Chapter 1

Building on strong foundations

Andy C. Pratt

KEY FINDINGS

- Cultural governance has strengthened significantly. By 2024, all Parties reported having a ministry or agency with responsibility and funding for culture, signalling growing acknowledgement of the need for robust institutional frameworks to support the cultural and creative sector.
- Decentralization trends are reinforcing this progress. Responsibilities for promoting the cultural and creative sectors expanded from 79% to 90% of Parties, and 92% now report having regulatory frameworks that foster interministerial cooperation. These developments indicate a broad commitment to strengthening cultural governance at multiple levels.
- Education and economic ministries are the main partners in interministerial cooperation. Education agencies now account for 28.1% of partnerships (up from 19%), and trade, economy, business and finance ministries account for 25%, reflecting a focus on leveraging the economic contributions of the cultural and creative sector. Still, a major gap remains between policy recognition and implementation in the area of innovation: although 77% of reporting countries acknowledge 'creativity and innovation' in their national sustainable development plans, only 3% of interministerial cooperation measures involve innovation-focused agencies. This disparity indicates challenges in aligning the sector's creative potential with policy frameworks that tend to prioritize technological innovation.
- Developing countries are narrowing the public funding gap, but the global average remains below 0.6% of GDP, reflecting a continuous decline in direct funding for culture globally. Developing countries have increased government spending on culture since 2018, while spending in developed countries has generally flatlined or declined since 2014. Despite this convergence, developed countries still allocate more than twice the share of their GDP to the cultural and creative sector compared to developing countries.
- Indirect public expenditures – such as tax deductions – are becoming a major policy tool for supporting the cultural and creative sector, particularly in the audio-visual sector. While direct public expenditures produce cultural goods with distinct social and cultural value, tax incentives work by reducing financial barriers for private sector investment. Yet, the impact of fiscal incentives policies is rarely examined beyond a narrow economic perspective, raising critical questions about their purpose, effectiveness and influence on the diversity of cultural expressions.
- Comprehensive and reliable data are essential for effective cultural policy making, as they enable assessment of policy results and foster evidence-based governance. The share of Parties with institutions for collecting cultural statistics has risen from 62% to 81%, and those with statistical offices or research bodies evaluating cultural policies has increased from 46% to 61%. However, their development lags behind most other areas of public policy (such as health, education and transport), and Parties frequently report challenges such as limited statistical reporting, expertise and resources for interministerial coordination.
- Cultural policy is increasingly oriented towards employment. Today 85% of Parties report job creation measures, up from 68% in the last reporting cycle. The most frequently reported measures, each cited by 29% of Parties, are integrating cultural employment into broader cultural policy strategies or national development plans and improving access to finance.
- Concerns are growing about formalizing cultural and creative sector activities within broader economy and governance frameworks. This reflects the persistent precarity of work in the sector – characterized by high levels of non-standard employment – including self-employment, part-time, secondary and intermittent work – and limited access to social benefits such as pensions, childcare and sick leave.
- Labour market data indicate that self-employment in the cultural and creative sectors can be significantly higher than economy-wide averages. While these arrangements offer flexibility, Parties note that they also create structural vulnerabilities that underscore the need for stronger formalization measures.
- Intellectual Property and copyright are critical to building resilient cultural and creative industries, yet many regions still show low respect for copyright and lack effective collective management organizations (CMOs) to collect and redistribute earnings from creative work. Coverage beyond the music sector remains particularly weak: while CMOs for music operate in just over two-thirds of Parties, only 23-24% of developing countries have CMOs covering audio-visual, literary, visual arts, photography or graphic design fields.
- Education and training in the cultural and creative sector are shifting rapidly in response to technological change and evolving labour market needs. While 83% of Parties still offer university-level programmes, as in the last reporting cycle, coverage has declined across several domains – including media arts, music, performing arts and visual arts, each domain scoring between 71% and 78%. Publishing is now the least supported at 60% in tertiary and 63% in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programmes, followed by cultural management at 65%. This indicates a continuing education gap. In contrast, TVET programmes have expanded sharply, from 76% to 93%, addressing shortages in technical and craft skills. Cinema, audio-visual arts and design show strong growth across both tertiary and TVET offerings, reversing previous trends. Digital literacy programmes for creation and experimentation have also surged, from 49% to 63%, reflecting rapid adaptation to technological change.
- Capacity building, funding, and artist development programmes remain among the most popular measures, reported by 31.7% of Parties. Developing countries (85%) implement capacity-building initiatives more often than developed countries (79%) to help artists monetize their work, reflecting the need for more solid institutional frameworks for training and capacity building.

