue with its Member States to carry forward consolidated action in ensuring the sector is supported in crisis response strategies. Monitoring the impact of the pandemic has been essential to gauge the needs and gaps, and help Member States in shaping appropriate policies. This is also why UNESCO mobilized a broad network of actors within the scope of its work in culture to better understand the situation in order to develop adequate responses. UNESCO launched a wide range of monitoring tools to guide policymakers and practitioners in the various dimensions of cultural policies.

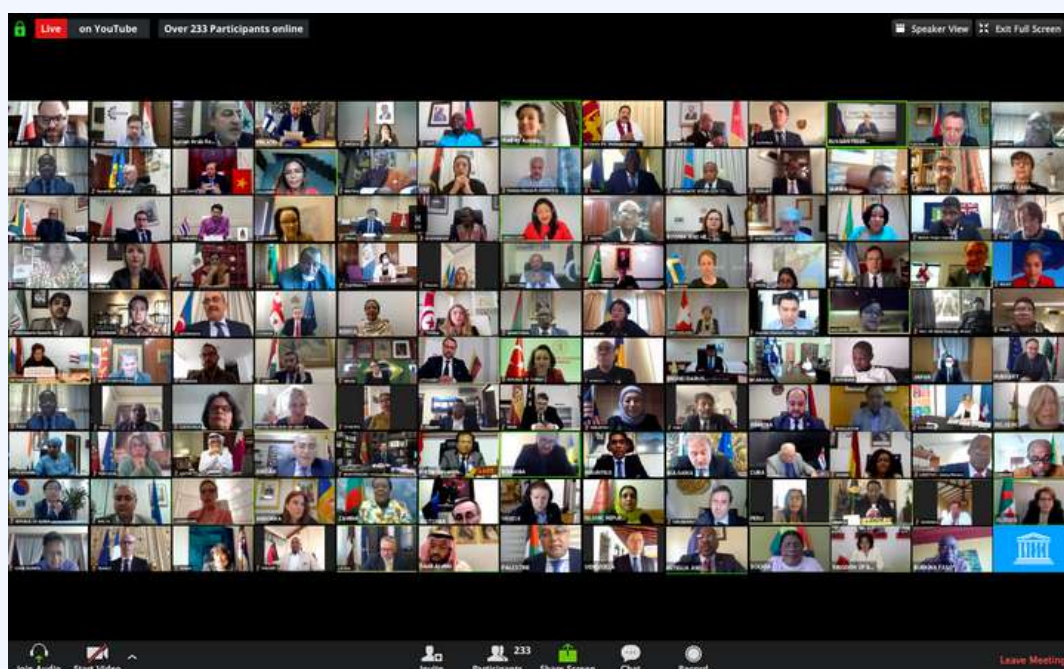
This Tracker on Culture and Public Policy was initially published last April as a weekly global policy monitor and later consolidated into a monthly format beginning in September 2020. The past year has seen each of UNESCO's Culture Conventions and programmes develop unique monitoring mechanisms to track the impact of the pandemic, ranging from monitoring World Heritage site closures, to carrying out surveys amongst Member States, site managers, living heritage bearers, and local authorities, among others.

Since UNESCO's Resiliart movement was launched last April, it has boosted the voices of countless artists and cultural professionals around the world to raise awareness about their first-hand experiences in order to inform policy. The Organization's regional partners and regional development banks have also been instrumental in supporting this work on the ground, where it is needed most. We know what is at stake, which is why we are resolute in advocating for the integration of culture in recovery strategies and plans.

The pandemic has shone a light on the vital contribution of culture to the full development of our societies

While the year paints a picture of a sector that has struggled to survive in the face of huge financial strain, culture remains resilient and adaptable. Today, it is this creativity, innovation and resilience that is also helping to keep our sector afloat. The pandemic has shone a light on the vital contribution of culture to the full development of our societies, and how it has adapted to changing circumstances. COVID-19 will leave its mark on how we operate both as a sector and as an Organization.

It is also an occasion to look forward, and decide what steps are needed to move towards a more resilient and sustainable culture sector. Turning the page into a second year of the pandemic, our experiences have shown that we cannot continue in the same way as before. It is an opportunity to build back better.



UNESCO Online Meeting of Ministers of Culture, April 2020
UNESCO



FACTS & FIGURES

Over the past year

35%



decline in artists' royalties (CISAC)



Swati H Das/Unsplash

61%

of global art fairs cancelled

(Art Basel and UBS)

12%

of artists considered leaving the culture sector

(Res Artis and UCL)

72%

loss in global film industry revenue (US\$32 billion)

(Omdia)

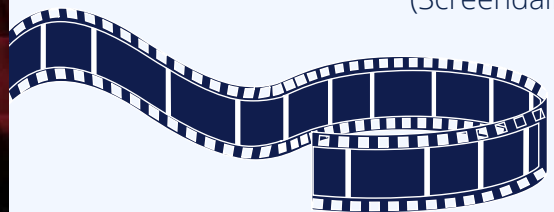
20%

of major film festivals cancelled

(Screendaily)



Felix Mooneeram/Unsplash



64%

decrease in global live music revenue (US\$18 billion)

(PwC)

60 to 80%

estimated drop in royalties from concerts, venues and public performances

(CISAC)



Maxwell Collins/Unsplash





FACTS & FIGURES



Itsukushima Shinto Shrine (Japan)
Alexander Schimmeck/unsplash

WORLD HERITAGE SITE CLOSURES



Tourism accounts for almost



30%

of the GDP of SIDS (WTTC)

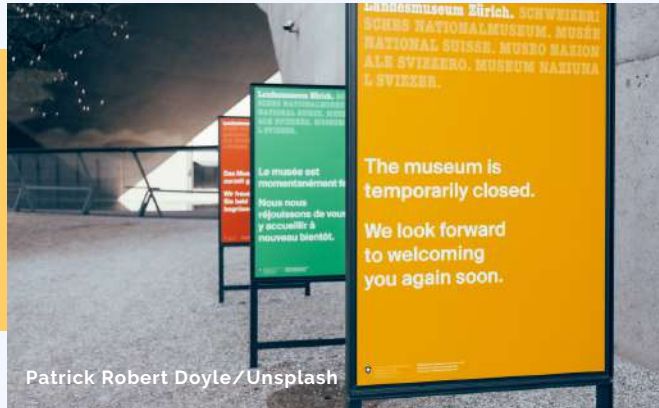


87%

fall in international tourist arrivals in January 2021 as compared to January 2020 (UNWTO)

70%

decrease in museum attendance (UNESCO)



Patrick Robert Doyle/Unsplash

Only 5%

of museums in Africa and SIDS can provide online content (UNESCO)

243 MILLION



women and girls, aged 15-49, experienced sexual and/or physical violence by an intimate partner in the past year



SINCE THE PANDEMIC violence against women, especially domestic violence, has intensified (UN Women)

8.7%

rise in youth unemployment (more than double the adult rate) (ILO)





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 and cities are transitioning from recovery measures to longer term strategies to build resilience in their cultural sectors.

The Ministry of Culture of **Saudi Arabia** has issued a [set of guidelines for the acquisition of art by Saudi artists](#) aimed at government agencies and institutions. The guide supports efforts in creating a national art market, promotes intellectual property rights and strengthens relations between artists and buyers.



Said Alamri/Unsplash

In **Japan**, the Working Group for Art Market Revitalization has published a [report on reigniting the art market](#) in the country and its future policy direction. The report is the outcome of discussions held over the past couple of months as part of the Cultural Policy Committee of the Council for Cultural Affairs.

The Ministry of Culture of **France** has launched the [Art History portal](#) on its website, which hosts 5,000 free resources from over 400 partners and covers 20 different fields of art. The site aims to offer open access to resources for educators and the general public alike.



Michael Barón/Unsplash

In **Colombia**, COP 80 billion (US\$22.1 million) have been earmarked for 2021 to support over 3,000 artists, cultural managers and creators, in particular, senior citizens. The funding is part of the Periodic Economic Benefits BEPS programme administered by local authorities, which has already channeled more than 190 billion pesos (US\$51.1 million), benefiting some 8,000 cultural workers.



Milos Hajder/Unsplash

In **Nigeria**, the [Afro-Brazilian Cultural Centre](#) in Lagos Island was unveiled, representing a move forward in recognizing Nigeria's 100 years connection with Brazil through cultural tourism. The Centre aims to safeguard the narratives of Afro-Brazilian descendants, and build positive relationships with the government and the people of Brazil.





CULTURAL POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

The Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism of **Burkina Faso** launched on 8 April the fifth edition of the Festival of Dance and Traditional Music of Colsama (FESTICO) in Bobo-Dioulasso. Held under the theme "Contribution of cultural actors to the promotion of cultural industries in a context of insecurity and COVID-19", the week-long festival was an occasion to showcase the resilience and solidarity of the cultural sector one year into the pandemic.



Balafon, RheaFavero/Getty Images from Canva.com*



Spencer Imbrock/Unsplash

In the **United Kingdom**, The Big Freelancer Report has been launched, which charts the challenges faced by the freelance workforce since the beginning of the pandemic and makes recommendations for change. The report was developed by an independent group of creators, supported by Freelancers Make Theatre Work and funded by Arts Council England.

In **Lebanon**, the French Institute and the Basil Fuleihan Institute for Economy and Finance have published the study "The Economic Contribution of the Cultural and Creative Industries in Lebanon". It concludes that the cultural sector constitutes 4.7% of GDP, valuing over US\$2 billion, and puts forward recommendations for its future development in Lebanon.



In **Kazakhstan**, the Shanyrak National Arts Centre has opened in the town of Tobol, representing the first-ever art centre to be established in the Kostanai region. The aim of the Centre is to promote Kazakh art in the region, particularly the creative achievements of traditional musicians and singers, such as zhyrshy and kuyshi.

The Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage of **Chile** has stepped up efforts to reactivate the heritage sector by announcing a CLP 9 billion (US\$12.9 million) funding injection for museums, libraries, World Heritage sites and organizations for the safeguarding of tangible and living heritage. The 2021 allocation is a two-fold increase from 2020.



Devon Divine/Unsplash



In **Côte d'Ivoire**, the Regional Directorate of Yamoussoukro has committed to boosting domestic tourism during the COVID-19 pandemic through the organization of the Paquinou Tourist Festival from 31 March to 4 April. The festival included a range of activities including training, concerts, exhibitions and contests to promote local destinations.

Yaw Niel/Shutterstock*





CULTURAL POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

In **Morocco** the National Railways Office (ONCF) and the National Museums Foundation (FNM) have signed an agreement to expand the domestic tourism offer through the discovery of Morocco's museums. The partnership focuses on increasing public access to museums through the development of a new travel concept "Train'Art".



Majorelle Garden, Marrakesh, Morocco
Fabian Møller/Unsplash



danielmegias/Canva.com*

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism of the **Republic of Korea** has joined with the Korea Creative Content Agency to support pop music performers and practitioners who have faced cancelled performances due to COVID-19 restrictions. The measure is expected to ensure financial support for 2,000 jobs over a six-month period.

In **Hungary**, SMEs in the culture and creative sector are set to receive a €8.2 million funding envelope from the European Investment Fund (EIF) and Magyar Vállalkozásfejlesztési Alapítvány (MVA) to help sustain jobs and recover faster from the COVID-19 pandemic.



Jonathan Dick, OSFS/Unsplash

In **Paraguay**, the National Secretariat of Culture (SNC) has stated that the "Puntos de Cultura" (Cultural Points) programme will be part the reactivation strategy of the cultural sector. With a focus on local development, the programme selects proposals that emphasize community cultural spaces, the use of digital technologies, and widening distribution channels of cultural goods. It will be rolled out with civil society and local governments, in line with the National Development Plan Paraguay 2030 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

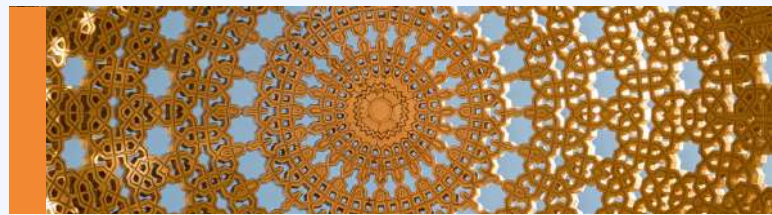
The governments of **Bangladesh** and **Nepal** have signed four Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) to enhance cooperation in different areas, including tourism, sanitation, cultural exchange and rail connectivity.

The Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC) of **Namibia**, the Museums Association of Namibia (MAN) and the Delegation of the European Union (EU) to Namibia have launched the country's first-ever Museum of Namibian Music. Part of an EU-funded project, the museum was developed by an interdisciplinary working group of cultural experts, non-profit organizations and policymakers.



CULTURAL POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

In **Oman**, the Omani Women's Association of Muscat has launched a project on the aesthetic contribution of art to community well-being and for curbing visual pollution. The activities aim to strengthen local community participation, especially youth, and nurture closer cooperation between civil society and the public and private sectors.



Arisa S./Unsplash

The **Turkish** Copyright Education Centre has held an online training on the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled. The Treaty, which was adopted by Turkey this year, provides disabled persons with increased access to culture-related digital content.

The Ministry for Arts, Culture and Heritage of **New Zealand** has launched a first round of the Cultural Sector Innovation Fund, part of the Government's NZ\$374 million (US\$268 million) Arts and Culture COVID Recovery Programme. The Innovation Fund will be delivered through nationwide "Te Urungi" events, which will promote cultural projects focused on sustainability, inclusive access and participation, as well as safeguarding mātauranga Māori indigenous knowledge.



Charles Dlodlu/Unsplash

The Ministry of Culture of **Peru** has presented the results of its first survey on the impact of the pandemic on the book sector. The report is the first of a series of studies and working papers that will monitor the dynamics of the book sector during the sector's recovery to better support decision-making and policy development.

In **South Africa**, the University of Johannesburg (UJ) Arts & Culture Division and Andani.Africa have co-hosted the inaugural "Futures and Beyond Forum: Creativity and 4IR Research Project and Forum" on 16 and 17 March. It advanced discussions on the role of the African creative industries in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), and the impact of technological change, which has been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic.



Benoit Debant/Unsplash

The Ministry of Culture of **Mexico** has celebrated the first anniversary of its digital strategy "Contigo en la distancia", which has enabled more than 13 million people in Mexico and abroad to learn about the country's cultural heritage. The platform and campaign has broadened access to culture, and has become a space for entertainment, recreation and support during the pandemic.

The Government of **Canada** has announced its 2021 federal budget that includes a CAD\$1.9 billion (US\$1.5 billion) investment to restore tourism, arts, culture, and sport over the next five years. The budget recognizes the importance of festivals in reigniting the tourism industry: CAD\$200 million is allocated to major festivals, with another CAD\$200 million going to community festivals and events.



Brokering a new future for cultural policymaking



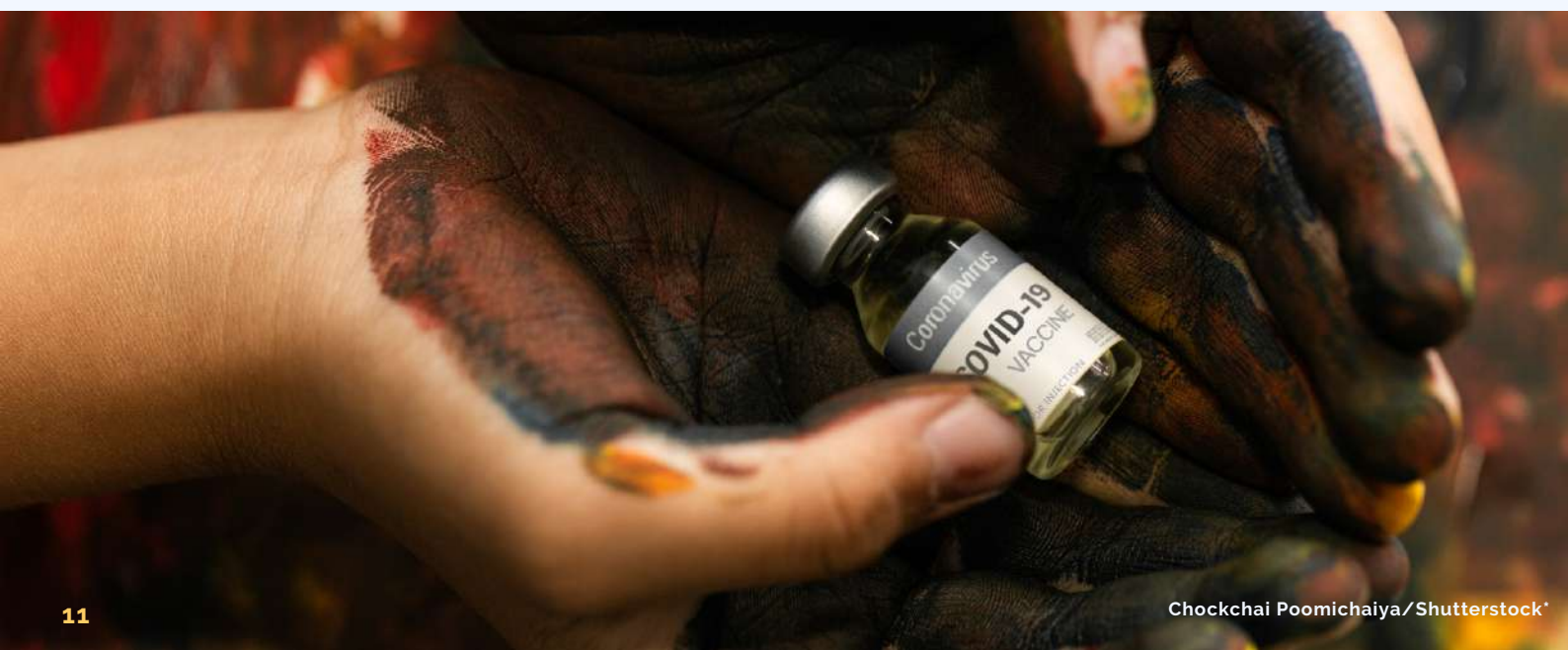
Pataxó indigenous community
Bahia (Brazil)
Brastock/Shutterstock*

The impact of COVID-19 has touched all segments of culture and will have repercussions for many years to come. The announcement of the pandemic led to a sweeping shutdown of cultural venues and activities throughout the world. Cultural events and festivities have been cancelled, World Heritage sites have closed, museums have shut their doors, and theatres have been dark, leaving the cultural workforce in a precarious position. The pandemic has disrupted the contexts and channels necessary for expressing, safeguarding and transmitting living heritage. The entire cultural value chain has been impacted, affecting the creation, production, distribution and access to cultural goods and services, as well as their diversity. Beyond providing emergency relief, **these measures designed to combat the impact on COVID-19 have also begun to transform patterns of cultural consumption, production and work**, which will impact the sector in the long term. This is why, at least in the medium term, the loss of international and domestic tourism, venue closures, reduced purchasing power and restrictions in public and private funding for arts and culture are crucial considerations as they could amplify negative impacts even further. This is a particular priority for countries faced with critical and competing development priorities, such as in the Global South.



