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# Shaping investments to safeguard cultural and natural heritage across the world

Results of the UIS Survey of Expenditure on  
Cultural and Natural Heritage  
(SDG Indicator 11.4.1)

June 2022





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## Introduction

After the completion of the first data collection cycle for the Survey of Expenditure on Cultural and Natural Heritage (Sustainable Development Goal Indicator 11.4.1) in 2021, the UIS organized country-level consultation meetings<sup>1</sup>. The objectives of the consultation meetings were to i) share country experience and lessons learned in completing the survey and ii) make recommendations for improving the survey's instructional manual. A series of capacity building webinars were also initiated in November 2021 that furthered countries' knowledge and understanding of national data sources and methodological aspects for calculating the indicator. This led to an improved response rate with 45 countries (22% response rate) participating in the 2021 survey, of which 41 countries provided robust data, an increase from only 31 countries in the 2020 survey.

Secondly, several countries provided additional comprehensive data series and historical data allowing for an initial analysis of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the financing of heritage preservation. As a result, this analysis is based on 51 countries with data available from 2017 to 2021. All SDG regions contributed to the 2021 exercise, but limited coverage remained for some regions with only one or two reporting countries from Oceania, Northern Africa, Western Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

## Private expenditure for the preservation of national heritage is lagging behind

During the second data collection, 19 countries provided data to calculate total per capita public and private expenditure on cultural and natural heritage. This is double the number of countries that provided data in the first data collection. Most respondent countries were from Europe and Latin America.

From the 19 countries, the median per capita expenditure was 89.1 \$PPP<sup>2</sup> spent on preserving heritage with public and private funds. In 2019-2020, in European countries,

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<sup>1</sup> The meetings took place virtually on the 8, 12 and 13 July 2021. 67 participants attended the SDG 11.4.1 consultation meetings including representatives from 30 countries, EUROSTAT, UN Habitat.

<sup>2</sup> All data are reported in constant 2017 \$PPP and inline with World Bank Atlas methodology.

the public and private expenditure in heritage covered a wide range of values from 11.1 \$PPP per capita for Greece to 219 \$PPP for Denmark.