CULTURE SNAPSHOT

Robust institutional frameworks for cultural governance are crucial for:

- **Funding for culture**
- **Accessible public cultural services**
- **Effective cultural policies**
- **Interministerial cooperation**
- **Monitoring and collecting cultural statistics**

PROGRESS

100% of reporting countries indicate having a **ministry/agency** with competence and funding for culture

92% of countries have regulatory frameworks supporting **interministerial cooperation**

62% → 81%
The share of countries with institutions collecting **cultural statistics** is rising

Increased measures addressing **technical workforce and skills gaps**, with cultural TVET programmes in **93%** of countries

CHALLENGES

Less than 0.6% of **GDP** is dedicated to **direct funding for culture** globally

Cultural statistics development lags behind other areas of public policy (health, education, transport)

Precarity of work in the **creative sector** remains **persistent**

Intellectual Property and copyright frameworks remain weak, with **collective management organizations** limited in developing countries

University-level programmes have declined, especially in publishing and cultural management

EMERGING TRENDS

Indirect public expenditures are increasingly used as policy tools; however, their impact on cultural expressions **needs to be assessed**

Ministries of education and economy are emerging as main partners for **interministerial cooperation**

Cultural policy is increasingly oriented towards **employment**, with **85%** of countries reporting **job creation** measures

49% → 63%
More countries report **digital creation and experimentation literacy** programmes, reflecting adaptation to technological change

INTRODUCTION

As the cultural and creative sectors navigate an increasingly complex landscape, this opening chapter of the *Re|Shaping Policies for Creativity* report examines the foundational elements sustaining creative ecosystems – governance structures, public funding, training opportunities and policy priorities observed over the course of the four years from 2021 to 2024. Framed by Goal 1 of the Monitoring Framework of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005 Convention), the chapter examines two key indicators: the extent to which policies and measures support the development of dynamic cultural and creative sectors, and the degree to which policy making is informed and involves multiple public bodies.

Since the last edition of the report in 2022, the world has undergone profound shifts. The COVID-19 pandemic initially elevated the visibility of culture as a vital part of public life and well-being. Yet, this recognition has been challenged by a cascade of global crises – armed conflicts, rising political polarization, rapid technological development and the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI). These overlapping pressures have strained public budgets and shifted policy priorities, often to the detriment of culture. This chapter attempts to correlate recent data with possible factors that have influenced recent trends in the governance of the cultural and creative sector.

The 20th anniversary of the 2005 Convention in 2025 offered a valuable long-term perspective. Over the past two decades, the Convention has helped shape a more holistic and integrated approach to cultural policy. By embedding culture within broader development agendas and promoting the complementarity of economic and cultural goals, it has encouraged Parties to the Convention to view culture not as a luxury, but as a driver of sustainable development, social cohesion and innovation. And there is clear evidence of progress, along with a growing recognition of the need for robust institutional frameworks to support the cultural and creative sector.

However, the short and long term, as well as the regional and global perspectives presented in this chapter, underscore that challenges persist. For example, the global average of direct funding for culture continues to decline, even though the gap between developed and developing countries appears to be narrowing for the first time in a decade. As cultural policy increasingly intersects with economic and educational agendas, new opportunities – and tensions – are emerging. Governments are exploring ways to harness the creative economy for job creation and innovation, while grappling with persistent challenges unique to the sector. At the same time, a global shift in education priorities raises pressing questions about the future of artistic talent and the role of creativity in a tech-driven world. This chapter explores these evolving dynamics and their implications for the cultural and creative sector.

SETTING THE STAGE FOR INFORMED POLICY MAKING

Institutional architecture and ministerial mandates

When Parties to the 2005 Convention first reported in 2020 on the existence of a ministry or agency with ministerial status responsible for cultural and creative sectors, the proportion of Parties with such institutions was already exceptionally high across regions, with only the Asia and the Pacific region reporting a marginally lower rate (93%). Today, all reporting countries (100%) have established ministries or agencies with competence and budgets for culture.

Box 1.1 • Azerbaijan: establishment of the Department of Creative Industries and Digital Development at the Ministry of Culture

Established in September 2021, the Department of Creative Industries and Digital Development aims to enhance the role of cultural and creative industries in national development and policy making. Key activities include strengthening the legal and policy framework for cultural and creative industries, supporting their digital transformation – particularly accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic – and leading inclusive policy dialogue with various stakeholders. Additionally, the department operates the Creative Azerbaijan web portal (www.creative.az) to promote awareness, local production and export of creative goods and services, as well as to foster a supportive ecosystem for cultural and creative industries in Azerbaijan, particularly in the digital environment.