Over the past year, responses have evolved from emergency and short-term to mid- to long-term responses, depending on the countries' approach and stage of opening. At the outset, short-term needs, such as direct financial support for cultural organizations and workers, and fiscal leniency, took priority, whereas long-term needs, including skills development, tax incentives and stimulating production of domestic content were introduced later in most instances. Moreover, changeable regulations and the unpredictability of openings and closures have made it difficult for the cultural sector to plan and, in some cases, ensure its viability. **Continuous disruptions have made it difficult to chart the path forward.** The introduction and roll out of vaccines have been major turning points for policy planning and for determining mobility and openings, upon which several sectors of culture depend upon. While the current context still remains uncertain, the timing of access to vaccines will be a major driver of determining when – and to what extent – the culture sector can be operational. Some countries have begun to experiment with hybrid approaches and to introduce physical distancing measures, for example, at museums and cultural events. More broadly, however, a shift from rescue to recovery is still pending in many areas of culture.

Overall, the pandemic has acted as a “revelator” and “accelerator”. It has exposed and deepened existing faultlines and vulnerabilities in the sector in all countries regardless of their development status, and has raised concerns that the progress achieved in advancing the cultural sector within the public policy realm could be fundamentally jeopardized. However, **the crisis has also shifted policymaking processes and priorities, as well as professional practices, towards more transversal, collaborative processes** that factor in robust, sustainable perspectives. This can be seen as a positive outcome of the current crisis, whose impacts reach beyond the cultural sector itself, and could offer a foundation upon which to build change in the sector. While the prospect of openings brings some fresh hope and perspective, the threat of financial insecurity and closures looms. Therefore, 2021 will be a decisive year, as countries navigate the introduction of vaccines with sustaining financial support measures, which for many are running low.





Key trends from year 1

Digitalization has been a game-changer, but the impact of the pandemic shows that it needs to be more accessible, adapted and monitored. UNESCO World Heritage properties moved quickly to provide online content, virtual tours, lectures and performances. Amidst physical site closures, UNESCO continued damage assessments using satellite technology developed with UNITAR-UNOSAT, 3D documentation and drone technologies. With festive events and ceremonies cancelled, some living heritage practices adjusted to "stay-at-home" orders by moving online.



The past year also witnessed a massive migration of live events to online and hybrid forms. Some 44% of the largest 114 film festivals were held online, while an additional 25% took place partly online. The art market also shifted online, with an overall 22% drop in global art sales. As people have looked to culture for solidarity, belonging, diversion, solace and inspiration, the online consumption of cultural goods and services surged across most regions through virtual exhibitions, concerts, music and streaming services. Many artists have offered free access to vast quantities of creative content. **This has also raised important issues of remuneration and copyright;** concerns that are gaining traction as cultural consumption patterns are rapidly changing in the digital era. Digital streaming services and gaming are the few areas whose activities have increased during the pandemic. Online music platforms have boomed during lockdown and have opened up access points enabling up-and-coming or lesser-known acts to take the floor. **The increased sharing of digital cultural content has amplified gaps in access and diversity, raising questions of inclusivity,** as digital content does not always target different audiences and may not be accessible to all. The large disparity in digital access and infrastructure threatens to exclude many from benefiting from technological development. In sub-Saharan Africa, only 19% of the population has internet access, while a larger share live in rural areas where cable or satellite connectivity is sparse and costly. The degree of access to technology can generate substantial development gains, as evidenced in a recent study in Nigeria that provides fresh evidence on the positive impact of increased mobile broadband coverage on household and individual welfare, including employment, and poverty reduction. **The extensive use of online platforms during pandemic has also revealed the digital gender divide.** Women's lower online access in comparison to men, compounded by women's disproportionate access to skills development and networks, risks the underrepresentation of women's creativity and voices online. The crisis thus carries the risk of deepening inequalities in access to and participation in culture and, on a broader scale, limiting cultural diversity.

46%

of the world's population does not have access to the Internet
(World Broadband Commission)

Music streaming was worth

US\$20.4 BILLION
in 2020
(PwC)



Across most fields of culture, employment was dealt a major blow, impacting the livelihoods of many workers both within the sector and in related industries. Prior to the pandemic artists and cultural professionals were already in a precarious situation, many of whom were working in situations of informality with no safety net. The impact of the pandemic on freelancers and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) has been particularly brutal. This has been evident even in countries where there are comprehensive social support frameworks in place, and more critical in those with a high prevalence of the informal sector. **The ripple effects of the pandemic point to insufficient support measures that are ill-adapted to the specifics of the cultural sector.** In countries where support measures have been made available, cultural institutions with salaried workers have generally been able to access some financial cushioning to protect staff. However, gig workers and freelancers, who are often "invisible" and at the margins of official relief mechanisms have in some cases been forced to pursue alternative employment outside their profession to support themselves. In theatre, whose creative workforce makes up the majority share (70%) of the sector, freelancers are crucial to the creation of work and the overall development and sustainability of the sector. In the United Kingdom alone, 25% of freelancers in the performing arts have reported to have ceased working altogether over the past year. For musicians, the closure of live music venues and festivals has impacted their rights payment and income, 75% of which derives from live events. Moreover, the loss of an artist's revenue today can also have consequences several years later, as artists may be paid 2-3 years later for the rights to their work. **By exposing the stark precariousness of the situation of cultural professionals, the pandemic has demonstrated both the vulnerability and magnitude of cultural employment.** It has also underscored how it is connected to many other non-cultural sectors and flows across the whole economic ecosystem, thus exposing the economic impact of culture in terms of employment more broadly.

“ Although it is clear that the performing arts is an economic driver, it is not understood that this income-generating activity is dependent upon freelancers.

Freelance Make Theatres Work



65%

of artists forced to pursue work outside the sector
(Res Artis and UCL)

51%

of musicians unsure they can afford basic living expenses
(MusiCares)



Certain subsectors of culture have been particularly affected by closures, limits on mobility and physical distancing measures. The performing arts, live performance and venue-based segments of culture have been particularly hard hit. A recent [UNESCO study](#) on museums in COVID-19 revealed that government subsidies decreased for half of national establishments over the past year. During this time, the overall attendance at [the world's 100 most-visited art museums dropped by 77%](#). Significant shortfalls have been borne by large museums. For example, in Brazil, where museums were closed for an average of 203 days last year, visitors to the Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand, the Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo and the Pinacoteca de São Paulo declined by 81%, 79% and 75%, respectively. Today, 43% of Member States responding to a [UNESCO survey](#) have their museums closed. The closure of museums has also had a negative knock-on effect on local economies, including tours, hotels, museum shops, cafes and restaurants. Similarly, the closure of UNESCO World Heritage sites have been detrimental to local communities who live in and around sites and may depend on it for their livelihoods, or for religious reasons. **Large public or partly public-funded structures have been better at weathering the storm.** Live performance venues, which are predominantly private, non-profit, or public non-profit structures, have been heavily impacted, particularly small, grassroots venues, which are important sources of creative experimentation and diversity. In London alone, [90% of grassroots venues](#) in the city currently face permanent closure. Confinement measures have interrupted living heritage practices, preventing bearers access to the spaces they need, from violinmakers in Italy who cannot access their studios, to craftspersons in Botswana who are unable to sell their earthenware pottery. The cancellation or postponement of fairs, festivals and biennales - integral to employment prospects and networking in the creative economy - have generated substantial losses for the events themselves and the many businesses and workers connected with these events. The cancellation of the annual Avignon Festival in France, for example, has not only impacted the festival workers, but also the broader urban ecosystem beyond the cultural event.

80%

**drop in museum
revenues**
(UNESCO)



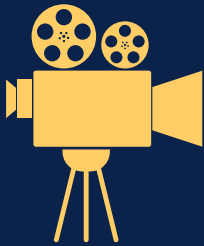
Ko Hon Chiu Vincent*

“

In the middle of March when Coronavirus was a big threat, we decided to close the site to visitors to prevent its spreading. This directly affects the site and the local communities that are selling their products outside the entrance.

Mahmoud Suliman, Site Manager
Archaeological Sites of the Island of Meroe, Sudan

Spotlight on a year in film



The year 2020 was an unprecedented year for the global film industry, reporting an estimated US\$32 billion loss. The downturn was driven by the surge in streaming services, widespread cinema closures, global box office downturn, lack of theatrical windows and film production shutdowns.

In Latin America, Argentina and Mexico saw their box office revenues drop by 80%. In Asia and the Pacific, box office revenues in the first half of 2020 had plunged by 92% compared to the same period in 2019. However, by August, Asia and the Pacific accounted for nearly 78% of the total box office worldwide. Recent data points to some indications of recovery. Film productions are increasingly up and running, with hygiene and physical distancing measures in place. Gower Street's latest Global Box Office Tracker shows that 2021 global box office grew to US\$4.2 billion last month, up from \$3.3 billion the previous month. A reflection on the reduction of the industry's climate impact is also gaining momentum, with a multiplication of initiatives and increasing encouragement from public policies, signaling a growing trend towards adapting practices.



Jared Murray/Unsplash



The wide-ranging impacts of the crisis have triggered greater recognition of the economic and social value of culture. Over the past year, the experience of the pandemic has signaled a shift in policy narrative, pointing to a stronger awareness of the cross-cutting benefits of culture in societies. In low- to middle-income countries whose GDP and national employment largely depends on cultural tourism, this impact has been felt even more starkly. Widespread closures and the cessation of cultural activities have been a wake-up call that has highlighted the extent that culture contributes to the economy – both as a sector in itself and for its connection to other industries. When Ministers of Culture of the G20 met last November, presided by Saudi Arabia, it marked the first time that culture has been included in the policy discussions of this international forum. **There has also been increasing recognition by international and regional development banks of the economic impact of culture,** notably in relation to the cultural and creative industries (CCIs) and cultural tourism linked to cultural heritage and museums. The pandemic has provoked much bigger questions about how cultural economies function and how they are valued. In the pandemic, we have turned to culture as a lifeline. It has provided a source of solidarity, inspiration and belonging. Open air UNESCO World Heritage sites such as Byblos, Lebanon have seen an increase in the number of local residents visiting the site to connect with their heritage during the pandemic. **Stronger linkages between culture and health have been forged** through culture's contribution to individual and community wellbeing, which has been highlighted in various surveys over the past year, and underlined as a crucial component of recovery strategies. There is also growing recognition that biodiversity is a key environmental determinant for all aspects of human health, both mental and physical, which has compelled societies to reconsider unsustainable practices. For instance, the experience of the pandemic was a turning point for the city of Venice to recently ban cruise ships. New sustainable business models are imperative for the sector's survival. It has signaled a need for structural change and reform in the sector that not only embraces new developments – such as changes in the status of artists over time, digital acceleration and mobility – but also helps to achieve other development objectives.



