

# CULTURE & COVID-19

## Impact & Response Tracker

### THIS REGULAR UPDATE

is produced by UNESCO as a snapshot on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the culture sector worldwide and on the responses initiated at the national, local and regional level. This tracker is not intended to be an exhaustive presentation of measures but instead draws on a variety of sources to provide a broad overview of the evolving situation worldwide.

### IMPACT

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve at a different pace in different parts of the world, with some countries combatting the first wave of infections whilst other countries have eased their confinement measures albeit with changes to daily life. In mid-April, the OECD estimated that spending on "recreation, culture, hotels and restaurants" had declined by 75% in G7 countries. However, the complex and rapidly changing situation makes it extremely difficult to fully quantify the exact magnitude of the impact on economies around the world, including on the cultural sector. The pandemic also poses questions about how cultural institutions and World Heritage sites can adapt in the medium term to the new realities.

Whilst there remains much uncertainty about the duration and magnitude of the confinement, it is clear that the effectiveness of public policies and the extent to which confidence returns will determine the resumption of cultural life and cultural activities. In Australia, a country beginning to lift mobility restrictions, a recent survey of over 23,000 respondents by the Australia Council of the Arts showed that overwhelmingly, audiences plan to return to art and culture events in future. 85% of the respondents indicating that they are planning to attend just as they did in the past, or even more often (7%). Two thirds said they will attend arts venues when they deem the risk of transmissions to be minimal, while just over half said that they were not comfortable attending performance venues seating large groups of 100 people. Although these results are preliminary and country-specific, they provide an interesting insight into the potential boosting of interest in the arts and the prioritisation of smaller performances.



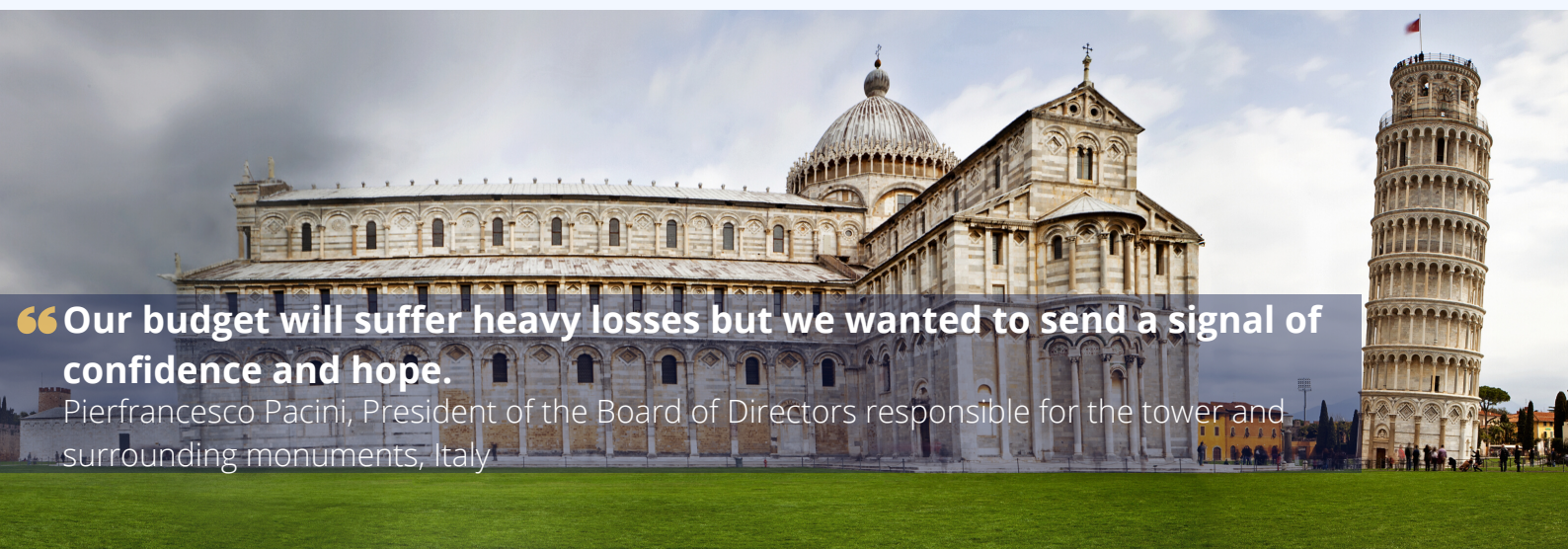


## RESPONSE – STRATEGIES FOR REOPENING

Particularly in countries in Europe and in some countries in Asia, cultural institutions are beginning to reopen cultural life. To maximise safety and improve confidence levels, governments and cultural institutions around the world are adapting guidelines for the cultural sector. The new Seychelles National Museum is the first museum to reopen in East Africa with measures for social distancing. Physical distancing is required within the museum spaces and information on handwashing is provided. Visitors are encouraged to use credit cards instead of cash, ticketing agents will now work from behind plexiglass shields, and the museum will require temperature checks for all visitors to the museum.