In the same year, the Azerbaijan Creative Industries Federation was also established to coordinate the development of creative industries, manage international and local projects, and coordinate government agencies and business partners with individuals, companies and public organizations operating in the field. The Federation is mandated to carry out awareness-raising activities; support the development of small and medium-sized enterprises in Azerbaijan; promote the production, promotion and export of creative products and services; support public entities in the field of creative industries; and develop initiatives within this framework.

Source: Azerbaijan QPR, 2022

While there has not been a significant change in the proportion of Parties reporting ministries or agencies with competence and budgets for culture, several Parties have reported changes in ministerial or governmental structures, including new ministries or departments being established. Where this has been reported, cultural and creative industries are placed alongside broader agendas. For example, Saint Lucia has created a combined ministry responsible for all areas of culture and creative industries, as well as information, media and broadcasting. The newly created Ministry of Tourism, Investment, Creative Industries, Culture and Information identifies the Cultural Development Foundation as its main implementing agency. Similarly, Azerbaijan has created new structures tasked with advancing both cultural and digital development (Box 1.1). Among the countries that took part in the UNESCO Culture 2030 Indicators pilot phase, seven out of ten (Burkina Faso, Colombia, Costa Rica, Morocco, Philippines, Portugal and Viet Nam) reported that tourism and sports/recreation were also included within the remit of their ministries responsible for culture. Not only do the cultural and creative sectors have global recognition within the policy-making arena, but these developments also indicate a trend towards the alignment of culture and other national development strategies (a topic explored in more detail in Chapter 8).

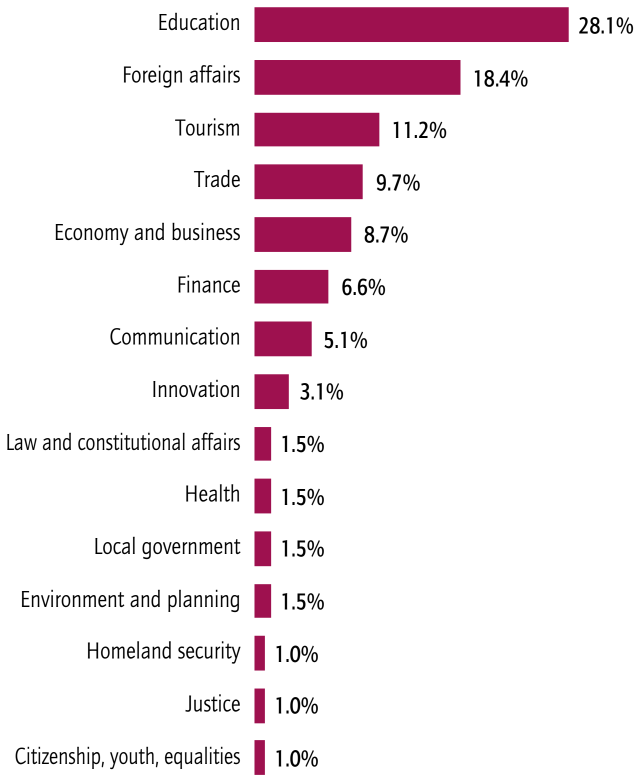
Interministerial collaboration and decentralization

A high percentage (92% globally) of countries report having regulatory frameworks that support the cultural and creative sector through interministerial cooperation, providing ongoing evidence of transversal cultural policy making. This level has remained largely stable since the last reporting period, although the share of developing countries reporting such frameworks declined slightly (from 92% in 2017-2020 to 89%). Regionally, the Latin American and Caribbean region is somewhat of an outlier, with a noticeably lower proportion of countries engaged in interministerial cooperation of this sort (76%), which has also decreased slightly from 81% in 2017-2020.

Closer analysis reveals that transversal collaboration extends across a wide range of separate policy domains (15). Of these, the most frequent partners for measures developed through interministerial cooperation were ministries and agencies in charge of education; these represented 28.1% of collaborative frameworks and measures (Figure 1.1). This represents a notable increase from the share recorded in the previous edition of the *Re|Shaping* report, when education was represented in 19% of the policies and measures designed through interministerial cooperation. Reported measures of this kind include collaboration on curriculum development and programmes to address skills gaps in the cultural workforce.

