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**Collecting Information, Data, Best Practices: Existing
Mechanisms and Tools**

List of Acronyms

CAB	Convenio Andrés Bello
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CoE	Council of Europe
CONACULTA	Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
EU	European Union
HKSAR	Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China
ICEX	Instituto Español de Comercio Exterior
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
ILO	International Labour Organization
OAS	Organization of American States
OEI	Organization of the Ibero-American States
OIF	Organisation internationale de la francophonie
SADC	Southern African Development Community
UEMOA	Union économique et monétaire ouest-africaine
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization

Collecting Information, Data, Best Practices: Existing Mechanisms and Tools

1. Background

In December 2009, the 3IGC requested the Secretariat to prepare an overview of existing mechanisms and tools that collect information, data and best practices in the field of cultural expressions from around the world.

In undertaking this exercise, it was found that in the last ten years, there has been a surge of initiatives aiming to render accessible information, data and best practices on the cultural sector(s). This is due to the increasing acceptance of the importance, both economic and social, that the cultural sector is gaining around the world, the growing need for specialized knowledge in contemporary societies and a shift towards evidenced-based policy making. The volume of available information at local, regional and national levels has also grown enormously in part due to the rise in number of online information networks and portals.

In addition, it was found that inventories attempting to map out and organize these numerous initiatives and disseminate them have been carried out on regional and global levels with mixed success. They are often confronted with the complex ecology of infrastructure and sources of information and knowledge and the distributed nature of the information, data and best practices scattered in various public, private and NGO institutions, bodies or agencies, in both physical and virtual spaces.

The overview below provides a brief description of the different types of knowledge producers and disseminators. A sampling of initiatives from around the world serves to illustrate the diversity of actors and some of their data and information collection and dissemination activities. It should in no way be considered as a representative or exhaustive inventory that is the result of a comprehensive survey but an evolving exercise that requires continuous input from all Convention stakeholders, in particular from the national points of contact.

2. Types and example of actors

There are indeed very few single mechanisms that collect information, data and/or best practices on a regular basis to monitor trends and developments in the field of cultural expressions in one country alone, not to imagine on a regional or international level. It is rather the sum of contributions from multiple organizations, bodies and sources that requires identification and recognition.

Mark Schuster, internationally renowned expert, initially mapped the cultural information infrastructure according to a typology of organizational models that includes public institutions; independent non-profit research institutes; university-based research centers; private companies and cultural observatories. Since the publication of his work at the beginning of the new millennia, reality has become even more complex. The landscape today can be characterized as being made up of a great variety and mix of *operating models* (depending on objectives, mandate, geographical and thematic scope) as well as *funding modalities* (that can involve both public and private sources of financing).

Schuster's work highlighted the important role played by **public institutions** in the collection of information, data and best practices. Some of these functions include cultural research that is carried out in Ministries for Culture such as the *Département des Études et de la prospective et des statistiques*¹ (France) or in arts funding agencies that maintain large cultural information systems such as *El Sistema de Información Cultural* developed in Mexico (CONACULTA²), in Colombia (Ministerio de Cultura³), or in Argentina (Secretaría de Cultura⁴). Others are carried out

¹ <<http://www.culture.gouv.fr/nav/index-stat.html>>

² <<http://sic.conaculta.gob.mx/?lan=2>>

³ <<http://www.sinic.gov.co/SINIC>>

through international, trans-regional or national statistics agencies, for example, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics⁵, EUROSTAT⁶, national bureaus for statistics (e.g. Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, Brazil⁷ or Statistics Finland⁸) as well as local agencies such as Chambers of Commerce (e.g. the Spanish ICEX).

Working groups or national task forces of representatives from across government departments and professionals from the cultural sector also generate a wealth of information needed to understand what is happening in the field of cultural expressions at a given point in time at the regional, national or local level. Their results are usually published in reports such as⁹:

- the *Impact of the Arts and Creative Industries on Africa's Economy*¹⁰ (carried out by NGOs and funded by Doen Foundation, Stromme and the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Commerce and Industry);
- the *Creative Industries Mapping Documents*¹¹ (DCMS, UK);
- the *Impacto del sector fonográfico en la economía colombiana*¹² (Ministerio de Cultura/Convenio Andres Bello, 2003);
- *Creative Industries in South Australia*¹³ (Government of South Australia); or
- *Baseline study on Hong Kong's Creative Industries*¹⁴ (Government of HKSAR, 2003).

