



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

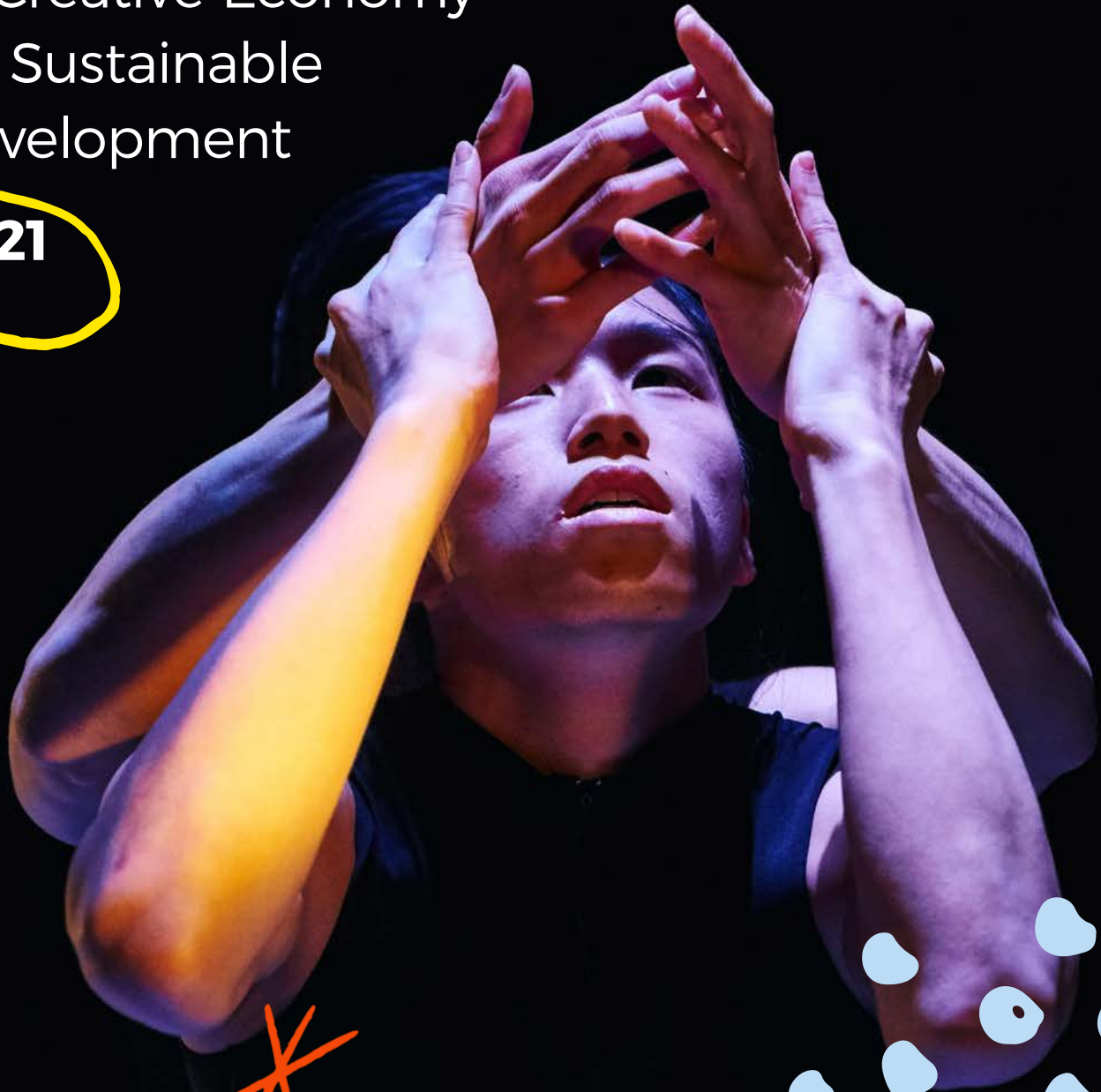


International Year  
of Creative Economy for  
Sustainable Development  
2021

# International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development

**2021**

  
**UNESCO Roadmap**





# About Creative Economy

The year 2021 has been declared as the **International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development** by Resolution A/RES/74/198. UNESCO, as the United Nations Specialized Agency with a mandate in culture, launches a year-long effort to highlight and amplify culture's contribution to the global economy and sustainable development. In particular, the Year of Creative Economy aims to acknowledge, promote and accelerate the economic and social contributions of the creative economy to the Sustainable Development Goals as part of the Decade of Action.

**The creative economy is one of the world's most rapidly growing sectors**<sup>1</sup> and currently contributes to 3% of global GDP. One of the unique features of the creative economy is the dual nature of the value it creates: both through physical manifestation of creativity (e.g. films, paintings and books) and an intangible expression of creativity (e.g. dance, music and performances). As an economic model dependent on the monetisation of ideas, the protection of intellectual property is a decisive factor for the growth of creative economy.