**FIGURE 1: Wide range of public and private investment in safeguarding cultural and natural heritage**

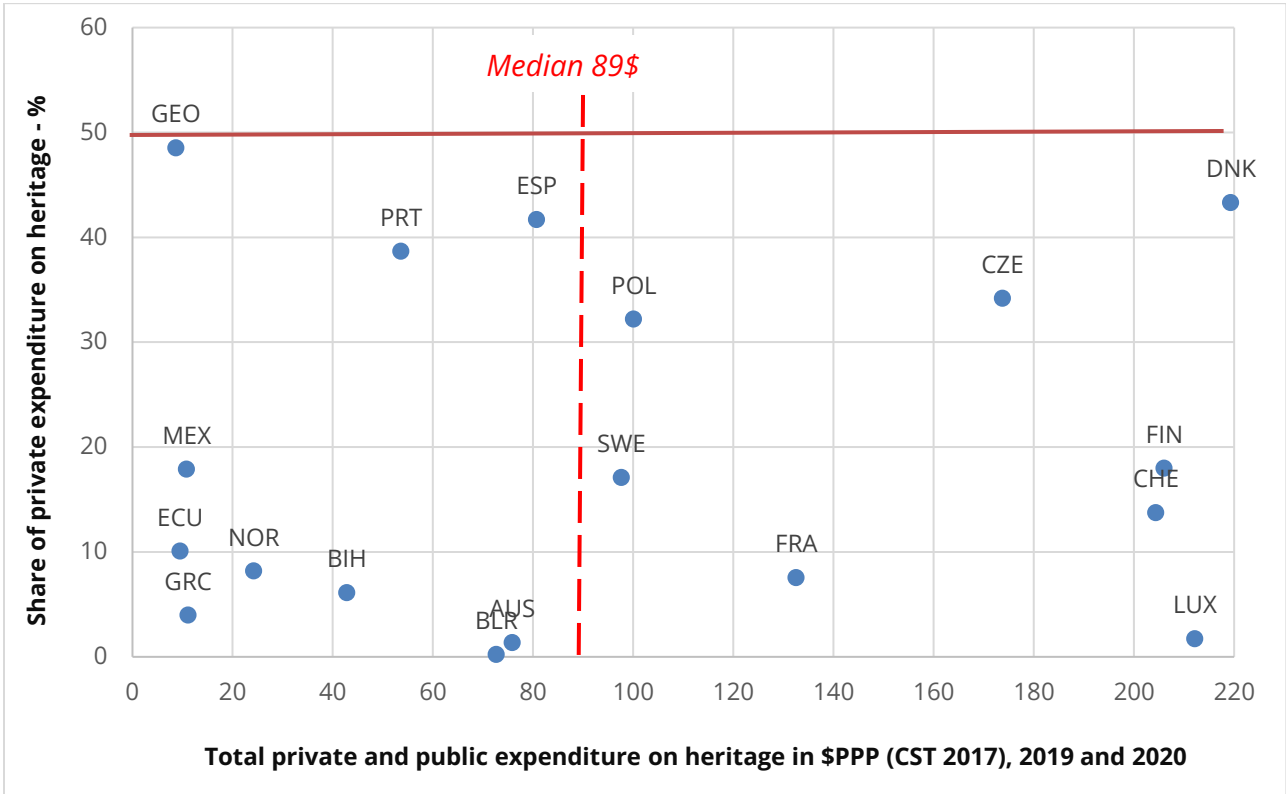
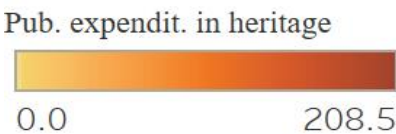
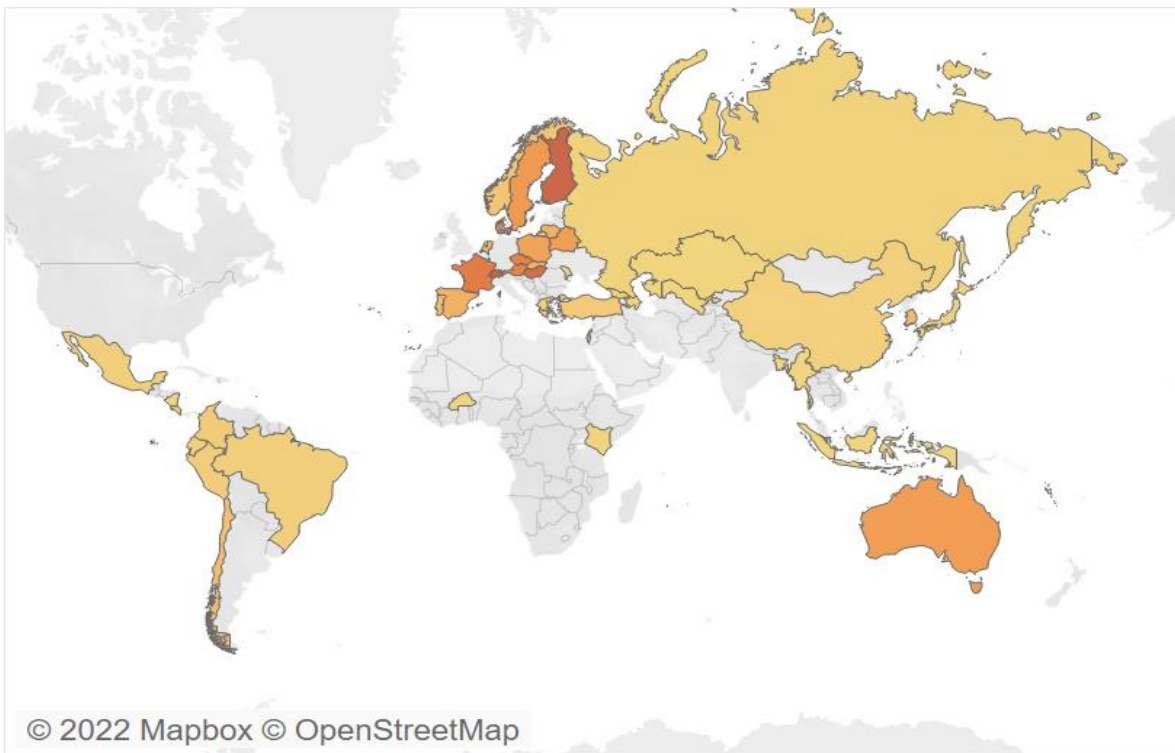