To this list of public actors can be added: **international agencies** (UNESCO, UNDP, UNCTAD, WIPO) and their field offices; **intergovernmental bodies** such as the OAS, OEI, OIF, IDB, CARICOM, the CAB, UEMOA or the CoE; **regional economic integration organizations** such as the EU; and/or other **agencies and institutes** such as National Commissions for UNESCO, the British Council etc. These actors either produce information themselves or commission studies to external experts. For example:

- ILO *Mapping Studies on Crafts, Performing and Visual Arts, Film, Music and Television as well as Ethno-tourism Industry*¹⁵ in SADC Countries;
- WIPO methodology to *Assess the Economic Contribution of the Copyright-Based Industries*¹⁶ that has been adopted in countries such as Australia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Hungary Jamaica, Mexico Latvia Lebanon, Paraguay, Philippines Romania, Russia Singapore, Uruguay, Ukraine etc.;
- Convenio Andres Bello's *Economia+Cultura* project, a comprehensive series of national studies on the culture sectors in Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela;
- CARICOM's *The Cultural Industries in CARICOM: Trade and Development Changes*;
- Inter-American Development Bank mapping studies such as the *Analysis and Quantification of Cultural Industries of Guatemala*¹⁷;

⁴ <<http://sinca.cultura.gov.ar/sic/mapacultural/metadata.php>>

⁵ <<http://www.uis.unesco.org>>. The culture page of the UIS provides a link list of useful sources for statistics on culture and communication from around the world.

⁶ <<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/culture/introduction>>

⁷ <<http://www.ibge.gov.br>>

⁸ <http://www.stat.fi/til/kl_t_en.html>

⁹ For additional information and links to cultural industries mapping studies and reports from around the world, please see: <<http://www.unesco.org/culture/en/creativeindustriesmapping>>

¹⁰ <<http://www.creative-africa.org/CREATIVE->

AFRICA_2008/components/com_jooget/file/collation_of_research_on_the_impact_of_art,_culture_and_creative_industries_in_africa.pdf>

¹¹ <<http://www.culture.gov.uk/>>

¹² <http://www.sinic.gov.co/SINIC/CuentaSatelite/documentos/libro_impacto_fonografico.pdf>

¹³ <http://www.arts.sa.gov.au/webdata/resources/files/CI_REPORT.pdf>

¹⁴ <[http://www.cpu.gov.hk/english/documents/new/press/baseline%20study\(eng\).pdf](http://www.cpu.gov.hk/english/documents/new/press/baseline%20study(eng).pdf)>

¹⁵ <http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_ent/---

ifp_seed/documents/publication/wcms_117682.pdf>

¹⁶ <http://www.wipo.int/sme/en/documents/guides/copyright_industries.htm>

¹⁷ <<http://www.iadb.org/topics/topic.cfm?id=CULT&lang=en>>

- British Council Mapping Reports such as *Creative Lebanon - a framework for future prosperity*¹⁸ or the *Gauteng Creative Mapping Project*,
- German National Commission for UNESCO, *The Culture and Creative Industries in Germany*.¹⁹

Larger projects that gather teams of people working together in **communities of practice** can also be considered important mechanisms that collect information and data on cultural expressions, for example, the *Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe*, a joint project of the Council of Europe and the European Institute for Comparative Cultural Research.²⁰

New communities of practice that produce and distribute information and best practices are planned to be organized in different regions of the world and have begun to take form, for example, in eight Arab countries where new cultural policy focus groups made up of independent and governmental experts are being planned and whose work has been supported by the European Cultural Foundation²¹. An additional example is the cultural policy working group established by the African NGO Arterial Network and supported by the Commonwealth Foundation and the Doen Foundation.

Sector specific associations also group resources and carry out studies, such as the Publisher's Association of South Africa (PASA) Annual *Book Publishing Industry Survey* reports or the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry Annual *Digital Music Reports*.

Responding to an increasing demand for information on the culture and media sector, **private consulting firms** such as PricewaterhouseCoopers International (PwC), IDATE, Screen Digest or Booz Allen Hamilton are specializing in providing information and data services at the global, regional and country level, for example the PwC *Global Entertainment and Media Outlook*, *The Arab Media Outlook* or the *Indian Entertainment and Media Industry Report*.

There are a growing number of **cultural observatories** throughout the world that differ according to whether they pursue a sector specific approach and/or a specific geographic focus, whether they funded/mandated by public authorities or are independent NGOs. Some examples include:

- El Portal Iberoamericano de Cooperación y Gestión Cultural²² (Spain);
- Observatory of Cultural Policies in Africa²³ (Mozambique);
- Cultural Observatory for Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries²⁴;
- European Audiovisual Observatory²⁵ (France);
- Regional Observatory on Financing Culture in East-Central Europe²⁶ (Hungary);
- Observatorio de Industrias Creativas²⁷ (Argentina);
- Observatoire de la culture et des Communications du Québec²⁸ (Canada).

International and/or regional networks of Convention stakeholders such as artists, cultural industry professionals, NGOs, cultural organizations, etc collect and disseminate relevant information, data and documents as a means to promote transparency and empower civil society. They also organise debates and create discourse on issues of importance to them and that are relevant for the future implementation of the Convention. Some examples include:

- International Federation of Coalitions for Diversity and national coalitions in over 40 countries²⁹ (Canada);

¹⁸ <<http://www.britishcouncil.org/lebanon-creative-lebanon-full-report.pdf>>

¹⁹ <http://www.unesco.de/fileadmin/medien/Dokumente/Bibliothek/culture_and_creative_industries.pdf>

²⁰ <<http://www.culturalpolicies.net>>

²¹ <<http://www.mawred.org/en/services/cultural-policies/157-conference>>

²² <<http://www.gestioncultural.org/gc>>

²³ <<http://www.ocpanet.org>>

²⁴ <<http://www.acpcultures.eu>>

²⁵ <<http://www.obs.coe.int>>

²⁶ <<http://www.budobs.org>>

²⁷ <<http://observatorioic.blogspot.com/>>

²⁸ <<http://www.stat.gouv.qc.ca/observatoire/default.htm>>

- the Africa-wide Arterial Network³⁰ (South Africa);
- Culturelink Network³¹ (Croatia).