Figure 1.1

Distribution of policies and measures designed through interministerial cooperation, by remit of partnering ministries



Source: UNESCO (2005 Convention)

Examples include the 'Egyptian Craftspeople' initiative, as well as scholarships for cultural professionals as seen in Indonesia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. In Lithuania, the 'Cultural Passport' initiative, launched in 2018, provides each student with a set allowance for cultural education activities (11 euros for the 2024 school year). The project 'Sustainable Interaction of Culture and Education' further enhanced this initiative between 2022 and 2024, contributing to improving students' cultural competencies, with notable gains in critical thinking and creativity. It also laid the groundwork for deeper cooperation between cultural and education sectors, ensuring that cultural education becomes an integral part of student education and positioning cultural institutions as trusted providers of high-quality content in both formal and informal education settings.

The important relationship between culture and education is also reinforced through the UNESCO Framework for Culture and Arts Education, which was unanimously adopted by UNESCO Member States in February 2024 at the World Conference on Culture and Arts Education in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

The Framework promotes the effective integration of culture and arts education in both culture and education policies, alongside greater cooperation across public policy areas.

Figure 1.1 also shows a clear focus on leveraging the economic dimensions and contributions of cultural and creative sectors: 25% of measures developed through interministerial cooperation involved agencies with a remit for trade, economy and business, or finance. These include measures such as tax incentives to stimulate economic activity in the cultural and creative sector and public-private partnership initiatives (Box 1.2). In Finland, a cross-sector growth agreement for the audio-visual sector was launched by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of Education and Culture in early 2022, while Business Finland and the Finnish Film Foundation were delegated to develop the initiative. A public-private working group was formed with representatives from the sector, with the aim to boost internationalization and sustained development within Finland's audio-visual industry. With the sector already showing upward momentum, further work continues, and the successful model has since been extended to other creative industries starting in 2023.

After education, the most frequently reported agency involved in interministerial cooperation was foreign affairs (18.4%). This is not a surprising finding; rather, it reflects a continuing trend that underscores the important role of the 2005 Convention as an international cooperation platform in the cultural and creative sector. It is worth noting that while the proportion of policies and measures developed through interministerial collaboration with foreign affairs agencies might suggest a decline from the 31% reported during the 2017-2020 period, this is solely due to the increase in the sample size, as the number of interministerial measures have doubled in the most recent reporting cycle from 120 to 240 between 2021 and 2024.

For example, since 2021, Andorra's Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport and its Ministry of Foreign Affairs have jointly implemented a 'Cultural Diplomacy' programme aimed at positioning the country as both a cultural producer and host. This targeted co-ministerial initiative has led to increased financial and governmental support for artistic residency programmes such as 'FABER' and 'ArtCamp'. For example, within the framework of 'ArtCamp', the Department of Multilateral Affairs and Cooperation within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs introduced a grant scheme for artists which supports projects that integrate art and themes of social justice and sustainable development.

International cooperation that supports the diversity of cultural expressions and sustainable development is a core principle of national cultural institutes around the world, as well as international regional organizations such as the European Union (EU). In fact, the EU's Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026 includes strengthening the cultural dimension of the EU's external relations as one of its four priorities. In this context, the Cultural Relations Platform is an EU-funded initiative supporting international cultural relations and cooperation between European and global cultural and creative sectors. It was launched in 2016 for a four-year period and later extended through 2025. The Platform's mission is to strengthen the EU's ability to engage meaningfully with different audiences and stakeholders in partner countries, through enhanced cultural relations and cooperation with the cultural and creative sectors. The Cultural Relations Platform provides policy support for EU institutions; promotes and facilitates sustainable cultural exchanges, people-to-people activities and co-creation processes between European and non-European actors active in the cultural and creative sector; and builds global communities.

Box 1.2 • Colombia: developing tax incentives in support of cultural and creative industries

Colombia has implemented several tax incentives to stimulate the growth of its cultural and creative industries. The Ministry of Cultures, Arts and Knowledge, in cooperation with the Ministry of Finance's Directorate of National Taxes and Customs, introduced a tax exemption for eligible companies. At the time of reporting, 1,482 companies benefited from these tax breaks. Although this programme ran only from 2020 to 2022, Colombia continues to implement tax incentives in support of the cultural and creative sectors. These are now managed through the Colombian Crea Talent Corporation (CoCrea), established in 2019, which offers a 165% income tax deduction (meaning for every 100 Colombian pesos spent, up to 165 Colombian pesos can be deducted from the company's taxable income) for private individuals and entities investing in or donating to approved cultural projects through open and public calls. As of 2024, CoCrea has issued 338 investment or donation certificates, representing contributions of 220.8 billion Colombian pesos for projects valued at more than 471 billion Colombian pesos. In addition, CoCrea has financed 221 projects related to arts, culture and heritage across 26 of Colombia's 32 departments. Colombia's Superior Council of Fiscal Policy, which sets the maximum annual amount of investments or donations eligible for the tax incentive managed by CoCrea, has approved a larger fiscal quota year after year, signalling positive outcomes.

