WHY CREATIVITY?

People everywhere are driven by a fundamental need to express themselves creatively. This creativity not only makes for a richer, more varied world, it also serves as a basis for sustainable development, as recognized by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A source of economic empowerment, creativity contributes to inclusive employment and entrepreneurial opportunities in the cultural and creative industries. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the creative economy was responsible for nearly 30 million jobs worldwide, and employed more people ages 15 to 29 than any other sector. Creative expression can also support the empowerment of marginalized groups by fostering a respect for their human rights, in particular their cultural rights and freedom of expression. At a time when artists and cultural professionals are struggling to make ends meet, UNESCO is sounding the alarm about the impact of COVID-19 on their livelihoods and supporting their recovery and socio-economic rights.

HOW DOES UNESCO WORK TO PROMOTE CREATIVITY?

   a. The 2003 Convention works to safeguard the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills that are continuously being created and recreated when transmitted from generation to generation. It stresses the dynamic nature of intangible heritage, as well as the role that the communities and groups involved in the production, recreation and transmission of intangible cultural heritage play in enriching the cultural diversity and creativity of humanity.
   b. The 2005 Convention aims to ensure that artists, cultural professionals and citizens from around the world can create, produce, disseminate and enjoy a broad range of cultural goods, services and activities, including their own.

ii. Policy guidance and monitoring. Through Re|Shaping Cultural Policies, the Global Monitoring Report on the 2005 Convention, UNESCO monitors the efforts of Member States to promote the diversity of cultural expressions through their policies and legislation. The 2005 Convention’s Policy Monitoring Platform contains over 2,000 policies from 103 countries aimed at protecting and promoting the diversity of cultural expressions and creativity.

iii. Mobilizing for artists and cultural professionals in crisis. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNESCO launched the ResiliArt movement, which aims to raise awareness on the impact of COVID-19 on the livelihoods of artists and cultural professionals and contribute to the development of policies and financial mechanisms to help them overcome the crisis.


v. Strengthening the creative industries. UNESCO’s International Fund for Cultural Diversity (IFCD) aims to support the emergence of vibrant cultural industries in developing countries, financing nearly 114 projects in over 58 countries to date.

vi. Building stakeholder capacity. The global capacity-building programmes of the 2003 and 2005 Conventions include training workshops, policy advice, and technical assistance missions, with the goal of creating positive institutional and professional environments for the safeguarding of intangible heritage and the strengthening of the creative industries.

vii. Tapping into its networks. The UNESCO Creative Cities Network, which includes 246 member cities specialized in seven creative fields, promotes cooperation with and among cities that have identified creativity as a key factor in their development.
People everywhere are driven by a fundamental need to express themselves creatively. This creativity not only makes for a richer, more varied world, it contributes to the cultural diversity of humanity and can serve as a basis for sustainable development. This is particularly true in the world’s cities, as recognized in SDG 11 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Creativity contributes to sustainable economic development through employment and entrepreneurial opportunities in the cultural and creative industries. Global trade in creative goods more than doubled between 2004 and 2013. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the creative economy contributed to 6.1% of the global economy, representing 4.3 trillion USD per year. The creative economy was responsible for nearly 30 million jobs worldwide, and employs more people ages 15 to 29 than any other sector.

The COVID-19 pandemic has hit artists and cultural professionals hard, as well as communities that rely on cultural tourism and World Heritage sites for their livelihoods. Many living heritage practices have been put on hold or adapted, limiting the ability of communities to express their culture and creativity. In response, UNESCO has launched the ResiliArt movement for artists and cultural professionals, collected data on the impact of the pandemic on museums, living heritage and World Heritage sites, and brought together the world’s Ministers of Culture through the Online Meeting of Ministers of Culture (22 April) to find solutions to the challenges facing culture.

Creative expression can support the social, civic and political empowerment of marginalized groups, such as women, minorities, young people and individuals with disabilities, by fostering a respect for their cultural rights and freedom of expression.

UNESCO recognizes that creativity is a multifaceted resource that can contribute to finding imaginative and appropriate responses to development challenges. The communities and groups involved in the production, recreation and transmission of intangible cultural heritage help to enrich cultural diversity and human creativity.

The rise of digital technologies has had a major impact on creative sectors worldwide, allowing artists and cultural professionals to bypass traditional distribution channels and interact directly with the public and potential audiences. Global systems of governance for culture must adapt to this new reality to ensure that the diversity of cultural expressions is protected and promoted.

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