UNESCO Global Report Re|Shaping Cultural Policies. Advancing Creativity for Development

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The new UNESCO Global Report *Re|Shaping Cultural Policies* is the second report in a series that is designed to monitor the implementation of the *2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* that was ratified by 146 Parties, including the European Union. The purpose of this series is to provide evidence of how this implementation process contributes to attaining the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all, which are quite ambitious targets to be achieved over the next 15 years.

Looking at the UNESCO report, what can one discern regarding what governments and non-governmental actors have done to implement the 2005 Convention? Cultural professionals are still searching for answers they base on quadrennial periodic reporting. These two publications — the 2015 report entitled *A Decade Promoting the Diversity of Cultural Expressions for Development*, and its follow-up entitled *Advancing Creativity for Development* — form a resourceful piece of information when it comes to the progress made in policy making related to the diversity of cultural expressions. For those not well versed in the UNESCO terminology, according to the 2005 Convention (UNESCO 2015: 7) the diversity of cultural expressions 'refers to the manifold ways in which the cultures of groups and societies find expression. These expressions are passed on within and among groups and societies'. The report itself provides us with a plethora of instruments that different governments and non-governmental actors designed in order to address this, and it provides an important step in evaluating these efforts.

The UNESCO Report brought together a diverse group of independent experts in order to analyse the quadrennial periodic reports submitted by Parties since 2015. From the time the report was first published in 2015, the methodological framework for monitoring and evaluation has consisted of the following four goals: 1. Support sustainable systems of governance for culture; 2. Achieve a balanced flow of cultural goods and services and the mobility of artists and cultural professionals; 3. Integrate culture into sustainable development frameworks; and 4. Promote human rights and fundamental freedoms. The report consists of ten chapters divided into four sections titled according to these UNESCO goals.

The first goal, which concerns supporting sustainable systems of governance for culture, contributes to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 8, 16, and 17. In other words, it deals with policies that promote local cultural products and production. It also deals with decision-making in public institutions and participatory processes that involve civil society in policy design and implementation and with capacity-building support to developing countries. The first chapter 'Towards more collaborative cultural governance', written by Jordi Baltà Portolés in collaboration with Milena Dragićević Šešić, highlights the influence of the Convention on cultural policies, collaborative governance, and multi-stakeholder policy making, especially with regard to developing countries. There has been a change in policy discourse, and cultural aspects have been integrated into policy documents that cover related domains, which in turn creates environments conducive to diversity of cultural expressions. However, the authors insist that collaborative frameworks for the governance of culture need to be created and that they need to involve multiple stakeholder groups such as government ministries, state and local government, and nongovernmental actors. The second chapter, 'Enlarging choices: Cultural content and public service media', is written by Christine M. Merkel, who identifies many improvements in the legislative base for media freedom and diversity. However, her research revealed some unexpected trends; for example, the state of media freedom worsened in 66% of countries, and only 19% of countries have developed specific gender awareness programmes for publicly-owned media organizations. The next chapter, 'Cultural policies in the age of platforms', by Octavio Kulesz, addresses the challenge of the technological revolution, which had a huge impact on the governance of the media and the cultural value

chain. According to Kulesz, transforming the cultural value chain from a pipeline-like configuration to a network model is fundamental; in other words, a digital model requiring countries to design new strategies for the implementation of cultural policies is necessary. The fourth chapter, 'Engaging civil society in cultural governance' by Andrew Firmin, covers civil society participation in supporting sustainable systems of governance for culture. As expected, current laws in most countries do not enable the participation of civil society. This last chapter also brings two interesting cases of successful advocacy in Chile and a new civil society vision for culture in Burkina Faso. The first section, therefore, focuses on the most compelling governance challenges of today's society, which is the primary concern of this Global Report.

The authors of the chapters in the next three sections deal with the variety of issues: mobility of artists and other cultural professionals, flows of cultural goods and services, international legal treaties and agreements, sustainable development, gender equality, and artistic freedom. In the chapter 'Surviving the paradoxes of mobility', author Khadija El Bennaoui addresses mobility challenges facing artists in the global south. Unfortunately, the imbalanced mobility between the global north and the global south is still highly present, and several factors such as visa regulations continue to hinder the artists' access to the market. The only chapter which concerns the third goal of the SDGs, 'The integration of culture in sustainable development' by Avril Joffe, deals with the cultural dimension of national development plans and programmes and explores the innovative ways of fostering sustainable development through culture. The 2005 Convention would not be properly implemented without calls for the integration of a gender perspective into cultural policies and measures. In this regard, some of the key findings are presented by Ammu Joseph in the chapter 'Gender equality: missing in action'.

The implementation of the 2005 Convention is an ambitious project, but the data provided by the Global Report suggests that progress has been made in implementing the 2005 Convention since the publication of the first Global Report in 2015. The evaluation of data showed that new approaches to strategic issues have emerged, particularly on the issues of artistic freedom, the mobility of artists, gender equality, public service media, and digital creativity. However, what is evident from the 2017 report is that cultural policy-making is still far from being *reshaped*, for it takes a serious amount of time to yield valuable results.

There is a risk that many people will not dwell on the 2005 Convention and the Sustainable Development Goals unless they are already somewhat familiar with the topic. Unfortunately, where UNESCO is concerned, there is a lack of promotion in the media in general. In the long term, the report could have a positive impact on these issues, which would be enhanced if the public were made more aware of such work. I recommend the report first and foremost to students and young researchers of various professions (not restricted to culture) to become acquainted with the cultural policy transformations on a global level. The third edition of the global report is scheduled for December 2020.

This publication and a short summary are freely accessible in English and French on the website of the Global Report.

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References:

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