

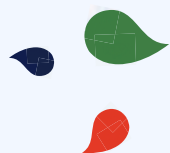


This monthly Tracker is produced by UNESCO to monitor culture in public policy with regards to the UN Sustainable Development Agenda. It highlights developments within national and regional contexts, as well as emerging debates on culture's contribution to sustainable development. Drawing on a variety 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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AT A GLANCE



Regional consultations continued with the Asia and Pacific region, bringing together Ministers of Culture and civil society actors. The UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development - MONDIACULT 2022 will be hosted from 28 to 30 September 2022 by the Government of Mexico. The consultation for Africa is currently taking place and Latin America and the Caribbean and the Arab States' consultations are to held in the coming weeks.



Cutting Edge examines the increasing prominence of cultural diplomacy in international relations and the shift to more mutually-beneficial cooperative models. Culture has a unique power to build trust and opening channels for dialogue. Furthermore, cultural diplomacy helps enhance a country's national and local cultural assets.

Cultural Policy Highlights contains the latest cultural policy innovations from around the world, whilst the **Regional Perspectives** section includes updates on regional processes.

Culture in the 2030 Agenda highlights the cultural diplomacy initiatives of Member States presented in their Voluntary National Reviews, from collaboration to combat the illicit trafficking of cultural property to supporting cultural and creative industries, aid for the reconstruction of cultural heritage to artist exchange programmes.



Opening ceremony of the 16th session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, UNESCO Headquarters, 2021
UNESCO/Christelle ALIX*



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 stimulate the adaptation of 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.



Ethiopia has inaugurated the Abrehot Library in Addis Ababa, one of Africa's largest public libraries, which can accommodate over 2,000 readers at a time. It can hold 1.4 million books and also has over 240,000 electronic books and 300,000 research papers.



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The Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy of **Indonesia** has released Guidelines Creative Village Development, as an effort to develop and explore the creative potential of rural communities in the country so that they become a force in economic recovery by opening up job opportunities.

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The Ministry of Culture of **Germany** has announced its intention to set up a "green culture desk" intended to serve as a central coordination point on sustainability issues for arts venues from museums to music production studios.



The Ministries of Culture and Education of **Saudi Arabia** have launched an initiative enabling greater access to culture and arts for students with disabilities, to provide them with rich, high-quality skill experiences.



The **Grenada** Tourism Authority has completed the renovations of the Grenada Underwater Sculpture Park. Accessible to both snorkelers and divers, it includes 82 lifesize sculptures that reflect Grenada's culture and are made of simple substrates designed to act as an artificial reef. The park has attracted a wide array of diverse marine life and contributes to tackling climate change.



R Gombarik/Shutterstock.com*



CULTURAL POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

Burkina Faso has adopted a new Language Policy 2021-2030 aiming to strengthen human capacities and citizen participation of all Burkinabe in the local, cultural and political development of the country by integrating national languages in the national institutional system.

Latvia has taken leadership of the Baltic Culture Fund for the next three years. Established in 2019 and managed on a rotational basis, it aims to promote cultural cooperation between Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and to enhance international awareness of Baltic culture through joint projects in architecture, visual art, design, literature, music, stage art, libraries, museums and archives.



Haitian creole dolls
NadineDoerle /pixabay.com

In **Haiti**, the Ministry of Ministry of Culture and Communication took part in the 15th Crafts Fair with nearly 200 creators who chose Nou pa ka sispann travay (We cannot stop working) as the event's motto, as a reminder that the health and climate crisis affecting the country has not stopped them. The Fair is a vital space for the exchange of artists that promotes local creation.



The Ministry of Culture of **Aruba** held the Children and Youth Dande Festival to keep the traditional dance of the Dande alive, as well as financing the "Dande di Aruba" documentary, that highlights the origin of Dande and its importance in the country's efforts to preserve cultural heritage.



Cyprus has announced the start of the construction of the new Cyprus Museum to replace the existing one built to house 6,500 antiquities in permanent exhibition spaces with the aim of contributing to cultural tourism. It will also include spaces for temporary exhibitions, educational programmes, conservation workshops, a library, and an amphitheatre..



Archeological site of Ancient Kuriom in Episkopi, Cyprus
Tânia Mousinho/Unsplash.com



The Department of Education of the **Philippines** has launched a national exercise programme, which aims to promote a healthy lifestyle, drawing on the country's folk, cultural and tribal dances.



CULTURAL POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

The Alisher Navoi State Academic Bolshoi Theater of **Uzbekistan** has launched an initiative for the promotion of national opera and ballet on the global stage, as well as develop the traditions and creativity of teachers and students.



Tashkent Opera, Uzbekistan
Kijs/Shutterstock.com*

The Ministry of Youth, Culture and Communication of **Morocco**, and the National Broadcasting and Television Company have launched "Al Masrah Ytaharak" (The Theatre is Moving), aiming to promote and develop national cultural and creative industries, and mitigate the impact of the crisis on the theatre sector.

The National Museum of Contemporary Art of **Greece** has teamed up with a nongovernmental organization called The Happy Act to make its institution more accessible to visitors with autism, for example by creating a quiet space for visitors experiencing a sensory overload and training staff how to approach visitors in distress.



The Board of Directors of the digital and creative enterprises programme in **Nigeria**, has launched a programme to create more sustainable jobs for youth. The initiative will stimulate investments in 226 technology and creative start-ups and provide non-financial services to 451 digital technology and small and medium enterprises, creating some 6.1 million direct and indirect jobs.



mavo/Shutterstock.com*



Gabon has announced efforts to improve the status of Gabonese artists, invest in recreation, culture and worship for 2022, as well as rehabilitate the National School of Art and Manufacturing.

The Ministry of the Cultures, Arts and Heritage of **Chile** has returned more than one hundred "Ivi Tupuna" and bioarchaeological pieces of patrimonial and spiritual relevance to the Padre Sebastian Englert Anthropological Museum of Rapa Nui, as part of efforts to promote dialogue with indigenous communities and advance a policy of restitution of cultural heritage to their territories of origin. The beginning of 2022 coincides with the start of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032).



