



European  
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# Stormy Times

Nature and humans:  
Cultural courage  
for change

11  
messages  
for and from  
Europe





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Cultural courage  
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Europe

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# Contents

Foreword by co-chairs.....	5
Introduction: getting ready for greater sustainability .....	8
<i>Culture: the visible elephant in the room of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development</i> .....	8
<i>'The Future is Now': Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) 2019 – pathways to change</i> .....	11
<i>Sustainability horizon 2050: resolve for a turnaround</i> .....	15
<i>Eleven messages for action for and from Europe</i> <i>Pathways for change to achieve the sustainable development goals</i> .....	17
1 Embrace Earth OverShoot Day.....	18
2 Join the moonshot project 2050 .....	23
3 Co-create sustainability transformation pathways.....	27
4 Invest in scientific knowledge digests.....	33
5 Talk and listen to each other .....	37
6 Make the cultural carbon footprint lighter .....	43
7 Enlarge access to change opportunities.....	49
8 Empower for democracy, human rights and artistic freedom.....	54
9 Connect with the next generation of change-makers .....	58
10 Provoke change in human behaviours and promote sustainable lifestyles.....	63
11 Assess and enhance impact.....	67
The way forward, by the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture and the co-chairs .....	72
Sustainable development goals.....	76
List of boxes.....	77
Abbreviations.....	78
Sources .....	79
List of experts participating in the Open Method of Coordination group on the cultural dimension of sustainable development .....	85



# Foreword by co-chairs

**Cultural courage for change** emerged as a *Leitmotiv* when the members of the European Union Open Method of Coordination expert group on the cultural dimension of sustainable development started developing its conclusions in early 2022: it is all about transformation. There is a need to rethink the relationship between humans and nature, to fuel our cultural imagination for a liveable, sustainable future. Serious commitment and action are urgently required.

This report delivers 11 messages for action for and from Europe, each pointing to a specific area of action. Policy recommendations are provided for stakeholders and policymakers who have the power to implement them. As this expert group is overseen by the Council of the EU, most of the recommendations address issues at EU level.

During the first half of 2022, while this report was being written, disruptions and uncertainties persisted.

— **The third year of a global pandemic.**

In February 2021, the Recovery and Resilience Facility (2020–2026) was adopted, aiming to mitigate the economic and social impact of

the COVID-19 pandemic, and make European economies and societies more sustainable and resilient, and better prepare them for the challenges and opportunities of the green and digital transitions. The COVID-19 pandemic hit the arts and culture sector severely, while also highlighting the vital importance of cultural, artistic, heritage and creative activities for citizens' health, resilience and well-being.

— **Russia's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine.**

The war is causing a massive humanitarian crisis and severe political and economic disturbances, and is disrupting global energy supplies and food production. The European leaders have taken a unified stance, strongly condemning Russia and imposing unprecedented sanctions and emphasising the right of Ukraine to choose its own destiny. The European Council stresses that 'the use of force and coercion to change borders has no place in the 21st century. Tensions and conflict should be resolved exclusively through dialogue and diplomacy' (European Council conclusions, 24 February 2022).

— **The release of the landmark sixth report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on 28 February and 4 April 2022, insisting that urgent action is needed to halve emissions by 2050.**

The first-ever independent scientific assessment of the state of implementation of the sustainable development goals had sobering messages for the EU and its Member States: the Global Sustainable Development Report published in September 2019 stated that no European country would fully meet the ambitious development plans to ‘transform the world’ and ‘leave no one behind’ of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The scientists convincingly demonstrated that six pathways for change need to be addressed together to achieve a balance across all dimensions of sustainability. This is best captured by the image of a house, with the global environmental commons forming the foundations and the economic, food, energy and urban systems supporting human well-being and capabilities.

As these and other disruptions persist, so does the sustainability crisis. Failure is not an option. The 11 messages for action for and from Europe developed by the experts of this Open Method of Coordination group <sup>(1)</sup> show pathways for change and possible areas for action.

The experts recommend unpacking the European Green Deal to fully include the cultural dimension of sustainability at strategic policy level, to empower and motivate people for change and develop a concerted approach, in consultation with the cultural and creative sector, to fully harness the power of culture in the Green Deal and the circular economy action plan. Creating a strategic sustainability platform for the cultural and creative sector should allow for cumulative knowledge development by 2030 or 2050. The upcoming preparation of the 2023 EU Voluntary Review should be used as a pilot and benchmarking exercise, reporting on the horizontal importance of the cultural dimension across all relevant sustainable development goals of the 2030 Agenda and across all relevant EU policies and instruments.

Using the seven Rs of the circular economy – rethink, reduce, repair, reuse, refurbish, recycle and recover – as terms of reference in calls for projects under all EU-funded cultural programmes is a promising pathway at programme level. This approach is useful in external cultural relations, establishing green incentives, and monitoring the contribution of the Creative Europe programme and of funded projects on the ground to environmental and climate goals while upholding the principle of artistic and creative freedom.

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<sup>(1)</sup> The Open Method of coordination (OMC) is a form of intergovernmental policymaking that does not result in binding EU legislative measures and does not require EU countries to introduce new laws or amend their laws.



Data are required to analyse the impact and effectiveness of policies, programmes and projects. The prompt generation of a new and updated special Eurobarometer on cultural access and participation is highly relevant to reducing inequalities in cultural access and participation, as an important condition for the success of the 2030 Agenda as a whole. Further emphasising the role of artistic and creative freedom of expression in building democratic societies as an inherent part of sustainable development strategies, developing meaningful connections with the next generation of change-makers, and investing in building the capacity of the arts and culture sector to conceptualise and work towards sustainable scenarios for the future should all contribute to the overdue transformation. The cultural dimension of sustainable development is a forward-looking, emerging issue: in a world in flux, it is high time that we solved the problem of the absurd underuse of cultural power for sustainable development.

The 11 messages, with their associated recommendations, offer a next level of understanding of the role of culture in sustainability. They aim to provide guidance for policymakers at all relevant levels as well as for professionals in the cultural and creative sector. With this report, the Open Method of Coordination expert group aims to contribute to strengthening the future work of both Member States and the EU on culture for sustainable development and on horizontal sustainability strategies. In addition, this report will contribute to global initiatives such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development – MONDIACULT 2022, which will be held in September 2022.

**July 2022, Brussels/Helsinki/Cologne**

# Introduction: getting ready for greater sustainability

## Culture: the visible elephant in the room of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

**Europe is a cultural powerhouse.** Its identity and democratic foundations are grounded in culture. Its citizens consistently value culture as the element that binds the continent together the most (see, for example, European Commission Eurobarometer 2018 <sup>(2)</sup>). Cultural participation and activity are high. Europe's diverse culture- and heritage-rich cities and landscapes are a source of energy, well-being and pride for its residents and a great attraction for visitors from around the world in non-pandemic times. Theatres, orchestras, festivals, clubs, museums and monuments all contribute to the continent's attractiveness. Its films and books inspire millions and are award winning (de Vries, 2019, 2021). 'Across the EU, 7.2 million people work in cultural employment – 3.6 % of total employment. In major EU cities the share of cultural jobs can be as high as 10 %. In 2018, 1.2 million cultural enterprises in the EU generated €155bn of value added – more than the motor trade sector or food and beverage services' (de Vries, 2021, p. 19; see also de Vries, 2019).

In ratifying the 2005 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, the EU Member States and the EU itself **made the political commitment and accepted the obligation to integrate culture into sustainable development policies at international, national and local levels.** It built on the 1998 Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development in Stockholm. All parties to UNESCO's 2005 Convention report periodically on the ways that they integrate culture into national sustainable development strategies and cooperation. Almost 100 reports were received and analysed in 2021, including the report of the EU (European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Culture, Creativity and Sport Unit/Cultural Policy Unit, 2021).

<sup>(2)</sup> For more info: <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/cultural-heritage>



In 2015, the **2030 Agenda** echoed these obligations, with **culture and cultural policies being crucial to achieving at least 9 of the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs)** and the transformational agenda as a whole; nonetheless, the contribution of culture is insufficiently recognised in the framework of the 2030 Agenda (UNESCO, 2018, 2022). Cultural action and policies are crucial for good-quality education, gender equality and democracy (SDGs 4, 5 and 16 and target 4.7), decent work and reduced inequalities (SDGs 3, 8 and 10), liveable cities and urban spaces (SDGs 12 and 11, especially 11.4, with its reporting indicator on the access to heritage in urban settings), and our role in protecting land, biodiversity and water (SDGs 14 and 15). Mitigating climate change and international partnerships will be vital if we are to achieve the 2030 Agenda as a whole (SDGs 13 and 17).

After 20 years of work on culture in, and as sustainable development (Dessein et al., 2015), **there is now widespread recognition of the interconnections between the cultural and creative sector, social inclusion, cohesion and the transformation of society to ensure sustainable development.** Culture in sustainable development is the fully recognised fourth dimension or pillar of the 2030 Agenda, culture for sustainable development contributes to achieving the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability as well as mediating possible conflicts of interests between these dimensions, and culture as sustainable development recognises the essential role of cultural values, beliefs, social innovation and imagination in transformation towards a more sustainable way of life, leaving no one behind.

Figure 1. Flyer for the 'SDG moment' of the 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly



Source: UNESCO (2020)

**Harnessing the cultural dimension of sustainable development is also increasingly well understood by governments**, according to the most recent UNESCO global report (UNESCO, 2022, p. 214). In fact, 80.5 % of European and North American countries have integrated culture into their voluntary national reviews (VNRs) of the 2030 Agenda since 2016. One pioneering current initiative to develop this knowledge base around sustainability further is UNESCO's thematic indicators for culture in the 2030 Agenda (Culture|2030 indicators). The initiative is currently in testing phase, with Portugal and Romania among the pilot countries.

The 2021 United Nations (UN) International Year for culture and creative industries for sustainable development, initiated by Australia, Canada, Colombia and Indonesia, among others, offered platforms for further international engagement and provided

valuable input in the preparatory process of the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development – MONDIACULT 2022. The urgent need to reconfigure the cultural dimension of sustainability was positively acknowledged by the G20 leaders at the G20 summit in Rome in July 2021 and by the UN General Assembly in December 2021 alike.

The **Council of the EU** took an important step in May 2020, adding 'Culture as a driver of sustainable development' as a priority to its **2019–2022 work plan for culture** (Council of the EU, 2018). Subsequently, an OMC working group of Member States' representatives on the cultural dimension of sustainable development was set up in January 2021. According to its mandate, this OMC group should map inspiring practices across Europe for integrating cultural policies and perspectives into national



sustainable development strategies. It should also suggest actions to be taken by the European Commission and Member States and advise them on how to strengthen the knowledge base and reporting practices around sustainable development. In addition, it should use the holistic and global approach of the 2030 Agenda to connect with relevant stakeholders at national, European and international levels, such as the UN and UNESCO. In its assessment of the 2019–2022 Work Plan for Culture, published in June 2022 (European Commission, 2022a), the European Commission notes that EU Member States clearly indicate the need to strengthen and update the cultural dimension of sustainable development within the strategic framework guiding cooperation on culture at EU level.

**The disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic** also increased people of all ages' appreciation of the vital significance of cultural, artistic and creative activities for health and well-being, as well as strengthening resilience. This effect is paradoxical, considering that the arts and culture sector is among those that have suffered the most as a result of lockdowns and that cultural professionals and artists have been severely hit, often losing their jobs and income, often even the existence. However, this finding has opened new dialogues between the EU, the African Union, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, UNESCO and the World Health Organization. The heavy push towards providing digital services, accelerated during the pandemic, has raised new issues, such as persisting digital gaps and the carbon footprint of

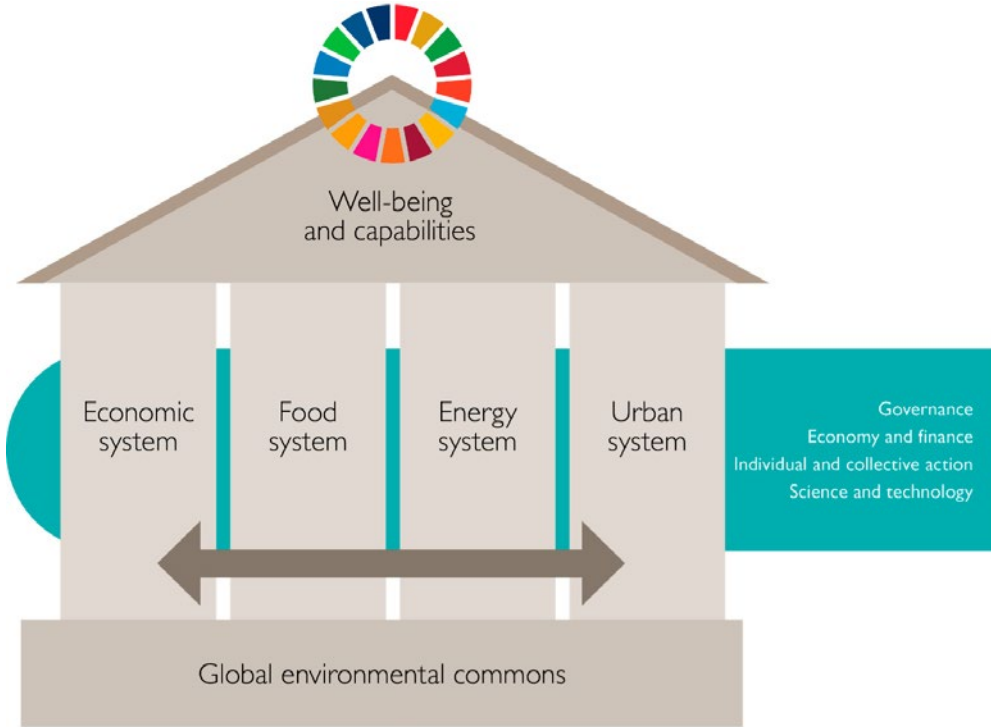
streaming services. Building back with a dual transformation, green and digital, means building back better, not getting back to how it used to be.

## **'The Future is Now': *Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) 2019 – pathways to change***

In September 2019, the first-ever scientific, holistic and systematic assessment of the state of implementation of the SDGs before the global COVID-19 pandemic identified the **four most alarming trends jeopardising sustainability**: rising inequalities (social, income, gender, access to opportunities, human rights and ethnicity), the massive and continuing loss of species, accelerated climate change and the growing amount of waste. As life-sustaining systems connect and reinforce each other, independent experts appointed by the Secretary-General of the UN identified six key areas for change that need to be addressed together to achieve a balance in all three dimensions of sustainability (Furman, 2021).

In consultation with the OMC group, Professor Eeva Furman, a member of the independent scientists' group, offered the image of a house, with the global environmental commons forming the foundations and the economic, food, energy and urban systems supporting human well-being and capabilities, which are also being developed in their own right.

Figure 2. Six key areas of sustainability transition and four leverages for change



Source: Furman (2021)

All six key areas of the sustainability transition have a cultural dimension, with culture being the domain in which different

forms of sustainability take meaning and shape.

Key area	Area of transformation	Cultural concept
1	Economic system	Developing cultures of sharing and trust
2	Food system	Changing food production, eating habits and food cultures
3	Energy system	Sharing experiences in decentralised energy production and saving
4	Urban system	Promoting active and global citizenship and the collaboration of key players
5	Global environmental commons	Building a new relationship with nature in the Anthropocene
6	Well-being and capabilities	Developing human well-being in balance with natural resources and the environment

While this report was being written, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the UN's body for assessing the science related to climate change, published on 28 February 2022 and 4 April 2022 the second and third parts of its landmark sixth report. According to the second part of the UN IPCC report on climate impacts, adaptation and vulnerability <sup>(3)</sup>, the world already risks overshooting the global warming limit of 1.5 °C, and over 3 billion people are now vulnerable as a result of current levels of planetary heating. Without immediate and significant reductions in emissions across all sectors, limiting global warming to 1.5 °C is beyond reach. However, there is increasing evidence of climate action. Notably, the tools, policies and know-how required to limit global warming are available and can be financed. This is shown in the third part of the report, entitled *Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of climate change*, authored by 278 scientists from 65 countries and approved by 195 governments. The time for action is now: emissions can be halved by 2050.