“

Creators are innovative, entrepreneurial, and resilient, but to build a long path out of this crisis, we have to turn to governments. This is not just for emergency funds; however welcome those have been. Policymakers also need to tackle the problems in front of them: the deep flaws that have skewed the playing field for creators for many years.

Björn Ulvaeus, President, International Confederation of Societies of Authors and Composers (CISAC)



Nkululeko Mayiyane/Unsplash



Advancing the policy agenda

At the outset of the pandemic, UNESCO took decisive steps to strengthen policy frameworks and support culture in crisis, highlighting its mission to support Member States. The pandemic has clearly underlined the importance of global policy dialogue on culture to address the impacts of the crisis and plan the recovery. **It has called on the need to regenerate the foundations of multilateral discussions** – a critical endeavor in an increasingly fragmented world – by putting the spotlight on culture as a shared, common good. One year ago, in April 2020, UNESCO convened more than 130 ministers of culture for an online meeting on the impact of and potential responses to the crisis, affirming the role of UNESCO for advancing policy dialogue with its Member States. This was followed by a consultation in July among Member States, with the aim of assessing and documenting the impact on the culture sector. **The pandemic has also underlined the need for more flexible, reactive monitoring instruments to support policymaking** in volatile, complex contexts by providing data on a rolling basis. The Tracker on Culture and Public Policy itself, which was initially published weekly to provide key information on the rapidly-evolving situation, was turned into a monthly monitoring tool following increased expectations upon UNESCO to provide much-needed guidance in light of its global and specialized mandate on culture. UNESCO has ensured that World Heritage site closures have been monitored, while surveys on the impact of COVID-19 have been carried out among World Heritage site managers and local authorities, as well as on living heritage.

The pandemic has invited UNESCO to expand and diversify communication channels with a wide range of actors, building on its various networks developed over time as part of its Conventions and Recommendations. Since its launch in April 2020, over 270 Resiliart debates have been held with artists in over 110 countries, highlighting the role of civil society in contributing to policymaking. The UNESCO publication “Culture in Crisis: Policy guide for a resilient creative sector” was also published as a practical tool for post-crisis recovery efforts. A Task Force on Culture and Resilient Tourism was established with the Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Convention to address key issues relating to tourism and heritage management during and beyond the COVID-19 crisis. Overall, institutional, professional or grassroots networks developed as part of the implementation of UNESCO Culture Conventions and Recommendations – such as World Heritage site managers, facilitators and community bearers of living heritage, experts and practitioners of the cultural and creative industries, and museum directors, among others – were also harnessed by UNESCO and its Member States to collect data, amplify advocacy or inform the policy response. Thereby, **the pandemic further brought to light UNESCO’s convening role across the different policy domains, bringing together policymakers and professionals**, the power of its normative and policy instruments, and its importance as a laboratory of ideas to stimulate global reflection on the future of the sector.



Many States provided initial emergency financial support to help cushion the impact of the pandemic for cultural organizations or individuals as part of mainstream financial support schemes targeting national economic recovery. In some cases, dedicated funds or financial mechanisms were set up for the cultural sector, reflecting a priority granted to culture in the national policy agenda, including in lower-income countries. This has served to expand eligibility criteria, and accelerate the delivery of existing financial mechanisms or earmarked budgets. In some cases, financial mechanisms targeted the cultural sector as a whole, but more often funding was channeled through professional or sectorial public authorities. In some countries, the momentum stirred by the ministerial dialogue on culture developed by UNESCO at the global level or by intergovernmental organizations at the regional level proved instrumental for line ministries to build the case for culture as part of national budgets. Local governments, the private sector and civil society have also been active in providing emergency measures for both cultural organizations and individual workers, many of which were introduced early in the pandemic.

In addition to public funding, other forms of support, including the participation of investment banks, nonprofit and crowdfunding, have shifted the lines towards more robust public-private partnerships and civil society engagement. Among the numerous examples around the world, Tunisia's "Fonds Relance Culture" (Culture Revival Fund - FRC) Fund provides a public-private endowment that centralizes financial contributions from organizations and individuals that would like to assist young artists and freelancers. At national level, in Senegal, more than 25,000 cultural actors have benefitted from the COVID-19 Force Fund for amounts ranging from 100,000 (US\$180) to 125,000 CFA francs (US\$230). Civil society has been a large contributor to Musicares, a U.S.-based, independent charity, which has distributed more than US\$22 million to more than 25,000 musicians and their families, while the U.K.-based Theatre Artists Fund has raised £7.2 million (US\$10 million) to support freelancers.





Karim Manjra/Unsplash

Overall, the impact of the pandemic has brought to light the gaps in public support and insufficient investment of the private sector in the culture sector. Many support measures have left cultural workers and organizations by the wayside as they didn't fit funding criteria. Also, as illustrated in the findings of a recent [global study](#), of the 32% of artists and cultural organizations able to access funding, it did not always come from COVID-specific emergency funds. Some artists and organizations, such as in the U.S., thus received unemployment insurance from their state, or relied on an emergency withdrawal of retirement funds. Moreover, some emergency funding support has been provided as one-off lump sums, which has made it more difficult to secure additional funding as the pandemic has progressed. The crisis also exposed the need to adapt tax frameworks to meet the specificities of the cultural sector. Turkey also made the decision to defer social security premiums for six months for a range of sectors, including culture. France introduced a waiver of social charges for businesses in hard-hit sectors, including culture. **The pandemic has triggered a broader reflection on re-evaluating public funding frameworks for culture.** In some countries, this has involved advocating for more robust partnerships with the private sector. In other countries, this has meant pushing for more public funding involvement in the cultural sector. This is equally challenging at the local level as cities have seen state subsidies decline throughout the pandemic, forcing them to innovate new economic models.

“ **It is time to position culture as a public policy priority and as a human right, just as it is stated in the international conventions we have signed.**”

Eva Gomez, Museo para la Vivencia Nacional, Honduras
Resiliart debate 2020



Maya Site of Copan (Honduras)
soft_light/Shutterstock.com



The pandemic has also spurred mid- to long-term structural reform and measures. This also means gradually adapting to a volatile environment, where similar health, climate or conflict-related crises may recur in the future. The crisis has changed how the world functions and points to the limitations of existing systems. In this spirit, many Member States have introduced training to boost digital and entrepreneurial skills, as a means of responding to the challenges and opportunities of the digital transition. In Romania, the National Institute for Cultural Research and Training introduced a Register of the Independent Culture Sector as a mechanism to support mobility and regulation in future national cultural strategies. Similarly, numerous safety and hygiene measures were undertaken for venues, live performances and events. From introducing checkerboard formations in outdoor concert halls to conducting rock concerts with audiences in cars in Mexico, States have been exploring the possibilities to safely open cultural venues and live performance while ensuring sanitary measures and physical distancing. Many local, national and international guidelines and materials have been prepared in this regard. Among them, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) developed guidelines for the safety and preservation of museum collections during confinement, and the safety of audiences when museums reopen. Beyond ensuring a safe cultural experience, **safety and hygiene measures have also prompted a reflection on ways to engage more inclusively with a wide range of audiences,** such as opening specific visit segments for the elderly or further facilitating access for the disabled.

Expanding access to culture throughout the crisis and accelerating digital literacy have been common denominators of most policy interventions across all regions. The majority of countries have sought to expand online cultural platforms, with the explicit intention to support cultural participation and education during confinement. Among countless examples, the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic, in association with the Arts and Theatre Institute (ATI), launched a project that harnesses new technologies to focus on the connection between live art and the audience. By "stepping into" the digital realm at an unprecedented scale and expanding publicly-owned platforms, countries have also started to move towards more deliberate State intervention in the regulation of the digital realm.

Longer term investment in domestic production was another core target for public policies to reignite and strengthen the cultural sector and take decisive steps towards comprehensive post-crisis recovery. Policy support for culture has taken numerous forms, including commissioning artwork; financing cultural infrastructure; promoting domestic production and cultural tourism; facilitating national distribution, export and international investment; boosting cultural consumption and demand; introducing tax incentives; and creating capacity-building initiatives. **The wide range of measures undertaken by countries illustrate the necessity for a comprehensive approach to public policy support** across different domains, as well as throughout the value chain. It also puts forward the importance of international solidarity and dialogue in view of the inequalities between and within countries, as well as their interdependence. Among the examples around the world, the Australian Government announced last July a AUD 400M (US\$310.6 million) location incentive as a way of attracting international film production over the next seven years.



Regarding cultural tourism, in mid-2020 UNESCO collaborated with the EU on a social media campaign "Europe's culture - close to you" aimed at encouraging people to rediscover their cultural heritage in different regions. Viet Nam's domestic tourism increased as national lockdowns were eased in May, while Thailand invested US\$700 million to reignite its domestic tourism. Reflecting wider support for the crafts sector, a local handicrafts continuity and revival programme was launched in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, a UNESCO Creative City of Handicrafts and Folk Arts, to provide vocational training and support to women artisans in the city.

Looking forward, this wide spectrum of policy measures is likely to steer the sector towards more resilient, sustainable and inclusive models, echoing the vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A number of Member States have taken the opportunity to push for more sustainable practices in line with the 2030 Agenda. Reducing the environmental impact of the cultural sector or harnessing culture's role in social inclusion are among overarching policy objectives. For example, as part of the UNESCO Sustainable Travel Pledge in partnership with Expedia Group, nearly 600 hotels in Thailand early this year pledged to introduce firm measures to eliminate single-use plastics and promote local culture for a more sustainable tourism recovery post COVID-19. The "new normal" shall not be "back to business as usual".