Rapa Nui, Chile
Stephanie Morcinek/Unsplash.com





CULTURAL POLICY HIGHLIGHTS



To foster the next generations of talents in **Cambodia** in the field of media, the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts has launched a training programme for film and documentary, as well as multimedia, in collaboration with the BBC Action Media, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and the Swedish Agency for International Development Cooperation.



True Touch Lifestyle/Shutterstock.com*



Yacoub Rabah/Shutterstock.com*

The **Palestinian** Museum and the British Victoria and Albert Museum have announced their first cooperation, through the establishment of the first studio for textile restoration in Palestine. The project coincides with the inscription of the Palestinian embroidery on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage .

South Africa has allocated a grant to fund the South African Cultural Observatory, aiming to bridge the gap between market related skills and artistic expression, allowing artists to market their artwork professionally and expand their business opportunities.



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The Ministry of Entertainment, Entrepreneurship, and Talent Development of **Saint Kitts and Nevis** has announced the launch of a "Month of the Arts" in 2022, which will feature virtual events, four mural projects, writing competitions in poetry and prose, as well as an art competition. The initiative aims to boost the creative sector. The Ministry also announced a new television channel to increase visibility of creative products.



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Spain has returned 36 artefacts to the Arab Republic of Egypt that were looted from Egyptian archaeological sites at Saqqara and Mit Rahina through illegal excavations. Among the pieces delivered there is a head of the lion goddess Sekhmet and a canopic vase with a lid of the head of the god Amset.

The Ministry of Telecommunications, Information Technology and Communication, of **Angola** has launched a new radio channel exclusively dedicated to the promotion and preservation of culture and values of national identity. Through the Angolan National Radio, the channel will cover various topics such as literature, dance, plastic arts, folklore presentations, music, cinema, theatre and stand-up comedy.



From standing out to reaching out: cultural diplomacy for sustainable development



Opening ceremony of the 16th session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, UNESCO Headquarters, 2021, **UNESCO/Christelle ALIX***

Culture increasingly permeates international relations and foreign policies. Cultural diplomacy is harnessed by countries to promote their cultural distinctiveness, thus enhancing the world's cultural diversity while paving the way to cooperation and dialogue. In a globalized, interconnected world where countries are increasingly interdependent, cultural diplomacy can be critical to fostering peace and stability. By supporting mutual understanding, trust and exposure to cultural diversity, it enhances international relations in many areas of cooperation. This unique form of intercultural dialogue has the power to bolster and renew multilateral cooperation, beyond competing interests, to put forth global public goods, while also tackling some of the pressing issues of our time, such as disinformation, social inequalities, conflict and climate change.

New models of cultural diplomacy are emerging that are mutually beneficial for the countries involved and build on culture as a resource for social cohesion and dialogue. Traditionally about winning "hearts and minds" for strategic purposes – or even, sometimes, instrumentalised for divisive purposes – contemporary cultural diplomacy can be seen as more about long term cooperation and sharing values. Whether it be enabling the mobility of artists to promote cultural diversity, lending museums pieces to build a shared understanding of the past, pooling expertise to boost the capacity of the creative industries or launching languages programmes, cultural diplomacy initiatives have multiple benefits for fostering global citizenship. Furthermore, facing the homogenisation of a globalised culture, cultural diplomacy can also serve as a way of enhancing a country's national and local cultural assets and so promote cultural diversity.



Valuing cultural diversity, in turn, enhances social inclusion and well-being through the arts and creativity, as well as cultural heritage, leading to enhanced participation and the feeling of being part of a society. As the economic weight of the cultural sector is now firmly established, cultural diplomacy efforts can also be leveraged to boost the cultural assets and creative industries of a country to support decent jobs and highlight their economic leadership.

UNESCO has been a unique global platform for cultural diplomacy since its inception in 1945 rooted in its conviction in the "free exchange of ideas and knowledge... for the purposes of mutual understanding and a truer and more perfect knowledge of each other's lives," as articulated in its [Constitution](#). Particularly through its normative instruments and programmes, UNESCO facilitates cultural diplomacy, opening new arenas for cooperation and dialogue on complex and sometimes sensitive issues related to culture, creativity, and heritage, building international consensus and frameworks for action.

Cultural diplomacy: a unique conduit for dialogue

Forms of cultural diplomacy have existed for centuries, with explorers, travellers, traders, teachers and artists being early "cultural diplomats". Documents on the UNESCO [Memory of the World](#) list - such as those related to peace building and cultural exchanges between [Korea and Japan](#) from the 17th to the 19th century - bear witness to formal government exchanges since the birth of the modern state. It was used by many European countries as a token of pride and courtesy and/or to build political alliances. In the late 19th century countries such as France (1883) and Italy (1889) began setting up networks of institutions to promote their cultures and languages abroad. Some countries, such as Brazil, began mapping cultural relations as early as 1920's to promote its image abroad - particularly in North America, Europe and Latin America - but also to connect with historical roots in sub-Saharan Africa in subsequent decades, marking a trend of strategies that have an external (foreign policy) and internal (nation building) purpose.





The 1920's also shifted the contours of cultural diplomacy as radio broadcasts in foreign languages could be used as a way to share cultural messages to populations abroad. Across history, culture was sometimes instrumentalised as part of geopolitics and competition between different countries.

Following independence, several countries centred their foreign policy around culture, or development policies around inter-state cooperation in culture. Cultural diplomacy was a way of recovering from the dark pages of their past marked by discrimination. For instance, Senegal's foreign policy strategy focused on the idea of "culture-peace", including intercultural dialogue as one of its main pillars, thus prioritizing soft power over hard power. Whereas in the Caribbean, culture was a cornerstone of national development policies and a strong regional multilateral dimension emerged through cultural diplomacy efforts, including through festivals such as the Caribbean Festival of Arts-CARIFESTA (1972) forging inter-state relations through the arts, which predates the creation of The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that collaborates in other policy areas.