Figure 1 shows that the share of private expenditure in countries' total overall expenditure on preserving cultural and natural heritage is generally significantly lower than their public expenditure with most countries private expenditure making up far less than 50% of the total. In Latin America, private expenditure accounted for 17.9% of total expenditure on heritage preservation. However, caution needs to be taken in the interpretation as in several cases where the coverage of private expenditure is often incomplete. A good example is in Mexico where dedicated surveys were created to collect such information. In European countries, while public expenditure is usually well monitored, in many countries, the coverage of private expenditure such as expenses of private owners of heritage buildings is not exhaustive or inexistent. For example, France, Colombia, and Belarus cannot estimate private expenditure for cultural heritage, while Ecuador, Luxembourg and Switzerland cannot estimate it for natural heritage. The results are therefore underestimated for several countries.

## Snapshot on global public expenditure in cultural and natural heritage

Of those countries that participated in the survey, a larger number reported on public expenditure on cultural and natural heritage compared to private expenditure (only 19 countries). Map 1 shows the 46 countries for which at least one data point from 2018 to 2021 is available. Public expenditure per capita ranges from 0.02 PPP\$ to 208.5 PPP\$.

**MAP 1: Diversity in public investment in cultural and natural heritage, most recent 2018-2021**



While most countries reporting the total for SDG 11.4.1 are from European countries, several developing countries were able to report total public expenditure on heritage preservation. The results show that the range of values for public expenditure on heritage for developing countries is significantly less compared to developed countries.

As a result, the median public expenditure on heritage preservation for developing countries reporting was 12.1 PPP\$ per capita, compared to a median of 89.1\$ per capita.

In Europe, public expenditure varied widely from 3 PPP\$ per capita for the Russian Federation to 208\$ for Luxembourg, with a median expenditure of 70.1\$PPP per capita. Other regions are more harmonized showing less variance in public spending. In Latin America and the Caribbean, median expenditure was 8.9 PPP\$ per capita, ranging from a low of 0.6 PPP\$ per capita for Nicaragua to a high of 30 PPP\$ per capita in Chile. For several countries in sub-Saharan Africa (Burkina Faso and Kenya) in Central and Southern Asia (Uzbekistan, Bangladesh and Kazakhstan) and Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (Myanmar, Indonesia), public expenditure in heritage preservation was less than 1 PPP\$ per capita.