Having reopened its state museums, the Republic of Korea was forced to close several major institutions and parks in the capital Seoul, including the National Museum of Korea, the National Palace Museum of Korea and the Seoul, Gwacheon and Deoksugung locations of the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (MMCA), due to a fresh outbreak. The MMCA had reopened on 6 May and operated for 24 days, with 64,857 visitors, which testifies to the contribution of culture to resilience, well-being and the need to return to normalcy.

The situation regarding World Heritage sites is mixed. The latest figures show that in 28% of countries' sites are opened, with others progressively reopening. For example, Italy, which was among the first countries to be affected by the pandemic, reopening some of its most famous cultural site the last weekend of May. The Leaning Tower of Pisa, a World Heritage site which usually attracts 5 million visitors a year, is only permitting 15 people in at a time. Visitors are requested to wear face masks and an electronic device that warns them if they are less than a metre from anyone else.



**“Our budget will suffer heavy losses but we wanted to send a signal of confidence and hope.**

Pierfrancesco Pacini, President of the Board of Directors responsible for the tower and surrounding monuments, Italy



## RESPONSE – STRATEGIES FOR REOPENING

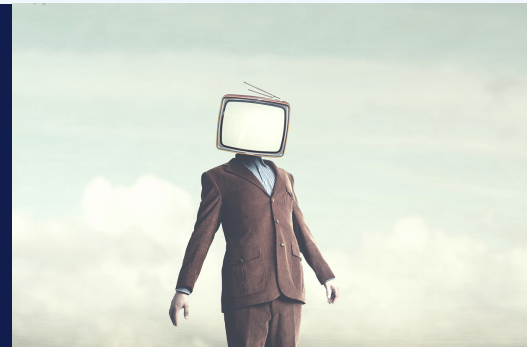
In the theatre sector, there are also many complications associated with opening. In Costa Rica, where projections estimate that the highest peak of infections will occur in July, the Ministry of Health proposes opening theatres to 25%-30% of capacity. Although this method does not allow the theatres to function normally, it does make it possible to start generating work protocols and to evaluate the evolution of the contagion. Spain, one of the first countries to move to reopening theatres, also proposes filling to 30% capacity, whilst some countries have compensated for theatre closures by organizing shorter and improvised theatre plays in the open air.

To give an indication of the financial impact of running at reduced capacity, some of the larger theatres, such as the Royal Shakespeare Company, need to fill their theatres to 80-90% capacity in order to be financially viable. It has lost 75% of its normal income and has had to place around 90% of its staff on furlough. Furthermore, for theatres around the world, there are a multitude of complications related to seating, pricing and shows scheduled for way in the future when the health situation may have evolved.

**30%**

**of Generation Z (8-23 years old) respondents said that they would be willing to pay for subscription to Netflix, compared to 5% of Boomers (55-75 year olds)**

World Economic Forum survey on media consumption.



Digital media consumption habits may also change. According to a survey by the World Economic Forum about media consumption, a greater percentage of people say that they are more likely to be willing to pay for subscription to access online cultural platforms than before the pandemic. During the lockdown, 80% of the respondents, (based in the US and the UK) across all generations said that the time they spend watching broadcast TV and online videos increased, perhaps unsurprisingly. However, the study also indicates a shift in attitude in paying for news media and cultural platforms for music and video accessed online. Younger generations, Generation Z (8-23 years old) and millennials (24-39 years old) were more willing to pay (57% and 56% respectively) than Generation X (40-54 year olds) and Boomers (55-75 year olds) at 44% and 20%, respectively. The survey shows differences between the generations as to which services they were willing to pay for: media services being favoured by older people, with cultural and entertainment outlets being favoured by younger generations. The need to diversify online cultural contents to meet a larger audience across all group ages is an issue that has been identified across countries.

**EXAMPLES OF GLOBAL RESPONSE TO COVID-19****ARTISTIC EXPERIENCE**

Galway, the 2020 European Capital of Culture in **Ireland** presented a video of the largest light installation on the Connemara mountain landscape created by Finnish artist Kari Kola

**CREATIVITY IN CONFINEMENT**

A social enterprise in **India** has organised online events with folk singers and musicians to celebrate art and culture during lockdown

**DIGITAL SOLIDARITY**

In **Tunisia**, the Archivart online art gallery through its "Artists Against Corona" initiative will contribute its 30% commission to the fight against COVID-1

**DATA FOR RECOVERY**

The Ministry of Culture in **Panama** is conducting a survey on the impact of COVID-19 on the country's creative and cultural industry to establish baseline data to inform post-pandemic strategies.