Cultural diplomacy is the "exchange of ideas, information, art, language and other aspects of culture among nations and peoples in order to foster mutual understanding"



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Despite being a long-term practice of cultural relations at State level in different forms, the term "cultural diplomacy" has only recently been established. Building on the notion of "soft power", coined in the 1980's by Joseph Nye, Milton Cummings proposed a definition of cultural diplomacy being the "exchange of ideas, information, art, language and other aspects of culture among nations and peoples in order to foster mutual understanding". Cultural diplomacy encompasses a wide range of practices with different objectives, be it forging alliances, stimulating economic development or supporting peace and security. John Lenczowski categorizes several instruments of cultural diplomacy, including the arts, exhibitions, exchanges, educational programmes, literature, language teaching, broadcasting, gifts, promotion of ideas (like rule of law), promotion of social policy (like campaigns against HIV), history and religious diplomacy (like interfaith dialogue). Other researchers are increasingly linking the arts, festivals and geopolitics.



Beyond State-driven policy processes, cultural diplomacy engages a wide range of non-governmental actors such as artists, curators, journalists, teachers, lecturers and students which support or amplify these processes, differentiating it from other areas of diplomacy. International art biennials, for example, rely on artists and curators. The Fulbright Foreign Student Programme of the United States of America or the European Union's ERASMUS student exchange programme are also tools for fostering cultural exchange and building mutual values, whilst multilingual public media also influence cultural cooperation. The growing role of non-state actors is transforming international relations, accelerating the circulation of ideas. Civil society organizations often have more flexibility to pursue exchanges and programmes. Such cultural relations often grow more organically rather than having strategic foreign policy purposes. The Institute for Cultural Diplomacy (Germany) even identifies private sector cultural diplomacy. Given the move towards more socially responsible business practices, the ability to understand and embrace the different values and needs of diverse cultures and societies becomes ever more important.

Museums are a particularly effective vehicle for cultural diplomacy. As platforms for civic discourse among a broad group of users, they bring together globally shared experiences for mutual understanding among cultures, such as the Canadian Museum for Human Rights on the issue of genocide and The Casa de la Memoria in Colombia, established after the armed conflict. Opened in 2017, the Louvre Abu Dhabi Museum was the first museum in the world that was the result of a diplomatic agreement, between France and the United Arab Emirates, and aims to foster a dialogue between civilizations. Networks of museums, such as the Ibermuseos of the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB), also collaborate to share expertise to strengthen museological heritage and the social functions of museums.

Louvre Abu Dhabi
Agnieszka Kowalczyk/Unsplash.com





Although cultural diplomacy is traditionally State-driven and anchored in bilateral processes, it is also gaining traction at the local level, fostering new forms of culture-based networking and cooperation worldwide. Global exchanges through cities can foster cooperation and leadership as well as pooling expertise, reshaping governance models of the cultural sector particularly for post-pandemic recovery. Cities are laboratories for new models of external cultural relations and their proximity to citizens allows more responsive and innovative policies and initiatives. UNESCO's Creative Cities Network ([UCCN](#)), for example, joins together 246 cities across the globe to embed cultural and creative industries in their local development, allowing these cities to promote their culture. Similarly, UNESCO's [World Heritage Cities Programme](#) brings together urban World Heritage around the world, for the sharing experiences and providing assistance for addressing the particular conservation challenges that these sites face. Morocco has effectively harnessed the city space through cultural festivals, such as the Marrakech International Film Festival and the Mawazine music festival in Rabat, bringing together international performers and visitors, as well as enhancing the status of these cities internationally.



Furthermore, digital technologies are transforming methods of cultural diplomacy, as digital platforms are no longer simply a platform for visibility and dissemination of messages and information but also the method for engaging audiences. "Network cultural diplomacy" is a term evolving around digital technologies. For example, Oman and China's cultural ministries recently held a digital cultural exchange week for youth, artists and entrepreneurs to share experiences and increase cultural cooperation between the two countries. The pandemic particularly increased digital demands and offers and opened new avenues to continue cultural diplomacy. An example is a livestreaming tour in Chinese facilitated by the Victoria and Albert (V&A) Museum in London, in August 2020 through the platform, Kuaishou.

From standing out to reaching out

Whilst the primary goal of cultural diplomacy remains the advancement of national interests, there is a perceptible shift towards more mutually beneficial models that seek to build trust, establishing cooperation and partnership. transitioning from "standing out" to "reaching out", as [one study](#) put it. Genuine cultural diplomacy is now a two-way communication process, entailing not only projecting a country's image and values to other countries but also endeavouring to understand their culture, values and images. As such, culture can open up new pathways for diplomacy as it is a way of kickstarting dialogue. The joint inscription of a [traditional Korean sport](#) on UNESCO's [Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity](#) reflects such process. UNESCO supported the joint application by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea, brokering the highly symbolic step on the road to inter-Korean reconciliation, demonstrating the peace-building power of cultural heritage, as a bridge between peoples.



Traditional Korean wrestling (Ssireum/Ssireum) listed as Intangible Cultural Heritage following unprecedented merged application from both Koreas

Korean Ssireum Association*
UNESCO



In some cases, cultural diplomacy can also directly or indirectly pursue economic benefits, as cultural diplomacy is understood as a lever to boost exports. Viet Nam in 2021 launched a new cultural diplomacy strategy to harness culture, which not only brings economic benefits but also helps the country raise its influence and spread its cultural values to the world. For example, China and New Zealand in 2015 embarked on a project to promote tourism through a museum initiative: the Te Papa National Museum organized exhibitions at the National Museum of China and vice versa. Peru was an early practitioner of “gastro-diplomacy”, using national cuisine as an element of its public diplomacy. Through its campaign “Cocina peruana para el mundo” (Peruvian Cuisine for the World), Peru used cuisine to establish a national brand, and to export this brand globally. Whilst a large element of this policy was to protect the cultural heritage of the country, it also aimed to promote the export of Peruvian goods, such as cacao and quinoa, as well as encourage the opening of Peruvian restaurants abroad, thus creating more economic opportunities. Other countries are also promoting their common culinary traditions, such as through the inscription on the Representative List of the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2020 of “Knowledge, know-how and practices related to the production and consumption of couscous” by Algeria, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia.