Source: Colombia QPR, 2024

The small number of measures developed through interministerial cooperation that were designed with agencies focused on innovation (just 3%) seems to raise questions about another finding, which shows that as many as 77% of reporting countries stated in their Quadrennial Periodic Reports that 'creativity and innovation' are recognized in their national sustainable development plans. The gulf between these two responses may point to a discrepancy in how innovation is understood – particularly in a sector inherently driven by imagination and continuous creativity versus in other areas of public policy where 'innovation' is typically associated with technological advancement.

While interministerial collaboration is concerned with the transversal governance of cultural policy, the practice and delivery of the cultural and creative sectors' activities is also context based. Hence, it requires Parties to also have decentralized responsibilities for policies and measures that promote the cultural and creative sector at subnational, municipal and local levels.

Quadrennial Periodic Report data indicate extensive and growing decentralization of responsibilities for policies and measures promoting the cultural and creative sector, having risen from 79% in the previous reporting period to 90%. This trend is also identical across developed and developing countries. Examples of new policies in this area include Indonesia's decentralization of cultural responsibilities for policy development (Box 1.3). In Lithuania, ten Regional Culture Councils were established (one for each county in the country) with the aim to bring the decision-making process closer to local communities and create a coordinated network of expertise and knowledge. Since the beginning of the regional model in 2019, there has been increased trust in the Lithuanian Council for Culture as the main funding institution in the country for cultural projects, and the distribution of the funds has been increasingly democratized.

However, financial pressures can prevent devolved administrations from fulfilling their decentralized responsibilities. For instance, in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (United Kingdom), funding for culture by local governments has declined sharply over the past decade. This has been driven by an equally dramatic decline in the overall budget allocations given to local governments by the central government, which has led some local governments to withdraw entirely from supporting cultural provision (Ashton et al., 2024).

Box 1.3 • Indonesia: decentralizing responsibilities for policy development

Over the past four years, Indonesia has introduced a series of policies aimed at decentralizing cultural governance by shifting responsibilities to provincial and city or regency governments. These measures support bottom-up cultural planning, requiring each regional government to draft regional cultural white papers with community involvement and to regularly monitor their implementation. The Special Allocated Funds for Culture, managed by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, now focus solely on programmatic – not physical – infrastructure support for museums and cultural parks, and their implementation is facilitated by a dedicated information system.

Overall, government affairs in the field of culture are classified as mandatory for the central government, provincial governments, and city or regency governments. In contrast, matters related to the creative economy are considered optional, with only the central government bearing mandatory responsibilities. Provincial governments and city or regency governments engage in this area according to the potential of their respective regions. These efforts contribute to national goals of reforming cultural institutions and strengthening the government's role as a cultural facilitator.

Source: Indonesia QPR, 2024

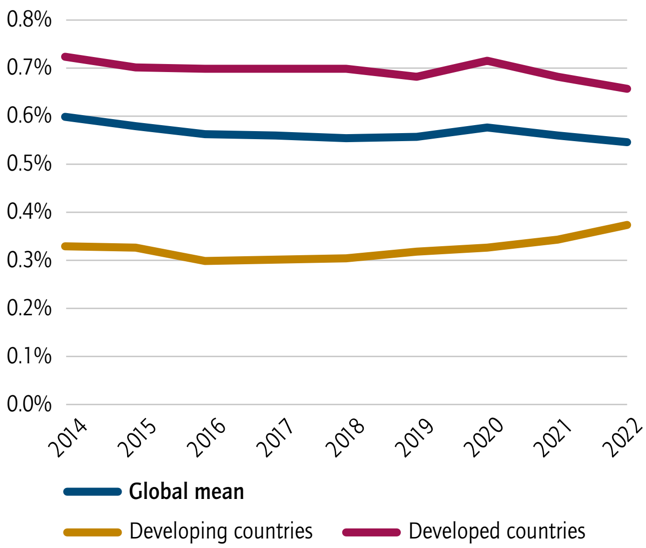
Direct funding for culture

Measuring the total value of public funding for culture is challenging due to a number of factors. For instance, the existence of transversal policy making that takes in other national government departments and agencies, coupled with the existence of public support at lower tiers of government, means that obtaining data that capture the full extent of public spending on culture is a complicated and difficult process. Adding international comparability further complicates the picture.