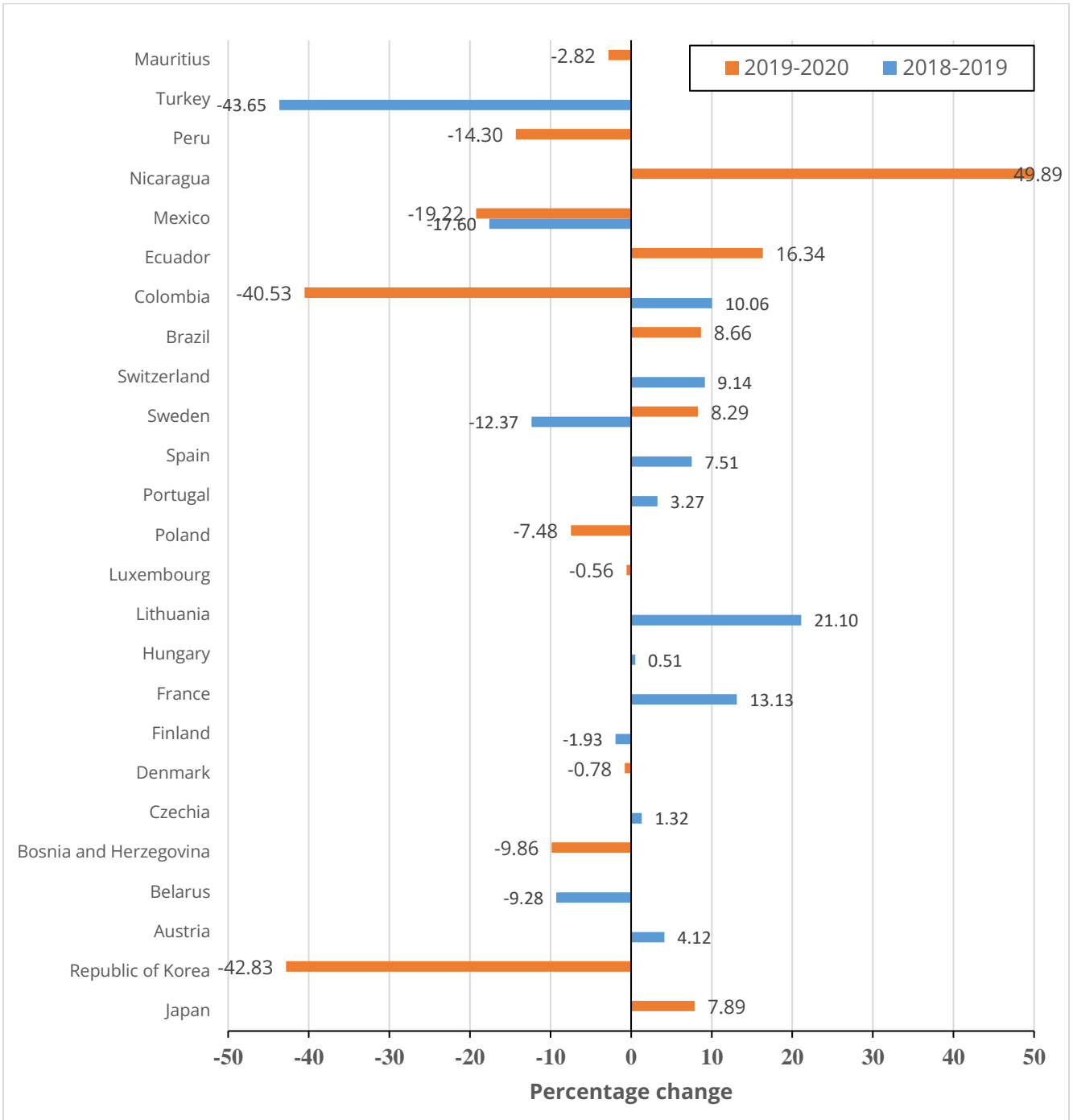
## Opposite patterns on public investment in heritage resulting from the impact of COVID-19

Given that for some countries there is a two-year lag when reporting finance data, the trend analysis in this report is based on comparing the period 2018 and 2019 for 14 countries and 2019 and 2020 for another 14 countries. Figure 2 shows the growth or decline in public investment between 2018-2019 and 2019-2020.

Between 2018 and 2019, for the majority of countries, public investments in heritage preservation remained stable or increased slightly with the notable exception of Turkey where public expenditure decreased by 43.4%.

The results for 2020 show an opposite trend in public investment in heritage preservation, compared to 2019. Countries response to cultural and natural expenditure differed at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. While some countries put in place special measures to support the culture sector, others decreased their expenditure. Examples of such measures include Czechia, where in 2020 an anti-crisis package was designed that included a reduction on tax value added for several activities including museum admissions. Other countries focused on strengthening their infrastructure and facilities. Japan, as part of emergency economic measures, invested \$20.1 billion USD to fund infection prevention measures in cultural infrastructure such as museums (UNESCO, 2020).