Tatiana Bralnina/Shutterstock.com*

The term “cultural diplomacy” has broadened considerably in recent years, also encompassing social development. The role of culture for participation, social inclusion, well-being and freedom of expression is well-recognised. Cultural diplomacy programmes now tackle issues such as social cohesion, racism, inequality, discrimination against minorities and migrants, the cultural dimension of inter-religious issues and post-conflict reconciliation. Panama's 2018 Cultural Diplomacy Strategy, for example, “positions culture as a resource for sustainable development not only in national spaces of consolidation but also at a regional and international level” and is rooted in cultural rights and the 2030 Agenda.



National governments today are gradually evolving and refining their models for diplomacy, including cultural diplomacy strategies. Since 2007, China has made significant efforts “to publicize the fine traditions of Chinese culture and strengthen international cultural exchanges to enhance the influence of Chinese culture worldwide,” leading to the establishment of several new think tanks, university courses and associations. China's One Belt One Road programme includes one of the biggest soft power efforts globally, through an important cultural and educational component that aims to build on the historic legacy of the cultural connections along the ancient silk road. The Qatar National Vision 2030 (2008), calls for a deepening “cultural exchange with the Arab peoples in particular” and to reflect Qatar's role as a “responsible member of the international community”, explicitly linking culture and sports.





Other countries have embedded cultural diplomacy as one of the strategic axes of their foreign ministry and have a dedicated directorate within their ministry of foreign relations, testifying to the power of culture to advance cooperation, as well as investments and trade. Malaysia's new Foreign Policy Framework 2021, for example, included cultural diplomacy approaches.



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Reflecting this trend, there has been a proliferation of new institutes dedicated to cultural diplomacy. Historically representing European countries, more recent examples include The Peres Centre for Peace (Israel established in 1996), Russkiy Mir Foundation of Russia (2007), The Confucius Institute (China 2004), Yunus Emre Institute (Turkey, 2007) and Korean Cultural Centers (Republic of Korea, 2009). Different cultural diplomacy policies and institutes have significant differences in approaches. For example, the UK focuses on education, the France and Germany emphasise language and Canada concentrates on exhibiting the diversity of their cultural development. Some cultural foundations create bridges between multiple countries, such as the Asia-Europe Foundation, the EU Japan Institute and Anna Lindh Foundation based in Egypt that unites 3000 civil society organizations to contribute to the development of an Intercultural Strategy for the Euro-Mediterranean Region. The Institute for African Culture and International Understanding (Nigeria 2007), under the auspices of UNESCO, also has a regional reach.

Other countries have chosen to invest in long-term initiatives, such as India's Project Mausam, which aims to connect countries on the Indian Ocean through the shared knowledge systems, traditions, technologies and ideas along maritime routes. Kazakhstan has a tradition of organizing conferences focusing on intercultural and interreligious dialogue, often organized by the International Centre for the Rapprochement of Cultures, under the auspices of UNESCO. New Zealand's government set up the Cultural Diplomacy International Programme in 2012 to boost New Zealand's profile and economic, trade, tourism, diplomatic and cultural interests, including through an exhibition entitled Tuku Iho by the New Zealand Māori Arts and Crafts Institute in Chile, Argentina, and Brazil and artist exchanges with Samoa. In Africa, the Panafrican Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou (FESPACO) a film festival in Burkina Faso and the Luanda Biennale in Angola also foster regional cooperation.





Cultural diplomacy on the global stage

The multilateral arena is especially vital for cultural diplomacy, with some countries increasingly investing in regional or global forums. Cultural diplomacy in the multilateral sphere has existed in the form of World Expos, which began in 1851 in the United Kingdom. Originally conceived to promote industry and national identity, Expos began to connect cultures and present national achievements in all domains of human activity and since the year 2000, the main UN agendas have guided the selection of Expo themes. The Dubai Expo 2020 currently taking place (postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic) under the theme "Connecting Minds, Creating the Future" is the first time a country from the Arab States has hosted. Organizations such as the International Organisation of La Francophonie (OIF) deepen diplomatic relations through efforts to promote the French language and the Commonwealth of Nations that aims to "influenc[e] international society to the benefit of all through the pursuit of common principles and values." Even organizations of hard power, such as NATO recently launched a Fellowship Programme in the field of cultural diplomacy.



Massimiliano De Giorgi - G20/PCM

At the regional level, culture has long been a vehicle for deepening cooperation in other policy areas. For example, the 1964 Charter of Arab Cultural Unity states that "the cultural and intellectual unity is the main basis upon which Arab Unity is built" (leading to creation of the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) in 1970. In Africa, culture quickly became recognised as an important element of the African Union (AU), following its establishment in 2002 as a replacement to the Organization of African Unity (1963-1999), notably through the 2006 Charter for African Cultural Renaissance that recognises the important role that culture plays in mobilising and unifying people around common ideals and promoting African culture to build the ideals of Pan-Africanism. The AU Year of the Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for Building the Africa We Want in 2021 is a further manifestation of this desire. Likewise, the Commonwealth of Independent States established an Intergovernmental Foundation for Educational, Scientific and Cultural Cooperation in 2006. The onset of the pandemic, has also prompted deeper cooperation on culture at the regional level. For example, the South American sub-regional trading bloc, MERCOSUR, has just released its first ever joint statistical exercise on the cultural sector whilst the eight members of the Central American Integration System (SICA) have developed a regional integration strategy, centred on cultural diplomacy.



Regional-level cultural diplomacy policies and strategies are becoming increasingly integrated, as exemplified by the [ASEAN Strategic Plan for Culture and Arts 2016-2025](#). However, the European Union (EU) has perhaps the most clearly articulated position for regional cultural diplomacy. Firstly, it established in 2006 the European Union National Institutes for Culture, creating a network in some 150 countries. Then in 2016, it sought to consolidate a regional cultural diplomacy strategy. The "[Towards an EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations](#)" joint communication explicitly recognised the security dimension of culture for "promoting peace and fighting radicalisation through intercultural dialogue". It accelerated the prominent positioning of culture as the core of the EU's foreign and security policy, for example, leading to the foreign policy branch - Europe's External Action Service (EEAS) - to engage more strategically with heritage. In June 2021, this resulted in the adoption of a new [EU approach to cultural heritage in conflicts and crises](#), indicating that the EU is consolidating its leading political role in this field.

