



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 closures of cultural institutions, archaeological sites and heritage sites, have led to reports of increased insecurity for cultural property and sites around the world. Particularly in countries experiencing conflict or post-conflict, the pandemic is exacerbating an already fragile security situation. The closures of sites that rely heavily on tourism to maintain their budgets could make longer term management of the site and working conditions more precarious. In some instances, it could also negatively impact conservation and research work done at the sites, unless emergency measures are put in place.

Last week, Europol reported the seizure by police in international art trafficking crackdown were in Spain' Barajas airport of 19,000 stolen artefacts. They recovered several rare pre-Columbian objects including a unique Tumaco gold mask, gold figurines and pieces of ancient jewellery, all of which had been illegally acquired by looting. The Antiquities Trafficking and Heritage Anthropology Research (ATHAR) Project, a UNESCO partner which investigates and documents the digital underworld of trafficking in looted artefacts, has found an uptick in posts on Facebook groups involved in the buying and selling of looted objects from the Middle East and North Africa in recent months, as many countries went into lockdown. Examples cited include thieves looting objects from a mosque near Larache in Morocco with images of the crime shared on Facebook trafficking groups.



euronews

ILLICIT TRAFFICKING

CELEBRATING

50 YEARS

of fighting the illicit
trafficking of cultural
property

Find out more about the UNESCO 1970
Convention on our website.



Due to the lack of staff, it is possible that there are also many other cases of theft at museums that are currently being underreported. The fragile security at these sites is a reminder of the importance of UNESCO's 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary. (See Find out more section...)



“ WE HAVE SEEN A RESURGENCE IN LOOTING AT SITES AND OF ILLICIT TRAFFICKING OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL GOODS AND TREASURES ON THE INTERNATIONAL ART MARKET

MS N'DIAYE RAMATOULAYE DIALLO, MALIAN MINISTER OF CULTURE, (UNESCO ONLINE MEETING OF MINISTERS, 22 MAY)

Loam Mosque in Djenné, Mali

Elsewhere at natural sites, including World Heritage properties, there has been an increase in the risk of poaching, partly due to the decreased presence of tourists and staff in the park. For example, there are reports of at least a dozen rhinos being killed in natural parks across Africa, although the true extent of the problem is currently unknown. In late April, 12 rangers in the Virunga National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage property in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, were killed in the deadliest attack in the park's recent history.

The big cat conservation organisation Panthera has recorded a spike in big cat poaching in Colombia, with two jaguars, an ocelot and a puma killed in recent weeks. In Cambodia, three critically endangered giant ibis were killed for meat in early April following the collapse of the local tourism industry. Whilst the Wildlife Justice Commission has reported that the trafficking networks have been temporarily interrupted by restrictions in international travel, they fear that new routes will open up soon.

View of Sacsayhuaman UNESCO World Heritage Site, Cusco, Peru



ASSESSING THE IMPACT

As the threat posed by the COVID-19 pandemic begins to recede in certain parts of the world, some countries are beginning to adopt measures to reopen cultural institutions whilst continuing to protect public health. A key question for predicting the recovery of the sector revolves around public confidence in the safety of cultural activities. Surveys by civil society groups have been carried out in a number of countries.

For example, a study in the United Kingdom by the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions shows that people will be cautious about visiting cultural sites. Figures suggest that it will be 5-6 months before visitor numbers begin to pick-up but that they may never return to pre-pandemic levels. Another study by IMPACTS Research & Development in the United States of America showed that only one in four people would feel comfortable going to a museum or gallery that had adapted its programme or infrastructure to reinforce hygiene measures, while only one in seven would feel comfortable going to a theatre, cinema, or music venue, even if they had made similar adaptations. Whilst these figures are specific to the contexts in which they were carried out, they may reflect broader tendencies on the longer term impact of the pandemic throughout the cultural sector.