Data derived from the Quadrennial Periodic Reports on the state of public spending on culture, coupled with secondary data, highlight recent global trends. The longitudinal analysis in Figure 1.2 shows that, on average, more than twice the proportion of gross domestic product (GDP) is spent on the cultural and creative sector in developed countries compared to developing countries.

Figure 1.2

Mean government expenditure on 08.2 Cultural Services and 08.3 Broadcasting and Publishing Services (Classification of the Functions of Government) as a percentage of gross domestic product, by developing and developed countries (2014-2022)



Source: IMF (2025) / BOP Consulting (2025)

However, there is evidence that this gap is narrowing. In developed countries, the long-term trend since 2014 has been for expenditure to flatline or decline. The only interruption to this was a short-lived uplift in 2020, as developed countries sought to protect their cultural sectors through the worst period of the COVID-19 pandemic. In contrast, in developing countries the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and United Nations Classification of the Functions of Government (COFOG) data show government expenditure on culture as a percentage of GDP increasing since 2018. The Quadrennial Periodic Report data also provide examples of this, such as Botswana, which reported a budget allocation increase of nearly 59% for culture and the arts in 2024, in recognition of the 'high potential' of the sector. The Chema Chema Fund was established with US$14.7 million aimed at transforming the informal sector and creating more employment opportunities.

Encouraging private sector investment: the rise of indirect expenditures

As noted in the previous section, measuring the total value of public funding for culture is complicated due to several factors. A final element of this complication is that both the COFOG data and data reported via the Quadrennial Periodic Reports include only direct government expenditure.

Another element of government expenditure is termed 'indirect expenditure' and relates to monies that governments forego by offering favourable tax deductions for a range of economic activities. These tax deductions are offered by governments to incentivize the spending of private actors, whether firms or individuals.

Tax incentives have become a key policy tool in the audio-visual sector for many countries. Initially targeted at film production, these incentives have since expanded to cover related activities such as high-end television, visual effects, animation and often also computer games. Tax incentives – in the form of rebates, tax credits or shelters that return a share of qualifying production spending and are typically designed to encourage inward investment – work at different tiers of government. While some are national in scope, many more are decentralized and apply only at province, state, region or city level. Data that track these automatic incentives suggest that by November 2024, there were 120 such incentives in operation around the world (Olsberg SPI, 2024). While these incentives are particularly frequent in Europe and North America, they are an increasing feature of audio-visual policy globally. Recent examples include Ecuador, where the Law for Digital and Audiovisual Transformation (2023) established a comprehensive legal framework aimed at modernizing the country through digital innovation and support for the audio-visual sector; Mongolia, where film production is supported by the recent Regulation on Incentives for Foreign and Mongolian Producers (2022), Regulation on Non-Repayable Financing from the Film Promotion Fund (2022) and the Law on Promotion of Cinematography (2021); and Saudi Arabia, where in 2022 the Saudi Film Commission launched the 'Film Saudi' cash-rebate programme as a strategic initiative to position Saudi Arabia as a global hub for film production (Saudi Film Commission, 2024).

The amount of money that these indirect expenditures account for can be substantial. For instance, the United Kingdom is particularly active at a national level in its tax-relief policies for the cultural and creative sector, having begun them in 2007 and extended them repeatedly, expanding them beyond the audio-visual industries to include tax relief for new museum exhibitions and theatre productions. Between 2009/2010 and 2022/2023, the total value of tax credits in the United Kingdom grew by 649%. In 2017 to 2018, this indirect expenditure surpassed the national culture ministry's core funding of cultural organizations for the first time and has remained far above it ever since (Ashton et al., 2024).

While an increasingly important element of public policy and support for the cultural and creative sector globally, this form of public expenditure raises important questions as to the purpose and impact of public funding.

Tax incentives place governments in a market-facilitating role in which the main aim of the incentive is to reduce financial barriers and risk for the private sector to invest, while maximizing positive externalities (benefits to the overall economy rather than the producer). In contrast, direct public expenditures are focused on producing public cultural goods – such as films, screen content and animations – that carry distinctive cultural and social value and that the market would not produce on its own, or would produce in insufficient quantities. Although many countries apply a 'cultural test' to tax incentives, seeking to channel them into projects that have public cultural good characteristics (and that would be aligned with the 2005 Convention), the effect of fiscal incentive policies is rarely researched from this standpoint, as it is more regularly assessed through a narrower economic lens (for example, Econometría Consultores, 2022).