Artists need to come together to create or agitate for policies.

Lennon Prosper, Artist and Chairperson of Balance Inc., Saint Lucia | Resiliart debate 2020



Nguyễn Hiệp/Unsplash

Emerging from the pandemic

2021 will be a defining year. Among the first to be impacted in 2020, the cultural sector may also be among the last to recover. Vaccine roll-outs will determine travel, mobility and openings of cultural venues, and strongly influence the future of the sector. Yet this is a fragile dawn. Within a highly volatile global landscape, where protracted crises may durably undermine public finances, support measures for culture risk being jeopardized or overshadowed by competing priorities. However, the overwhelming recognition of the social and economic impact of culture – which has been highlighted by the pandemic – is univocal.



In this context, deliberately anchoring culture within mainstream recovery plans is critical for the future of the sector. Culture should be central to recovery efforts, not only as a priority policy area but also, more fundamentally, to inspire a shift in policymaking towards more people-centred approaches. At country level, the inclusion of culture in national COVID-19 recovery plans, which has been notably supported by UNESCO Field Offices as part of UN Country Teams, will help this shift. At the multilateral level, the upward trajectory on global policy dialogue for culture – from the UNESCO Forum of Ministers of Culture in 2019 to the inclusion of culture in major global fora such as the G20 and the upcoming Mondiacult Conference in 2022 – will also be a driving force. Likewise, the growing commitment of international financial partners, including development banks, towards the culture sector – notably the economic weight of the creative economy and cultural tourism – will be critical. To underpin this process, building the case for culture through strong data, indicators and narrative will be critical.

Reviewing the business models of the cultural sector and fostering economic diversification came forward as a critical priority in a context where the pandemic has revealed massive flaws in the system, regardless of countries' socio-economic contexts. Drawing on lessons learnt from the crisis, policy support schemes should be adapted to the specific needs of the cultural sector, including the high prevalence of SMEs, self-employed workers and informality. The economic and social protection of artists and cultural professionals, in particular, should be strengthened, building on the outcomes of the Resiliart movement and a review of the Recommendation on the Status for the Artist. Overall, more comprehensive policy measures should be developed across the value chain. This entails the support of a broad alliance, including civil society and the private and non-profit sectors, to strengthen cultural ecosystems and review business models of cultural institutions, notably to ensure more agile, public-private partnerships. **Countries should deliberately work to diversify culture-related economies, including through public investment, reducing tourism dependency, spurring national cultural consumption and demand,** and integrate culture-based strategies across national economies, including in non cultural sub-sectors. Finally, more agile data collection mechanisms and communication channels between policymakers and cultural stakeholders should be sustained to inform the adaptation of cultural policies in a fast-evolving environment.

The future of the cultural sector also relies on a more robust integration of culture across the policy spectrum. The pandemic has exposed and, to some extent, amplified global development challenges, in particular social inequalities, the climate crisis and digital transformation. These overarching trends have been reshaping the policy landscape over the last decade and directly call upon the transformative role of culture in our societies, even more so in the COVID-19 recovery context, which has reshuffled policy priorities. As the current crisis has exacerbated pre-existing inequalities between countries and within societies, leveraging culture to foster social inclusion and wellbeing will be a major endeavour. Steps undertaken in that direction point to a growing recognition of the role of culture in social progress.



As the cultural sector is invited to profoundly reshape its business models for economic recovery, promoting culture's contribution to climate action has clearly gained traction with a view to building back better and greener.

This growing momentum arising from the sector itself should be deliberately supported by public policies, including through financial incentives and legal frameworks. Adapting to the digital transformation, which was massively accelerated since the outbreak of the pandemic, will be a major component of culture and public policies in the years to come, and a factor in supporting the sector's diversification. Enabling more equitable access to online culture through investments in infrastructure and capacity-building, as well as further regulating the digital realm to ensure fair remuneration of cultural professionals and to better protect cultural and linguistic diversity, will be critical endeavours. Public investments linked with COVID-19 recovery offer the opportunity to accelerate this much-needed shift.

The pandemic is also likely to accelerate the evolution of the cultural policy landscape towards multi-level governance models, a trend which has been unfolding over the past two decades. The **rise of local governments,** in particular, was further accelerated by the crisis, as cities and regions were on the frontlines in addressing the needs of the cultural sector, while also having to innovate economic models to face severe cuts in State transfers. Likewise, the **role of civil society** in policymaking was clearly reflected in the active engagement of professional organizations in conducting impact assessments, channeling needs of the sector to decision-makers, outlining prospects for policy action or innovating financial mechanisms to rescue cultural professionals and individuals affected by the pandemic. This is a role that is likely to be amplified in the future. Finally, the **increasing engagement of regional and sub-regional organizations** towards the culture sector was further illustrated by the numerous ministerial debates, impact assessments, data collection and financial assistance mechanisms conducted by regional and sub-regional organizations around the world.





CUTTING-EDGE

Looking forward, recovery perspectives should shed new light on the role of culture as a common good. This is an essential rationale in the current public policy discourse across different policy areas, where culture has a critical role to play. As societies were profoundly shaken by the suspension of cultural interactions and made acutely aware of the profound importance of culture by this brutal interruption, the pandemic acts as a reset button. **At this particular juncture, public policies should deliberately invest in valuing cultural diversity as a positive resource and engine for renewal and societal transformation.** Beyond the cultural sector itself, culture has the power to advance other human development objectives such as education, health and well-being, while also stimulating the much-needed skills and values of adaptation, solidarity and empathy, all of which will be vital to build back better societies.



GoodStudio/Shutterstock*



Kilimanjaro National Park (United Republic of Tanzania)
Sergey Pesterev/Unsplash

Significant human, economic and environmental costs to Africa threaten to have mid- and long-term consequences on the region's recovery from COVID-19. For the first time in 25 years, economic growth in Africa shrunk, dropping by 2% in 2020. Despite reports that suggest that the first wave of COVID-19 progressed relatively slowly in Africa, by December a second wave of infections triggered an estimated 40% surge in cases across the region. Travel restrictions, closures and physical distancing measures have impacted World Heritage sites and the continuity of living heritage practices. Amidst heritage site closures, reports of poaching and looting have also increased. Meanwhile, informal sector workers, women and youth have suffered disproportionately from reduced opportunities and unequal access to social support.

Across Africa, community mobilization and sensitization, and locally-led campaigns of information dissemination have been prevalent and effective, many of which have mobilized artists. Drawing on their experience with the Ebola outbreak in 2014 — notably in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia — local healthcare systems have also been adept at communicating effective response strategies to local populations. In Ghana, for instance, UNESCO and the Economic Commission of West African States (ECOWAS) joined forces to launch a local media health campaign using music and mobilizing Ghanaian artists in partnership with the National Commission on Culture (NCC), the Musicians Union of Ghana (MUSIGA) and the Creative Arts Council. Throughout 2020, 22% of UNESCO's Resiliart debates were held in Africa; an initiative that has rallied support for artists during and beyond the crisis. Zimbabwe alone conducted six Resiliart debates in collaboration with the National Arts Council, resulting in strong advocacy efforts from artists to establish a COVID-19 relief fund. Two of these debates were held on Radio Mozambique, demonstrating the importance of adapting to local contexts and needs. Despite under-resourced public social support in many African countries, innovative practices have shown preventative and mitigation strategies that are suited to local realities.





Harnessing digital technologies has been highlighted as an important area to develop in post-COVID-19 recovery strategies and for socio-economic transformation. Throughout the first year of the pandemic, the extent of inequalities in access to digital technologies across the region has become glaringly evident, highlighting pre-existing gaps and needs in infrastructure. For instance, while some museums and cultural institutions were able to explore online options to continue functioning and ensure the public's access to culture, only 5% of museums in Africa have an online presence. Despite these setbacks, Africa's youth have been instrumental in pushing the boundaries of the Internet and digital spaces. Of all regions, Africa is home to the largest youth demographic, which by UN estimates will increase by 89% in 2050. The region has an entrepreneurial energy, with many creative and cultural workers based in the informal economy. Africa's youth population is recognized as a powerful accelerator of economic growth and innovation, and a key element in supporting the region's recovery from the pandemic. Similarly, this demographic has also pointed to certain potential economic and social challenges in long-term recovery strategies, including implications for peace and security. Supporting the contribution of culture to social cohesion and peace-building, therefore, remains a strong priority in UNESCO's work across the region.

The African Union's 2021 Year of Arts, Culture and Heritage came into being during the pandemic. As underlined by the AU, the crisis provides an opportunity to re-evaluate the role of culture in Africa's socio-economic priorities through equality, inclusion, social cohesion and African Renaissance. Last month, the AU's Roadmap for the Year of Arts, Culture and Heritage was launched at the AU 2nd Virtual Forum of Ministers responsible for Arts, Culture and Heritage. Member States reiterated their commitment to combat the impact of the pandemic through innovative methods, and cultural and heritage policies that support cultural workers to produce cultural goods and services. In building a recovery strategy for Africa, Member States encouraged governments to dedicate 1% of their national budgets to culture. Culture was highlighted as a lever for economic growth; a role that is even more important in the context of crisis recovery.





Damian Patkowski/Unsplash



REGIONAL SNAPSHOTS

UNESCO launched a digital campaign "Voices of Resilient Women" in August 2020 to promote gender equality in the West African cultural sector during the pandemic. The campaign makes visible the unique voices and dynamic contributions of ten West African women artists.



Paul Hakimata Photography/Shutterstock*



cortes22/Getty Images from Canva.com*

In June 2020, Seychelles was the first country in Eastern Africa to reopen its museum during the pandemic, with hygiene and physical distancing measures. Museum ticket agents worked behind plexiglass covers, information on hand hygiene was provided, physical distancing was regulated in museum spaces, and visitors underwent temperature checks at the entry.