**POLICY ACTION**

The Government of **Botswana** is reviewing its Arts and Culture policies to provide the necessary support for the cultural sector by partnering with research institutions and universities

**NEW  
NEW  
NEW****FULL REPORT NOW AVAILABLE:**

On the 22 April, UNESCO convened an online meeting to discuss actions to bolster the cultural sector, which is facing unprecedented upheaval due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Over 130 Ministers and Vice Ministers joined, reaffirming their commitment to intergovernmental dialogue and international solidarity in order to strengthen and unite their efforts.

Full report now available in

**EN****FR**



According to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN Habitat), around 95 percent of people with COVID-19 live in urban areas. The pandemic has brought into sharp relief some of the fundamental inequalities at the heart of our towns and cities, hitting the most vulnerable the hardest. Cultural life also ground to a halt as countries closed cultural institutions having a particular impact on cities, which are major hubs for creativity, as well as heritage.

Yet, culture was perceived during lockdown as a source of well-being, solidarity and resilience as witnessed, for example, by the spontaneous concerts performed from balconies in cities and towns in solidarity with health professionals and COVID-19 patients. Furthermore, harnessing heritage, creativity and cultural life in cities can help them respond to the crisis and, longer term, become more inclusive, environmentally sustainable and pleasanter places to live for the world's 4.2 billion urban dwellers. Action at the local level can be more agile and adapted to the needs of the population. UNESCO, through its Historic Cities Programme and the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, supports city-level action in building resilience through culture, while the UNESCO Cities Platform brings together UNESCO's competency in all of its areas of expertise.

Collaboration between networks of cities have also helped to pool experiences and share tools. For example, United Cities and Local Government Africa (which brings together African local governments) and its flagship programme #AfricanCapitalsCulture have launched a survey to contribute to assessing the impact of the crisis on the culture, creative and tourism sectors. Some cities have even been collaborating city-to-city. Buenos Aires (**Argentina**) and Mexico City (**Mexico**), both UNESCO Creative Cities of Design have collaborated on an online cultural platform titled 'Cultural Capital in Your Home', allowing both Creative Cities to provide wide access to various artistic expressions that reflect the cities' cultural diversity.

### CULTURE FOR CITIZENSHIP AND INCLUSION

The city of Medellín (**Colombia**) is collaborating with the House of Memory Museum to carry out actions in the community particularly as regards to shelter, food and health. This initiative builds on several years of community work by the museum. In Yamagata (**Japan**), a UNESCO Creative City of Film, a collective of universities, private digital and cinema companies and film producers and directors have launched an online course, that can appeal to several audiences, regardless of their age or background. UNESCO Creative City of Crafts and Folk Art, Areguà (**Paraguay**) has launched a 6-month programme to revitalise socio-cultural and economic activities, including an online arts festival with artists. Also, the UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts, Changsha (**China**) will organise an exceptional edition of the International Youth Forum entitled "International Youth Forum on Creativity and Heritage along the Silk Roads: Special Dialogue on Youth's Response to COVID-19".

## CULTURE FOR FOOD SECURITY

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As global food supplies have been disrupted by the pandemic, some cities have responded to increase food security. In Montevideo (**Uruguay**), for example, citizens and local organizations are implementing a traditional model of home deliveries of food, fruits and vegetables called “ollas populares” – some directly from producers to consumers, with special attention to vulnerable people. In the city of Bamberg (**Germany**), a World Heritage Historic City, urban gardening has been practiced since the Middle Ages. These late medieval structures for gardening, and the traditional knowledge of how to farm them, have helped the city maintain a resilient food system during the crisis. Inspired by an initiative launched by UNESCO Creative Cities of Crafts and Folk Art Fabriano (**Italy**), bakers from several cities shared videos on social media on how to prepare the typical bread of local culture and tradition, including Paducah (**United States**), San Cristobal de Las Casas (**Mexico**) and Duran (**Ecuador**).



Montevideo painter by Emilia Garassino  
CC BY-SA 2.0

“ Protecting and encouraging culture has always been a feature of this administration and today we continue to set up measures that put people at the centre.

