



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 UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) reports that 96% of all worldwide destinations have introduced full or partial restrictions since the end of January. The World Travel and Tourism Council predicts that up to 75 million jobs in the travel and tourism sector are under immediate threat, equating to a loss of US\$2.1trillion GDP in 2020.

This is equivalent to an astounding one million jobs being lost every day in the travel & tourism sector and is a worry for many countries. For some countries, tourism and related sectors are equivalent to up to 70% of the national economy. The downturn in tourism will deeply affect the culture sector, particularly heritage sites, museums and cultural production, notably crafts.

Travel helps open the doors to intercultural exchange and leads to greater understanding of our shared human story. Encounters with the living heritage, built heritage and natural heritage, and creativity of another country in a way that benefits local communities and that is in harmony with the natural environment is the purpose of the UNESCO World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme, which supports Member States in adopting more sustainable models of tourism, through online tools and initiatives.



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WORLD HERITAGE

CURRENT FIGURES

90%

of countries have closed or partially closed their World Heritage Sites

See video testimonies from World Heritage site managers
#ShareOurHeritage



Given the global scale of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is increasingly clear that no single country can tackle its impact alone. International cooperation is vital and UNESCO, in its role as UN-mandated agency for culture, convened over 130 Ministers on 22 April to discuss policies for protecting the cultural sector (see Spotlight). Action at a regional level, through regional intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and development banks, is also essential in adjusting strategies that are adapted to the local context. On 17 April, twelve regional IGOs and development banks participated in a debate on approaches to address the impact of this unprecedented crisis on the cultural sector, both the immediate impact and over the longer term regarding structural change, particularly the need to enhance the range of digital content on offer and to a wider audience.

IGOs' work is key for coordinating the collection and dissemination of information, pooling data and good practices, reinforcing financial mechanism and mobilising Member States through dialogue. The role of financial institutions is also essential as governments alone cannot address the scale of the economic downturn. In the short and medium term, financial investment in cultural subsectors – such as museums, heritage site or creative industries – will be strategic for economic recovery.



According to preliminary OECD estimates, each country can expect a 2% drop in GDP for each month of confinement with 50-70% drop in tourist flows for 2020. Some 50% of small and medium-sized enterprises will go out of business if lockdown lasts 2-3 months. The cultural sector is a complex ecosystem, which poses institutional challenges for assistance. Long term, this crisis will prompt structural changes, including for digitization and even urban planning.

The World Bank has put together a US\$14bn response package to provide immediate liquidity, given how hard the creative economy has been hit. Disaster risk management instruments will help governments to reduce risk but we must focus on the poor and vulnerable populations. Cities are vital for channelling resources to the frontline.

“UNTIL NOW, WE HAVE NOT SEEN THE FULL WEIGHT OF THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY.”
ABDULHAKIM ELWAER, ISLAMIC DEVELOPMENT BANK





According to CEPAL estimates, 1.4% of jobs in the region are in the cultural sector or auxiliary services. This means that cultural workers are vulnerable to the economic downturn. According to OEI much work in the cultural sector is done informally, including in the crafts and local gastronomy sector. Whilst digital technologies are important, defending copyright law remains a critical challenge. SEGIB has begun to develop impact assessment tools and plan on creating a data bank for Member States to share resources. The IDB is mobilising US\$50m in technical cooperation and is supporting regional dialogue. Longer term, the sector may be able to adapt to the 'new normal' more easily than other sectors but many initiatives must be explored, including blockchain to remunerate artists.

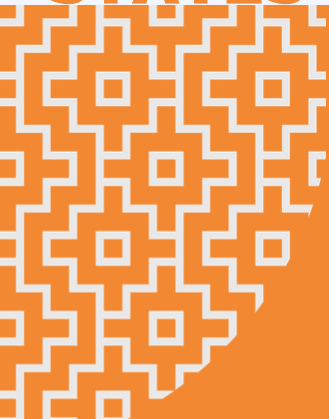
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN



Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI)
 Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB)
 Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)
 Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL)

10,000 MUSEUMS IN SEGIB MEMBER STATES ARE IMPACTED BY THE CRISIS

ARAB STATES



ICESCO has launched several initiatives to foster digital access to culture, as well as distance education on tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Due to the cancellation of festivals and uneven access to digital technology, ALECSO called for a focus on the most vulnerable populations. The Islamic Development Bank is mobilising with 10 other regional banks and institutions to set up a fund for social and economic development. There is a need to develop indicators to be able to assess the full scale of the impact.

Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALESCO)
 Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO)
 Islamic Development Bank (IsDB)



“CONFINEMENT CANNOT BECOME OUR NEW LIFESTYLE: CULTURE MUST BE LIVED, THROUGH HUMAN CONTACT, GIORGIO FICCARELLI, EUROPEAN COMMISSION



AFRICA



The AU calls for a special international fund for artists who were losing revenue, particularly as African artists have a strong role to play in raising awareness. The African Development Bank remarked that culture is not part of its main work but is aware of the economic weight of the cultural and creative industries across the region. It has put in place a US\$10 bn overall COVID-19 response support package. Longer term, according to AfDB, we may need to consider larger platforms that could provide subsidized or free cultural content.

African Union (AU)
African Development
Bank (AfDB)

The ADB has already mobilised its Members but sees the need for active collaboration among institutions and development partners worldwide through rapid deployment of support. It is providing working capital to small and medium-sized enterprises, focusing on the livelihoods of those in informal settlements. It is also providing advice and technical assistance. According to ADB, supporting artisans is vital for the resilience of cities. Longer term, policy reform is necessary, including for disaster management systems. ASEAN participated as an observer.

ASIA



Asian Development Bank (ADB)
Association of Southeast Asian
Nations (ASEAN)

EUROPE



The European Commission has been mobilising its Member States as cultural workers are often not well protected by social security. It has been heavily engaged in impact assessments building on existing policy platforms to gather data and assess impact on cultural sector. The 'silver-lining' of the crisis is that we are reminded of the importance of culture, as seen through the 'blossoming' of the digital sector. The EC is accelerating access to financial instruments in the creative economy, reorienting existing aid programmes to bolster copyright legislation and launching a platform for cultural exchange, among other initiatives. Longer term, we must examine all the possibilities for cultural activities less pre-disposed to digital transformation.

European Commission (EC)

“CULTURE HAS ALWAYS SAVED US IN THE PAST AND THIS TIME WILL NOT BE ANY DIFFERENT”
MS ALEJANDRA FRAUSTO GUERRERO, MINISTER OF CULTURE OF MEXICO

Over 130 Ministers and Vice-Ministers of Culture joined the online meeting on the 22 April convened by UNESCO to discuss actions to bolster the cultural sector, which is facing unprecedented upheaval due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The ministers spoke of the direct effects of the current crisis on tourism, museums, cultural production and artists, as well as the measures that they have taken to mitigate the impact of the crisis. They reaffirmed their commitment to intergovernmental dialogue and international solidarity in order to strengthen and unite their efforts. In addition to short term emergency measures, many governments are also reflecting on longer term structural changes to be made to their public policies. See link to full article in Find Out More...

STRENGTHENING SYSTEMS

Whilst most countries spoke of the immediate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, some countries are also beginning planning for longer term policies to reinforce their cultural sectors. For example, **Paraguay**, **Thailand** and **Hungary** referred to processes to update data collection mechanisms, and **Barbados** is planning a mapping exercise. **Jordan** is planning some capacity building activities, Malaysia is planning to increase online capacities and **Greece** will upgrade online interactions between government ministries, as well as with private sector organizations. Capacity building is a priority for **Belize**, whilst both **Mozambique** and **India** plan to support their artists to professionalise, the latter through e-commerce training. Finally, **Mali** also sees advantage in strengthening its copyright laws to help strengthen authors' rights, as well as its cultural and creative industries.

1

"CULTURE CAN - AND SHOULD - BRING US TOGETHER, BOOST INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENT AND RESTORE HOPE AND CONFIDENCE."