**FIGURE 2: Opposite trends in public investments for safeguarding cultural and natural preservation between 2018-2019, 2019-2020**



As shown in Figure 2, half of the countries invested less public funds in cultural and natural preservation in 2020 compared to 2019, with the Republic of Korea and Colombia showing the greatest decreases of 43% and 40% respectively. During the same

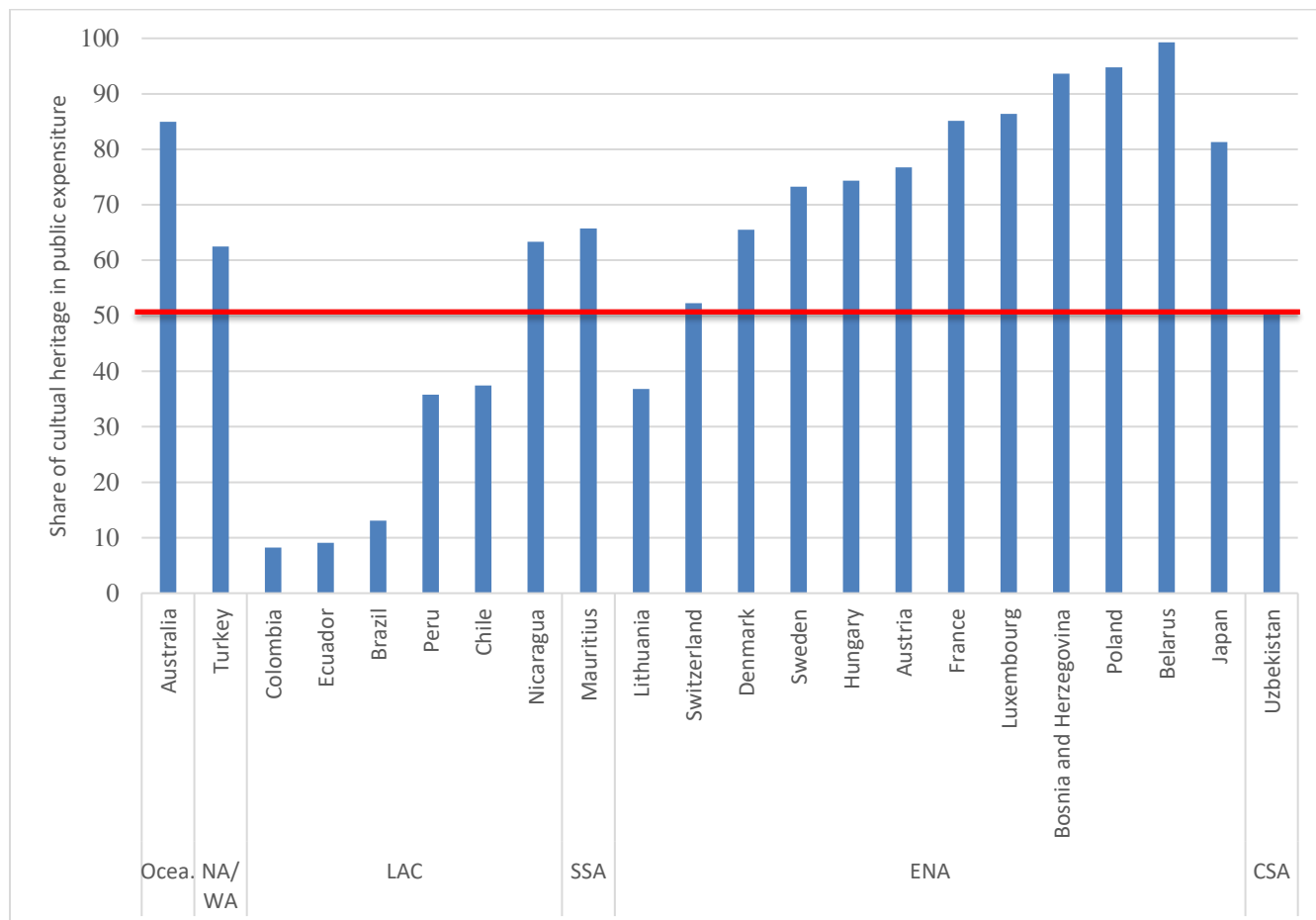


period, the amount spent remained stable for Luxembourg and Denmark with only marginal changes, while the public funds invested increased for six countries, Czechia with a slight increase of 1.3%, Japan by 7.9%, and the highest increase was by Nicaragua with a 50% change.