An illustration contest for young creatives led by UNESCO resulted in 125 entries from nine countries in Southern Africa, which expressed the impact of COVID-19 and other issues, such as gender-based violence.



Lindiwi/Shutterstock*



Vera Davidova/Unsplash

The pandemic has exacerbated the gravity of challenges in the Arab States, leaving many countries vulnerable to the secondary effects of the crisis and impacting the cultural sector, including issues relating to freedom of expression. Prior to the pandemic, 41% of countries in the region were already in fragile and conflict-affected situations. Several countries were struggling through protracted conflict and dealing with mass forced displacement, food insecurity, weak health sectors and economic decline. In the case of Lebanon, the dual impacts of COVID-19 and the Beirut explosion on 4 August 2020 compounded existing political and economic challenges for the country. As part of response efforts for the rehabilitation of culture and education following the blast, UNESCO created the international fundraising appeal, Li Beirut (For Beirut in Arabic). Resulting from the appeal, the Lebanese NGO Peace of Art launched the youth-led project "We Rise Through Art" that ran art workshops to provide psychosocial support to children.



The crisis has sparked a marked fall in employment. While higher rates of unemployment have affected all regions, the impact in the Arab States region has been particularly evident. For the past 25 years, youth unemployment in the Arab States has been the highest in the world. Over the past year, governments in the region have placed particular focus on boosting employment and decent work in the field of culture, notably for youth. The UNESCO/EU project "Cash for Work: Improving livelihood opportunities of urban youth in Yemen", currently employs over 1,300 skilled and unskilled youth under the age of 35 in cash-based urban rehabilitation activities. Through boosting job opportunities for youth, it aims to build confidence and combat the despair and disillusionment among youth in crises.



The pandemic has not only shone a light on the value of cultural heritage safeguarding to communities, but also decent work as a way of fostering broader peacebuilding in the region. Following an international architecture competition launched by UNESCO as part of its flagship initiative "Revive the Spirit of Mosul", eight Egyptian architects have been awarded the job of rebuilding the Al-Nouri Mosque complex in the city of Mosul, Iraq. In addition, last month UNESCO and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) launched the EU-funded project "[Reviving Mosul and Basra Old Cities](#)", which will extend this work and fund 120 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to support employment opportunities in urban cultural heritage restoration in these two cities. Forging stronger synergies between culture and education in the region has also been underlined to enable learners to develop new skills to be able to adapt to the labour market beyond the crisis.

Youth unemployment rates in the Arab States are the highest in the world

(The World Bank)

Regional cooperation has strengthened through joint efforts and alliances to combat the impact of the pandemic. As reported in [The Tracker on Culture and Public Policy](#) last June, in May 2020, ministers at the 21st Conference of the Arab Ministers of Culture convened by the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) stressed how the pandemic has impacted cultural life in the region and halted the safeguarding of Arab culture. They underlined the importance of increased digitization of cultural content and initiatives to support artists and cultural institutions affected by the pandemic. ALECSO also "called on Arab countries to accelerate the completion of the digital transformation project, employ artificial intelligence and advanced technologies to produce cultural content, support cultural and creative industries, and expand the sharing of cultural resources online". The Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) has also been committed to supporting the culture sector in the region. Last September, ICESCO pledged US\$1 million to restore the collections of 30 museums in the Islamic world affected by crises. It also created the Network of Islamic Art Museums, and launched an initiative to make museums more inclusive, including adapting facilities and infrastructure for persons with disabilities.

Azhar J/Unsplash

5%

decrease in economic growth
in the Arab States in 2020

(The World Bank)

41%

of countries in the Arab States region
were conflict-affected when COVID-19 hit

(The World Bank)



Women entrepreneurs in the Arab States face difficulties due to a lack of access to training and networks, complex legislation and banking services.

(Womenpreneur Initiative)

Geerati/Getty Images from Canva.com*



REGIONAL SNAPSHOTS

The **Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC)** distributed 177 one-off grants of US\$3,000 to recipients working in music, visual arts, film, performing arts, photography and literature. The Artist Support Grant was created with the support of Ford Foundation, Open Society Foundations, and Spotify through the Spotify COVID-19 Music Relief programme.



Fey Marin/Unsplash



Jasmine Creation/Shutterstock*

COVID-19 mitigation and recovery strategies for the film industry was the focus of an ALECSO-led coordination meeting last December among the Arab film industry. Participants put forward ways to **harness digital platforms for broadcasting cultural and artistic content, as well as to better protect the rights of artists and creators.** A key outcome was the creation of a working group to draft a roadmap to support the film sector in the Arab States.

ICESCO launched a strategy for building capacities in innovation in the Islamic world. The strategy focuses on the creation of research scholarships, an innovation award, green technology programmes and innovation clusters in ICESCO Member States.



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ASIA AND THE PACIFIC



Mahmur Marganti/Unsplash

Asia and the Pacific was affected in the early stages of COVID-19. Most countries in the region responded by rapidly closing borders, restricting movement and shutting down cultural institutions, venues, heritage sites and activities. Several countries in the region had restrictions in place before the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak a global pandemic last March.

One year into the pandemic, measures to curb the pandemic have resulted in serious social, economic and environmental costs in the region, especially in countries highly dependent on trade and tourism. Small businesses and workers in the culture sector have been hit hard by the pandemic's economic toll, particularly those in informal labour markets. The region's diverse and thriving cultural and creative industries – from cutting edge innovation and global cultural industries to more informal sub-sectors, such as crafts – have been heavily impacted. The continued practice and transmission of intangible cultural heritage, which is a long-standing priority for cultural policies in the region, has also come under threat. Festivals, rituals and ceremonies have been cancelled, from Buddhist Vesak celebrations in Southeast Asia to the annual March celebrations of Nowruz, celebrated by more than 300 million people across parts of Asia, the Arab States and Europe. Last June, the Asian Development Bank warned of the rise in nature-based crime due to unguarded protected areas, and that rural areas are increasingly under pressure from changes in land use, biodiversity loss and illegal poaching.





International tourist arrivals plummeted as widespread border closures and travel restrictions were introduced. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Asia and the Pacific has suffered the largest drop in tourism of all regions in the world. This contrasts with the pre-pandemic context where tourism was one of the fastest growing sectors in Asia. Cultural tourism ranked high in regional and national development plans for its growth potential, particularly for smaller countries with limited exports. The pandemic has resulted in job losses and has wiped out many SMEs dependent on cultural tourism and its related industries. Pacific Island nations, whose economies are heavily reliant on tourism, have seen their GDPs diminish as tourism plunged by 99%. Other island nations in the region, such as Maldives, whose tourism industry directly accounts for a quarter of its GDP, have also particularly vulnerable to external shocks. In Q1 2020 its economy contracted by 5% and in Q2 by 52% – a decline primarily driven by the slump in tourism.

Restarting cultural tourism was underlined as a priority for governments in UNESCO's Online Meeting of Ministers of Culture held in April last year. Countries in the Asia and the Pacific region were quick to introduce strategies to stimulate domestic tourism as lockdown measures eased. Last May, the Asian Development Bank released an assessment of the economic impact of the pandemic and recommended that "for many destinations, encouraging domestic tourism should be a priority".

Young women spend three times the amount of time on unpaid care and domestic work than young men.

(ILO, based on 39 countries in the region)



The Philippines launched a PHP 421 million (US\$8.7 million) domestic tourism campaign as early as March, Viet Nam's domestic tourism increased as national lockdowns were eased in May, Thailand invested US\$700 million to reignite its domestic tourism, and by October, domestic tourism numbers in China had reached 80% of the previous year's total. Countries in the Asia and the Pacific region have also demonstrated how cultural tourism can be leveraged for cultural diplomacy as a form of "soft power" to build dialogue between peoples and strengthen regional cooperation. After a year of border closures, one-way and two-way travel bubbles, travel corridor arrangements and a Reciprocal Green Lane scheme are being tried out to enable allow safe travel between various countries in the region, which will contribute to reviving cultural tourism in the region.

An integral part of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN's Comprehensive Recovery Framework) is the acceleration of digital transformation, and ASEAN meetings throughout the pandemic have explored possible pathways to revive cultural and creative sectors using digital technologies. ASEAN Ministers responsible for culture and arts, together with their counterparts from China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, met in late October to discuss the "Impact of COVID-19 and Way Forward for the Culture and Arts Sector". The meeting focused on new initiatives in the field of culture during and after the pandemic.



By 2100, it is estimated that 48 islands in the Pacific will be lost to sea-level rise.

(Climate Vulnerable Forum)

Emerging from the pandemic, the region is showing signs of sustainable perspectives in its recovery strategies. The Phnom Penh Declaration on a More Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient ASEAN Tourism adopted by ASEAN Tourism Ministers in February this year called for “greater socio-economic growth while safeguarding the diverse cultures and rich biodiversity in the region”. Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS) have also been active in pushing for climate awareness and building on the opportunity of COVID-19 to build a “bluer Pacific”. Last month over 50 participants from 13 Pacific SIDS participated in the first training programme on climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, as part of a new e-learning platform led by the Pacific Climate Change Centre (PCCC). Factoring in environmental considerations in Pacific tourism recovery strategies was also underlined. Recent pilot initiatives on assessing the value and contribution of oceans to well-being were carried out in Thailand, Malaysia, China, Samoa, and Viet Nam, and will inform the new framework System of Environmental-Economic Accounting – Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA) launched last month by the United Nations Statistical Commission. The SEEA aims to integrate natural capital in economic reporting, and measure how the natural environment contributes to well-being and social progress. From a policy perspective, it helps to shape sustainable recovery strategies that can weigh up the cost of economic profit against damage to the environment.

JANUARY
84% **20**
20 drop in international tourist arrivals

JANUARY
20 **96%**
21 drop in international tourist arrivals
(UNWTO)

REGIONAL SNAPSHOTS



UNESCO has closely engaged with the Pacific Community (SPC) in supporting policy and a COVID-19 impact assessment.