MR ZHANG XU, VICE MINISTER OF CULTURE AND TOURISM OF CHINA



UNESCO Online Meeting of Ministers of Culture, 22 April, 2020

INNOVATIVE FINANCING

2

The vulnerability of the cultural sector has made it more necessary than for the public sector to intervene in stabilizing cultural activities and the livelihoods of those working in the sector, with some countries re-evaluating their economic models. Countries such as **Iceland**, **Bulgaria**, **Djibouti** and the **Netherlands** are providing salary subsidies to ensure a minimum income for artists, whilst **Turkey**, **Ukraine**, **Malta**, **Mauritius** and **Hungary** are giving cultural institutions tax breaks or a moratorium on loan repayments. **Côte d'Ivoire** is exploring how to give artists early payouts from the national copyright fund. To reboot the economy following the lockdown, **Japan** and **Germany** are implementing coupons schemes to boost access to culture. Longer term, **Jamaica** is exploring how to transition cultural workers in the informal sector into the formal economy. Meanwhile, the provincial government of **Quebec** is calling on multinational digital platforms to ensure that artists are fairly remunerated.

“SOCIAL DISTANCING MEANS THAT WE ARE COMING TOGETHER IN NEW WAYS. EVERY DAY WE ARE DISCOVERING NEW CREATIVE POTENTIAL – ALL OF IT IS NECESSARY

MS SILVIA RIVA, MINISTER OF CULTURE AND SPORTS OF ANDORRA



ENHANCING INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

3

A large number of countries emphasised the importance of international cooperation and sharing information at the international level, including through normative instruments. **France** pointed to the importance of the UNESCO 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions as a key policy tool to respond to this crisis, whilst **Belgium** posited the idea of strengthening the 1980 Recommendation concerning the Status of the Artist to protect artists, as well as the cultural ecosystem. **Slovakia**, **Lebanon** and **Algeria** called on UNESCO to be an international platform for Member States to provide information on the contribution made by the cultural sector and how to reduce the risk of COVID-19 at cultural sites. **Viet Nam** and the **United Arab Emirates** also called for longer term guidance on the impact of the pandemics with a view to avoiding disruption to the cultural sector. **Sudan**, the **Republic of Equatorial Guinea** and **Sri Lanka** appealed for international aid for poorer countries, to protect artists' livelihoods, as well as World Heritage sites. An international festival of culture was also proposed by the **British Virgin Islands**, as a means to enhancing international solidarity.

A full meeting report will be made available soon



FIND OUT MORE...

UNESCO works with many other cultural organizations on various aspects of culture. Many have made public statements or calls for action. We will feature in this section a few each week. Click on the logos for more information from these partners.

“CREATORS ARE IN A UNIQUELY FRAGILE POSITION. THE LARGE MAJORITY OF THEM ARE SELF-EMPLOYED AND DEPENDENT ON ROYALTIES PAID BY AUTHORS SOCIETIES... IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT GOVERNMENTS IN ALL COUNTRIES ACT FOR CREATORS NOW AND ENSURE THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF SUPPORT POSSIBLE..

CISAC



BEYOND THE HUMAN TRAGEDY, MUCH ATTENTION HAS TURNED TOWARDS HUMANITY'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE NATURAL WORLD AND THE IMPACT OF OUR ACTIVITIES... FURTHERMORE, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK IS ALSO BRINGING NEW THREATS TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND RURAL COMMUNITIES.

IUCN

USEFUL LINKS

- [UNESCO World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme](#)
- [World Travel and Tourism Council figures](#)
- [World Heritage site manager testimonials](#)
- [Regional Integovernmental Organizations Pledge to support Cultural Sector](#)
- [More than 130 Ministers Call for Support to Culture Sector in COVID-19 Response](#)
- [All UNESCO Cultural Conventions and Recommendations](#)
- [Culture 2030 Indicators](#)

ADVOCACY MATERIALS

- ['Why Culture Matters in Crisis' video](#)
- [World Museums \(18 May\) day ICOM map of events](#)

This update is published by UNESCO

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