THE NATIONAL PALACE MUSEUM IN TAIWAN (WHICH DID NOT CLOSE DUE TO THE PANDEMIC) SAW VISITOR NUMBERS DROP FROM

274,464 IN DEC 2019 TO **62,144** IN FEB 2020

EXAMPLES OF GLOBAL RESPONSE TO COVID-19

SOLIDARITY WITH ARTISTS

Romania has allocated a budget for the acquisition of contemporary art

CULTURE FOR WELL-BEING

In **Iraq**, the UNESCO Creative City of Slemani launched the initiative 'Literature and Arts as Helpmate and Therapist' to help people in confinement experiencing solitude

PROMOTING CONTEMPORARY CREATION

The Museum of Contemporary Art and Design of **Costa Rica** has created a directory of national design stores so that people can buy their cultural products even during the period of confinement.

AWARENESS RAISING

In **Cambodia**, the Ministry of Health is raising awareness about the pandemic through artistically designed posters using traditional dance gestures

NEW ECONOMIC MODELS

The government of **Namibia** is helping craftspeople sell their goods online

Some of the countries first hit by the pandemic, in Asia and in Europe especially, have already begun to reopen their cultural institutions and sites. Approaches in different countries to rekindle cultural life vary. For example, the **Republic of Korea** is placing great emphasis on the responsibility of each individual in the transition from "social distancing" to "distancing within daily life". Other countries are incentivising the public to return to cultural activities, through vouchers or the reorganisation of activities. Even if measures vary between the type of institution and different countries, there are a number of similarities between safety strategies, such as pre-booking, limiting capacity, health and hygiene regulations, and public communications. The International Committee for Museums and Collections of Modern Art (CIMAM) have issued among the most comprehensive guides for reopening based on the experiences from museums and galleries in **Singapore, China** and **Japan** (see link in Find Out More section).

Overall, the COVID-19 pandemic is forcing cultural institutions and heritage sites, and the sector as a whole, to adapt. Whilst many of these measures may be temporary, some may lead to longer term structural changes to the ways in which the sector operates, whether it be management systems, cultural programming and outreach, or conservation. For example, the Association of Museums of **Germany** warns that more staff will be needed to enforce changes, even though profits are lowered due to reduced visitor numbers. A specialist at the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of **Turkey** expressed concern that disinfectant products could damage certain artefacts in the country's collections, especially if they are not protected behind glass and called for greater research into the use of ultra-violet rays for disinfection.

SHIFTS IN WORKING PRACTICES

According to a survey by the Advisory Board for the Arts, 60% of jobs in day-to-day working in arts organizations had changed by comparison to before the virus. In terms of working practices in confinement, respondents largely cited that the crisis has led to more efficient decision-making that include a greater number of stakeholders. Some organizations report a diversification of donors, potentially changing the dynamics for the institution. Furthermore, it can be observed that the crisis has led the cultural sector to adopt more transversal practices, working ever closer with the health and education sectors, for example. This could lead to changes in working practices of the sector in the longer term, including reinforcing the perception of the cultural sector as being a vital element for the common good.

REASSESSING PRIORITIES AND ACTIVITIES

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In some countries, the hiatus in visitors mean that sites are able to carry out essential works. Petra in **Jordan**, for example, is carrying out essential renovation works that cannot be carried out in the tourism season, whilst in **Cambodia**'s Angkor Wat site, ongoing archaeological work has led to the discovery of new structures. The site is also investing in a new visitors' centre and new bicycle trail to welcome tourists in the future. Plans for the rehabilitation of 60 heritage site are also still ongoing in **Georgia**. At the Historic City of Yazd, **Iran**, they are also maintaining conservation activities as a source of livelihoods and have switched to the online sale of crafts. Conservation and monitoring is continuing at several natural World Heritage sites but, for example, park rangers have begun to wear masks to protect the mountain gorillas at the Bwindi National Park, **Uganda**. Some cultural institutions that remain closed to the public have changed their activities, for example the costume-makers of the National Cervantes Theatre of **Argentina** are making face masks, whilst the Eugenio Espejo National Library of **Ecuador** has become a centre of innovation for biomedical specialists to research respirators.