Christian di Candia, Mayor of Montevideo, Uruguay

## NEW FORMS OF ENGAGEMENT WITHIN THE CITY

During the confinement, the city of Gabrovo (a UNESCO Creative City of Crafts and Folk Art, **Bulgaria**) adapted its traditional carnival to the virtual sphere, offering prizes adapted to the circumstances, such as awarding the best decorated balconies. The Greater Amman Municipality (**Jordan**) initiated distance education programmes and training courses, along with the Zaha Cultural Centre, for children and coaches. Meanwhile, Sharjah (a UNESCO Creative City of Crafts and Folk Arts in the **United Arab Emirates**), together with the Irthi Contemporary Crafts Council, has launched the initiative 'Crafts and Folk Art Continuity and Recovery Programme' that adapted a vocational training programme for Emirati women craft artists by delivering sterilized 'Craft Kits', containing raw materials and tools for craft production, as well as a sanitizer spray. Beijing (**China**), a UNESCO Creative City of Design has launched a dedicated Online Medical Consultation Platform for COVID-19, gathering more than 1,000 doctors and 5 hospitals located in the city. While reducing the risk of cross infection caused by in-hospital consultations, the Platform alleviates not only the pressure from public medical resources but also help its citizens deal with anxiety. The city of Ulyanovsk (**Russia**), a UNESCO Creative City of Literature has launched a Call for Application for the project titled 'A City as a Writer's Workplace', open to writers, poets, playwrights and other authors, as well as translators and literary artists, from the UNESCO Cities of Literature to share reflections on their favourite places in their cities and explore how their relationship to the city is changing.

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## USE OF PUBLIC SPACE FOR CULTURAL LIFE

Public space is vital for a vibrant cultural life and several cities have modified the use of this space, sometimes in reaction to the initial confinement period but also as a way of reinvigorating cultural life post-confinement. In Rome (**Italy**), the #Cinemadacasa initiative has been projected films on the facades of buildings throughout the city after nightfall. Graffiti artists in Africa, from **Senegal** to **Kenya** have been using the space in their cities to make murals conveying public health messages to help combat the spread of the pandemic. In **Panama** City, a new sound map has been launched offering a unique tour through sounds and more than 200 stories about the city told by its inhabitants. To boost cultural life and support artists, Seville (**Spain**) has extended its cultural programme into the summer and autumn, encouraging the use of streets and public space for cultural events. In Vilnius (**Lithuania**), whose UNESCO-listed World Heritage city centre consists of narrow streets, eighteen of the city's public spaces such as its central Cathedral Square, have been opened up for outdoor cafes and restaurants. In a similar move, Porto (**Portugal**) is converting its World Heritage Historic Centre into a pedestrian area at weekends and, longer term extending the network of cycle paths. Athens (**Greece**) is also widening its pavements, enlarging public squares and banning traffic from areas beneath the Acropolis.

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“These measures (to use public space) should help cafés to open up, retain jobs and keep Vilnius alive”.

Remigijus Šimašius, Mayor of Vilnius, Lithuania



Outside a bar in Vilnius, Lithuania.  
Credit: Mindaugas Kulbis/Associated Press

## CITY-LEVEL SUPPORT TO CULTURAL AND CREATIVE INITIATIVES

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In addition to many countries' national-level emergency relief packages, cities have also been announced measures to support cultural life. Niterói (**Brazil**) is supporting artists and artisans who usually sell their products at street fairs and cultural centres, in the promotion and commercialization of their products, including online. The Arts Council of Montreal (**Canada**), a UNESCO Creative City of Design, is accelerating the payment of grants to cultural professionals, including for visual arts and fine crafts artists in the city. Melbourne (**Australia**), a UNESCO Creative City of Literature, has committed \$2 million in grants to artists and creatives to invest in new works, and digital presentation of works and performances. In the **United Arab Emirates**, Dubai's arts district, Alserkal Avenue, has waived the next three months' rent for its galleries and businesses. Paris (**France**) has announced a 200 million euro plan which includes exonerating associations, cultural institutions and small businesses from rent payments for six months. The city is also allowing cafes and restaurants to extend their terrace space and will hold a Cultural Month in August for artists to present their works in the public space.



## EVENTS



### Upcoming ResiliArt editions

Canada (10, 23 June, 7 July) | Ghana: (10 June) | Senegal (11, 21 June, 9, 27 July, 13, 31 August) | Global: Global Foundation for the Performing Arts (15, 22 June) Comoros: (16 June) | Iberoamerica: UNESCO (18 June, 16 July) | Cameroon (18 June) | Saudi Arabia (18 June) Global: UNESCO with Mémoire de l'avenir (19 June) Central Africa (covering 10 countries) (19 June) | Global: Union internationale de la marionette (22, 29 June, 6, 13, 20, 27 July) | China (June) | Mozambique (June)

For more information click [here](#)



### The World Heritage City Lab Webinar

**17 June 2020**

**13:00h – 15:00h (CET)**

An international panel of World Heritage City Mayors and experts will share their views and experiences.

For more information click [here](#)

## USEFUL LINKS

- [World Economic Forum survey](#)
- [UNESCO Urban Notebooks from the World Heritage Cities Programme \(May 2020\)](#)
- [UNESCO Urban Notebooks from the World Heritage Cities Programme \(June 2020\)](#)
- [UNESCO Cities Platform](#)
- [UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape \(2011\)](#)
- [UNESCO Creative Cities responses to COVID-19](#)
- [UNESCO Creative Cities Network](#)

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