**At the heart of the creative economy are cultural and creative industries (CCIs)**, which operate at the crossroad of arts, culture, commerce and technology. CCIs generate 2,250 billion USD annually and employ around 30 million people worldwide<sup>2</sup>. They are also the biggest job providers for workers aged 18-25, making it the industry of tomorrow.


**Today, creativity is increasingly recognized as a renewable, omnipresent resource for sustainable, human-centric development.** A creative economy founded upon respect for freedom of expression and cultural rights can also galvanise inclusive, tolerant and peaceful societies. It can also empower and engage various vulnerable and at times marginalized groups within societies.

**COVID-19 has exposed pre-existing vulnerabilities within the culture sector.** Owing to its heavy reliance on venues and shared experiences, the sector has been among the hardest hit by COVID-19. Cultural tourism suffered a double blow of travel restrictions and physical distancing measures: according to the International Council of Museums (ICOM), nearly 13 per cent of museums may never reopen. Many small creative enterprises and organisations, lacking cash reserves or endowments, are fighting for their survival. Due to the often-informal nature of employment in the sector, many freelance and part-time workers have slipped through the cracks of conventional social safety nets.

1 UNCTAD, *Creative Economy Outlook*, 2019

2 UNESCO, *Re|Shaping Cultural Policies*, 2018



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**The complexity and magnitude of contemporary global challenges require concerted action from the United Nations to support Member States.** UNESCO welcomes efforts to promote the creative economy for sustainable development and to provide recommendations on concrete actions that support policies and actions by Member States and the UN system to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including those led by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Development Programme, the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, the World Intellectual Property Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and other entities of the United Nations system and beyond, such as the European Commission, OECD, and international and regional development banks, per the Resolution A/RES/74/198.

**Furthermore, UNESCO, together with its partners across the UN system and beyond, further highlight the cross-cutting role of culture towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.** Specifically, UNESCO reinforces inter-governmental dialogues to strengthen international cooperation on culture and public policies. The 2019 UNESCO Forum of Ministers of Culture, the April 2020 Online Meeting of Ministers of Culture, and the recent integration of culture in the G20 process testify to the growing recognition of culture's role across the public policy spectrum for more resilient and sustainable societies and economies.

**The pandemic has further accelerated the digitalization of cultural content.** Digital sales in the music industry increased by 16% in just one year between 2015 and 2016<sup>3</sup>. Web-based technologies have the potential to expand public access to diverse cultural expressions, stimulate innovation and new creations, and provide new means of remuneration for artists and creators. However, lockdown measures have demonstrated that a lack of access to the internet can limit the right to participate in cultural life. In Africa and Small Island Developing States, only five per cent of museums have developed online content for their audiences in response to lockdown measures, revealing the widening global digital divide. Testimonials from over 220 ResiliArt debates, a UNESCO-initiated advocacy platform for artists in the face of COVID-19, also revealed a shared global dilemma: while the internet has provided an exhibition space for artists and a sense of connection for their audiences, digital platforms rarely generate substantial remuneration for content creators.

**The health crisis also brought to light the critical contribution of the cultural sector to collective well-being.** In 2020, people found solace and resilience in cultural content and activities. This heightened appreciation for the arts and culture present an opportunity to cement the vitality and importance of creative economy in the public's consciousness.





# UNESCO's Commitments

The 2021 International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development presents a new momentum to **raise awareness about the importance of investing in creativity** especially in developing countries and countries with economies in transition.


**UNESCO urges States to develop policies that benefit the entire creative value chain both on- and off-line. Public support schemes that reflect the changing needs of cultural workers must also be envisioned.** The social and economic inequality exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis must spur future policies that better align with the 2030 Agenda. To achieve a structural, sustainable change, culture should not be considered solely as a policy domain, but rather a transversal component across the policy landscape.

**UNESCO highlights international, regional and national practices that leverage culture for economic recovery following the pandemic.** National, regional and sub-regional institutions play an important role in revitalizing the creative economy by shaping innovative solutions tailored to specific communities and their needs. Through regional cooperation and strategic partnerships, they may also form knowledge-sharing networks across and beyond their regions.

**The International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development is an opportunity to further highlight culture's transformative role in developing innovative solutions to implement the 17 SDGs.** UNESCO assists countries in the collection of data and cultural statistics and advocate for the enhanced monitoring of culture's contribution to the global economy. Such efforts should be optimised and standardised through the UNESCO Culture|2030 Indicators, which measure culture's contribution to the SDGs. Empirical data contributes to greater recognition of culture's transversal role across sectors, evidence-based policies and operational actions, as well as greater investments in culture.