This seminal work of the IPCC should be read in conjunction with equally essential work of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. In its latest global assessment report (IPBES, 2019),

<sup>(3)</sup> <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/>.

the platform notes that around 25 % of animal and plant species are at risk of extinction unless urgent action is taken. If there is not a profound change in this trajectory, the global rate of species extinction will only accelerate. The platform therefore calls for transformative change and emphasises that risks related to the inevitable uncertainties and complexities in transformations towards sustainability can be reduced through integrative, inclusive, informed and adaptive governance approaches.

Accelerated and equitable climate and biodiversity action in mitigating and adapting to climate change and the loss of biodiversity is critical to sustainable development. While the OMC group has been discussing sustainable development options in all its dimensions and in its holistic integrity with regard to culture, **climate change and biodiversity loss are still two of the biggest threats to us all**. These threats also substantially influence the policy options available to achieve more balance and leave no one behind, as is so clearly agreed on in the 2030 Agenda.

As is widely documented and reported unmistakably by independent scientists, the current way of life in many parts of



the world, with high levels of production and consumption, is by far exceeding planetary boundaries – in terms of air, water, land and biodiversity – and is thus unsustainable and unsafe. The current way of life and policies are also aggravating inequalities in terms of human rights, income, gender, cultural and democratic participation, and access to opportunities. This exacerbates the risks of social divides and conflicts, of further violations of human rights and of undermining social cohesion (UNDESA, 2019).

Tackling these threats is key in the age of the Anthropocene <sup>(4)</sup> that we have entered (UNDP, 2020). As the 2022 climate report urges, climate change is a major and imminent threat to human well-being and

to the health of the planet. Acting now **can** secure our future, but there is no guarantee that it **will** (IPCC, 2022). It is too late to wait to take action. The IPCC report integrates knowledge more strongly across the natural, ecological, social and economic sciences than earlier assessments, but, most importantly, it recognises for the first time the interdependence of climate, ecosystems, biodiversity and human societies.

This interdependence is also acknowledged by the European Green Deal communication published by the European Commission on 11 December 2019. The overarching aim of the European Green Deal is to enable the EU to become the world's first 'climate-neutral bloc' by 2050. It has the goal of extending to many different sectors, including construction, biodiversity,

energy, transport and food.

'It is thus the most ambitious policy project worldwide,' according to the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen (DIE ZEIT, 2022). She describes the deal as a transformation project comparable to the historic Apollo 11 moonshot of July 1969. The metaphor of the moonshot, first used by the economist Mariana Mazzucato (2021), points to the manifold actions and strategies required to achieve the Green Deal's ambitions. Therefore, the European Green Deal can, and should,



<sup>(4)</sup> The Anthropocene is a new geological epoch characterised by the advent of humans as the main force for change on Earth, overriding geophysical forces. This is the age of humans, and that of unprecedented planetary disorder (République française, n.d.); the term Anthropocene was coined by Paul J. Crutzen in 2002.



also tackle the underlying attitudes, cultural habits and values of Europeans to pave the way for a more sustainable way of life and achieve the necessary rapid changes.

However, mobilising the arts and culture sector and using cultural policy resources to accelerate a shift towards urgent and systemic safeguarding of life-sustaining systems needs a major boost as soon as possible (UNESCO, 2022, p. 207; UNDESA, 2019, p. 153).

## Sustainability horizon 2050: resolve for a turnaround

**To rapidly initiate the necessary transformation actions, the interconnections between culture, as a fundamental process of social learning and innovation, and nature need to be brought to the attention of policymakers across the EU and of cultural actors and citizens. It is no longer sufficient to regard the 17 SDGs as a list for benchmarking measures and cultural projects. The gap between knowledge, policy messages and organised action must be narrowed, particularly in the cultural dimension, for the decade of action to reach the SDGs by 2030. Achieving increased sustainability will require the promotion of sustainability transformation, which entails a change in perspective towards win-win co-benefits and unexpected cooperation.**

This transformation is challenging. Governments have been seeking and receiving scientific advice on climate and

sustainability issues for decades. Pathways to change require transparency on the true planetary and social costs of non-sustainability: nature pays, people pay.

For policy investments that can help to achieve the transformation, democratically elected governments need to seek broad support from society and must be willing to demonstrate leadership. Some of the necessary policies face resistance among key stakeholders and people. This opposition is related to ways of life and production and consumption patterns developed over the past 70 years, often based on identities, attitudes and values, and on equality issues. This is exactly why **culture plays such a critical role in boosting successful transformation.**

Subsequently, focusing on transformation and on achieving the SDGs also puts a focus on culture. This approach creates a new, important opportunity to **update the narrative on the cultural dimension of sustainable development.** It promotes the design and implementation of cultural policies that facilitate and expedite transformation in synergy with other public policies for change: talking is good, doing is better when it comes to transformation. Over and above the promising Culture|2030 indicators, the approach also provides the opportunity for further work to create synergy between this sectoral exercise and the VNRs to fully inform the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

To shift gears for change, **the contribution of cultural and culture-related policies and measures to these necessary and urgent transformation pathways will be invaluable and needs to be addressed strategically.**

The concept of the cultural dimension of sustainable development does not seek to replace the often-used notion of culture as an enabler and driver of sustainable development. Rather, it complements and expands that notion by cutting across the 2030 Agenda and going beyond the SDGs to address the underlying values and attitudes promoting, or hindering, sustainable development. As such, the cultural dimension of sustainable development is very close to the idea of culture **as** sustainable development and emphasises transformation. It encompasses all dimensions of culture and cultural expressions, as recognised by the Member States back in 1982: the first MONDIACULT conference on cultural policies (Mexico 1982) concluded that ‘culture includes not only the arts and letters and heritage, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions, and beliefs; ... it is culture that gives man the ability to reflect upon himself’<sup>(5)</sup>. Consequently, harnessing the cultural dimension of sustainable development means conceiving and implementing cultural and culture-related policies and measures as levers of transformation.

The 11 interconnected messages offered in this report contribute to **a new level of understanding of sustainability** and how to make sustainable development happen. They suggest pathways to change and areas in which action is necessary. These messages are intended to inform Member States’ and the EU’s future work on culture for sustainable development and on horizontal sustainability strategies, as well as to contribute to global initiatives such as UNESCO’s World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development – MONDIACULT 2022 in Mexico in September 2022.

Stormy times indeed. There is a need to reconceive the relationship between humans and nature, and to fully appreciate the indispensable contribution of culture, as a twin of democracy, based on fundamental values and freedoms, to sustainability transformation. With its extraordinary convening and storytelling power, culture is simply a fundamental asset for innovation for a liveable, sustainable future. Culture is needed as a catalyst and accelerator of multifaceted changes today and tomorrow, in Europe and beyond. Hence it is high time that we solved the problem of the absurd underuse of cultural power for sustainable development. This is the cultural courage for change required today.

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<sup>(5)</sup> Final Report, World Conference on Cultural Policies, Mexico City, 26 July – 6 August

# Eleven messages for action for and from Europe

## Pathways for change to achieve the sustainable development goals

The culture sector is a change-maker. This report delivers 11 interconnected messages that provide pathways for accelerating change towards sustainable development through culture.

1

**Embrace Earth Overshoot Day.** Five annual moments for sustained cultural action and cooperation, 2023–2050.

5

**Talk and listen to each other.** Governments inform each other through voluntary national reviews (VNRs). Multistakeholder change starts with conversations.

9

**Connect with the next generation of change-makers.** A healthy, just and safe digital ecosystem.

10

**Provoke change in human behaviours and promote sustainable lifestyles.** What moves people? Storytelling helps. Do no harm.

2

**Join the moonshot project 2050.** The European Green Deal reloaded: trigger change. Build back better with culture.

6

**Make the cultural carbon footprint lighter.** Strategic change of production and consumption. Economic sustainability and circular economy. Use data.

11

**Assess and enhance impact. Measure what you value.** The culture sector as change-maker.

3

**Co-create sustainability transformation pathways.** Governance silos on the move. A strategic sustainability platform for the culture sector.

7

**Enlarge access to change opportunities.** Cultural participation matters. We live in broadband times.

4

**Invest in scientific knowledge digests.** The sustainability relevant knowledge is available but not necessarily accessible, known and understood.

8

**Empower for democracy, human rights and artistic freedom.** A cultural push to overcome challenges to democracy.

These 11 messages all address necessary action. Hence, they are equally important, as action in all these dimensions and policy areas is required to successfully accelerate the overdue transformations. They will lead to a new level of understanding the role of the cultural dimension of sustainability.

1

# EMBRACE EARTH OVERSHOOT DAY

Five annual  
moments for  
sustained  
cultural action  
and cooperation,  
2023–2050



The current ways of life, in terms of production and consumption, are unsustainable and unsafe. Will Europeans be able to make a difference, change course and move the date of Earth Overshoot Day? We don't yet know. Earth Overshoot Day <sup>(6)</sup> marks the date on which humanity's demand for natural resources surpasses the Earth's ability to renew those resources each year. It comes earlier every year, for several European countries frighteningly and irresponsibly early. The Overshoot Day for an individual country is the date on which Earth Overshoot Day would fall if all of humanity consumed like the people in that country. A regional

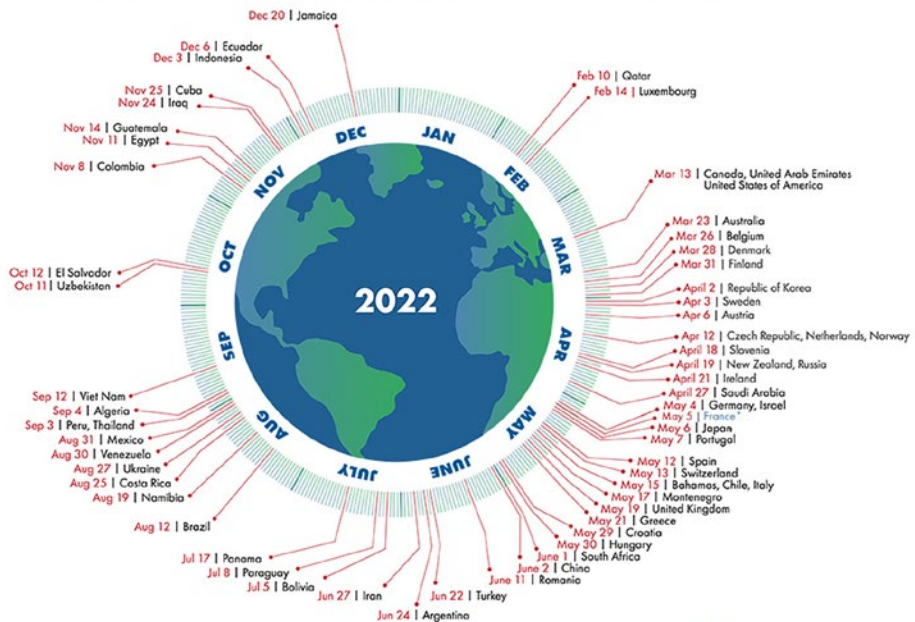
Overshoot Day for Europe is identified each year. For 2022, this was 26 March <sup>(7)</sup>.

This rapidly changing date provides a very real sense of the health of the planet, and of the human well-being connected with it. Earth Overshoot Day is calculated by the Global Footprint Network <sup>(8)</sup>. The ecological footprint <sup>(9)</sup> is based on 15 000 data points per country per year. It adds up all people's competing demands for biologically productive areas – food, timber, fibre, carbon sequestration and the accommodation of infrastructure. Currently, carbon emissions from burning fossil fuels make up 61 % of humanity's ecological footprint.

Figure 3. Country Overshoot Days 2022

## Country Overshoot Days 2022

When would Earth Overshoot Day land if the world's population lived like...



EARTH  
OVERSHOOT  
DAY

For a full list of countries, visit [overshootday.org/country-overshoot-days](https://overshootday.org/country-overshoot-days).  
<sup>(7)</sup> France Overshoot Day updated April 20, 2022 based on new-casted data. See [overshootday.org/france](https://overshootday.org/france).  
 Source: National Footprint and Biocapacity Accounts, 2022 Edition  
[data.footprintnetwork.org](https://data.footprintnetwork.org)



Global Footprint Network  
Advancing the Science of Sustainability

<sup>(6)</sup> <https://www.overshootday.org/about-earth-overshoot-day/>

<sup>(7)</sup> [https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/visualisation/earth-overshoot-day\\_en](https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/visualisation/earth-overshoot-day_en)

<sup>(8)</sup> [https://www.footprintnetwork.org/?\\_hstc=207509324](https://www.footprintnetwork.org/?_hstc=207509324)

<sup>(9)</sup> [https://www.footprintnetwork.org/our-work/ecological-footprint/?\\_hstc=207509324](https://www.footprintnetwork.org/our-work/ecological-footprint/?_hstc=207509324)



## Nature and humans – raising awareness

‘Our Time on Earth’ is an exhibition aimed at helping people to understand our incredible ecosystem in new ways. It depicts humans as one species among millions of others, striving to live in a delicate balance in shared habitats. It explores radical ideas of the way humans live, including food, the soil and rewilded cities, through an immersive experience. The exhibition is based on the question ‘What are humans to do with their time on Earth?’ It was conceived and curated by Barbican International Enterprises and co-produced by the Museum of Civilisation, Québec City, Canada, and is taking place from 5 May to 29 August 2022 in London.

Source: <https://www.barbican.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/2022-05/Our%20Time%20on%20Earth%20Press%20Release%20-%20Updated.pdf>

This challenge was already understood 50 years ago, when the Club of Rome published the book *Limits to Growth*. The first-ever UN Conference on the Human Environment took place in Stockholm in June 1972 under the motto ‘Only one Earth’.

In 1972, Earth Overshoot Day fell on 10 December. The ground breaking image of the ‘Blue Marble’, showing the beauty of planet Earth as seen from space, was taken by the Apollo 13 team of NASA astronauts in the very same month. At the time of writing, this is the most frequently reproduced image in culture and media history. To raise awareness and fire people’s imagination for transformational change through images and storytelling, we can use the annual planetary health check of Earth Overshoot Day in creative ways. Promoting creativity and cultural awareness will empower communities and citizens, while increasing public’s concern through the media or through creative ways of mobilising collective engagement around protecting planet Earth.

The convening power of culture creates a snowball effect. Protecting Earth will be a joint effort until 2050, the year in which it is envisaged that a climate-neutral Europe will be achieved. If we push Earth Overshoot Day back by 5 days each year, from March (for Europe) towards December, we will be living within our planet’s means again by 2050, as was the case 50 years ago.



## NATURE AND HUMANS IN POPULAR MUSIC

Released in November 1995, Michael Jackson's '**Earth Song**' was his first song to overtly discuss the environment, war and **animal welfare**. Produced by Jackson, **David Foster** and **Bill Bottrell**, 'Earth Song' was accompanied by a lavish music video which was shot in four geographical regions, centered on the destruction and rebirth of Earth, and went on to receive a **Grammy** nomination in 1997. It challenged the aesthetic expectations, fusing blues, opera, rock and gospel. The '6'44" song became a massive hit globally, reaching number one in the charts of over fifteen countries for weeks and months. Decades later, it still stands as one of his greatest artistic achievements.