While most cultural activities were paused during the pandemic in 2020, some countries designed dedicated recovery measures to support the culture sector, including heritage institutions, so they could continue their work even while lacking income from visitors for most cultural and natural sites or museums. The COVID-19 pandemic had a major impact on the culture sector and for heritage preservation as at the height of the pandemic in 2020, 95% of the world's museums and 90% of world heritage sites were closed (UNESCO, 2021a). The pandemic resulted in a 60% drop in visitors to the world heritage sites, which caused a 52% drop in income from admission fees at sites where fees are charged. The pandemic negatively affected 78% of communities living in and around world heritage sites too (UNESCO, 2021a). The pandemic also had a major impact on employment for those in the sector including heritage site employees, museums workers, free-lancers and many volunteers. A study in Europe indicated that in April 2020, "three out of 10 museums had put on hold contracts with freelance workers and three out of five museums had entirely stopped their volunteer programmes" (UNESCO, 2021b: 29). In addition to virtual tours, some museums developed alternative means to attract visitors such as podcasts or videogames (Italy) (UNESCO, 2021b).

Figure 3 shows that most countries from Europe spent the majority of their investments on protecting cultural heritage as it accounted for more than 80% of the total heritage expenses in Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, France and Luxembourg. It was the opposite for countries from Latin America where most of their public investment was spent on the preservation and protection of natural heritage, which contributed to more than 80% of the total expenses in Brazil, Colombia, and Ecuador in 2020 for example.

**FIGURE 3: Share of cultural heritage in public expenditure, 2018-2020**



Key: Ocea. = Oceania, NA/WA = Northern Africa and Western Asia, LAC = Latin America and the Caribbean, SSA = Sub-Saharan Africa, ENA = Europe and Northern America, CSA = Central and Southern Asia

The figures also hide an uneven coverage of expenditure data by type of heritage, as the availability of data by type of cultural heritage is usually more frequent than the one on natural heritage.

## Reinforcing Member States capacities

While this second data collection exercise resulted in many additional countries providing expenditure on heritage data, several countries that provided data for a second time also took the opportunity to provide new and revised figures. In some cases, countries that provided provisional data the previous year provided finalized data this year. Some other countries changed the data sources for the components of the indicators. This demonstrates that countries made substantial efforts to provide data for the first time and/or provide better quality data to UIS.

To respond to the need for capacity development in SDG indicator reporting in all UIS areas, and in particular Northern Africa and Western Asia, the UIS recently participated as lead trainer to a regional workshop organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) for countries in the region.

In order to continue strengthening country capacity in reporting SDG indicator 11.4.1, the UIS will renew its series of webinars on data collection instruments in 2022. At the request of countries, UIS is also planning to develop an online community of practice to support SDG indicator 11.4.1 reporting. The online platform will allow countries and other stakeholders to improve the reporting of data and monitoring by sharing their experiences with the production of their national data with others. Based on experience during two data collection exercises, UIS is also planning to produce a compilation guide for SDG 11.4.1.

## Additional resources

UIS, 2021, [Tracking investment to safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage](#)

UIS database: SDG 11.4.1 Data and detailed metadata under the section culture  
<http://data.uis.unesco.org/>

UIS Web page on SDG 11.4.1 <http://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/sustainable-development-goal-11-4>

UIS glossary for culture terms <http://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary>

UNESCO Web page on Culture | 2030 Indicators <https://whc.unesco.org/en/culture2030indicators/>

UNESCO, 2020, [Culture in crisis: policy guide for a resilient sector](#)

UNESCO, May 2021a, [World Heritage in the face of COVID-19](#)

[UNESCO, 2021b, Cultural and Creative Industries In the Face of COVID-19: An Economic Impact Outlook](#)