The rise of significant indirect public expenditures in culture is in large part a policy response to the transformations of the sector over the last 20 years that have already been discussed – specifically the increasing complexity, technological sophistication, and production and distribution costs, as well as the globalized supply chains, of many cultural and creative industries.

However, the use of fiscal incentives in supporting the cultural and creative sector should not be at the cost of ignoring the possible impact of these policies on the diversity of cultural expressions. Relatedly, it is also important to flag that production tax incentives are not the only way that governments can provide financial support to the cultural and creative industries. Estonia is an example where the government is using a hypothecated tax – a tax whose revenues are set aside exclusively for a specific purpose. In this case, those funds support the Cultural Endowment, the main institution responsible for distributing public funds for cultural purposes, alongside the Ministry of Culture. The Cultural Endowment receives a percentage of levies on tax, gambling and alcohol to fund cultural projects, associations and buildings.

Developing the evidence base

It should go without saying that reliable data, evidence and robust information systems are essential to effective public policy making. The use of statistics, measurement and assessment supports accountability and transparency in the use of public funds, enables appraisal of the results and effectiveness of policy actions, and is central to policy improvement. However, the development and sophistication of the data and evidence used in cultural policy making typically lags behind most other areas of public policy (health, education, welfare, transport, etc.).

In part, this is driven by the fact that the cultural and creative sector represents a much smaller proportion of public spending than most other public policy areas, and this often drives political priorities. But there are also other complicating factors. Collecting cultural statistics, and particularly those associated with an expanded notion of the cultural and creative sector as an important element of contemporary economies, has been a relatively new undertaking for all countries. Cultural statistics often require considerable technical expertise to extract and repurpose from existing official sources, and they often rely on goodwill and mutual understanding across different offices of government – factors that can be challenging even in developed countries. The demand for cultural and creative data can seem expensive and hard to justify within government budgets, particularly by Parties with limited resources, and especially those that cannot already demonstrate the potential impact of the creative economy.

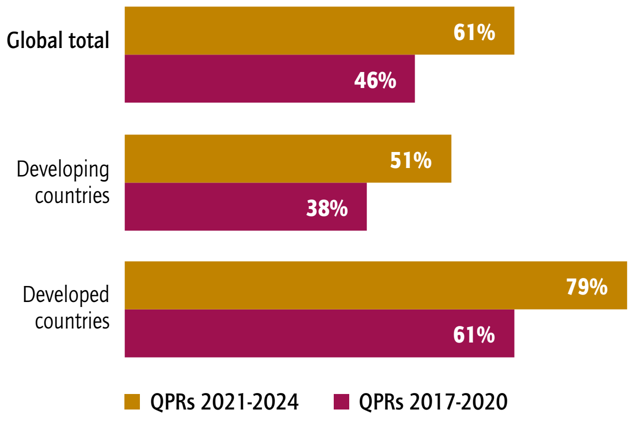
Therefore, many Parties have been on a journey of constructing cultural statistics from a minimal starting point. In the periodic reports, Parties often refer to the coordination challenges of collecting and analysing cultural statistics as it requires active interministerial coordination. Further issues noted in the reports include the lack of, or low level of, basic statistical reporting more generally (for example, Cameroon, Guatemala, Mongolia, Samoa and Timor-Leste) and the unavailability of resources to improve the situation (for example, Central African Republic, Mali and Mauritius).

Nevertheless, there has been considerable progress in Parties establishing institutions and responsibilities for collecting and maintaining cultural statistics; this share now represents 81% of countries globally, up from 62% in the previous 2017-2020 reporting period. Côte d'Ivoire provides a specific example, with the Ministry of Culture and Francophonie having launched a computerized system for collecting and managing cultural statistics. This initiative aims to address existing gaps – such as outdated data collection methods, lack of trained personnel, and insufficient infrastructure – and to continue the production of Cultural Statistics Yearbooks. These yearbooks – produced in 2018, 2020 and 2023 – support better analysis of culture's economic impact, employment trends and the growth of cultural enterprises. As a result of this process, Côte d'Ivoire has participated in regional workshops to share good practices in cultural policy and statistical evaluation systems, providing technical assistance to Benin and Togo. This work builds on a 2017 study on the socio-economic impact of culture on development in Côte d'Ivoire, which led to an increase in the Ministry's budget for culture. This shows considerable acknowledgement of the intrinsic importance of the cultural and creative sector, as well as positive commitment from the government to address the problem through the allocation of resources, even in those countries with fewer resources.