Sources: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earth\\_Song](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earth_Song), last updated 14 June 2022; Vogel (2011); official video version at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XAi3VTSdTxU>

This is not yet an unsolvable problem. In 2020, the pandemic-induced lockdowns slowed human activity down. As a result, Earth Overshoot Day was pushed forward by 24 days, to where it stood some 15 years ago. However, in 2021 this positive effect evaporated.

Five days each year present opportunities for cultural action and cooperation, namely:

- the global Earth Overshoot Day, which in 2022 fell on 28 July;
- Earth Overshoot Day for Europe, which in 2022 was on 26 March;
- the specific Earth Overshoot Day for each EU Member State (see Figure 3);
- a day for cultural cooperation with countries whose Earth Overshoot Days are the earliest in the year, for example, in 2022, a day in February for Luxembourg and Qatar;
- a day for cultural cooperation with countries whose Earth Overshoot Days are the latest in the year, for example, in 2022, a day in December for Ecuador, Indonesia and Jamaica.

Humanity, especially the richest 15 % of the world's population – which includes all EU Member States – is currently living as if there were 1.75 Earths at our disposal. If trends continue unchanged, they will be living as though there are three Earths by 2050. While some affluent OECD economies have started showing dematerialisation in the past 20 years, thus achieving more from less, this is not the case on a global level, where use of oil, gas and coal continues to increase substantially, along with CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

Countless solutions exist to #MoveTheDate of Earth Overshoot Day. They are creative, socially and economically viable, and ready to be deployed at scale, including in the 100 companies that can have the biggest effect on reducing our carbon footprint. In addition, a person's carbon footprint associated with food, mobility and goods can directly be influenced through their cultural lifestyle choices.

Seen through the lens of the SDGs, this is a huge cultural learning exercise, promoting global citizenship and cultural diversity while building an understanding of culture's contribution to sustainable development (SDG 12 and target 4.7).

To ensure that the urgency of the cultural change in mindset and transformation towards sustainable development is more widely acknowledged, the OMC group makes the following recommendations to all stakeholders and policymakers.

- ↳ Raise awareness of the role that the cultural, artistic and heritage sectors have in relation to Earth Overshoot Day.
- ↳ Highlight the need to move the European average date forward in the calendar year, from March (as of 2022) towards December.
- ↳ Design models enabling self-organised action of the cultural and creative sector, cultural and memory institutions, civil society, cultural and educational actors, Member States and EU institutions (including the European Commission, with all relevant directorates-general, and the European External Action Service).
- ↳ Develop cultural, artistic and heritage-related action and awareness-raising possibilities on the Earth Overshoot Day concept through peer-to-peer cooperation, involving local audiences, partnerships in external cultural relations and other partnerships, including at municipal and regional levels.
- ↳ Use the aforementioned five days per year for cultural action and cooperation.
- ↳ Include incentives in the next work plan for culture, including an easy and effective way for sharing and stimulating project ideas.
- ↳ Commission an independent external impact assessment of cultural action and cooperation in relation to Earth Overshoot Day by 2031.



2

# JOIN THE MOONSHOT PROJECT 2050

The European  
Green Deal  
reloaded: trigger  
change. Build  
back better with  
culture.



In 2015, world leaders pledged to keep the rise in global temperature to within 1.5 °C of the pre-industrial baseline (Paris Agreement). That same year, all 193 UN member states adopted the 2030 Agenda and the 17 SDGs to boost human development, end hunger and poverty, preserve the planet and 'leave no-one behind'.

The results so far are sobering. In early 2020, before the COVID-19 pandemic, no EU country was on track to meet all SDGs by 2030. Europe's worst performance is in relation to SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production), SDG 13 (climate action), SDG 14 (life below water) and SDG 15 (life on land) (de Vries, 2021, p. 10).

The EU aims to make Europe climate-neutral by 2050. The Green Deal provides a masterplan for a just transition to a sustainable, climate-friendly future, with multiple interlocking projects, laws and regulations. Cultural policy and the culture sector are not (yet) part of it, although these account for 3–4 % of the European economy.

Given the magnitude of the task, the complexity and speed of the solutions needed, and the ambition to achieve it across an entire continent, the President of the European Commission compared the European Green Deal to a moonshot mission, inspired by Mazzucato (2021).

In January 2022, Ursula von der Leyen reiterated the seriousness of the situation: 'Climate change is exclusively man made. If we don't act, humanity will perish. The planet will survive, but we as a species will have disappeared. Hence, high time to act!' (Die Zeit, 2022).

This time, the 'moonshot mission' is about 10 billion people landing safely on Earth – an unprecedented challenge in demographic, ecological, economic and cultural terms. The Green Deal challenges Europeans to change the way they live and the way they think. Such transformational cultural change needs artists and cultural organisations to play a full part. Artists and other creators and curators of culture are fundamental to ensuring that such a cultural revolution succeeds.

Art and culture can be used to visualise challenges and dilemmas, help imagine solutions and empower change, addressing worries and fears. The creative economy contributes to social and technological innovation and creative problem-solving. Artists can encourage and empower people. Designers already play an important role in the circular economy.

Libraries, museums, galleries and monuments can provide spaces and opportunities for conversations, reflection and responses. Online as well as offline, cultural agoras invite people to share their perspectives, find common ground and design joint solutions. This is another powerful argument for including culture in Europe's Green Deal (de Vries, 2021, p. 7 ff).

The industrial revolution is among the root causes for the shift towards the Anthropocene (Crutzen, 2002; UNDP, 2020). It originated in Europe 200 years ago. The current situation of the systemic degradation of life-sustaining systems results from the Great Acceleration, which has been happening since 1950, where again Europe, together with North America, is taking the lead. It was massively reinforced in the phase of globalisation. A turnaround for human societies is still possible, if pathways to change the economic system, the food system, the energy system and urban systems are taken together. The cultural dimension is key to accelerating this transformational change.

We need to develop our imagination with respect to the time horizon 2050. While seemingly far away, it is fast approaching. Cultural learning should also address the seemingly small things – such as a 3-mm ozone layer – that can have powerful effects on life-sustaining systems, such as the stratosphere, stretching from 12 km to 50 km above the surface of the Earth (Crutzen, 2019; Furman, 2021).

## Focus on culture and climate change

In their work outside the EU, several national cultural institutes in Europe already focus on culture and climate change. Since 2018, a joint programme of the Goethe-Institut and the Prince Claus Fund has supported international initiatives, including 'Take Me to the River', a set of 15 interdisciplinary artistic projects about climate change from the river deltas in South Asia and the marshes of the Tigris and Euphrates to the rainforests of South America. The Danish Cultural Institute has registered 41 projects that support climate action (SDG 13), including in the Baltic region and in the Eastern Neighbourhood (de Vries, 2021, p. 14).

## Policy change is possible

While not directly related to the cultural dimension of sustainable development, a successful mini-moonshot project of the 1990s is relevant: the recovery of the ozone layer above Antarctica. It was possible because of a ban on the use of chlorofluorocarbons, despite resistance from industry. In addition, humanity was lucky in the sense that the chemical behaviour of chlorine is relatively benign in comparison with that of bromine, use of which would have led to an irreversible situation (Crutzen, 2019).

However, the ozone layer has by no means fully recovered (European Environment Agency, 2021).





## Human imagination of time horizons

One of the cultural challenges in promoting sustainability is developing our imagination of time horizons and time spans in a cultural epoch of rapid change and distractions. The Clock of the Long Now is a bold projection towards the future: this project constructing a monument-size clock inside a mountain is designed to be able to measure time for the next 10 millennia. It started in 1995 as a joint collaborative project of engineers, computer scientists, and social and cultural scientists (<https://longnow.org/clock/>).

The European Green Deal should make good use of culture's capacity to empower people to create a sustainable world. As the Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor (Montalto et al., 2019) shows, culture and creativity are central to urban well-being, sustainability and competitiveness. The EU should build on these findings and connect the New European Bauhaus with a comprehensive strategy on culture for sustainability in local and regional communities (de Vries, 2021, p. 13).

From an SDG perspective, global citizenship based on cultural diversity, overcoming inequalities, changing mindsets, sustainable lifestyles, changing urban systems and expanding democratic participation is coming together (SDGs 10, 11, 12, 13 and 16 and target 4.7).

The OMC group makes the following recommendations to EU policymakers, including the European Commission and Member States.

- ↳ Unpack the European Green Deal to fully include the cultural dimension of sustainability at the strategic policy level, to empower and motivate people for change.
- ↳ Develop a concerted approach, in consultation with the cultural and creative sector, to fully harness the power of culture in the Green Deal and the circular economy action plan.

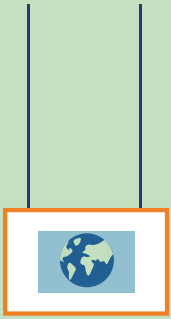
- ↳ Starting as soon as possible, push the horizontal role of the cultural dimension as a catalyst for sustainable development through joint consultations with three constituencies, namely:
  - (a) the European scientists involved in the Global Sustainable Development Report 2019;
  - (b) the government experts involved in the OMC groups relevant to sustainability during 2019–2022 (gender, 2021; architecture, 2021; heritage/climate, 2022; cultural dimension, 2022; status and working conditions of artists and cultural and creative professionals, 2023; and cultural tourism, 2019);
  - (c) representatives of Voices of Culture (Voices of Culture, 2021), Culture Action Europe and the European Cultural Foundation.
- ↳ Empower and motivate people for the cultural change in the European way of life.



3

# CO-CREATE SUSTAINABILITY TRANSFORMATION PATHWAYS

Governance silos  
on the move.  
A strategic  
sustainability  
platform for the  
culture sector.



Culture's transformative power cannot be harnessed by anyone alone. Rather, it will take honest, strategic and organised cooperation between public authorities at all levels, professionals in the cultural and creative sector, other relevant professionals and citizens.

Similarly, the necessary transformation for sustainability cannot be achieved by any one set of policies or measures. Rather, it calls for a horizontal approach in which all policies and measures are harnessed to promote and expedite transformation. It will require a paradigm shift in governance. Dynamising multilevel governance has great potential for enabling sustainable progress for all involved and is a prerequisite for accelerating the implementation of the SDGs at all levels (European Commission, 2019).

As part of existing commendable efforts to achieve sustainable development, the design and implementation of different measures often take place in policy silos. Integrating culture into sustainability strategies, and in particular into strategies for implementing the 2030 Agenda, continues to be a challenge in spite of mounting evidence on culture's potential. This applies to both European and national policymaking.

It is obvious that all necessary policies and measures should be used to address both the environmental crisis of accelerating loss of biodiversity and climate change, as well as societal challenges threatening democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and the urgently needed post-COVID-19 recovery. As highlighted by the European Parliament (2020), the 'post-pandemic recovery and revitalisation of European cultural policy are strictly connected to the other challenges that the EU and the world are facing', including climate change and the digital transition.

The EU's post-COVID-19 Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) supports reforms and investments in Member States, making up to EUR 723.8 billion in grants and loans available. The European Commission encouraged Member States to earmark 20 % for the digital transition but did not ask for the culture sector to be included systematically, whereas the European Commission and the Member States were called on to earmark at least 2 % of the RRF for cultural and creative sectors and industries (European Parliament, 2020). As of April 2022, 16 out of the 22 endorsed national recovery and resilience plans included measures targeting the cultural and creative sector.

## Cultural policy as an integral part of national policy and sustainable development strategy

The main strategic document in Lithuania for 2021–2020, the national progress plan, integrates cultural strategy; one of the 10 goals is specifically related to culture. The national progress plan sets out six cultural objectives: the development of the cultural and creative industries (CCIs), preservation and adaptation of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage to modern societal needs, ensuring equal access to cultural services of high artistic value, the promotion of cultural diversity, promoting cultural internationality as well as ethnic minority culture, and strengthening copyright and public information. The objectives of the national progress plan, approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, are implemented through sectoral national progress programmes prepared by ministries. The principle of equal access to cultural services as a public good (at four levels: national, regional, municipal and local) was also integrated into Lithuania's general plan approved in 2020.

*Source:* <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/c1259440f7dd11eab72ddb4a109da1b5/asr>

For policies and measures to work, it is important to take the often hybrid forms of work and (self-)employment in the cultural and creative sector into account, as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development rightly points out (de Vries, 2021, p. 24). Across the EU, 33 % of cultural and creative professionals were self-employed in 2020, compared with an average of 14 % for the whole economy. Because of the pandemic, they lost between 30 % and 80 % of income and revenue. Developing a European framework for working conditions in the cultural and creative sector would pave the way forward (EENCA, 2020).

To harness the full power of culture to contribute to co-creating sustainability transformation pathways, a strategic Europe-wide platform for the cultural and creative sector is needed. This will make it possible to pool and tap into sustainability knowledge and know-how, including technical and managerial skills, and will facilitate communities of practice and mutual learning across national boundaries and across subsectors and disciplines. Given the enormous diversity of the culture sector, with its mix of small companies, larger organisations and self-employed professionals, such a sustainable development action platform or network would quickly demonstrate its added value, helping to overcome silos within the sector. It should be designed to contribute effectively to achieving the SDGs by 2030 and a carbon-neutral Europe by 2050.



## Strengthening the development of sustainable cultural tourism

In December 2021, the Austrian Committee for Ecolabelling adopted a new set of guidelines, *Sustainable Tourism Destinations*, which includes the approach to culture as one of six evaluation criteria. Destinations applying for the ecolabel must implement sustainability measures to protect cultural goods and intangible heritage, must ensure open and inclusive access, must have measures for visitor management in place, etc.

Source: <https://www.umweltzeichen.at/de/tourismus/destinationen>

Two promising possibilities for co-creation of sustainability transformation pathways can be highlighted.

- To accelerate change in urban systems, the EU should build on the positive performance results of cultural and creative cities as regards employment, cultural participation, diversity, openness and trust; these results were measured for 190 cities by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (de Vries, 2021, p. 22). By 2050, four out of five Europeans will live in cities. Sustainability transformation, including the promotion of the arts, culture and heritage at local and regional levels, clearly needs to be a priority.
- Transforming tourism, Europe's third largest economic sector, by promoting sustainable cultural tourism is also a promising co-creation pathway. Prior to the pandemic, 50 % of the world's total international tourist arrivals were in Europe, attracted strongly by art, fashion, festivals, landscapes and heritage in all its expressions.

Europe's coastal regions – exposed to environmental hazards and climate risks – depend heavily on tourism.

Therefore, there is a need to apply the sustainable blue economy approach and to develop a strategy to revive cultural tourism and the cultural economy in Europe (de Vries, 2021, p. 24).

From an SDG perspective, this co-creation of sustainability transformation pathways contributes to participation, decent work, international partnerships, and sustainable cities and settlements, as well as tourism (SDGs 16, 17, 11 and 10, as well as target 8.9). Furthermore, strong institutions promoting social and intergenerational justice stand at the core of sustainability. Voluntary destruction or pillaging of cultural heritage and illicit trade in cultural property are the cause of irremediable harm to the identity and collective memory of communities. Therefore, these issues should be addressed further in the context of SDG 16.



To accelerate change towards sustainability and ensure coherence between policy measures, the OMC group makes the following recommendations to the European Commission and the Member States.

- ↳ Adopt integrated cross-sectoral strategies to promote sustainability transformation, and in particular an integrated approach to culture across public policy areas and European Commission directorates-general. This should include clarification of conceptual and statistical points (e.g. the number of cultural workers, estimates of which range from 7 million to 8 million).
- ↳ Find ways to integrate cultural policies into national, regional and EU-wide sustainability strategies.
- ↳ Create a strategic sustainability platform for the cultural and creative sector to enhance its cumulative knowledge development through structured self-organisation and capacity building, with the time horizons 2030 and 2050, along the lines of the European forum on culture and the SDGs suggested by Voices of Culture (2021, p. 91).
- ↳ Propose a comprehensive strategy on the cultural dimension of sustainability in local and regional communities, with a focus on multilayered governance at European, national and regional levels.
- ↳ Propose a European strategy to develop and promote sustainable cultural tourism, taking into account the proposals made by the 2019 EU OMC group on sustainable cultural tourism.
- ↳ Develop a European framework for working conditions in the cultural and creative sector to promote decent work, taking into account the conclusions and recommendations of the OMC group on the status and working conditions of artists and cultural and creative professionals (to be published in 2023).