“ THIS CITY BUILT IN THE DESERT SHOWS HOW YOU CAN TURN LIMITATIONS INTO OPPORTUNITIES.

MOHSEN ABBASI HAROFTEH, THE HEAD OF CULTURAL HERITAGE BASE OF HISTORICAL CITY OF YAZD, IRAN



EVOLVING OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

The crisis has also accelerated trends towards greater digital public outreach, such as behind the scenes visits and interaction that encourages the public to be creative. Several museums, such as the Hermitage Museum in **Russia**, have boosted their social media engagement in multiple languages, while also providing online guided tours, whilst curators of the **Netherlands**' Rijksmuseum have been engaging with audiences by talking about art from their homes. Similarly, in **China**, the Hong Kong Ballet director has been broadcasting discussions with dancers about life as an artist, through a series called Ballet Blah Blah Blah. In the Ngorongoro Conservation Area of **United Republic of Tanzania** where the community lives alongside the wildlife, there is a daily live-stream. Regarding longer term public outreach strategies, **Mauritius** is considering the use of mobile theatre caravans.

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MUSEUMS REOPENING

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Since **China** began opening its cultural institutions (including over ten in Shanghai) at the end of March, its museums and galleries are limiting visitor numbers to 50% of capacity and visitors are required to book online in advance to manage the flow and ensure contactless entry. Similarly, the **Republic of Korea**, is prohibiting group tours and allocating strict time slots. **Egypt** envisages the installation of floor signs for social distancing. The Museum of the Republic of Srpska, **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, is creating special sessions for elderly people to visit whilst in **Belgium**, the Brussels Museums has put in place a one-way system for visits and it intends to replace audio guides with alternative smartphone apps. The Barberini Museum in Potsdam has erected protective barriers for exchanges that cannot occur digitally.



40%

OF EUROPEAN MUSEUMS HAVE SEEN AN INCREASE IN ONLINE VISITS.
NETWORK OF EUROPEAN MUSEUM ORGANIZATIONS

LIBRARIES AND THEATRES REOPENING

In **Spain**, the government has put in place a four stage deconfinement plan for cultural places, including, for example, library openings for lending and limited access to reading rooms, indoor cultural performances limited to 30 persons and outdoor cultural performances limited to 200 persons. Library users in **Austria** will be able to loan books but will not have access to the reading rooms, whilst its theatres will reopen with social distancing for spectators but actors will not be able perform love scenes or combat scenes in which there is less than a metre distance. In **France**, small museums and local libraries can open from this week but the larger museums, cinemas, theatres and concert venues will remain closed.

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FIND OUT MORE...

UNESCO works with its partners on various aspects of culture. Many have made public statements or calls for action. We will feature in this section a few each week. Full statements are available on partner organizations' respective pages.

“ IN THIS TIME OF SOCIAL DISTANCING, THE IMPORTANCE OF BOOKS HAS BEEN RE-EMPHASIZED. STAYING AT HOME AND READING A BOOK IS A WAY OF CARING FOR OTHERS. NEWSPAPERS AND BLOGS AROUND THE WORLD HAVE PUT TOGETHER LISTS OF BOOKS TO READ WHILE YOU ARE IN ISOLATION, WHETHER THAT BE TO ESCAPE OR TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IS HAPPENING. BOOKS ARE WHAT PEOPLE TURN TO IN DIFFICULT TIMES. ... A WORLD WITHOUT NEW BOOKS WOULD BE A SAD AND IMPOVERISHED PLACE. WE ARE WORKING HARD TO COME THROUGH THIS CRISIS, BUT WE NEED HELP TO SURVIVE.

INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHERS



PEN INTERNATIONAL ADVOCATES FOR THE RELEASE OF WRITERS WHO ARE DETAINED IN VIOLATION OF THEIR RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION. THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK HAS MADE THEIR FREEDOM MORE CRITICAL THAN EVER, AS PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR LIBERTY ARE LIKELY TO BE MORE VULNERABLE TO THE DISEASE... PEN INTERNATIONAL REITERATES ITS CALL ON ALL GOVERNMENTS TO IMMEDIATELY AND UNCONDITIONALLY RELEASE ALL WRITERS IMPRISONED FOR THE LEGITIMATE EXPRESSION OF THEIR VIEWS.