There are also an increasing number of **online platforms** disseminating arts and culture related information on policy developments, upcoming conferences and events, latest research results, artistic and cultural events. Some examples include:

- *culture360.org*³², an online platform of the Asia-Europe Meeting and the Asia-Europe Foundation (Singapore);
- online news and information system of the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies³³ (Australia);
- Sudplanete Portal on Cultural Diversity³⁴ (France);
- LabforCulture³⁵ (the Netherlands);
- Africultures³⁶ (Senegal/France).

Many of the public and private actors and institutions presented above have contributed to **international research initiatives** that have produced (and continue to produce) information and data of relevance to the implementation of the 2005 Convention. Some of these are:

- UNESCO World Reports on Culture (1998, 2000, 2009);
- UNDP Human Development Report (2004);
- UNCTAD Creative Economy Report (2008);
- MDG-F projects that are collecting primary and secondary data on the cultural industries in specific countries such as Costa Rica or Mozambique;
- Anheier and Isar “Cultures and Globalisation Series” (2007, 2008, 2009, 2010);
- Council of Europe National Cultural Policy Reviews (also in Asia).

3. Challenges

The 2005 Convention calls for the exchange, analysis and dissemination of information, statistics and best practices related to the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions in both Articles 9 and 19. This cursory overview leads to some observations on the main challenges for the full and effective implementation of these Articles on the international level.

The overview shows that there are multiple public, private and civil society actors engaged in data and information collection exercises and that their mandate and scope of activities are extremely diverse.

Some focus on building new concepts or methodologies for studying the cultural sector, gathering data on a particular field such as music production and distribution, providing basic information on cultural policy systems and strategies in their country, etc.

Others serve different functions such as: providing input to the development of new policies or strategies; raising awareness and engaging stakeholders in dialogue about the Convention and its potential impact; identifying and communicating information about opportunities for artists and cultural professionals to obtain funding; or informing citizens about opportunities to engage with diverse cultural expressions.

Many of these actors face enormous challenges related to a lack of continuous and stable funding as well as political support for their information and knowledge production activities.

²⁹ <<http://www.ifccd.com>>

³⁰ <<http://www.arterialnetwork.org>>

³¹ <<http://www.culturelink.org>>

³² <<http://culture360.org>>

³³ <<http://www.ifacca.org>>

³⁴ <<http://www.sudplanete.net>>

³⁵ <<http://www.labforculture.org>>

³⁶ <<http://www.africultures.com/php>>

Additional challenges are more technical, posed by: the various levels of professional expertise, technology and infrastructure available; the existence or not of a cultural research community; access to relevant information/data needed for analysis or the collection of best practice; few data control mechanisms, etc. The result is a serious imbalance on the availability and quality of information and data from all parts of the world.

This general observation is confirmed through the results of the ENCATC working group and the “Global Map of Cultural Observatories”³⁷ project that demonstrates an uneven supply of cultural observatories world wide that produce and distribution cultural information, data and best practices; the majority located in Europe (60%) and Latin America (30%) with few in Africa and almost none in the Asia Pacific or Arab regions (10%).

4. Conclusion

The systematic and sustainable collection of information, statistics and best practices in the field of the diversity of cultural expressions is essential for the future implementation of Article 19 on the 2005 Convention. This means addressing some of the challenges identified above, in particular, ensuring that there is support for information / research infrastructure and expertise within countries in order to enable the exchange and dissemination of relevant information on the international level.

In the meantime, it can be acknowledged that calls have been made over the years to create and/or strengthen connections between different actors and their activities in a drive to provide global access to information and knowledge without creating new centralized administrative structures. However, given the diversity of approaches to information and data collection, it can be deduced that simply linking existing information will not suffice.

One solution would be for knowledge producers and distributors to make a proactive and conscious decision to align some of their activities with the information sharing objectives of the Convention and thereby contribute to its implementation. They can do so by, for example, tagging³⁸ the information, data and best practices they produce as being useful for stakeholders of the Convention. If adopted, a content or knowledge tagging system could provide added value to such organizations and secure recognition for their work. The results can be featured on the website of the 2005 Convention.

³⁷ <<http://www.gestioncultural.org/gc/es/pdf/Poster-MMOC-eng.pdf>>

³⁸ Content or knowledge tagging is a technique that identifies, describes or defines information resources. Coined by knowledge management theorists, content or knowledge tags are more than traditional non-hierarchical keywords or terms and are a type of metadata that captures knowledge. This could be in the form of descriptions, categorizations, classifications, semantics, comments, notes, annotations, hyperdata, hyperlinks, or references that are collected in tag profiles. They are often used to capture distributed and scattered information resources that are kept in heterogeneous storage repositories. This form of tagging generally allows greater flexibility than other knowledge management classification systems.