# The EU's post-COVID-19 Recovery and Resilience Facility

The post-COVID-19 RRF is the EU's largest-ever funding instrument, intended to help European economies and societies to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and build resilience against future shocks. EU Member States commit to implementing ambitious reforms and investments, set out in national recovery and resilience plans. When they achieve these commitments, they receive funds from the RRF.

As of March 2022, 16 out of the 22 national recovery and resilience plans endorsed by the Council included measures targeting the cultural and creative sector, supporting and enhancing its resilience and accelerating the green and digital transitions. These measures are financially supported with a total of EUR 10.121 billion, equalling 2.3 % of the total expenditure estimated in the 22 national recovery and resilience plans.

Among the most relevant reforms are planned legislation to improve the status of artists and cultural workers (Czechia, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Romania) and efforts to exploit digital and greening opportunities by making adjustments to funding schemes (Czechia, Romania). Several reforms embrace digital and greening opportunities by introducing minimum environmental criteria for cultural events (Italy) or developing a national digitalisation strategy for cultural heritage (Austria, Romania).

Investments target greening, digitalisation and innovation in the cultural and creative sector. Many Member States plan to support the green transition in the culture sector through renovations to increase the energy efficiency of cultural buildings and heritage (Croatia, Italy, Austria, Portugal, Slovakia), by safeguarding cultural heritage sites against climate change (Greece), and by supporting green and climate-friendly projects by cultural actors.

Other measures target the competitiveness, innovation and internationalisation of CCIs (Croatia, Italy, Finland), training and capacity building, the accessibility of content, access to finance, intellectual property management,

arts education and research, increasing the attractiveness of certain territories, and cultural tourism. Some Member States have planned innovative actions to harness the power of culture for social cohesion and well-being. In addition, the cultural and creative sector will also benefit from **horizontal measures covering all sectors**. For instance, green construction will increase demand for architectural services. Support for the digitalisation of small and medium-sized enterprises or for developing digital skills will usually be open to CCI professionals and companies, as well as increasing demand for their services.

## **Successfully co-creating transformation for recovery and sustainability in response to the EU RRF offer.**

In 2021, the Czech cultural and creative sector lobbied successfully for a decent budget for culture in the national recovery and resilience plan. Subsequently, the Czech government allocated 4 % of the budget to culture (<https://artsczech.cz/creative-czechia-initiative-zakreativnicesko>). The Romanian national recovery and resilience plan for 2021–2026 addresses the culture sector under various components; a number of investments and reforms are included in component 11, 'Tourism and Culture', and component 5, 'Renovation Wave', both of which are the direct responsibility of the Ministry of Culture. Portugal has included around EUR 243 million divided between cultural networks and digital transition and cultural heritage in its recovery and resilience plan. Belgium, Latvia and Finland are working towards digital transition in the cultural and media sector through measures that support digitisation and the production and distribution of digital content. Czechia, Spain, Lithuania, Austria, Portugal and Slovenia plan investments in the digitisation of cultural heritage and major cultural services to improve the accessibility of culture. For example, the Austrian national recovery and resilience plan includes a national strategy (as a reform), a relaunch of the digital platform (aggregator) and a fund amounting to EUR 15 million for the digitisation of cultural heritage.

*Source:* European Commission (2022b)

4

# INVEST IN SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE DIGESTS

Sustainability  
relevant knowledge  
is available but  
not necessarily  
accessible, known  
and understood.



The cultural and creative sector is not alone in seeking the best and fastest way to discover what **really** counts in achieving the turnaround towards sustainability, from the point of view of reaching the goal of achieving and accelerating change in the most important life-sustaining systems in synchronicity, as explained convincingly in the *Global Sustainable Development Report 2019*.

Without doubt, knowledge is the best ally in this endeavour, helping us to understand the many super-wicked and large-scale problems, such as social injustice, inequalities, lack of gender equality, loss of biodiversity, lack of food security, climate change and others, addressed in the 2030 Agenda. While fact-based communication is obviously not enough to mobilise energies and courage for change, without digests of relevant scientific knowledge, sustainability efforts and plans may be futile and fail to achieve leverage. However, sustainability comes with a knowledge paradox: often, things are not what they seem. This is the cultural challenge that needs to be overcome.

Substantive research on a phenomenon such as the effect of CO<sub>2</sub> on the climate became possible only in the 1970s, no longer than 50 years ago. From the perspective of the cultural dimension of sustainability, this is a relatively short period of time. Humanity has gained essential knowledge through 40 years of science in meteorology and climate. Governments have been seeking scientific advice for roughly the same period, for example through the creation of the IPCC, which was founded in 1988. Its most recent report, of 4 April 2022, was co-produced by 278 scientists from 65 countries.

Complex scientific assessments over time exist, too, such as the analysis of the gendered nature of natural disasters carried out by Neumayer and Plümper (2007) in a sample of up to 141 countries during 1981–2002. Their main finding was that natural disasters and their subsequent impacts on average kill more women than men or kill women at an earlier age than men: ‘Taken together our results show that it is the socially constructed gender-specific vulnerability of females built into everyday socioeconomic patterns that lead to the relatively higher female disaster mortality rates compared to men’ (Neumayer and Plümper, 2007, p. 551).

However, even scientific knowledge that has been available for decades remains very poorly understood, with dissemination often limited to specialist science journalism or science communication upon the release of a specific study. In recent years, though, the communication of scientific results to the public at large and to sustainability-relevant stakeholders and change-makers has been gaining momentum. It is now understood as being crucial to achieving the SDGs.

For the cultural and creative sector to fully play its role in achieving the necessary turnaround towards sustainability, empowerment through knowledge digests will be needed. Cultural actors need to be able to make informed choices as non-specialists, to avoid bogus solutions or greenwashing. As societies start to prepare for mitigation and adjustments, the cultural task of helping people to better understand nature will be highly important. Together with the media, cultural and memory institutions can help to accelerate the acquisition of the

necessary knowledge and understanding. In addition, this will contribute to the development of democracy, as citizens will be better equipped to assess government decisions and hold governments accountable.

It can be taken as an encouraging sign that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the public and policymakers sought out information about equally complex matters such as zoonoses and immunology. Furthermore, the magnitude of the pandemic called for good communication by experts, revealing hitherto unnoticed communication talents among scientists and specialists. Learned journalism with a focus on constructive solutions has become much more visible, including in the form of web-based formats such as podcasts, which have proven to be particularly successful in reaching beyond specialist circles.

These lessons learned should be fully exploited to enhance transformative communication and journalism on sustainability and climate change.



## The BiblioLab programme of Barcelona Provincial Council

The BiblioLab programme is a sustained initiative in which libraries and community centres participate in citizen science projects that connect creativity and explorations of sustainability. For example, in 2021 citizens engaged with BiblioLab to think about healthier and more humane cities.

Source: Boekman Foundation (2022) ([bibliolabciencia.blogspot.com](https://bibliolabciencia.blogspot.com))

The challenge for organisations in the cultural and creative sector is not a lack of willingness to move towards new modes of working sustainably. Rather, it is a question of finding the resources, time and relevant partnerships to enable them to gather and digest the necessary data and research results and to follow up on ongoing changes to achieve a thorough transformation of current cultural practices. It would be worth considering, as a pilot action, commissioning a series of science digests on the issues covered by the 2030 Agenda, produced by blended teams of science journalists, cultural journalists, artists and sustainability communications experts.

The power of culture influences the songs we sing, the steps we dance, the words we write and the way we think. It also shapes our brains. Scientists have long known that neuroplasticity allows individual events to sculpt the brain's form and function. Nature provides the setting in which cultural processes, activities and belief systems develop, all of which feed back to shape biodiversity. The four key bridges linking nature with culture are beliefs and worldviews, livelihoods and practices, knowledge bases, and norms and institutions. Investing in digests of scientific knowledge with a cultural perspective would strengthen

## 17 Museums × 17 SDGs

17 Museums × 17 SDGs is a project through which museums can demonstrate that they take the SDGs seriously and make concrete contributions to achieving the 2030 Agenda. It aims to raise awareness and visibility, both internally, among all staff, and externally, among the public – that is, visitors and stakeholders – and to make the international community’s vision of a good future accessible to as many people as possible, including in the culture sector. After all, museums and art institutions are important social players with great impact. 17 Museums × 17 SDGs is run by the International Council of Museums Austria with the support of the Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport.

the knowledge base and could change beliefs and worldviews. In addition, it would contribute directly to achieving SDG 16, which is both an outcome and an enabler of sustainable development. Its overarching objectives are to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, thus addressing the democratic substance of the 2030 Agenda.

The OMC group makes the following recommendations to EU policymakers, including the European Commission and the Member States.

- ↳ As a pilot action, commission a series of science digests on the issues covered by the 2030 Agenda, produced by blended teams of science journalists and experts, cultural journalists and experts, artists and sustainability communications experts.
- ↳ Develop, in consultation with the cultural and creative sector, a sustained peer-to-peer transformation leadership development mechanism to ensure that sustainability science results are used to the fullest extent possible.



### Climate Matters: Research, Analysis and Opinion

Climate Matters: Research, Analysis and Opinion (<https://climatematters.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/>) is a climate and sustainability debate watch blog edited by the Chair of Climate Communication at the University of Hamburg. It covers culture and sustainability; for example, three postings have addressed climate change in pop culture (novels, pop songs and independent music). ‘There are many reasons for science to take popular culture seriously – one of them being that pop culture can be seen as a “battlefield” where scientific knowledge and attitudes are presented and disputed. If science disregards this field, it is left for pseudo-scientific actors, fundamentalists and figures with vested interests who use pop culture as a way to spread their view on scientific topics such as climate change.’

Source: <https://climatematters.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/category/climatewatch/>



5

## TALK AND LISTEN TO EACH OTHER

Governments inform each other through voluntary national reviews (VNRs). Multistakeholder change starts with conversations.



The 2030 Agenda ('Transforming our world') is without doubt the most ambitious and holistic agenda for development ever agreed upon by all members of the UN. Its adoption sent the encouraging sign that the need to shift from siloed approaches to 'navigating multidimensional, interconnected and increasingly universal predicaments' (UNDP, 2020) was understood, indicating an evolution in mindset and governance.

Achieving balance in the environmental, social and economic dimensions of development was the pledge in 2015, with an ample framework of 17 SDGs, each of them a tree with several targets branching off from it. However, there was a very limited number of explicitly cultural or culture-related targets, although the catalyst role of culture in development had been recognised in international law 10 years earlier (2005 UNESCO Convention, Articles 13 and 14).

Governments inform each other periodically through the UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on a voluntary basis on the 2030 Agenda progress achieved, using a system of 231 indicators offered by the UN. As things stand now, not a single country has achieved all 17 goals or is likely to do so. In early 2020, before COVID-19, no EU country was on track to meet all the SDGs by 2030.

Three of those 231 indicators are straightforwardly culture-related.

- SDG 4, target 4.7: ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including through sustainable lifestyles, human rights,

gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of culture's contribution to sustainable development (progress measured by indicator 4.7.1).

- SDG 11, target 11.4: strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage, to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (progress measured by indicator 11.4.1).
- SDG 16, target 16.10: this target includes ensuring media freedom, a prerequisite for culture and cultural diversity and for democracy building (progress measured by indicator 16.10.1).

In addition, the cultural and creative sector, the creative economy, heritage and the curbing of illicit trade can easily be anchored in the following SDGs, sub-goals, targets and indicators, with the caveat that the UN-developed indicator system does not cover them directly and visibly: 4.7, 5b1, 5.5.2, 8.3.1, 8.4.1, 8.9, 8a, 9.3, 10.02, 11.3, 11.4, 12.1, 12.6, 12.6.1, 12.7, 13.3, 16.1, 16.4, 16.7, 16.10, 16.1, 17 and 17.2, with the option of using all available EU-wide quantitative and qualitative data.

Greece and Romania (2018), Croatia (2019), Austria, Bulgaria, Estonia and Finland (2020), and Germany (2021) have presented VNRs, all of them addressing the cultural dimension of sustainability, linked to several of the sustainability goals and their targets, and demonstrating the transversal integration of culture into national sustainable development policies and plans, even in the absence of specific indicators in the VNR reporting system. This shows that Member States value the



contributions made by culture and cultural policies, although they are integrated only to a limited extent into the 2030 Agenda and its implementation and reporting structures.

In 2023, the European Commission will prepare and present its first voluntary review.

Cultural policies and the culture sector are increasingly striving to promote the cultural dimensions of sustainability as decision-makers come to understand the urgency of the turnaround needed. Most recently, the G20 Ministers of Culture affirmed 'culture's transformative role in sustainable development, helping address economic, social, and ecological pressures and needs. In this respect, we call for the full recognition and integration of culture and the creative economy into development processes and policies, involving all levels of societies, including local communities, as a driver and an enabler for the achievement of the Goals set out in the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' (G20 Research Group, 2021).

However, the current 2030 Agenda reporting system seems to reflect at least an implicit hierarchy of sectors of society and policies. Conventional wisdom has it that most culture-related issues or messages from the cultural and creative sector and relevant ministries do not warrant the same high profile as, for example, issues and messages relating to the economy, the environment or education.



## Closing the data gaps: thematic indicators for culture in the 2030 Agenda formulated by UNESCO

### (UNESCO's Culture|2030 indicators project)

The Culture|2030 indicators recluster the elements of the 2030 Agenda around four dimensions: Environment and Resilience (heritage, cultural infrastructure, open space for culture), Prosperity and Livelihoods (gross domestic product, employment, cultural businesses, trade in cultural goods and services, public finance, governance), Knowledge and Skills (education for sustainable development, cultural knowledge, multilingual education, cultural and artistic education, training), and Inclusion and Participation (social cohesion, artistic freedom, access to culture, cultural participation, participatory processes). Transversally, the indicators contribute to women participation and leadership and policies on gender equality, as well as to international partnerships around capacity building, global partnerships, public, private and civil society partnerships and the measuring of sustainability.



### **UNESCO's Culture|2030 indicators project – the hands-on experiences of Portugal and Romania, 2022**

The project is being piloted in six countries including, from the EU, Portugal and Romania.

In Romania, the project was officially launched in December 2021 (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/events/1640/>). It is being implemented both at national level by the Ministry of Culture in partnership with the National Institute for Cultural Research and Training and at local level by Cluj-Napoca City Hall in partnership with the Cluj Cultural Centre and Babes-Bolyai University. The letters of agreement with UNESCO on the implementation of the project in Romania were signed in May 2021 at national level by the Minister of Culture and in July 2021 at local level by the Mayor of Cluj-Napoca. The resulting indicators will become available from July 2022. The project collected knowledge and datasets from 17 national and local authorities and institutions, allowing for widespread participation and the collaborative involvement of all stakeholders. At national level, the objective of the Ministry of Culture is the inclusion of the results of the project in Romania's next VNR, planned for 2023.

Portugal's pilot project under the UNESCO Culture|2030 initiative was carried out with guidance provided by UNESCO. The framework has a total of five stages, namely the preparatory phase, the data collection phase, the access the Culture|2030 indicators online portal phase, the data analysis phase and the results sharing and raising awareness phase. Thirty-nine entities were identified for inclusion in the project; these were key national and local partners and stakeholders in various areas, such as culture, tourism, the economy and digital transformation, education, territory, housing and gender equality. All four dimensions of the 2030 agenda (Environment and Resilience, Prosperity and Livelihoods, Knowledge and Skills, Inclusion and Participation), all 17 SDGs and 22 indicators were examined with the data available. The pilot will end with the drafting of an analytical report, guided by the UNESCO experts, which will include recommendations on adjusting local and national policies. Then the results will be shared with the aim of contributing towards the achievement of the SDGs.