UNESCO: a global platform for cultural diplomacy

Foreign relations are increasingly engaging in the field of culture and in the promotion of cultural diplomacy from the perspective of valorizing national assets. This is not just in the realm of the arts and heritage, but also through the use of culture more generally to promote sustainable development, intercultural dialogue, peace and security, global citizenship education, social inclusion and environmental sustainability. The recent historic declaration of the G20 attests to this shift in perceptions of culture as a driver for broader policy change. The Republic of Korea's cultural diplomacy policy not only focuses on promotion of Korean culture (Hallyu) abroad but also on reinforcing its efforts through UNESCO.

Participating in UNESCO's work, through the UNESCO Conventions and their Committees not only allows Member States to promote their cultural riches but in so doing, contribute to the safeguarding of cultural diversity. This can be through progressively expanding and deepening criteria for what culture and heritage we collectively value, and deepening cooperation on thematic issues, such as the preservation of rock art or earthen heritage. There are also some 20 [UNESCO Category II Centres for culture](#) across all continents, which, through capacity-building, knowledge sharing and research, provide a valuable and unique contribution. These centres are beacons of regional cooperation and cultural diplomacy.





UNESCO, with its global mandate on culture and promoting the free flow of ideas and images is the global platform for cultural diplomacy, building in particular on legal frameworks enshrined in its Conventions and programmes. Reflecting the important place of culture in international relations, the UNESCO 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict was the second important UN-brokered agreement in the field of international humanitarian law, after the 1948 Genocide Convention. In 1966, in the context of the Cold War, UNESCO Member States adopted a Declaration of the Principles of International Cultural Cooperation to tackle “profound difficulties of understanding one another” and “undesirable practices in the conduct of international relations”, illustrating the need for cultural cooperation to contribute “to the establishment of stable, long-term relations between peoples, which should be subjected as little as possible to the strains which may arise in international life”. The fact that the UNESCO 1972 World Heritage Convention is the most ratified of all of the international conventions (with 194 States Parties) and the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage the most rapidly ratified international convention (with 179 States Parties in under 20 years) attests to the vital importance of culture for multilateral dialogue.

By encouraging multi-country listings, where cultural heritage transcends territories and countries, UNESCO’s World Heritage Convention directly supports cultural diplomacy efforts. The World Heritage List includes, for example, the Qhapaq Nan Andean Road System (covering 30,000km across six countries in South America) and the Great Spa Towns of Europe (comprising 11 spa towns, located in seven countries). The Architectural Work of Le Corbusier World Heritage property, spans several continents with its 17 sites across Europe, Argentina, India and Japan. Due to the number of sites listed along the Silk Roads, UNESCO has a dedicated programme that bears witness to the historic routes known for peaceful trade, and a rich history of religious and harmonious cultural exchange.

Likewise, the growing number of multinational inscriptions on UNESCO’s Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage of the 2003 Convention bear witness to the circulation of culture across countries, thereby fostering cultural cooperation. Examples are numerous from Camel racing, a social practice and a festive heritage associated with camels (United Arab Emirates - Oman), to the musical art of horn players, an instrumental technique linked to singing, vibrato, resonance of place and conviviality (France, Belgium, Luxemburg, Italy), to the art of crafting and playing Mbira/Sansi, the finger-plucking traditional musical instrument in Malawi and Zimbabwe and the Argentinian and Uruguayan tradition of the Tango. Falconry was jointly inscribed by no fewer than 24 countries (Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czechia, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Morocco, Netherlands, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Spain, Syrian Arab Republic and the United Arab Emirates). In 2021, 16 Arabic-speaking countries jointly listed Arabic calligraphy: knowledge, skills and practices. Also inscribed on the Representative List is the celebration of Nowruz marking the first day of spring for over 3000 years in the Balkans, the Black Sea Basin, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Middle East and other regions, and proclaimed as an International Day by the UN General Assembly in 2010.



The return and restitution of cultural property has become an increasingly prominent issue for cultural diplomacy. The 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property - ratified by 141 States - provides a common framework not only for countries to take measures to prohibit and prevent the illicit import, export and transfer of cultural property but also provide to the conditions for its return and restitution. Since its adoption, increasing collaboration between national police services, as well as through Interpol, has seen multiple returns of looted and illicitly trafficked items. Recent examples include the 3,500 year old "Gilgamesh Tablet", one of the oldest literary works in history, which was formally handed back to Iraq by the United States of America, having probably been looted from a museum during the 1991 conflict. The voluntary handover of a fragment of the Piedras Negras stela from a private collector to Guatemala, also demonstrated an evolution in the international environment, made possible through the international cooperation of Guatemala, France and UNESCO. In recent years, there has been an increase in demands for the restitution of artefacts from the colonial era, reflecting a shift in North-South policy discussions towards renewed dialogue on culture. The 1970 Convention provides a framework for such policy discussions and encourages these bilateral efforts.



Ceremony for the voluntary handover of a fragment of stela no. 9 from the Piedras Negras archaeological site in Guatemala
25 October 2021
UNESCO

Cultural diplomacy is also conducive to enabling the exchange of cultural goods and services, the mobility of artists and respect for artistic freedom - a vision which is at the core of UNESCO's 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.



By providing a legal framework to support a balanced flow of cultural goods and services and promote the mobility of artists, particularly from developing countries, the 2005 Convention supports the development of bilateral and multilateral cultural cooperation agreements that cover both operational programmes and professional exchange activities. In a context where the mobility of artists from the Global South is hampered by increasingly restrictive visa regimes - as underlined by UNESCO's soon to be published Re|Shaping Policies for Creativity report - such cultural diplomacy efforts are particularly critical.