Music was the rallying point for an exchange of cultures and strengthened mutual solidarity at the festival ROUND 2020 held last December, organized by ASEAN and Republic of Korea.

ASEAN Member States adopted last November the ASEAN Declaration on Digital Tourism, which underlines the contribution of tourism to regional cultural exchange, and the role of digital technology and innovation in sustainable tourism development in COVID-19 recovery.



EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA



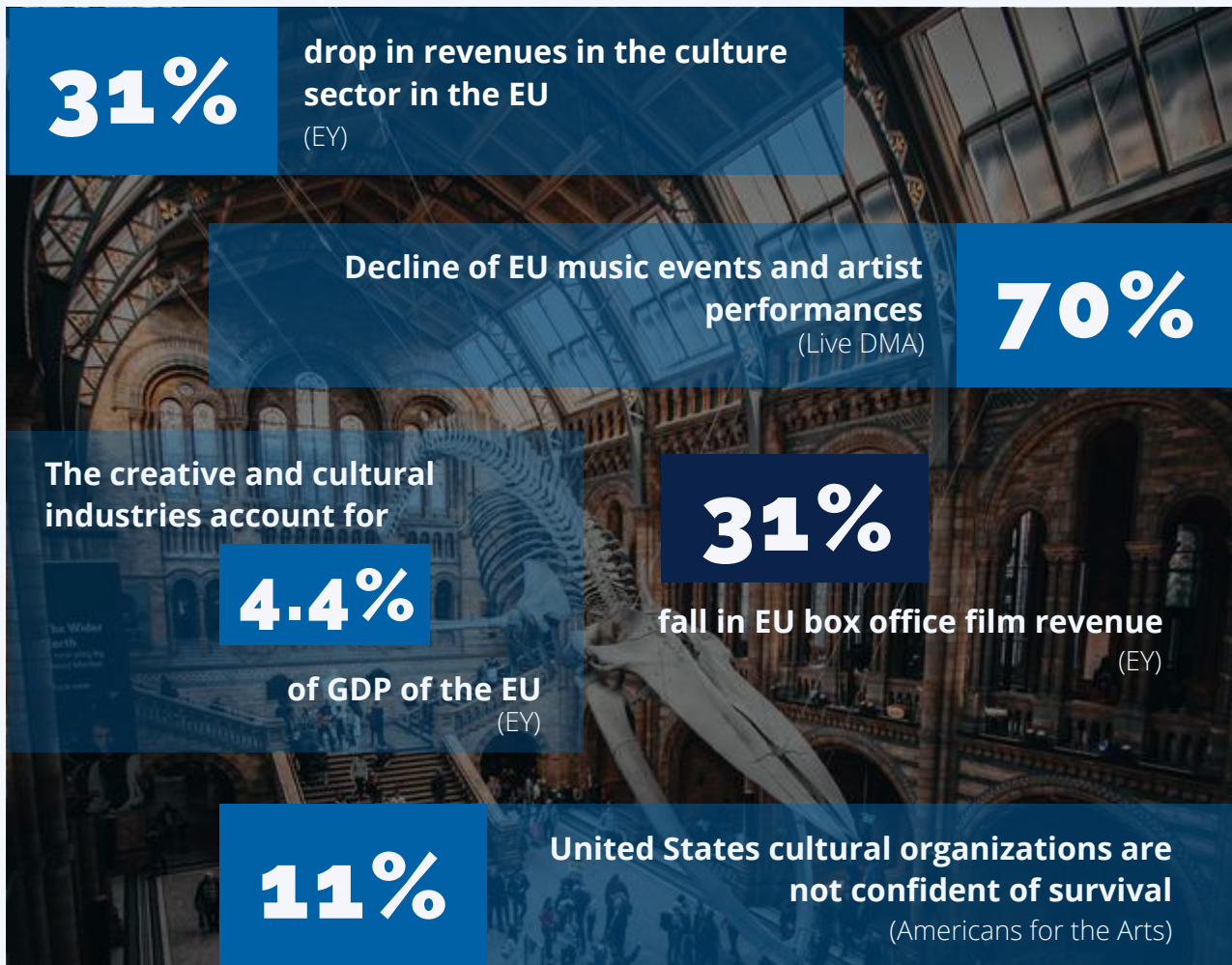
Alliance Images/Shutterstock*

Europe and North America continues to be heavily impacted by first, second and third waves of the pandemic, its variants and the accompanying restrictions and unpredictability. Europe was one of the first regions to be affected by the pandemic, resulting in countries promptly closing cultural institutions, venues, heritage sites and events. Most European Member States were able to quickly put in place emergency government support mechanisms — some for general unemployment, and others catered specifically for the cultural sector. In most European countries, arts and cultural institutions largely rely on public support rather than on private contributions, whereas in the United States, for instance, support for the cultural sector includes donations, corporate sponsorships, foundation grants, patronage and philanthropic giving. Therefore, when the crisis hit, many institutions in the USA were unsure of how long they could realistically support their activities. Back in March 2020, the American Alliance of Museums anticipated a decline in charitable contributions as donors potentially reassessed their capacity to give due to financial volatility. As all states in the USA set their own restrictions and safety protocols, cultural institutions have adhered to different regulations.

Throughout 2020, Europe suffered an overall 31% fall in revenue in the culture sector. European cities witnessed a steep decline in international tourism throughout the year, especially from June to September. As large museums can be closely connected with the cultural tourism of cities, when tourism ceased, a large share of museum revenue streams were also cut off. In response, most (70%) EU museums increased their online presence. In Europe, as in other regions, the performing arts and live performance sub-sectors have been heavily impacted by the pandemic. With venues closed across most of Europe, there was a staggering 90% drop in EU business for theatre and performing arts and 76% for music. While the majority of countries in Europe have solid social support structures in place for the cultural sector, the impact of COVID-19 has not left its cultural landscape unscathed. Moreover, the pandemic has brought to light weaknesses in structural frameworks and systems, which can be addressed in future strategies.



REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES | EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA



Joshua Rawson-Harris/Unsplash

As the creative and cultural industries drive 4.4% of the EU's GDP, COVID-19 restrictions have presented significant challenges for the region's development. This recognition of the importance of the CCIs to European economic development and social cohesion was why the European Parliament voted in favor of a resolution on the "Cultural Recovery of Europe" last September. It underlines the connection between post-pandemic recovery and the revitalization of European cultural policy to other priorities, including climate change and digital technologies. Moreover, it calls on the European Commission (EC) and the Member States to earmark 2% of the Recovery and Resilience Facility to the cultural and creative sectors and industries. Following a virtual meeting of EU Ministers of Culture in April 2020, the European Commission launched Creatives Unite, an online platform for sharing information on the cultural and creative sectors during the crisis.

Despite the massive losses to the creative sector, there are some signs of recovery. For example, as of April 2021, 37% of EU Member States have opened museums to the public. Statistics Canada also reported an 11% increase in employment in the Canadian arts, entertainment and recreation sectors between February and March 2021, demonstrating an upward trend in employment growth for the second consecutive month.



REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES | EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

Current status of museum re-openings in EU countries

Source: NEMO (April 2021)

Closed
37%

Open
37%

Partially open/Physical distancing
26%



Dannie Jing/Unsplash



REGIONAL SNAPSHOTS

The European Commission and the European Investment Fund (EIF) launched new measures last July to boost access to funding for cultural and creative enterprises during the pandemic. The measures are part of the overall Culture and Creative Sectors Guarantee Facility, which provides €251 million to SMEs and small public enterprises.



Jade Scarlato/Unsplash



Irina Komaritskaya/Shutterstock*

Co-funded by the Creative Europe Programme of the EU, DigiTraining has offered **SMEs and heritage institutions digital and management skills** to accelerate their participation in digital transformation.

Anonymous Was A Woman (AWAW) partnered with the New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA) to introduce an emergency relief grant programme to **support women artists impacted by the COVID-19 crisis**. The fund provides grants of US\$2,500 to support women artists aged 40 years and older who have lost income or opportunities due to the pandemic.



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LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN



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Confronted with the pandemic, the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region has faced challenges on several fronts. COVID-19 has revealed structural gaps and vulnerabilities in the region, and has exasperated pre-existing inequalities, exclusion and insecurity. When the pandemic hit, these issues were compounded by additional risk factors, such as overcrowding, lack of access to basic services, and high levels of labour informality. The challenges of exclusion and inequalities were underlined as key issues for the region during the 53 UNESCO Resiliart debates that took place in Latin America and the Caribbean over the past year. Certain groups – Afro-descendent artists, indigenous creators, women and youth – have been particularly vulnerable to the shocks of the pandemic. In five countries that account for 80% of the region's indigenous peoples (Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru), more than eight million indigenous people lack access to drinking water in their homes, which has made it difficult to practice hygiene measures. The pandemic's impact on tourism-related industries has been particularly felt in the Caribbean where tourism employs some 2.4 million people and makes up 15.5% of GDP.



Despite these challenges, the region has introduced many powerful response measures to combat the impact of the pandemic and ensure the continuity of cultural life. The Governments of Colombia, Guatemala and Peru prepared health-related materials in various indigenous languages that were adapted to cultural contexts. Soon into the pandemic, ministries of culture in the region began to engage in impact assessment processes – at times partnering with regional and civil society organizations, and drawing on existing regional data sets. The Ministry of Culture of Panama, for instance, conducted a survey on the country's cultural and creative industry to establish baseline data. In Brazil, researchers and partner institutions joined with civil society organizations to assess the impacts of COVID-19 on the value chains of the cultural and creative sectors.



REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES | LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

A regional assessment on the impact of COVID-19 on the cultural and creative industries was launched last year by MERCOSUR, UNESCO, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB) and the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI). The results showed that, by November 2020, ten countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay) have implemented a total of 218 national public policies to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on cultural workers and cultural and creative industries. Similarly, the results provided insight into the most impacted workers in the cultural sector and what are the most needed public policy measures for companies operating in culture. UNESCO also supported the survey "Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic in the Cultural and Creative Sectors in Brazil", carried out from July to September, and supported by the Social Service of Commerce (SESC), University of São Paulo (USP), the National Forum of State Secretaries and Directors of Culture and 13 State Secretaries of Culture. The findings reveal heavy implications for employment. Between March and April, 44% of organizations dismissed all their employees and there was a 49% drop in third-party service contracts. A government survey carried out in Costa Rica last year estimated that 12% of art workers surveyed live in a state of poverty or extreme poverty, making them especially vulnerable to the effects of the pandemic. Such patterns in cultural employment echo the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) estimates that the crisis in 2020 added 22 million more people living in poverty and extreme poverty in the region.

Strengthening the nexus between culture and education has emerged as a policy priority across the region. From the beginning of the pandemic, in March 2020, eight member countries of the Central American Integration System (SICA) jointly adopted a Contingency Plan agreed by their governments. UNESCO worked together with the Educational and Cultural Coordination of SICA (CECC-SICA) to include specific guidelines on education and culture into this Plan. As part of this joint effort, a digital platform "Culture in Times of COVID-19" also highlighted governmental actions to broaden access to cultural content during the crisis. The Organization has also collaborated with CECC-SICA in recommendations for a Collaborative Response Strategy for culture in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in view of strengthening institutional capacity-building to formalize the sector and its access to social security.

Mike Lewis HeadSmart Media/Unsplash

6.9%

drop in economic growth in LAC
(The World Bank)

Tourism employs an estimated

2.4

million people in the Caribbean
(CEPAL)

81%

of the population of Latin America and the Caribbean is urban, making it the most urbanized region in the world
(ECLAC)



REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES | LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Women's inclusion in the labour market is estimated to have been set back by 10 years in Latin America.
(ECLAC)



The 27th Ibero-American Summit was held this month in Andorra to discuss economic, social and environmental proposals for the region's post-COVID recovery. The 18 Heads of State and Government or Vice-Presidents adopted the Andorra Declaration, the Commitment on Innovation for Sustainable Development and the Programme of Action, as well as 16 special communiqués, which called for the strengthening of multilateralism together with health, economic, social and environmental measures to support recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. Full support was also given to four new Ibero-American cooperation initiatives: Congenital Chagas, Prevention and Eradication of Gender Violence, Indigenous Languages, and Global Citizenship for Sustainable Development.



REGIONAL SNAPSHOTS

Strengthening the productivity and competitiveness of Central American economies and **promoting cultural and educational cooperation projects in the region** was at the core of a cooperation framework agreement signed by the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI) and the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (BCIE) in February.



Marcos Castillo/Shutterstock*



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The Mujer Exporta MX initiative of the Mexican Government has **boosted women's entrepreneurial skills and access to financing and business networks**, equipping them with the tools for development and expansion into other markets throughout the region and beyond.

UNESCO, CARICOM and the University of the West Indies joined forces to **stimulate the growth of the creative economies in 14 Caribbean countries**. The sub-regional project "Creative Caribbean: An Ecosystem of 'Play' for Growth and Development" is backed by a €3 million funding package from the European Development Fund and will be rolled out over a 40-month period.





JOINT UN ACTION AT NATIONAL LEVEL



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The COVID-19 pandemic is having a destructive impact on the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), disproportionately impacting the most vulnerable groups in societies, and stalling and, in some cases, reversing progress. While the crisis has threatened progress towards achieving the SDGs, it is an opportunity to heed the lessons learned to ensure inclusive, sustainable and transformative COVID-19 recovery. Culture is crucial to these strategies.

In June 2020, the Secretary-General launched the "UN Comprehensive Response to COVID-19" for United Nations-wide cooperation to "save lives, protect societies, recover better" during and after the pandemic. Within this policy there are three main response components:

- **Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan to address immediate health needs**
- **Global Humanitarian Response Plan**
- **UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response**

Building on its mandate, UNESCO contributes to UN COVID-19 response efforts on the immediate socio-economic response. Culture is firmly anchored across all of the five pillars of the framework:

- 1. Health first: protecting health services and systems during the crisis**
- 2. Protecting people: social protection and basic services**
- 3. Economic response and recovery: protecting jobs and small and medium sized enterprises, and the informal sector workers**
- 4. Macroeconomic response and multilateral collaboration**
- 5. Social cohesion and community resilience**



UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION FRAMEWORK (UNSDCF) AND COUNTRY COMMON ANALYSIS (CCA)

Most countries are engaged in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and the preparation of Country Common Analysis (CCA). CCAs now include multidimensional risk analysis that give prominence to the obstacles that ethnic and linguistic minorities face in some countries in, for example, learning in mother tongue languages, or accessing state employment opportunities. Other entry points for culture include social cohesion, sustainable urbanization, post-COVID tourism and digitalization. These efforts pave the way for greater national ownership and interagency collaboration at the country level, as well as a more nuanced and contextual framework to better respond to priorities.

UNESCO has remained committed to advocating for the inclusion of culture in COVID-19 recovery plans. This means putting people at the centre of responses for more equitable and resilient outcomes. UNESCO is actively engaged in the work of UN Country Teams (UNCT) and UN interagency programmes and mechanisms. In the Arab States region, for instance, UNESCO contributes to UNCTs related to culture and employment for youth through the “Revive the Spirit of Mosul” and “Cash-For-Work” initiatives, and works to raise the profile of the Organization’s work in culture and sustainable development. Notably in **Yemen**, culture’s contribution focuses on economic resilience, decent employment and protecting people, in line with the humanitarian focus of all UN activities at country level.



Cash for Work Project, Yemen
©UNESCO



ENSURING EFFECTIVE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Solid policymaking must be based on robust, evidence-based data. This is why thorough analyses of the impact of the pandemic on culture is needed in order to both establish a starting point for moving forward into recovery and ensure culture's inclusion in recovery strategies. In the Pacific sub-region, UNESCO contributed to a joint socio-economic impact assessment that provided key data on the integration of culture in the recovery process of 15 SIDS. The assessment also captured more fine-grained data related to the importance of intergenerational transmission of traditional knowledge, agricultural practices, the links between living heritage and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the impact of the cultural and creative industries on social cohesion and community resilience throughout the crisis. UNESCO also provided inputs on the impact of COVID-19 on culture in **Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro** and **Serbia** in relation to Pillar 3 (economic response) and Pillar 5 (social cohesion) of the UN COVID-19 response, based on ongoing projects and a UNESCO socio-economic impact assessment carried out in these countries.



HARNESSING INTERAGENCY COOPERATION

Greater coordination between UN entities was an overarching priority of UN cooperation prior to the pandemic. Given the multi-faceted impacts of the pandemic, COVID-19 has only accentuated the need for diverse expertise and integrated responses. Over the past year, UNESCO collaborated with a number of UN agencies on targeted projects at country level. For example, in **Cambodia**, UNESCO joined other UN agencies to develop the socio-economic plan for COVID-19 response, in which culture features prominently through tourism, the cultural and creative industries and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) for handicrafts. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and UNESCO for the implementation of UNESCO Culture Conventions and the development of cultural policies in ECOWAS Member States, which also includes joint responses against COVID-19. In **Brazil**, UNESCO has worked on an UN interagency project to combat the spread of COVID-19 among indigenous peoples in the Amazon region. Through radio, social networks and other tools, it provides health messages in indigenous languages that take into consideration their values and culture. Meanwhile, a joint UN project on COVID-19 response in the informal sector with a specific focus on the creative industries was approved by the Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) to be implemented in **Fiji, Vanuatu, Palau** and **Tonga**.





LATEST NEWS



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UNESCO CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL JAZZ DAY

The 10th anniversary of International Jazz Day was held on 30 April, co-organized by UNESCO and the Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz. Commemorated around the world, the Day highlights the power of jazz as a beacon for freedom, creativity and a universal language of peace. This year's edition included a series of online master classes with world-renowned jazz artists, an event on "Jazz Women in Africa" and an All Star Global Concert held virtually from cities all around the world, including UNESCO Creative Cities of Music.

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ITALY HOSTS CULTURE WEBINARS IN LEAD UP TO G20

Under the Italian G20 Presidency, UNESCO participated in three thematic webinars held from 9 to 13 April 2021 to strengthen culture's contribution to policy dialogue of the G20, which will take place in July this year. The webinars brought together ministers, international organizations, NGOs, cultural networks and experts to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on the cultural sector, and how culture can contribute to economic growth and broader sustainable outcomes.

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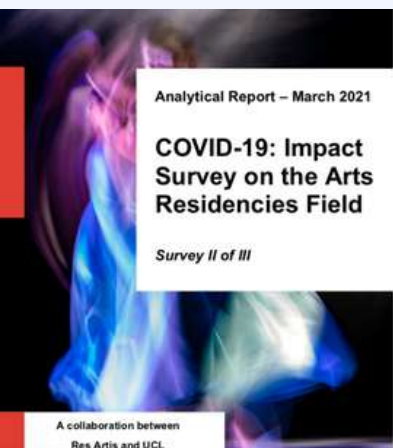
RECENT PUBLICATIONS



MUSEUMS AROUND THE WORLD IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

In this publication, UNESCO provides a provisional assessment of the situation facing the world's 104,000 museums, drawing on data from an online survey among 87 Member States carried out in March this year.

Report available in English and French



COVID-19: IMPACT SURVEY ON THE ARTS RESIDENCIES FIELD

The second of a three-part survey series by Res Artis and University College London (UCL) that looks at the short, medium and long-term impacts of COVID-19 on the international arts residencies field. The first survey was published in September 2020.

Report available in English



This Tracker is produced by UNESCO, in English and French.

We are counting on partners to support its production in other UNESCO official languages, to expand the global discussion on culture and public policy.

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