The OMC group gets the sense that this conventional idea lingers in many sustainable development processes, including national implementation plans, strategies and reporting schemes. How, then, to resolve the problem for cultural policymakers that the current structure of the 2030 Agenda obliges them to develop their own strategic objectives, implementation frameworks and schemes, often meaning that they are not in a position to make full use of the horizontal character of this sustainability strategy?

This outdated hierarchy of policy sectors and reporting systems creates the risk of developing a parallel reporting system for culture and missing out on important evidence. The lack of alignment means that all pertinent information may not be used to inform decision-making.

The OMC group strongly believes that achieving the 2030 Agenda and the sustainability turnaround will require an open policy dialogue, with participants talking and listening to each other. The European Commission is in a unique position to put the horizontal cultural dimension of the 2030 Agenda fully on the international agenda when preparing its voluntary review for 2023.

It will also be important to follow up on the work of the European Sustainable Development Network's Peer Learning Platform 2022. Its 7th edition, on 14 June 2022 in Brussels, was on the topic 'Voluntary national reviews: challenges, successes and lessons learned'. The event was organised in cooperation with the European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils Network. The goal was to offer national-level policymakers in Europe the

chance to exchange experiences with and learn from countries that had already done their second VNR, and there was also a focus on the EU's voluntary review in 2023, as this will be the first such report produced by the EU.

The OMC group makes the following recommendations to EU policymakers, including the European Commission and the Member States.

- ↳ Use preparation for the EU's voluntary review in 2023 as a pilot and benchmarking exercise, reporting on the horizontal importance of the cultural dimension across all relevant SDGs and targets under the 2030 Agenda and across all relevant EU policies and instruments, making full use of the rich content of the EU's quadrennial report on the implementation of the 2005 UNESCO Convention, tabled in July 2021.
- ↳ Plan an EU-level peer-to-peer meeting to share experiences and discuss improving reporting practice, involving the national contact points or the authorities of EU Member States in charge of VNR reporting, as well as the national contact points for monitoring, knowledge exchange and reporting under the 2005 UNESCO Convention.
- ↳ Apply this approach to all upcoming VNRs by EU Member States.
- ↳ Take note of UNESCO's thematic indicators for culture in the 2030 Agenda (the Culture|2030 indicators) when preparing upcoming VNRs, harnessing the Portuguese and Romanian experiences with the 2022 pilot phase, and use the substance of this methodology and experience as fit.

- ↳ Build on existing experiences and continue and intensify the participatory multistakeholder tradition of outreach to and cooperation with the cultural and creative sector in the reporting process, in a transparent and documented form.
- ↳ Clarify the definition of CCI and of the cultural and creative sector used by the

European Commission and its services and ensure convergence and coherence as much as possible (estimates currently used of employment in the culture sector differ by 1 million people: 7 million versus 8 million). Such definitions matter for legal and financial reasons, and with regard to policy and statistics.

## European Commission: Voices of Culture – EU stakeholder dialogue on culture and the SDGs

The European Commission held meetings during 2020–2021 for and with European cultural and creative sector stakeholders, as part of its Voices of Culture structured dialogue, on the topic ‘Culture and the sustainable development goals: challenges and opportunities’. Following an open call for applications, 47 organisations were selected to participate. They were invited to focus their discussions on five areas:

- education
- growth and employment
- sustainable communities
- climate action
- freedom of expression.

The resulting brainstorming report of February 2021, *Culture and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Challenges and opportunities*, offers 10 recommendations (Voices of Culture, 2021, pp. 87–91).

1. Develop and/or revise tools, in a participatory process involving all relevant cultural stakeholders.
2. Secure the integration of culture-related indicators in the EU SDGs indicator set for 2022.
3. Further align all culture-related policies, measures and documents produced by EU Institutions and the Member States.
4. Recognise and support Culture both as a sector and as a vector of key policy priorities.
5. Formally acknowledge culture as the missing 4th pillar of sustainable development at all levels (local, national, European and global).
6. Champion the need to introduce an additional, stand-alone SDG focusing on culture.
7. Improve the information systems at national and European level.
8. In the framework of the EU implementation of SDGs, launch an innovative funding scheme (and/or public and private matching fund scheme) for ‘culture4SDGs’.
9. Use the SDGs framework to improve structural cross-sectoral cooperation.
10. Build on the knowledge that already exists about public spaces, development, and cultural rights.

6

# MAKE THE CULTURAL CARBON FOOTPRINT LIGHTER

An illustration showing two dark blue industrial smokestacks on the left, emitting a large, light green carbon footprint. The footprint is composed of several rounded shapes, with the largest one at the bottom. In the background, there are stylized buildings with orange roofs and windows. The ground is a light brown color, and there are orange chemical structures (resembling a polymer chain) on the right side. A large, dark red speech bubble is positioned on the right, containing text.

Strategic change  
in production and  
consumption.  
Economic sustainability  
and circular economy -  
use data.

The race against time is already on. While sectors with large carbon footprints such as construction, travel and agriculture are at the centre of attention, culture's carbon footprint is heavier than most realise. The average blockbuster film (budget over USD 70 million) generates around 3 000 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> from transport, electricity and heating, and diesel generators. Pre-COVID-19, the festival industry generated 100 000 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> and 23 000 tons of waste in the United Kingdom alone. The annual global carbon footprint of the visual arts is estimated at 70 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub>. Museums, theatres, libraries, clubs and other creative spaces also contribute to pollution, waste and global warming (de Vries, 2021, pp. 10–11). The entertainment and media sector (TV, gaming, streaming, entertainment, newspapers) currently accounts for 1.2 % of global emissions and 3 % of global electricity consumption (de Vries, 2019, p. 19). Online video is one of the most energy-intensive digital products on the internet and increased video consumption results in massive amounts of data being stored, damaging the environment further and hampering the aims of the Paris Agreement. Ten hours of high-quality video comprises more data than all the English language articles on Wikipedia in text format.

Hence, like other sectors, the arts, culture and heritage sector needs to pull its weight and re-examine and transform its practices. Action is already being taken, and creative industries are often at the forefront of change. The issue of digital sobriety needs to be in the spotlight in CCIs, as it is as important to change our digital consumption habits as to use products that consume less energy. There is an urgent need for the cultural and creative sector to transform further, both for the sake of lowering its own carbon footprint and to harness the sector's social impact. It is also an issue of credibility, linked to the broader requirement for Europeans to change their cultural habits regarding production and consumption. Various cultural actors and industries are already heavily involved in greening their practices, pledging to achieve zero carbon emissions by 2030. To this end, sector-relevant CO<sub>2</sub> calculators have been developed. At the same time, some cultural organisations and institutions have built shared platforms to raise awareness among their visitors and audiences. This could inspire millions.

### **Re-examining digital consumption habits**

The Shift Project report of 2019 points out that online videos accounted for 80 % of global data flows in 2018, with the remaining 20 % accounted for by websites, data, video games, etc. These online videos appear in particular on streaming services, such as Netflix and Amazon Prime, as well as on YouTube and social networks.

Source: <https://theshiftproject.org/en/article/unsustainable-use-online-video/>

To further accelerate the development of holistic mitigation and adaptation policies, it will be important to embrace the principles of the circular economy and make innovative use of them for the culture and creative sector to harness unlimited creativity using limited ecosystem resources. These principles are summarised by the seven Rs: rethink, reduce, repair, reuse, refurbish, recycle and recover. The circular economy is about sharing knowledge and scaling up good practices. Given that the culture sector is particularly well placed to address the human dimension of sustainability, synergies with reducing inequalities (relating to gender, class, ethnic background, etc.) should be strengthened and made visible. In addition, the reappraisal of low-emission European knowledge and techniques – as used in intangible heritage practice, especially in rural areas – can create new synergies to bring about change.

## Green Europe Experience

This international initiative aims to build tomorrow's festival, using various types of expertise to design more sustainable production methods (<https://greeneuropeexperience.eu/>). Green Europe Experience is a 3-year lab that is working on a Green Deal circular economy for festivals, with partners from Belgium, France, Germany, Portugal, Slovakia and the United Kingdom. It is an initiative that forms part of efforts to green the Creative Europe programme, as reported by the European Parliament in 2020 ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2020-0141\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2020-0141_EN.html)). Similarly, the French initiative **Pour une Charte des Festivals** (2021) examines all aspects of the sustainability of cultural festivals funded with public monies.



## The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions Green Library Award

Since 2016, the **Green Library Award**, sponsored by De Gruyter Publishing, has been awarded to libraries and projects that communicate their commitment to environmental sustainability. Among the aims of the initiative is creating awareness of libraries' social responsibility and leadership on environmental education.

## Carbon-neutral, low-waste cultural facilities and formats

Since 2019, Tampere Hall has been Finland's first carbon-neutral conference and concert centre ([www.tampere-talo.fi](http://www.tampere-talo.fi)). Using renewable energy in buildings is a key element in the pursuit of a fossil-fuel-free society, as buildings account for nearly 40 % of all energy consumed and generate more than 30 % of emissions. Strategic environmental planning started as early as 1992, and, while achieving carbon neutrality was a significant milestone, the work continues. In 2020, a special valve was installed to save water. In 2021, the expansion of the solar power plant was completed and 514 photovoltaic panels were installed on the roof. The city of Tampere aims to be carbon neutral by 2030. The city is the first municipality in Finland to implement climate budgeting.

Since 2013, the EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme has been used and renewed annually by Kulturbetriebe Berlin ([www.kbb.eu](http://www.kbb.eu), certificate DE-1027-00140 as of 2021), demonstrating its usability for cultural facilities, formats and productions. Kulturbetriebe Berlin runs large exhibition facilities such as Gropius Bau and Haus der Kulturen der Welt, as well as the film festival Berlinale and other festivals organised by Berliner Festspiele.

The European Commission will need to combine digital transition with reducing the carbon footprint of the cultural and creative sector. This raises the seemingly technical question of the clarification of the terms used by different EU structures, for example 'cultural and creative sector' and 'cultural and creative industries'. These differences matter for legal and financial reasons, as well as in terms of policy and statistics (de Vries 2021, p. 47). The underlying definition of a term used in a particular policy document determines which companies, cultural organisations, professionals and artists can benefit from EU (financial) support, including that provided by initiatives to reduce culture's carbon footprint.

If CCIs want to be change-makers bringing about a more sustainable future, they need to better understand – and consequently change – their own unsustainable practices. As the sector is diverse and somewhat fragmented, ensuring the full participation of all stakeholders will be vital. Methods to achieve this could include guidelines on available tools and methods, coordinated action and peer-to-peer learning, including pooling of technical and managerial knowledge. Furthermore, a more visible cultural sustainability ambition would be useful, especially with regard to communicating the aim to audiences.

Through the SDG framework, making the cultural carbon footprint lighter would connect with other initiatives aimed at shifting European ways of life towards more sustainable modes of production and consumption (SDG 12), while also countering climate change (SDG 13).





## Circular tailoring

The Jobel Centre in Italy, a **theatrical costume workshop** for children, teenagers and professional productions, practices circular tailoring (*sartoria circolare*). It makes costumes **almost entirely with recycled materials**, in some cases sourced from large theatrical productions disposing of unused materials. It is an example of a small creative business seizing an opportunity for cultural and entrepreneurial revitalisation in the fight against climate change and supporting more sustainable production and consumption models.

Source: <https://economiecircolare.com/la-sartoria-circolare-del-centro-jobel/>

## Stage set based on uprooted fir trees

In October 2018, an extraordinarily severe hurricane uprooted millions of trees in north-east Italy. Eighty uprooted fir trees gave life to the set of the tragedy *The Trojan Women* by Euripides staged at the Greek Theatre in Syracuse as part of the 55th cycle of classical performances by the National Institute of Ancient Drama. The wood industry in the Italian region Friuli-Venezia Giulia, the architect Stefano Boeri, the theatre and the institute cooperated to create a set with a strong visual and emotional impact, as a response of resilience to tragic events.

## Traditional knowledge, techniques and organisation for sustainability

In 2022, Austria, together with Belgium, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Switzerland, nominated **traditional irrigation in Europe** for the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The international transfer of knowledge around sustainable use of water could open up new opportunities for communities acutely threatened by climate change and its consequences to reflect on how they can effectively contribute to the sustainable development of their natural landscape.

In 2018, **the art of drystone walling** in Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Slovenia, Spain and Switzerland was inscribed in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This art concerns the know-how involved in making stone constructions by stacking stones on top of each other without using any other materials, except sometimes dry soil. Drystone structures organise living and working spaces using local natural and human resources. They play a vital role in preventing landslides, floods and avalanches, in combating erosion and desertification of the land, in enhancing biodiversity and in creating the right microclimatic conditions for agriculture. The bearers and practitioners include the rural communities where the art is deeply rooted, as well as professionals in the construction business. The technique exemplifies a harmonious relationship between humans and nature.

The OMC group makes the following recommendations to the European Commission and the EU Member States.

- ↳ Enlist the transformative power of culture by mainstreaming culture across all relevant policy domains, in accordance with the integrated approach to sustainability envisaged by the SDGs.
- ↳ Use the seven Rs – rethink, reduce, repair, reuse, refurbish, recycle and recover – as terms of reference in project calls under all EU-funded culture-related programmes, including in external cultural relations.
- ↳ Foster peer-to-peer capacity building and job shadowing to promote best practices for the reduction of culture's carbon footprint.
- ↳ Make reducing culture's carbon footprint a focus in international cooperation and co-production as part of EU external cultural relations and action.
- ↳ Monitor the contribution of the Creative Europe programme and of funded projects on the ground to environmental and climate goals, and establish green incentives while upholding the principle of artistic and creative freedom.
- ↳ Clarify the definitions of CCI and of the cultural and creative sector through better engagement and investment in harmonising cultural statistics methodology across national contexts, in order to push for a more coherent use of definitions and data in policymaking (e.g. on the number of cultural workers, estimates of which range from 7 million to 8 million).



7

# ENLARGE ACCESS TO CHANGE OPPORTUNITIES

Cultural  
participation  
matters. We live in  
broadband times!



Cultural rights, in particular the right to freely participate in the cultural life of a community and to enjoy the arts and heritage, have long been recognised as fundamental human rights. They are indispensable to people's dignity and the free development of personality. In 1948, they were coded as Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; they were then further enshrined in the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Article 15) and included in the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (Articles 29–31). Most recently, they were included in the 2001 UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities and in UNESCO's 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

Guaranteeing cultural rights is crucial to building inclusive and equitable societies and to achieving an effective, people-centred approach to sustainable development. This includes physical and social access to culture for the public of all ages and for artists and creators. While the 2030 agenda does not articulate this relationship in a straightforward manner, in their landmark *Global Sustainable Development Report 2019*, the independent scientists draw the alarming conclusion that 'the entire 2030 Agenda is threatened by rising inequalities in income and wealth' (UNDESA, 2019, p. 51). Not only is SDG 10 not being reached, but multiple inequalities related to gender, ethnicity and access to opportunities have been further exacerbated since 2015, even before the COVID-19 pandemic deepened divides further.

As underlined by Gro Harlem Brundtland in her foreword to the *Global Sustainable Development Report 2019*, 'we need courage to confront the vested political, business, and economic interests that seek to maintain the current unequal order, and we need to grasp the opportunity that the move to a low carbon economy offers in order to rectify current inequalities. ... Just as important, however, is continued political pressure to tackle the underlying causes of the problems the Goals seek to address, namely, poverty, discrimination, conflict and inequality. If we do not put inequality at the heart of the global development agenda, we are doomed to failure' (UNDESA, 2019, p. 18).