Beijing, China, "Golden Bridge on Silk Road" sculpture is on display at the Olympic Green ahead of the upcoming Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation
[testing/Shutterstock.com](https://www.shutterstock.com)

Cultural diplomacy, an enabler of strategic alliances

Cultural diplomacy as practiced by States today has fostered a stronger recognition of the power of culture and cultural diversity as an added-value in today's multicultural societies. By placing culture at the centre stage, cultural diplomacy efforts are conducive to enhanced investments towards the cultural sector, employment and social inclusion. Digital technologies, the rise of civil society and the recalibration of international cultural cooperation have all given rise to new models for cultural diplomacy and stronger policy engagement with the cultural sector. Furthermore, there has been a shift from self-promotion to value-promotion, as cultural diplomacy increasingly targets the recognition of countries' cultural assets, as well as historical and social legacies rooted in the practices of peoples and communities.

Along with these shifts in focus – from projection to cooperation – cultural diplomacy also engages a broad, diverse range of stakeholders. Although cultural diplomacy is traditionally State-driven, new forms of culture-based networking and cooperation at the local level are also increasingly gaining traction. Global exchanges through cities, as a form of cultural diplomacy can foster cooperation and leadership and pool mutually beneficial expertise.



Similarly, regional-level cultural diplomacy initiatives are increasingly potent conduits for sharing values and expertise and supporting regional integration. These multi-layered cultural diplomacy efforts can reshape governance models of the cultural sector, including for post-pandemic recovery.

When grounded in genuine commitment to promote intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity, cultural diplomacy can renew multilateralism, fostering more inclusive, mutually beneficial international cooperation patterns. Countries increasingly acknowledge that enhancing the world's cultural diversity and fostering cultural understanding - as major targets of contemporary cultural diplomacy policies - are equally critical to peace building and security, and even more so in an increasingly fragmented world.

Such approaches to cultural diplomacy allow countries to identify common cultural values and legacies, opening pathways for renewed alliances, thus enacting the principles of the [UNESCO 2001 Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity](#). Multi-country nominations as part of UNESCO Culture Conventions, regional agreements to support the mobility of artists or the development of cross-border cultural tourism routes, reflect such policy endeavors. In doing so, cultural diplomacy has the power to strengthen peace, security and development through the promotion of the world's cultural diversity - as opposed to instrumentalizing culture for divisive purposes - also underlining the dynamic essence of culture and its capacity to renew over time.

However, such a comprehensive vision requires a consolidation of national cultural diplomacy policies and a clearer articulation across the policy spectrum. Despite recognizing the value of cultural diplomacy and actively engaging in it, many countries do not have a specific policy, with responsibilities scattered across government and no earmarked funds. Consolidated cultural diplomacy policies would be beneficial to Member States' national interest, as well as international cooperation. This requires, in particular, that countries foster data-led policy-making and to examine specific challenges and opportunities raised by the digital transformation.

UNESCO provides normative instruments and policy fora for countries to strengthen, articulate and amplify their cultural diplomacy goals. UNESCO Culture Conventions offer dialogue platforms and operational tools to support, for example, the safeguarding of common heritage, the mobility of artists or the restitution of cultural property. The upcoming World Conference on Cultural Policies - [MONDIACULT 2022](#), due to be hosted by the government of Mexico in September, will renew the commitment to global policy dialogue - a vital forum to demonstrate the power of cultural diplomacy to deepen dialogue and cooperation for a more peaceful, prosperous and culturally-diverse world.



Image from Venice Art Biennial, 2017
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The first ever Creative Africa Nexus (CANEX) Summit took place as part of the African Trade Fair to support creative economy growth on the continent. Activities included film policy workshops with film commissioners and policy makers from around the continent, as well as panel discussions on topics ranging from digital disruption, the importance of cultural festivals for the creative economy, monetising visual arts content, talent management, representation and branding. CANEX is an initiative of the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank).

The World Day for African and Afro-descendant Culture was held on 24 January to highlight the contributions of the culture of the African continent and the African diasporas around the world, as well as their role in driving sustainable development, dialogue, and peace. The year's celebration was led by the African Network of Cultural Promoters and Entrepreneurs (RAPEC), the government of Ghana with the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Associations of African Universities (AAU) with support from UNESCO. It included a colloquium of themes including Incorporation of African History and Culture in Education/Curricula and in the Creative and Cultural Industries, and Reconciliation, as well as musical performances. This event contributes to the UN International Decade for People of African Descent 2015-2024, which aims to promote African and Afrodescendant culture and heritage as crucial for the development of the continent, and for humanity as a whole.





Dubai, United Arab Emirates
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From 19-20 December 2021, Ministers of Culture met for an inter-ministerial conference organised by the Arab League Cultural, Educational and Scientific Organisation (ALECSO), whose principal aim was to review and update the draft of the comprehensive plan for Arab culture, based on an analytical review of the most important developments of the Arab cultural scene in past 20 years. The discussions also covered the political, economic and social repercussions of these events and the challenges that the Arab world is facing today. The event culminated in the signing of the UAE Declaration for the Arabic Language.

Held at Expo 2020 Dubai, the session hosted 18 ministers and more than 88 delegations with representatives of intergovernmental organizations such as UNESCO, the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (ISESCO), the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS), the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the Arab Theatre Authority.



ASIA AND THE PACIFIC



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The [13th Asia-Europe Meeting \(ASEM\) Summit](#) was held from 25-26 November focusing on multilateralism, growth, sustainable development and prosperity. The Final Statement included a commitment to enhance multilateralism for social and cultural links, stressing the need to strengthen cooperation on sustainable tourism and the creative economy for people-to-people connectivity, economic cooperation, and quality-job creation. Leaders also reaffirmed their commitment to freedom of religion or belief, advancing interfaith and intercultural dialogues, and the respect for cultural diversity as important components of Asia-Europe partnership and cooperation. In this regard, they expressed their determination to eliminate all forms of intolerance and discrimination, including racism, xenophobia and religious intolerance, among others. [The ASEM Cultural Festival](#) was also held as an official side event to showcase the richness of artistic creativity and diversity in Asia and Europe.

ASEM is an intergovernmental process established in 1996 to foster dialogue and cooperation between Asia and Europe, addressing political, economic, financial, social, cultural, and educational issues of common interest in a spirit of mutual respect and equal partnership. It comprises [53 partners](#): 30 European and 21 Asian countries, the European Union and the ASEAN Secretariat.



