

Portugal

This Report does not provide an exhaustive description of all the programmes, projects and actions pursued in national territory in the framework of the Convention or that may be framed therein. Instead it identifies several key examples, in function of their creativity, innovative character and distinctive results.

Ratification of the 2005 UNESCO Convention did not immediately engender initiatives that were specifically aimed at fostering its execution, at the national, regional or local level. However, the principal guidelines underpinning Portuguese public policy recognise that the Convention's values are of fundamental importance for Portugal. For this reason, and also due to the current international situation, several key steps have been taken in recent years that to a certain extent have contributed to promoting the Convention's goals and different entities have been developing initiatives in various areas and contexts, whose objectives lie within the framework of the Convention.

For this reason it is difficult to evaluate the results of implementation of the Convention, given that it is a fairly recent instrument and because many of the initiatives that have been developed do not appear to be specific measures or policies arising from implementation of the Convention.

Notwithstanding certain differences of evaluation between public organisations and civil society, there are several issues that are in common and are consensual: a significant increase in audiences, together with greater awareness-raising amongst the general public of the diversity of cultural expression, thus guaranteeing greater tolerance and understanding of different languages and styles and contributing to their cultural enrichment and development of a more sophisticated critical spirit – above all for younger audiences; fostering artistic activity as an instrument to promote economic development and qualification, inclusion and social cohesion; art is increasingly associated to other areas, such as education, science and technology, the environment and territorial planning, tourism and social solidarity.

However there are various significant difficulties and challenges, commencing with major financial constraints that at all levels condition the creation, production and dissemination of culture and art. These are always the first areas to feel the impact of the financial crisis and the reduction of available resources. But further difficulties may also be identified: many people consider that the framework of action of this Convention is unclear; many public bodies have difficulty in understanding the Convention and while at the outset the adhesion of civil society may seem to be obvious, in practice we find that such adhesion has not been manifested as was to be expected.

Perhaps for this reason, the key challenge is to achieve greater involvement of civil society and this can only be achieved through major reinforcement of the dissemination and promotion of the Convention, presentation of good examples, successful case studies, good practices. An identical process of greater awareness-raising must be developed in relation to public bodies; it is essential to establish a commitment from central government bodies in relation to the Convention that should be placed high on the agenda, recalled within international negotiations and national questions and transversal to all areas of government activity. Strong and close collaboration between the various entities is also indispensable, including the public and private sector, central, regional and local government, public administration and civil society. Involvement of other sectors of the national population is also required, in particular the media (which needs to be clarified in relation to the issues involved), the scientific community, schools and universities.