The *Global Sustainable Development Report 2019* states that 'the relationship between inequality and well-being is complex. ... There is no scientific consensus on what would be optimal for the SDGs, but there is mounting evidence that current levels and trends present challenges' (UNDESA, 2019, p. 51). We are at risk of failing due to 'inequalities in opportunities; persistent gender inequality; mismatches between education and skills, especially looking to the future; unequal access to healthcare, exposure to disease, and attainment of high standards of health; insufficient resilience to recover from shocks; and inadequate preparation for dealing with ageing. Many of the needed transformations in this area are demonstrably possible within more balanced economic paths' (UNDESA, 2019, p. 57). Both socioeconomic and political equality are fundamental to **leaving no one behind** when implementing the 2030 Agenda.

## The 2013 special Eurobarometer on cultural participation

The 2013 special Eurobarometer on cultural participation found that, compared with 2007, in general fewer Europeans were engaging in cultural activities, as performers or spectators. Only 38 % actively took part in a cultural activity, such as singing, dancing or photography, in 2012. In terms of passive participation, the number describing their cultural engagement as high or very high was down to 18 %, compared with 21 % in 2007. The main reasons cited for not engaging in culture were lack of time (44 % gave this reason for not reading a book), lack of interest (50 % said this was why they had not seen a ballet, dance performance or opera), lack of money (25 % gave this reason for not attending a concert) and lack of choice (10 % on average).

Source: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/1115>

Inclusion merits special attention because more equity within and across countries is critical to transitions that are not simply rapid but also sustainable and just, as well as attractive or at least plausible to voters. The OMC group considers cultural participation to be an important missing link here: cultural participation in all its dimensions is a key resource for human well-being, capabilities and resilience, while also shaping identities and a sense of belonging.

Since developing its cultural agenda, the EU has been monitoring the cultural participation of its citizens, publishing special Eurobarometer editions in 2007 and 2013. The underlying 'Information, Communication and Community', 'Enjoyment and Expression' and 'Transaction' model sees **cultural participation** as encompassing people's activities as consumers of culture (reading books and newspapers, going to the cinema, the theatre and concerts, visiting museums and historical sites, etc.) but also

as active participants (painting, playing music, dancing or engaging in any activity with an artistic dimension). It is clear from the growing number of services available on the internet that the cultural offer has also adapted to the digital era. The use of ICT and the internet for cultural purposes was therefore included in the 2013 cultural participation Eurobarometer.

The OMC group considers cultural participation to be an essential part of the DNA of the change opportunities that will need to be seized to turn things around and achieve the SDGs. Hence enlarging access to change opportunities, including through novel approaches to cultural participation, is key to building positive motivation and strengthening resilience, understood both as a cultural right and as a future-oriented resource.

Over the past few years, there seems to have been a cultural shift towards more inclusive cultural participation, moving from a focus on access to artistic and

cultural works and heritage sites towards a concept of participation that includes active co-creation and safeguarding practices (UNESCO, 2018, 2022). This hypothesis should be further developed and tested.

Innovative cultural practice seeks synergies, for example between social affairs and urban development. This more comprehensive understanding of culture, developed through and since MONDIACULT in 1982, is facilitated and mainstreamed by new and emerging technologies <sup>(10)</sup>. In addition, an evolving understanding of cultural and natural heritage and cultural landscapes acknowledges the cultural role of intangible heritage practitioners.

Therefore, the notion of cultural participation and access should be updated through the lens of sustainable development. SDGs 16 and 10, and targets 4.7 and 5.5, are of direct relevance here, connecting the fight for greater equality with the development of global citizenship and enhanced cultural governance.

<sup>(10)</sup> See, for example, the VRDays Europe website (<https://www.becca-europe.eu/projects/vr-days-europe>).



## Identity Building and Sharing Business Initiative

The Identity Building and Sharing Business Initiative takes an ethical and 'glocal' approach to job creation and sustainable development. This EU initiative contributes to socioeconomic development through human capital investment in the cultural and creative sector, which is mobilised as a driver of business development and identity building. The project also tackles the root causes of irregular economic migration and displacement by strengthening identity-building in countries in fragile situations and addressing the lifestyle market's value chains.



### Samen Cultuurmaken

Samen Cultuurmaken (Making Culture Together) is a grant scheme for projects in which social and cultural workers come together **to create culture for everyone** in the Netherlands (<https://cultuurparticipatie.nl/funding/36/making-culture-together>). Forming part of the cultural participation programme for 2021–2024, this scheme promotes closer collaboration and interaction between makers, pioneers and/or participants in the culture sector and in the social field, for instance in care and welfare. The unique power of art and culture is applied to help tackle societal issues, for example loneliness. It was launched by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Cultural Participation Fund, in cooperation with municipalities, provinces and the National Centre of Expertise for Cultural Education and Amateur Arts.

## The Victoria Square Project

The Victoria Square Project has grown in the city centre of Athens since 2017, in an area where residents face significant social problems, including finding ways of living together with refugees and dealing with a fraying urban and social fabric (<https://www.victoriasquareproject.gr/about-us>). This artistic and social project was created on the occasion of the modern art exhibition documenta (Kassel-Athens 2017).

The OMC group makes the following recommendations to EU policymakers, including the European Commission and the Member States.

- ↪ Update the concept of cultural participation through the lens of the cultural dimension of sustainable development, as specified in this OMC report, especially with regard to reducing inequalities in cultural access and participation, as an important condition for the success of the 2030 Agenda.
- ↪ Involve Eurostat in updating the methodology for monitoring this updated cultural participation concept accordingly, including with a view to gathering information on the widespread use of ICT and the internet for cultural purposes in digital times and achieving a more comprehensive and inclusive understanding of artistic, cultural and heritage practice.
- ↪ Have a new special Eurobarometer on cultural access and participation carried out on this updated basis as soon as possible, to make relevant data available for the decade of action to achieve the SDGs.



8

# EMPOWER FOR DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND ARTISTIC FREEDOM

A cultural push  
to overcome  
challenges to  
democracy





'The world is witnessing a global trend to roll back human rights, close civic spaces and silence critical voices' (de Vries, 2021, p. 7). Currently, democracy in the EU faces challenges from rising extremism, election interference, the spread of manipulative information and threats against journalists. As the 2022 ranking of Reporters Without Borders shows, EU countries are caught between two extremes: while seven EU Member States are among the top ten for media freedom worldwide, nine EU Member States rank between positions 56 and 108 in the world list, and media freedom is clearly hampered there.

Citizens should be able to make electoral and other choices in a public space where different views can be expressed freely. Free media, academia and civil society should be able to play their roles in stimulating open debate, free from malign interference, either foreign or domestic. The European Democracy Action Plan is designed to empower citizens and build more resilient democracies across the EU <sup>(11)</sup>.

While Europe's identity and democratic foundations are grounded in culture, the EU lacks a consistent response and structured approach to cultural policy as a means of addressing the rising tide of authoritarianism both within Europe and around the world (de Vries, 2021, p. 28).

The 2030 Agenda made a leap forward from the millennium development goals by including a democracy goal (SDG 16). It was understood that transforming governance would be key to achieving ambitious human development goals and making the

<sup>(11)</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/api/files/document/print/en/ip\\_20\\_2250/IP\\_20\\_2250\\_EN.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/api/files/document/print/en/ip_20_2250/IP_20_2250_EN.pdf)

turnaround towards sustainability. Human rights, fundamental freedoms and effective institutions are part and parcel of this and need to be co-developed.

For the region of Europe, the Council of Europe developed an indicator framework accompanied by a self-assessment tool for cultural policymakers to better understand how culture does impact democracy, enabling better targeted allocation of resources. This led to a strong statement on culture's value to democracy: robust relationships were identified between several culture and democracy dimensions, such as active cultural engagement, democratic openness, political engagement, trust in society and well-being <sup>(12)</sup>.

Although this initiative has unfortunately been discontinued, the Council of Europe also adopted a manifesto in 2020 on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights in order 'to highlight the key role of arts and culture as powerful means for maintaining constructive dialogue in democratic and open societies' <sup>(13)</sup>. The digital exhibition 'Free to create – create to be free' followed the launch of the manifesto. It is now online and constantly being updated <sup>(14)</sup>.

Democracy needs democrats who are always ready to develop and strengthen it further; people who are willing to engage in public debate to reconcile different views for the benefit of their societies and of progress. Artistic expression and cultural activities effectively contribute to

<sup>(12)</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/indicators-culture-and-democracy>

<sup>(13)</sup> <https://rm.coe.int/manifesto-on-the-freedom-of-expression-of-arts-and-culture-in-the-digi/1680a056a2>

<sup>(14)</sup> <https://freetocreate.art/>

putting into practice the right to freedom of expression and to peaceful assembly, as well as the right to education. Furthermore, creating and producing art and safeguarding heritage requires cultural rights and artistic and creative freedoms and, critically, fosters the necessary ingredients for democracy: openness, trust and dialogue.

UNESCO's Global Report 2022 concludes that 'there remains a worrying disconnect between protective law and practice, with attacks on freedom of artistic expression continuing to rise in 2020. To be effective, protective laws must be supported by local monitoring systems and concrete implementation mechanisms. Cultural and human rights defenders, as well as civil society organizations, increasingly engage in monitoring and advocating for freedom of artistic expression, including through the provision of safe havens for artists at risk. There is a clear need for organizations with understanding and expertise of both human rights and culture in all regions to fill persistent gaps in monitoring and reporting on artistic freedom' (UNESCO, 2022, p. 265).

To achieve this, full and holistic use of the options already provided within the SDG framework should be made, including harnessing the results of the Council of Europe Indicator Framework on Culture and Democracy. It will be vital to scale up EU efforts to defend and promote artistic and

cultural freedom, as well as media freedom, which is a prerequisite for cultural diversity and related cultural freedoms. More EU involvement to provide safe havens for artists, academics and journalists at risk is also required. In June 2022, the Council of the EU sent a significant message of support for the protection and safety of journalists and other media professionals when adopting the council conclusions of the French presidency <sup>(15)</sup>. Likewise, this issue is currently being addressed by the European Commission's proposal for an EU Directive consisting of procedural safeguards against strategic lawsuits against public participation in cross-border trials and by the Commission recommendation to Member States on protecting journalists and human rights defenders who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded or abusive court proceedings.

To contribute to this urgent awareness raising and monitoring, cultural EU action on UN and UNESCO international days relevant to cultural freedom and other fundamental freedoms would make the EU visible as a principled partner. Such action would also provide much-needed support to local artists, academics, journalists and citizens

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<sup>(15)</sup> <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/06/21/council-pushes-for-further-actions-to-protect-journalists-and-media-professionals>

## Safe havens

In Europe, several initiatives provide **safe havens** for artists and creators, academics and journalists at risk, such as the International Cities of Rescue Network, Artists at Risk, Project Defenders and the Martin Roth Initiative, in addition to US-based initiatives such as Scholars at Risk, the IIE Scholar Rescue Fund and Journalists in Distress.

*Source:* de Vries (2021, p. 34)

## Culture for All

The Culture for All initiative guarantees free access for 1 year for young adults aged 18 to all the Portuguese government's cultural equipment and to that of private entities that have joined the initiative, thus encouraging the active cultural engagement of young voters. This measure was a winning participatory budget project. It has been operated since 2018 by the Portuguese government.

keen to enjoy their cultural rights (de Vries, 2021, p. 20).

From the perspective of the SDGs, this would directly contribute to reducing inequalities (SDG 10), developing leadership (SDG 5) and building strong institutions (target 16.8) while increasing the safety of journalists (target 16.10), based on an active understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity (target 4.7).

The OMC group makes the following recommendations to EU Member States and the European Commission.

- ↪ Further emphasise the role of artistic and creative freedom of expression in building democratic societies as an inherent part of sustainable development strategies.
- ↪ Seek structured exchange and cooperation with organisations and initiatives that provide safe havens to artists, academics and journalists at risk and enable them to work in a

## Freemuse

Freemuse is an independent international non-governmental organisation advocating for freedom of artistic expression and cultural diversity (<https://freemuse.org>). The organisation, based in Copenhagen, has UN special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and consultative status with UNESCO. Freemuse is widely known for its annual *State of Artistic Freedom* report, which is used both in academia and for policymaking.

better coordinated and transparent way, including through long-term financial support.

- ↪ Use all legal and financial powers to defend and promote media freedom across the EU, as media diversity is crucial for diversity of cultural expressions.

The OMC group makes the following recommendations to the European External Action Service and the European Commission.

- ↪ Propose a joint communication on freedom of cultural expression and artistic freedom in the digital era, considering the 2020 manifesto of the Council of Europe.
- ↪ Prioritise diplomatic and financial support for cultural rights around the world.
- ↪ Invite EU ambassadors to host and/or join public events celebrating international days relevant to artistic and cultural freedom.

## UN and UNESCO international days relevant to cultural and artistic freedom

UN and UNESCO international days relevant to cultural and artistic freedom and other connected fundamental freedoms include International Jazz Day (30 April); World Press Freedom Day (3 May), which has very visibly included artistic freedom since 2015; the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development (21 May); the World Day for Audiovisual Heritage (27 October); and World Human Rights Day (10 December).

9

# CONNECT WITH THE NEXT GENERATION OF CHANGE-MAKERS

A healthy, just, and safe digital ecosystem



Since the Brundtland report, *Our Common Future*, was published in 1987, the structures of the public domain, public opinion and public service media have undergone revolutionary change. This is highly relevant both for the cultural dimension of sustainability and for the power to communicate about sustainability through culture and lifelong learning.

‘We are already living in the digital era ... with profound impact on the cultural sector ... This “cultural digitisation” does not stop at the more familiar technologies of web platforms and social media but also extends to the rapidly emerging technologies of artificial intelligence, virtual and augmented reality, as well as robotics, which all have the potential to revolutionise the ways in which we preserve, create, access and experience culture ... The global shutdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic also accelerated the rate of change. By one estimation the pandemic has condensed 5 years of progress into 3 months. At the UNESCO April 2020 online meeting of some 130 ministers of culture the question of maintaining access to culture via digital platforms was one of the highest priorities’ (UNESCO, 2020).

Those generations who were born between 1981 and 1996 (millennials) and between 1996 and 2011 (generation Z) have almost entirely migrated to online platforms as their prime source of information, communication, and cultural participation and practice. This includes the initiators of the Fridays for Future movement.

To boost the cultural dimension of sustainable development for the decade of action to 2030, these divergent cultural horizons, changed media ecosystems and

new points of reference must be considered. Already today, 40 % of global consumers belong to generation Z.

By 2025, millennials will make up 75 % of the global workforce. How can we find would-be influencers who embrace the cultural dimension of sustainability in their own way? Whom to talk to? And how? This generation is absent both from this EU OMC group and from most structured dialogues with civil society, such as the Voices of Culture initiative by the European Commission. The energy for change and sustainability readiness of these age groups will be decisive in achieving the SDGs.

One notable EU instrument in this respect is the EU Youth Dialogue <sup>(16)</sup>, which is currently in its ninth cycle and has a focus on European Youth Goal 10, ‘Sustainable green Europe’ and European Youth Goal 3, ‘Inclusive societies’. Taking a transversal approach to the cultural dimension of sustainability could also mean finding synergies between a cultural approach to sustainable development and the EU Youth Dialogue.

While the internet and social media offer many exciting and welcome new opportunities for culture and heritage, and reach out to new audiences at home and abroad, access to digital technology is still highly unequal, according to data from the UN Broadband Commission, the Alliance for Affordable Internet and the World Economic Forum (World Economic Forum, 2021; de Vries, 2021, p. 17; International Telecommunication Union, 2021, p. 106). Only just over half of the world’s population

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<sup>(16)</sup> [https://europa.eu/youth/get-involved/eu-youth-dialogue/what-eu-youth-dialogue\\_en](https://europa.eu/youth/get-involved/eu-youth-dialogue/what-eu-youth-dialogue_en)

is connected to the internet; Africa remains the world's least connected region, according to an International Monetary Fund report quoted by the International Telecommunication Union in 2021: about 28.2 % of the population are internet users.