MONDIACULT 2022 | The Regional Consultation on Cultural Policies for Asia and the Pacific was held on 11-12 January 2022

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Mondiacult 2022
México



Billetter Editorial/Unsplash.com

The European Commission has adopted the 2022 Annual Work Programme of the Creative Europe Programme. With an annual budget of €385.6 million, nearly €100 million more compared to 2021, Creative Europe is strengthening its support to the cultural and creative sectors, taking due account of the challenges resulting from the COVID-19 crisis and growing global competition. A major strand of work is fostering transnational European cooperation projects in cultural and creative sectors to foster transnational cooperation, promoting exchanges of practices, joint production and innovation. Other priorities include support to performing arts, the book sector and cultural heritage. New support is also available to the audiovisual and media sector, as well as Creative Innovation Labs, encouraging innovative approaches to content creation, distribution, and promotion across different sectors, which can contribute also to the objectives of the New European Bauhaus. The European Commission also announced that Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg, Kaunas, Lithuania, and Novi Sad, Serbia, will hold the title of European Capital of Culture for one year as of 1 January 2022. This gives them the chance to boost their image, put themselves on the world map, promote sustainable tourism and rethink their development through culture.

The Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity, and Inclusion (CDADI) of the Council of Europe held its fourth meeting from 7 to 9 December 2021 to unanimously endorse a new draft Recommendation on intercultural integration. It contains the essence of the intercultural integration model as a set of policies that seek to include migrants through interaction and participation, to foster equality and a sense of belonging, and to value diversity as an asset for community development. It further requires Member States to implement intercultural integration strategies through a multilevel approach, involving stakeholders and authorities at all levels in their design, implementation, and evaluation. It offers European guidance to support a coherent, comprehensive, and consistent approach to intercultural integration based, among others, on best practices collected in Member States.



LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN



William Recinos/Unsplash.com

The Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB) has declared 2022 the Ibero-American Year of Culture and Sustainable Development. The declaration, made at the last Meeting of Ibero-American Ministers of Foreign Affairs in November 2021, will help to implement the Ibero-American Strategy for Culture and Sustainable Development, approved at the Ibero-American Summit in April 2021, as a roadmap to align cultural public policies with the Sustainable Development Goals. The declaration recognises several international events during 2022 that will amplify the dialogue around the relationship between culture, development and recovery from the pandemic, including the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies (MONDIACULT), to be held in Mexico in September 2022. Furthermore, SEGIB will continue to implement the strategy throughout the year through several of their ongoing programmes, notably the Ibercultura Viva Programme, Ibermúsicas, the Programme for the Promotion of Ibero-American Music, or the Ibermemoria Sonora y Audiovisual.

The Regional Cultural Committee of The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) met from 2-3 December to discuss, among other issues, the recovery of the culture and creative industries from the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Directors of Culture of CARICOM Member States explored ways of implementing measures to promote a more robust and resilient culture and creative industries, notably the Draft Regional Development Strategy for the Creative Industries in CARICOM. They also discussed issues pertaining to the Caribbean Festival of Arts (CARIFESTA) due to take place in August 2022, financing the regional cultural agenda and the Region's continuing pursuit of Reparations for Native Genocide and Slavery. Finally, a new project, with the support of the European Union, was announced entitled Creative Caribbean: An Ecosystem of 'Play' for Growth and Development, to provide grant funding for artists, professional arts associations and cultural entrepreneurs in the region.

A new report has been released on "Evaluation of the impact of COVID-19 on the cultural and creative industries". A collaboration between the Ministry of Culture of Argentina, UNESCO, the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), the Inter-American Development Bank, SEGIB and the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI), it estimates that at least 2.6 million jobs were affected as a result of the pandemic restrictions. Activities linked to heritage, performing arts, training and music were the most affected, with a drop of more than 20% in the generation of Gross Value Added.



CULTURAL DIPLOMACY IN THE VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls on policymakers, civil society and citizens to forge deeper, stronger and broader partnerships in order to be able to achieve the ambitions of the whole of the SDG agenda. Cultural diplomacy is inherently about forming partnerships to enhance the power of culture across the SDGs. In their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) submitted to the United Nations to monitor progress towards the 2030 Agenda, several Member States highlight their cultural diplomacy initiatives. Some initiatives aim to foster cultural exchange and intercultural dialogue, whilst others seek to boost employment and social development, or safeguard cultural heritage.

FOSTERING CULTURAL EXCHANGE AND INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

Intercultural dialogue is at the heart of many policies cited in VNRs, particularly among Arab States, including **Qatar's** International Cooperation and Partnership Programme aiming for greater regional and global cultural exchange and dialogue fostering among civilizations, **Morocco's** promotion of the creative economy and artistic mobility between countries or **Oman's** National Youth Commission Cooperation that grants scholarships for research in the field of oral, cultural and intangible heritage. The **United Arab Emirates'** particularly highlights its hosting of Expo 2020 for the construction of effective partnerships among countries in the field of innovation and culture. **New Zealand** focuses on regional Pacific identity through languages and cultures, citing "talanoa" (inclusive dialogue with indigenous people) for exchange and cooperation. **Kenya's** VNR cites cultural exchange programmes with 51 countries and **Andorra** cites its biennial Art Camos project of art workshops with painters from around the world to enhance intercultural dialogue. Youth exchanges also feature in **Belgium's** VNR that cites intercultural exchanges between Brussels' secondary school pupils and their counterparts in **Morocco**, as well as university student exchanges with the **Democratic Republic of Congo** and **China**. **Malta** offers scholarships for **Palestinian** Arts and Cultural Heritage Management students and **Tunisian** Arts and Humanitarian Action students. Moreover, the **Kyrgyz Republic's** VNR also mentions the "SDG Youth Ambassadors" programme, which brings together youth activists to promote the 2030 Agenda through culture.