PEN INTERNATIONAL

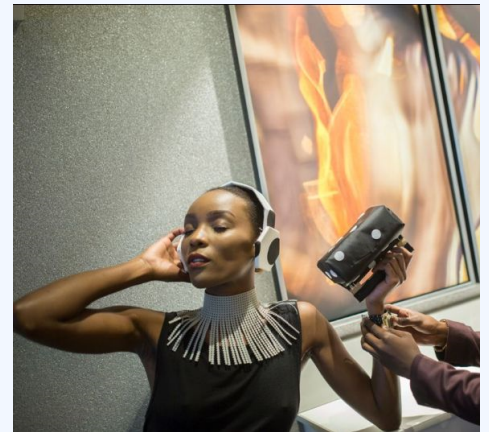
ADVOCACY MATERIALS



Click on the image to see testimonials from World Heritage Site Managers



Click on the image to see the video on the illicit trafficking of cultural property

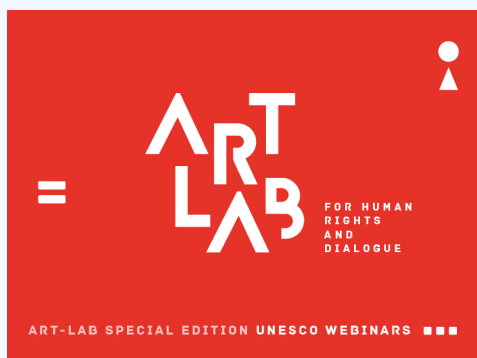


Click on the image to see the policy compendium of efforts to protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions in the wake of COVID-19.



FIND OUT MORE...

UPCOMING EVENTS



Art-Lab Special Edition- UNESCO Webinar 22 May, 2020, 4.00 p.m. to 5. p.m. (Paris-time)

To commemorate World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development UNESCO, is organizing a special edition webinar entitled "Art-Lab for Human Rights and Dialogue" in response to Covid-19 and beyond.

Join:
https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_p5HdPCmdQ2eRdrwLnfBYFQ

Password: 668978



Ibermuseums Panels: museums, culture and heritage

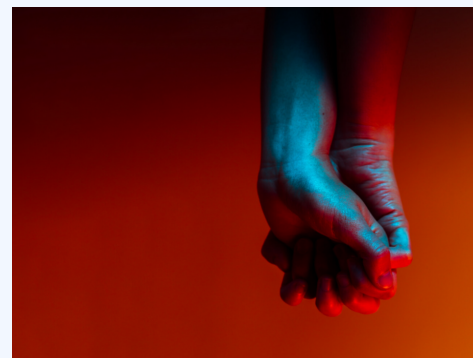
Webinars on the present and future of museum institutions in times of physical distancing, as part of ResiliArt.

15 May Museums in times of pandemic – innovation and perspectives

18 June Museums and the publics in times of crisis – dissemination, communication, accessibility, inclusion and equity

16 July Museums and territory – reaffirmation of the social role in times of pandemic

More information:
www.ibermuseos.org



ResiliArt – Road to Recovery 14 May 2020, 14-16h Paris time

This second flagship debate in the ResiliArt series will explore ways to help the creative sector get back on its feet in the "new reality" through State and private sector interventions.

For more information see:
bit.ly/ResiliArt!

Other ResiliArt events around the world:

Thailand: 12, 19, 26 May |
Georgia: 12 May | Iberoamerica:
15 May | Algeria: 16 May |
Yemen : 18 May | Senegal: 18
May | Germany: 20 May | Cuba:
21 May | Chad: 22 May |
Republic of Korea: 22 May

USEFUL LINKS

- [About ATHAR Project](#)
- [UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property](#)
- [Evolution of the UNESCO 1970 Convention](#)
- [Wildlife Justice Report](#)
- [CINAM guidelines](#)

This update is published by UNESCO

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