In Europe, several digital divides persist. In central and eastern Europe, 36 % of the population is not connected, compared with 19 % in western Europe. Across the EU, 82 % of the urban population has computer access, against only 66 % of the rural population. Many EU countries continue to show a digital usage gender gap as well as a gender employment gap. Women make up 65 % of European employees but are only 17 % of the European ICT workforce (World Economic Forum, 2021). On the positive side, Europe offers affordable broadband with very good entry-level speeds. While 4G penetration in Europe is growing and 5G networks are being built, there are still connectivity and coverage gaps across subregions.



The gender-based glass ceiling and other inequities are a general policy challenge given the overarching relevance of data transfer and the service economy. They affect the cultural and creative sector online and offline. It is hence imperative for EU policy to promote the digitalisation of culture in Europe to directly – and measurably – counter these divides (de Vries, 2021, pp. 19–20), beyond the first commendable initiative to create a shared data space among memory institutions. At the same time, in addition to integrating cultural and creative sectors and industries into digital innovation policies, the EU should develop targeted policies to help the cultural and creative sector to reduce its carbon footprint (see message 6). Although greater digitalisation of the CCIs is clearly necessary to strengthen their resilience and competitiveness, it is equally necessary for the CCIs to be fully included in the European Green Deal, in line with the 2030 Agenda.

Meaningful connectivity and just digital inclusion are key for cultural citizenship in the 21st century. Thus, the EU Digital Services Act (DSA) package, adopted on 23 April 2022, is a landmark, aiming to protect internet users by establishing an ‘unprecedented new standard’ for online platforms that will see companies such as Google, Meta (Facebook) and Twitter

### **GLAMers: Enhancing GLAMs through youth engagement during the COVID-19 crisis**

The Erasmus+ project ‘GLAMers: Enhancing GLAMs through youth engagement during the COVID-19 crisis’ provides a collection of good practices involving youth engagement by galleries, libraries, archives and museums (GLAMs) during the pandemic and training opportunities to support GLAMs in their digital transformation through the participation of youth (<https://glamers.eu/>). What the project makes clear is that youth communities can take an active role both in society and in the co-design of new relationships between GLAMs and young audiences, creating initiatives that contribute to better societies through civic empowerment.

## Digital cultural platform Europeana

An example of a promising practice is the digital cultural platform Europeana, where people from across the world can access the digital cultural heritage of some 3 000 European libraries, museums, and audiovisual collections. In November 2021, the European Commission published a recommendation on a common European data space to accelerate the digitisation of cultural heritage assets. Europeana will be the basis for building this common data space, allowing museums, galleries, libraries and archives across Europe to share and reuse digitised cultural heritage images, such as 3D models of historical sites and high-quality scans of paintings.

The campaign ‘**A school year with Europeana**’ put a spotlight on how the education community has been integrating digital culture into the classroom (<https://pro.europeana.eu/tags/a-school-year-with-europeana>). In partnership with European Schoolnet, 1 800 teachers in primary and secondary education from 55 different countries worked with the Europeana collections during the 2018/2019 academic year and created more than 200 learning scenarios. All the relevant material is featured on the ‘Teaching with Europeana’ blog (<https://teachwitheuropeana.eun.org/>).

held accountable for illegal and harmful content. The DSA contains EU-wide due diligence obligations that will apply to all digital services that connect consumers to goods, services or content, including new procedures for faster removal of illegal content and comprehensive protection for users’ fundamental rights online.

The DSA and the Digital Markets Act have two main goals: to create a safer digital space in which the fundamental rights of all users of digital services are protected and to establish a level playing field to foster innovation, growth and competitiveness, both in the European Single Market and globally <sup>(17)</sup>.

The new framework under the DSA is founded on European values, including respect for human rights, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law. It will rebalance the rights and responsibilities

of users, online intermediaries, including online platforms and very large online platforms, and public authorities.

The legal framework established by the DSA and the Digital Markets Act will also help in countering the inevitable misinformation on, or biased interpretations of, the motives and impact of public policies and measures needed to curb climate change and sustain biodiversity. Younger generations, who practically live in the fast-paced online world, may be susceptible to such misinformation, but, on the other hand, they are also more media literate than most of those belonging to older generations.

Given its significance for sustainability and cultural participation, the cultural and creative sector should be fully included in all resulting digital policies and instruments, thus also contributing to achieving SDGs 4, 5, 8, 10 and 16.

<sup>(17)</sup> [https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/package/digital-services-and-digital-markets-act\\_17701](https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/package/digital-services-and-digital-markets-act_17701)

The OMC group makes the following recommendations to the European Commission, the Member States and the cultural and creative sector.

- ↳ Develop meaningful connections with the next generation of change-makers through, for example, peer group networks, focus groups and polls.
- ↳ Continue to assess the digital competitiveness of the culture sector and identify gaps and priorities.
- ↳ Develop targeted policies to help the cultural and creative sector to reduce its carbon footprint while catching up with the digital transition and the data economy.



### **The National Plan of Arts, Portugal**

The mission of the National Plan of Arts mission is to promote social transformation, mobilising the educational power of the arts and heritage in the lives of all citizens. The national plan was instituted by the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education, covering 2019–2029. It will entail the implementation of cultural school projects in partnership with local artistic and cultural organisations. It is intended to expand the impact of culture on teaching and learning, formal and non-formal, and to support teachers in their teaching, enabling closer connections between content and skills in different areas. The aim is to offer access to multiple artistic languages and enriched cultural references, through the provision of activities, programmes and artistic and cultural projects. The plan also aims to promote the development of the curricula of the various educational and training institutions involved and of the areas of competences set out in the *Profile of Students Leaving Mandatory Schooling*.



10

# PROVOKE CHANGE IN HUMAN BEHAVIOURS AND PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES

What moves people?  
Storytelling helps.  
Do no harm.



It is high time we moved beyond resistance and obstacles. 'The situation is clear: climate change is exclusively man-made. If we don't do anything, we will perish. The planet will continue to exist, but we will no longer exist. So, let's do something!' (Ursula von der Leyen, President of the EU Commission, 13 January 2022, in DIE ZEIT). To achieve the necessary sustainability turnaround, reduced resource use among the most affluent 15 % of the world population will be essential (see message 1). This involves the citizens and residents of all EU Member States. Hence the European way of life needs to change and adapt. As stated by de Vries, 'to decouple economic growth from resource use we must fundamentally change the way we consume, produce, travel, work, live, and above all, think. Such transformational change represents a cultural challenge of unprecedented proportions; one that requires creativity, imagination, and innovation, as well as empathy and solidarity. The Green Deal challenges each and every one of us to change our hearts, our thinking, and our behaviour. Europeans, in other words, need to change their cultural habits' (de Vries, 2021, p. 10).

The 75-year-old constitution of UNESCO starts by recognising that 'since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed'. As regards the cultural dimension of sustainable development, we can similarly state that, since unsustainable ways of life persist because of our mindsets, attitudes, behaviour and ways of thinking, these mindsets and behaviours must be updated and rewired.

Mostly, we humans seem to be rather slow learners where our own personal situation is concerned. Unless we have been brought up in a culture of planting olive trees for the next and following generations, we tend to privilege fast and short-term rewards over long-term thinking and benefits. Reluctance to modify behaviour to prevent future ill health is a classic example of this. Furthermore, even with extensive academic education, our way of thinking remains biased. This often prompts severe misreading of correlations, causalities, situations and proportions, as can be demonstrated by ample evidence (Kahnemann, 2011).

Provoking reflective change is possible, though, not just through disruption but also and especially through creativity and humour. If Europeans were to bring about a transformative shift in self-development, this would send the strong message that open, democratic and free societies can empower themselves and their citizens to change and adapt.

The essential role of culture in promoting this type of transformation is widely acknowledged. The 2019 resolution of the Council of the EU and the Member States on the cultural dimension of sustainable development described it as follows: 'As the defining characteristic of humanity, cultures, in all their diversity and richness, embody values and are sources of identity, by virtue of which culture can have a transformative role as a creator of sustainability, promoting sustainable lifestyles and societies while enhancing quality of life.'

This understanding sees culture **as** sustainable development. Whereas culture **in** sustainable development refers to culture as a legitimate self-standing pillar of sustainable development, like the traditional environmental, economic and social pillars, culture as sustainable development focuses precisely on culture's transformative power, and thus goes beyond a sector- or pillar-based approach. Capitalising on culture's capacity to accelerate sustainability transformation means, on the one hand, that cultural policy toolkits must be coherent and assessed using a sustainability lens and, on the other, that the cultural expressions that people have access to and participate in are diverse and discoverable. These cultural expressions include intangible heritage practices as well as natural and cultural heritage, in addition to cultural spaces that foster new types of conversations.

This transformative role of culture requires a new understanding of communication and soft skills among cultural and heritage professionals, as well as new offers for audiences, creators and producers. Feeling overwhelmed ('emotional DNA') by crisis phenomena and data can hamper action; we need to create images of possible sustainable futures, foster critical yet optimistic thinking and develop constructive hope. Motivation for change comes in equal parts from hope and fear. There are no 'quick fixes' or shortcuts, as adapting one's identity, values, attitudes and behaviour obviously takes time. The substance of these activities clearly contributes to achieving both SDG 12 (change towards sustainable lifestyles) and SDG 4 (quality learning and appraisal of cultural diversity) of the 2030 Agenda.



### **Clothes as an important cultural feature of lifestyle**

Clothes make the man or woman and are an important cultural feature of lifestyle. Since 2020, the yearly call for scholarships for young up-and-coming fashion designers in Austria requires that two out of five of the selected designers deal with societal challenges in connection with the 2030 Agenda in their fashion collections or projects, as an incentive to explore creative approaches to the SDGs.

Source: <https://www.austrianfashionassociation.at/StartstipendienMODE.html>

This resonates with the new EU strategy for sustainable and circular textiles, communicated on 30 March 2022. The strategy aims to make textiles more durable, repairable, reusable and recyclable, to tackle fast fashion, textile waste and the destruction of unsold textiles, and to ensure that production of clothing and textiles fully respects social rights.

Source: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_22\\_2013](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_2013)

The OMC group makes the following recommendations to the European Commission and the Member States.

- ↳ Invest in capacity building in and with the arts and culture sector to imagine, conceptualise and act upon sustainable scenarios for the future.
- ↳ Seek new communication and content alliances and partnerships with the next generation of academics and media and cultural professionals to fully harness the transformative power of culture.
- ↳ Develop a joint peer-to-peer mechanism for sharing experiences and best practices in this respect.



## It's OK to laugh at climate change

Analysing the Netflix film *Don't Look Up*, Joshua Ettinger, DPhil candidate at the School of Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford, explores the types of artistic and cultural storytelling that invite change.

Source: Ettinger (2022)



11

# ASSESS AND ENHANCE IMPACT

Measure what you value. The culture sector as change-maker.



We have already entered the decade of action to ensure that the SDGs are met as fully as possible by 2030, in addition to having adopted the ambition to achieve a carbon-free Europe by 2050. We are not there yet. A deepened understanding of the impact that the cultural and creative sector has on accelerating the necessary transformations will motivate action and facilitate decision-making.

As can be seen in the current reporting practice on integrating cultural policies, measures and perspectives into national sustainable development strategies (see message 5), rich information on the work pursued by Member States is being shared regularly both through periodic reporting on UNESCO Conventions and through VNRs on the objectives of the 2030 Agenda. Mostly, this information describes policies and programmes envisaged or currently under way. Where implementation cycles started a few years ago, Member States and cultural actors may be able to share outputs or even outcomes – ideally supported by data from structured self-assessment and/or independent external evaluation – as part of their reporting to each other. Currently, the percentage of cultural policies that are evaluated is still very low. Longitudinal assessments are rare. And the cultural dimension of sustainable development strategies has not yet been considered systematically in these evaluations.

Assessing the impact of the culture sector as transformational change-maker, as well as of specific programmes and actions with a sustainability element, requires more qualitative and quantitative data, as well as a medium- to long-term time horizon in planning processes that allow us to identify palpable impact later. Over the past 5–7 years, UNESCO's Internal Oversight Service has been developing a theory-of-change approach to assessing the impact of working with UNESCO's culture conventions. Similarly, the results and possible impact of EU-funded culture projects could be better assessed. As stated by de Vries (2021, p. 46), 'cultural professionals, political decision-makers and citizens would benefit particularly from more systematic identification and presentation of good practices'. Systematic external, independent evaluation of EU projects would be useful, generate evidence about project impacts and make the case for culture stronger. De Vries also points to the very useful compendium of successful cultural projects financed by EU Structural Funds, published by the European Commission 10 years ago, before the 2030 Agenda was adopted. Recent, very useful, communication activities of the European Commission encompass a revamped website on culture and creativity, a new *CulturEU Funding Guide* and publications addressing political priorities, such as *Creative Europe 2014–2020 – Gender equality, sustainability and digitalisation: Cultural cooperation projects for a Union that strives for more*.

### Sustainable development hubs

In the central public administration system of Romania, sustainable development hubs are being created in each public authority by the Department of Sustainable Development, Government of Romania. The people nominated to act as hubs benefited from specialised professional training between May and September 2022, provided in cooperation with the Faculty of Administration and Public Management of the Bucharest University of Economic Studies, to acquire the competences necessary for the role of sustainable development expert. The medium-term objective is for the hubs to ensure the implementation and monitoring of Romania's sustainable development strategy for 2030. This is part of the project Sustainable Romania, financed by the European Social Fund through the operational programme on administrative capacity for 2014–2020.

Accelerating the transformation towards sustainability requires new approaches using change management methods in cultural and memory institutions and platforms, combining their management of facilities, processes and cultural production with outreach and communications to boost the motivation of citizens and lifelong learners of all ages to take action for sustainability.

'Measure what you value' is a lesson learned by many value-oriented organisations and initiatives. Multiple interesting efforts are being pursued using

self-assessment tools throughout the planning cycle in combination with external evaluation, where possible. Leadership and management in cultural policies and cultural infrastructure are one of the areas of focus of this innovative community of practice, and most recently it has been building capacity for transformation management. This knowledge could be shared more systematically and promoted more energetically. In 3–5 years, it should be possible to document the combined impact of culture policies and sectoral initiatives as a catalyst for transformation towards sustainability. It is interesting in

### Programme for permanent professional development

The 2020–2024 programme for permanent professional development in the culture sector in the Netherlands sets out three main principles: (1) contribute to the costs of lifelong learning activities in order to stimulate lifelong learning; (2) promote professional development to increase the human capital and earning potential of all cultural workers, regardless of contract type, and cultural institutions; (3) create structural change by initiating and facilitating collective agreements about the financing and encouragement of professional development. Permanent professional development is offered by Platform ACCT in cooperation with Federatie Cultuur, Creatieve Coalitie, Kunstenbond.