CULTURAL DIPLOMACY FOR JOBS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Several Member States, particularly in South-Eastern Europe, cite examples of cultural diplomacy initiatives to boost employment and social development, such as **Slovakia's** VNR highlighting a project for unemployed youth in **Georgia** in the tourism and, traditional arts and crafts sectors. Similarly, **Slovenia** and the EU delegation co-financed the CreathON project to support students create businesses in **North Macedonia** to promote cultural heritage. **Ecuador** cites the Quito-based Latin American Corporation for Entrepreneurship and Productive Innovation working to boost creative enterprises across the region. Meanwhile **Serbia** highlights cooperation between **China** and Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC 16+1) in the development of the creative industries, as the basis of a permanent cultural exchange. **Estonia** cites the project of the Peipsi Centre for Transboundary Cooperation entitled "Development of Women's Entrepreneurship and Handicraft Production in Călărași Region" that contributes to the employment in preservation of heritage and culture and promotion of organic food production in the Lake Peipsi region of **Moldova**.



COOPERATION FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

Bulgaria cites a partnership with **Romania** promoting an ecotourism route in the Danube region, that enhances heritage site protection, biodiversity conservation and local tourism development whilst **Bosnia and Herzegovina** highlights a regional project to connect countries among the Via Dinarica promoting tourism, as well as protection of the environment and local production. **Hungary** cites financial aid for the reconstruction of Christian sites in the Middle East. **Morocco** mentions its cooperation programme with Spain to combat illicit trafficking on cultural property, including through a guide on relevant mechanisms. Citing initiatives at the multilateral level, **Egypt** refers to its success in passing the resolution Combating Transnational Organized Crime Against Cultural Property during the 10th Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in Vienna. Meanwhile, **Cyprus** mentions its initiative on adopting the resolution on Cultural Rights and the Protection of Cultural Heritage in the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, in March 2018 and the organization of a two-day conference in 2019 in the country for the discussion of Cultural Property. **Greece** points out the organization of the international conference on "Religious and Cultural Pluralism and Peaceful Coexistence in the Middle East" mainly focused on deliberate destruction and looting of religious and cultural heritage whilst **Austria** cites the Closing Conference of the European Year of Cultural Heritage held in Vienna in 2018, where sustainability in cultural activities, urban planning and preservation of cultural landscapes were discussed.





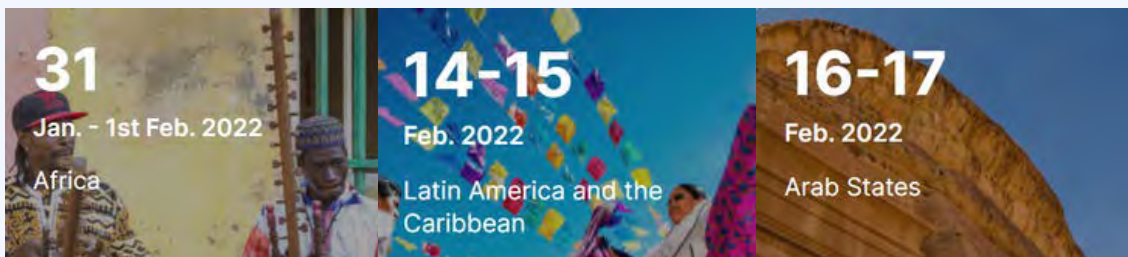
UNESCO WORLD CONFERENCE ON CULTURAL POLICIES AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT - MONDIACULT 2022

MONDIACULT 2022 will be hosted from 28 to 30 September 2022 by the Government of Mexico to engage the international community in reflection on cultural policies to tackle global challenges and outline priorities to shape a more robust and resilient cultural sector, fully anchored in sustainable development

Ministers and senior officials of 32 countries as well as more than 20 leading Intergovernmental organizations and NGOs from the Asia-Pacific region met online on 11 and 12 January to share key trends, issues and priority areas of policy engagement for culture. These included digitalization of resources, protection and promotion of natural and cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, legal framework to protect cultural properties and cultural rights and strengthening of data and statistics.

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UPCOMING REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS



UNESCO INTERAGENCY PLATFORM ON CULTURE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

On 26 January, the third workshop of the UNESCO Interagency Platform on Culture for Sustainable Development took place with UN sister agencies and other partners to discuss the power of culture for climate action. Participants highlighted that culture can have an impact on diverse policy areas related notably to urban planning, food security, social inclusion, and sustainable tourism. They discussed potential initiatives on local and indigenous knowledge to build more sustainable societies that respect the intrinsic linkages between cultural and biological diversity. They agreed on the need to strengthen innovative partnerships, including with civil society and youth organizations, to build knowledge and evidence on the multifaceted linkages between culture in all its forms – natural, tangible and intangible heritage, cultural and creative industries – and climate action.

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NEXT STEP...

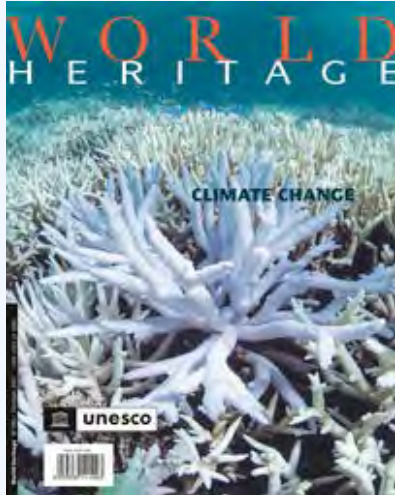
Wrap-up Session on the Outcomes of the Thematic Workshops



MARCH 2022



LATEST UPDATES FROM UNESCO



WORLD HERITAGE REVIEW: SPECIAL CLIMATE CHANGE ISSUE

Climate change is the defining issue of our time, and among the greatest threats facing cultural and natural heritage today. One in three natural sites and one in six cultural heritage sites are currently threatened by climate change. In recent months and years, we have seen cultural and natural heritage sites, including many World Heritage sites, threatened by wildfires, floods, storms and mass-bleaching events. We have also seen how climate change puts living heritage – oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, festive events and traditional knowledge – at risk.

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The Qhapaq Ñan, Andean Road System was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2014. It is an outstanding example of international cooperation and the fruit of ongoing efforts by the six countries involved in its protection: Argentina, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. This publication shares experiences and good practices shared that can serve as a source of inspiration for other UNESCO World Heritage properties, and more generally, for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention in the 21st century.



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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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