**UNESCO also seeks to highlight the challenges facing the creative economy and encourages States to explore sustainable solutions.** These issues, often further exacerbated by the health crisis, include the status of the artist, mobility of artists and market access, intellectual property rights, artistic freedom, instrumentalization of arts and culture, and gender equality. There is a particularly urgent need for policy revisions to address the ongoing digital transition and transformation of creative products.





**At the same time, the International Year must underline the fundamental role played by artists and cultural professionals for the global economy.** Suitable working environment for artists and creators, who produce goods and services that benefit actors in the creative value chain, is a key factor for a sustainable creative economy. Fair remuneration, social and economic safety nets and the equitable sharing of benefits of the digital revolution can all enhance resilience and sustainability within the creative economy ecosystem.

**UNESCO has, over the years, adopted a number of international standard-setting instruments to protect and promote diverse and dynamic cultural and creative industries (CCIs).** The UNESCO 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions provides a policy framework to stimulate the development of local and national CCIs while promoting a balanced flow of cultural goods and services across the world. Additionally, the UNESCO 1980 Recommendation concerning the Status of the Artist calls for the improved professional, social, and economic status of cultural workers. The adoption and implementation of these instruments must be encouraged throughout 2021.

**UNESCO begins its celebration of the International Year of Creative Economy** during the 14th session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions to be held in Paris from 2 to 5 February 2021. A high-level political forum on sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic is held in New York in collaboration with the Office of the President of the United Nations General Assembly on 21 May 2021 (provisional date), the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development. An inter-agency meeting follows to build a strategic alliance and promote synergies between UNESCO, the other UN agencies whose mandates covers the creative economy (UNCTAD, ILO, WIPO, OHCHR) and intergovernmental partners (OECD, World Bank, African Union, OIF).

**This year presents an important opportunity to align efforts among UN Agencies towards a shared goal: the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.** Expertise sharing on critical and transversal issues such as digital innovation, economic growth, environmental sustainability and social inclusion can promote the understanding of the creative economy and evidence-based actions across the UN system.

**UNESCO spearheads a series of activities** including the creation of a knowledge-sharing platform, partnerships with major cultural events and communications campaigns. A high-level event on the creative economy during the Abu Dhabi Cultural Summit in March 2021 encourages decisionmakers to reflect on concrete actions to be taken in and beyond 2021, while a virtual reality exhibition at UNESCO HQ demonstrates the accessibility of the creative economy to the public. The International UNESCO-Bangladesh Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Prize for the Creative Economy will also be launched.



# Call for Action

The International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development must **inspire policy actions** to harness the potential of the creative economy while further expanding culture's transversal, multifaceted contribution to sustainable development.

In this context, **UNESCO invites Member States to consider the following steps:**

## ▶ **Reviewing the status of artists and cultural professionals**

A sustainable creative economy, which ultimately contributes to sustainable development, requires dignified working conditions for artists and cultural professionals; they must be empowered if they are to continue producing goods and services to benefit the entire creative value chain. Member States are encouraged to review policies concerning the Status of the Artist, fair remuneration for creative work on- and off-line, and artistic freedom to ensure the creative economy can contribute to sustainable development. Particular attention must be paid to social and economic safety nets for these workers in order to improve the resilience of the sector.

## ▶ **Providing an enabling environment towards sustainable growth patterns**

To stimulate and further demonstrate culture's contribution to sustainable growth and prosperity, notably as part of recovery plans in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, providing an enabling environment for cultural and creative employment is critical. In that context, measuring the full scope of cultural employment through more robust data collection systems is instrumental to support policy engagement and public funding towards the creative economy. Public support schemes should also be adapted to the specific needs of cultural employment, including the prevalence of individual workers and small and medium-sized companies, as well as, for some countries, the importance of the informal economy in the cultural sector. Strengthened synergies between culture and education is also needed to spark the most needed adaptation and innovation skills, with a view to prepare learners to adapt to fast-evolving labour markets and work patterns.

## Adapting cultural policies to the challenges and opportunities of the digital transformation

As creative transactions increasingly shift online, adapting to the digital revolution is a prerequisite for a flourishing creative economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This transversal issue requires a series of concerted efforts to realise equitable access to the internet, copyright protection and remuneration for online cultural goods, improvement of ICT infrastructure, training of creative workers and the public to benefit from the new technologies, and policy dialogues with major content platforms to safeguard local and diverse content. Synergies with the education sector must also be made to supply the labour market with technology-literate talents so sustainable development is supported by the creative economy for many years. Member States are also encouraged to engage in a robust data collection and inclusive public consultations to map the cultural landscape and the state of the digital transition.

<http://en.unesco.org/creativity/>