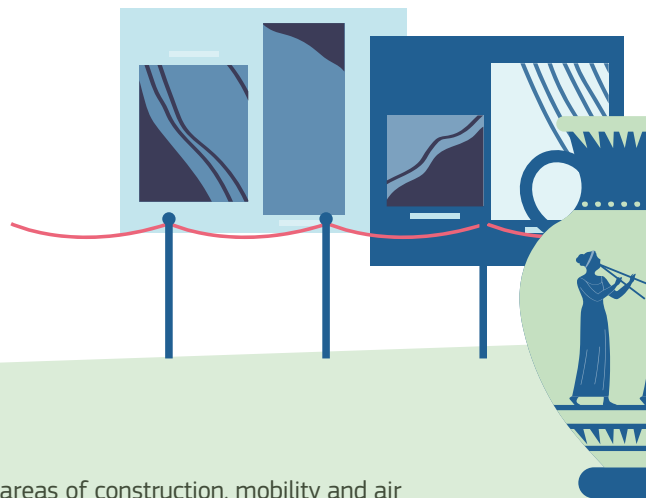
Source: <https://werktuigppo.nl/>

### Capacity-building programme for transformation managers from the arts and culture sector

In 2021, the German Action Network for Sustainability in Culture and the Media started to develop a capacity-building programme for transformation managers from the arts and culture sector, in cooperation with the Cologne Chamber of Commerce and Industry. As a result, transformation packages have been developed for 13 partners, including theatres, concert halls, opera, museums, art galleries and a library. The certified managers continue to cooperate as a network, thus enhancing and accelerating changes in practice.

*Source:* <https://ihk-koeln.de/hauptnavigation/weiterbildung/zertifikatslehrgaenge/transformationsmanager-nachhaltige-kultur-ihk-5243850>

this respect that ministers for culture of the G20 pointed to the need to improve management skills in the cultural and creative sector as part of their pledge to '[introduce] Culture in the G20 work stream, given its strong economic and social impact at the national and global level' (G20 Research Group, 2021). A similar acknowledgement of culture's potential and forward-looking approach would be most welcome across the various relevant organisations and policy platforms.



### Impact of museums

Museums have the greatest climate impact in the areas of construction, mobility and air conditioning. Concrete measures to address these 'low-hanging fruits' should be taken. In addition to reducing their CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, museums also have the potential to have an impact by communicating the importance of sustainability. Through projects that have a positive impact on society, museums can make a significant contribution to a change in thinking and a positive change in values. Sustainability must be seen as a whole system, not limited to climate protection. In addition to CO<sub>2</sub> reduction, museums must, for example, be able to continue to pursue their educational mission and address all areas of society in the process.

*Source:* Network of European Museum Organisations (2022)



The OMC group makes the following recommendations to the European Commission and the Member States.

- ↳ Identify key projects and programmes for investment in independent evaluations and assessment reports, to be conducted from the perspective of the cultural dimension of sustainability, focusing on success indicators and criteria for measuring the impact of culture on sustainable development.
- ↳ Support initiatives to further improve and professionalise management skills in the cultural and creative sector, with a focus on the cultural dimension of sustainable development.
- ↳ Identify transformation management efforts across the cultural and creative sectors in Member States on an ongoing basis.
- ↳ Support structured exchange of information to enhance replicability and impact.



### **Social Platform for Holistic Heritage Impact Assessment**

The **Social Platform for Holistic Heritage Impact Assessment** offers for the first time an interactive self-assessment tool for measuring the impact of heritage interventions throughout the complete project cycle. The approach was developed by a multipartner consortium as a Horizon 2020 project (during 2020–2022), led by Roma Tre University, Italy, with partners from Ireland, Greece, Spain, Croatia and Austria. This approach to impact assessment could inspire similar tools in other parts of the cultural and creative sector.

Source: <https://sophiaplatform.eu/en>

# The way forward, by the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture and the co-chairs

The work of the OMC group and this *Stormy Times* report focus on framing the cultural dimension of sustainable development as an emerging issue. The 11 messages highlight **areas for action and transformation pathways** identified by the group. Subsequently, this report is by nature forward looking.

Given the OMC group's task of facilitating and steering sustainability transformation by harnessing the cultural dimension of sustainable development, the group is also contributing to the current debate on updating the governance of sustainable development strategies by focusing on transformational levers to overcome the obstacles preventing or slowing down the achievement of the SDGs.

The *Stormy Times* report and its contribution to identifying transformation pathways are to be seen in particular as a **roadmap for future work**. Culture in all its forms, expressions and meanings, whether as an intrinsic value or as representations of tangible and intangible heritage, must be at the heart of any transformational path for human development.

The EU has been progressively integrating the cultural dimension of sustainable development into its policies, and the planned Commission report on the interplay between cultural policies and sustainable development in European actions is expected to be another step towards full recognition of the value of culture in this area and to pave the way for further strategic reflection on the issue.

Accordingly, the messages of the OMC group are also designed to help shape the narrative on sustainable development and clarify the essential role of its cultural dimension. Although increasing understanding of the need for transformation and the role of culture in it is important, it remains the case that it is **serious commitment** and **action** that are most urgently needed.

The OMC group puts forward a number of recommendations. Some of them relate to the overall structure of key EU strategic frameworks (e.g. the Green Deal) and to future work on culture (messages 1 and 2 respectively). Recommendations on joint consultations with the European

scientists involved in the *Global Sustainable Development Report 2019*, with government experts involved in the sustainability-relevant OMC groups and with key civil society organisations (message 2) and on creating a strategic sustainability platform for the cultural and creative sector (message 3) constitute a call for yet stronger outreach and effective multistakeholder policymaking.

Enhancing policy coherence is addressed in several messages, including messages 2, 3, 5 and 7. The recommendation under message 5 to hold a peer-to-peer meeting between the national contact points responsible for VNR reporting and reporting under the 2005 UNESCO-Convention reflects the importance of getting out of silos and accelerating sharing of knowledge.

It is the hope of the OMC group that its messages and recommendations inform and inspire EU policymaking generally, and in particular work on culture for sustainable development, notably the forthcoming report from the European Commission, expected before the end of 2022, and the future work plan for culture. As evidenced by its quadrennial report in 2021 on the implementation of the 2005 UNESCO Convention, the European Commission develops and implements an impressive number of cultural and culture-related public policies and measures. However, these remain somewhat fragmented, as they are developed to serve different policy objectives. Few of these measures are intended to promote sustainable development directly or designed using a sustainability lens. Fostering their coherence with sustainability policies and assessing their contribution to sustainability, as appropriate, should help to foster the

impact of such policies and measures, with respect to both their intended policy objectives and their contribution to sustainable development. This should also help to consolidate the evidence regarding the effectiveness and relevance of these measures.

The same observation can be made as regards many cultural policies and measures implemented by the EU Member States. They too would benefit from increased public policy coherence and better public policy planning.

It is the OMC group's view that the vision of culture as a public good should be a new inspirational model for policymakers to pursue. This would help in reaching a full understanding of the role of culture in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and in achieving sustainability beyond 2030, in line with recent efforts and commitments to better integrate culture and the creative economy into development processes and policies.

For all these reasons, strong determination and concrete commitments should guide the discussions at UNESCO's World Conference on culture policies and sustainable development – MONDIACULT 2022, and the aim should be to translate the results and messages of its final declaration into an ambitious plan, including corresponding actions by the EU and the Member States at global level. The 2030 Agenda is a global agenda, adopted by the UN, and its monitoring, reporting and fine-tuning also take place at UN level. The EU's role in this global, multilateral dimension has not yet been fully exploited. The EU and its Member States could make a more tangible and visible contribution to UNESCO and the UN

than they have done so far, even leading the way at global level on the cultural dimension of sustainable development, if it were to strengthen its international cultural relations. The expectations of cultural stakeholders and communities in this regard are high.

Moreover, considering that the cultural dimension of sustainable development is not only about cultural and culture-related policies but also about sustainable development and sustainability transformation, the OMC group believes that basically all measures intended to achieve the SDGs would benefit from a systematic assessment of the potential of culture to promote more sustainable lifestyles and transformational paths to behavioural change. However, these changes will require measures from the EU and the Member States to promote sustainability by enlarging the consensus on and public support for these goals. All the EU institutions and the Member States know how to promote sustainability, but the necessary political decisions to boost

sustainability transformation, which will involve costs and disruption to the status quo, may not enjoy popular support among electorates; the road ahead is long and winding – perhaps too much so for our societies and economies to transform in time, given the urgency and magnitude of the action required.

As noted in this report, the EU is a cultural powerhouse as well as an economic force. Jacques Delors famously said in his address to the European Parliament on the broad lines of the European Commission policy in 1989 that ‘you cannot fall in love with the single market’. This quote captures perfectly the need for an emotional attachment on the part of people and communities if very broad political objectives are to be realised. Sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda resonate with large parts of our populations, certainly among the youth, but less so among older generations.

The EU has a primary responsibility to reinforce its invaluable instruments and better exploit opportunities to strengthen



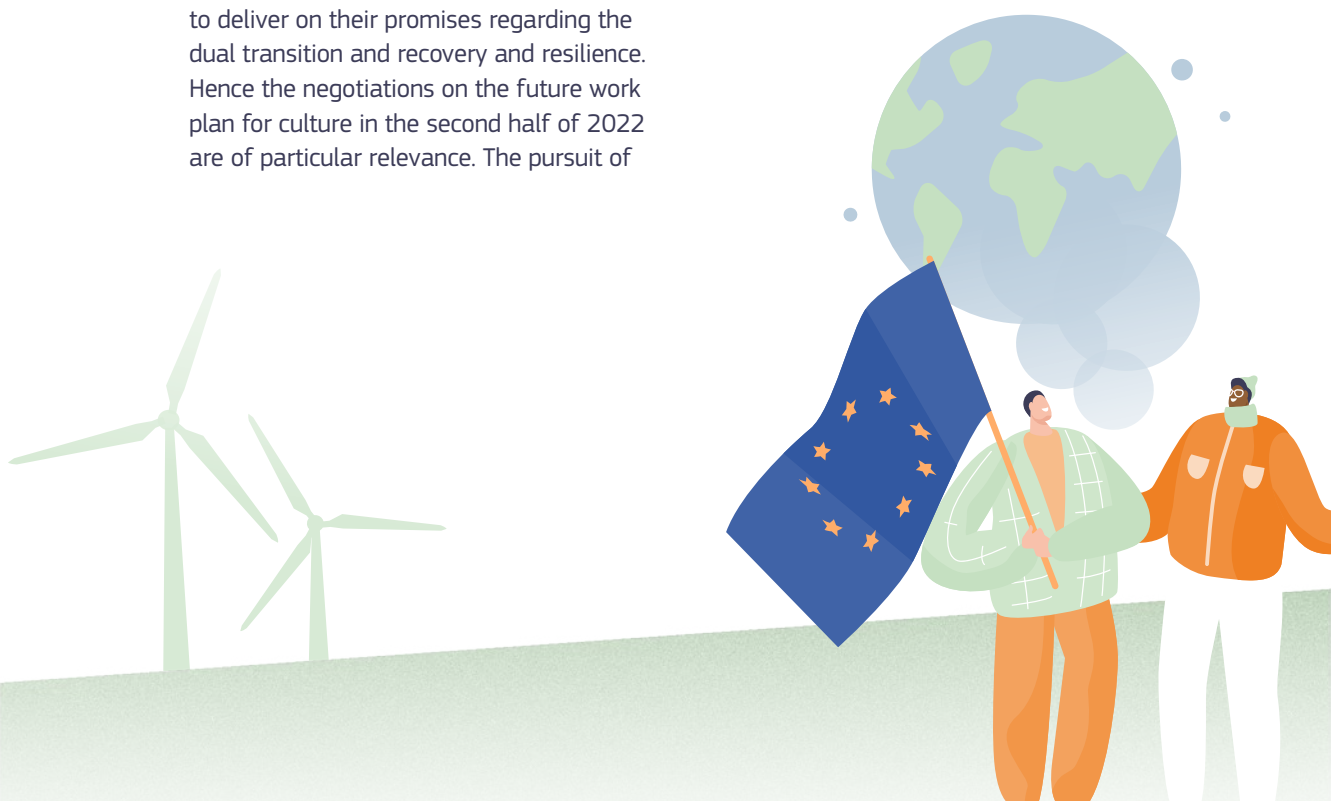
its policy framework for culture. In the OMC group's view, the EU should provide effective support for the development of a broader policy, financial and regulatory framework in which culture and sustainable development policies are intertwined.

The EU institutions can inspire an exploration of ways to achieve this objective by making a stronger commitment to engaging with the transformative power of culture to bring about behavioural change and create better, more inclusive ways of life.

As regards the Council and the Member States, the work plans for culture have proven to be very useful in tackling policy topics of mutual interest in a structured manner. Given the ongoing disruptions and their impacts on the cultural and creative sector and on our societies at large, certainly including sustainable development, there is a palpable need for both the EU and the Member States to deliver on their promises regarding the dual transition and recovery and resilience. Hence the negotiations on the future work plan for culture in the second half of 2022 are of particular relevance. The pursuit of

sustainability and the harnessing of its cultural dimension are policy objectives shared by the EU institutions and the Member States. Consequently, the work plan for culture should serve as a roadmap and a platform for action to meet those urgent objectives.

Again, it is all about transformation. It is high time that the EU and its Member States capitalised on culture **as** sustainable development to make a hitherto fragmented collection of policies and measures into meaningful and participatory areas for action and transformation pathways. It is worth noting that even the mandate given in 2020 to this OMC group underestimated the potential for change offered by the cultural dimension of sustainable development. Thus, this report makes recommendations that can help in scaling up the possibilities and ambitions for action for and from Europe.



## Sustainable development goals



Source: UNESCO ([https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/sdgs\\_poster\\_936\\_en.png](https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/sdgs_poster_936_en.png))

## List of boxes

- Box 1** Nature and humans – raising awareness
- Box 2** Policy change is possible
- Box 3** Focus on culture and climate change
- Box 4** Human imagination of time horizons
- Box 5** The EU's post-COVID-19 Recovery and Resilience Facility
- Box 6** Cultural policy as an integral part of national policy and sustainable development strategy
- Box 7** Strengthening the development of sustainable cultural tourism
- Box 8** The BiblioLab programme of Barcelona Provincial Council
- Box 9** 17 Museums × 17 SDGs
- Box 10** Climate Matters: Research, Analysis and Opinion
- Box 11** Closing the data gaps: thematic indicators for culture in the 2030 Agenda formulated by UNESCO
- Box 12** UNESCO's Culture|2030 indicators project – the hands-on experiences of Portugal and Romania, 2022
- Box 13** European Commission: Voices of Culture – EU stakeholder dialogue on culture and the SDGs
- Box 14** Green Europe Experience
- Box 15** Carbon-neutral, low-waste cultural facilities and formats
- Box 16** Re-examining digital consumption habits
- Box 17** Traditional knowledge, techniques and organisation for sustainability
- Box 18** The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions Green Library Award
- Box 19** Circular tailoring
- Box 20** Stage set based on uprooted fir trees
- Box 21** The 2013 special Eurobarometer on cultural participation
- Box 22** Samen Cultuurmaken
- Box 23** The Victoria Square Project
- Box 24** Identity Building and Sharing Business Initiative
- Box 25** Safe havens
- Box 26** Culture for All
- Box 27** Freemuse
- Box 28** UN and UNESCO international days relevant to cultural and artistic freedom
- Box 29** Digital cultural platform Europeana
- Box 30** GLAMers: enhancing GLAMs through youth engagement during the COVID-19 crisis
- Box 31** The National Plan of Arts, Portugal
- Box 32** Clothes as an important cultural feature of lifestyle
- Box 33** It's OK to laugh at climate change
- Box 34** Programme for permanent professional development
- Box 35** Sustainable development hubs
- Box 36** Capacity-building programme for transformation managers from the arts and culture sector
- Box 37** Impact of museums
- Box 38** Social Platform for Holistic Heritage Impact Assessment

## Abbreviations

<b>2030 Agenda</b>	2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
<b>CCIs</b>	cultural and creative industries
<b>DSA</b>	Digital Services Act
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>GLAMs</b>	galleries, libraries, archives and museums
<b>IPCC</b>	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
<b>MONDIACULT</b>	UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development
<b>OMC</b>	Open Method of Coordination
<b>RRF</b>	Recovery and Resilience Facility
<b>SDG</b>	sustainable development goal
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>VNR</b>	voluntary national review



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