UNESCO

United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Cultural Policies

Cultural policies

As the only United Nations institution with a mandate in the field of culture, UNESCO endeavours to create cultural policies in accordance with its Constitution. These policies put forward appropriate responses to the challenges of cultural diversity and dialogue among cultures in the context of globalization.

Cultural policies have evolved down through the years, following the evolution of the concept of culture. Beyond arts and letters, culture today encompasses a wider domain: lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs. In just a few decades, the idea of "diversity of cultures", viewed as static juxtaposed entities corresponding ideally to the borders of nation-states, came to be complemented with the idea of "cultural diversity", understood as an evolving process, with the capacity for regenerating cultures by inciting implicit or explicit dialogue.

Cultural policies were thus formulated first according to an "inter-state" reality, centred on international cultural cooperation,

The Buddhist temple: a space that is social and recreational as well as religious. Thailand.
(© A.Clayson/UNESCO/WWAP)

and little by little began to take into account an "intra-state" cultural issue. Now, because the force that connects culture and development is a function of harmonious interaction among communities and individuals, simultaneously within societies and between societies, the accent is on intercultural dialogue, also termed dialogue among cultures, civilizations and peoples.

Current cultural policies are aimed at protecting and promoting cultural diversity in all its forms, both heritage-related and contemporary. They are based on a series of normative instruments established by UNESCO and involve the Culture Sector as a

whole. UNESCO did, however, set up a Division of Cultural Policies in 2000, as a forum of reflection to ensure a holistic approach that includes all dimensions of the culture programme, notably issues linked to cultural pluralism. In this capacity, UNESCO supports Member States in revising and updating their cultural policies, with a double aim: one, to develop the cultural sector, notably by responding to needs for legislation, training in cultural administration and management of cultural resources; and two, to ensure that culture has its rightful place in all development policies, particularly those related to education, science, communication, health, environment and tourism.

Since 2001, about 40 countries have called on the Organization in order to obtain strategic tools to help boost their institutional capacities and allow them to better define their national cultural policies. Such initiatives to assist Member States contribute to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and are carried out through numerous partnerships with UNESCO field offices, the key relays. Among the most visible actions on behalf of Member States' culture sectors: reinforcing the methodological and scientific foundations of cultural policies through sub-regional workshops on **"Cultural indicators in Central America"**; setting up the **Observatory of Cultural Policies** (OCPA) in May 2001;

supporting the activities of international networks and institutions specialized in training, education and information, such as the **European Network of Cultural Administration Training Centres** (ENCATC) for Europe, Russia, the Caucasus and Central Asia; le **Red de Centros y Unidades de Formación en Gestion Cultural** (ENCATC) for Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain and Portugal. At the same time, UNESCO has founded a significant number of UNESCO Chairs.

In the wider domain concerning the relationship between culture and development, UNESCO has undertaken some 20 projects highlighting mainly, on one hand, the links between culture and health, and on the other, the links between culture and tourism. The first is **Culture and HIV/AIDS**, which aims to help States develop culturally appropriate responses to HIV/AIDS. This approach respects cultural references of local populations and involves them in the fight against HIV/AIDS, by mobilizing all concerned, including artists, religious leaders, traditional healers, etc. The second is the programme on **cultural tourism** as a development policy that promotes tangible and intangible heritage. It intensifies research, builds local capacities, catalogues "best practices", forms networks and carries out field projects to create intelligent tourism, beneficial to visitors, hosts, environment and cultural diversity, thus contributing to sustainable development and better appreciation of otherness. UNESCO's support of cultural policies upholds its fundamental mission, to "build peace in the minds of men". Today this mission is carried out in the context of increasing interdependence among States in all fields of human activity and unprecedented intermingling of populations. In such a context, raising awareness at the local, national and international level on the issues of recognition and respect of cultural diversity and their corollary, intercultural dialogue, is more crucial than ever for sustainable development. For this reason the Division of Cultural Policies added its intercultural dialogue programme in 2002, with the aim of injecting the principles of genuine mutual understanding into all cultural strategies and institutions.

Contacts :

Mme Katérina Stenou
k.stenou@unesco.org

M. Edgar Montiel
e.montiel@unesco.org

M. Hervé Barré
h.barre@unesco.org

Mme Suzanne Diop
s.diop@unesco.org

Mme Helena Drobná
h.drobna@unesco.org

To Find Out More

Observatory of Cultural Policies**:**
http://www.opcanet.org

Cultural policies :
http://portal.unesco.org/culture