The advances in collecting cultural statistics are increasingly being matched by stronger institutional capacities within national statistical offices and cultural ministries to evaluate and analyse them. The proportion of Parties globally with statistical offices or research bodies that evaluate cultural policies is 61%, up from 46% in the previous 2017-2020 reporting period (Figure 1.3). While it should be recognized that establishing an office or responsibility is merely the first step on the journey of providing full reporting on cultural statistics, it does bode well for the longer-term construction and maintenance of an evidence base for cultural policy making.

Figure 1.3

Proportion of Parties with statistical offices or research bodies evaluating cultural policies, by developing and developed countries



Source: UNESCO (2005 Convention)

At the global level, the UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics (adopted in 1986 and updated in 2009 and 2025) provides internationally recognized standards for cultural statistics and comparable data. The latest 2025 revision identifies 14 domains[1] within the cultural and creative ecosystem, delineating them as the 'statistical universe for measuring culture'. It standardizes terminology and concepts for a wide range of statistical operations, including censuses, surveys, administrative data, big data and qualitative methodologies, enabling a deeper understanding of the sector's complexity while reflecting national cultural contexts.

1. The 14 domains are categorized into two main groups: cultural domains and transversal domains, which together recognize the pivotal role of public, private and non-profit agents in fostering the development and sustainability of cultural practices. The seven cultural domains are 1) cultural and natural heritage, 2) performing arts, 3) visual arts and crafts, 4) books and press, 5) audio-visual, 6) design and 7) music. The seven transversal domains are 8) cultural knowledge, 9) festivals, 10) interactive media, and 11) cultural governance and management, classified as cultural transversal domains; 12) cultural education and 13) cultural tourism, categorized as partial cultural domains; and 14) a support domain for multipurpose devices and equipment essential for cultural production and dissemination.

This update also presents a timely opportunity to revise the Monitoring Framework of the 2005 Convention, a process initiated in 2025 at the request of its governing bodies.

DEVELOPMENT OF DYNAMIC CULTURAL AND CREATIVE SECTORS

Job creation and entrepreneurship support

Reporting on measures related to job creation and support for entrepreneurship is a key component of monitoring the implementation of the 2005 Convention, offering insight into the steps taken to foster a dynamic and adaptable cultural and creative sector.

Within the 2021-2024 Quadrennial Periodic Reports, there is an increasing focus on cultural policy on supporting employment: the proportion of Parties that report measures focused on job creation in the cultural and creative sector is now 85%, up from 68% in the previous 2017-2020 reporting cycle. This is likely in recognition of the significant share of total employment now represented by the cultural and creative sector in many countries. Using the responses from the periodic reports, supplemented with Eurostat data from additional countries, a combined dataset of 61 countries (39 developed, 22 developing) shows that the mean share of total employment accounted for by the cultural and creative sector was 3.6%.

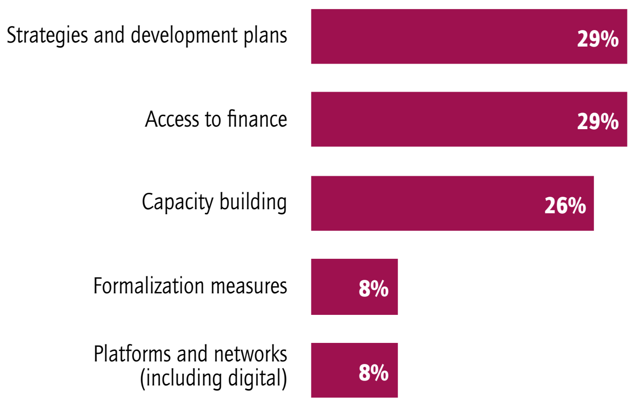
As the 2021-2024 reporting cycle overlaps with the COVID-19 pandemic, delays in statistical data collection and reporting at national levels mean the full impact of the pandemic on the cultural workforce is likely not yet reflected in the available data. While the immediate impacts of pandemic-related restrictions on social gatherings are known to have been acute for many in the cultural and creative sector workforce, longer term impacts may be apparent in future periodic reporting cycles.

The job creation measures most frequently reported by Parties encompassed cultural employment as part of a broader cultural policy strategy or national development plan, followed by access to finance, both at 29% (Figure 1.4). Access to finance measures included publicly provided financial assistance to cultural and creative sector businesses (for example, debt finance and loan guarantees, such as the European Investment Fund's Cultural and Creative Sectors Guarantee Facility), as well as grants designed to improve entrepreneurship and support business growth. For instance, Chile established a co-financing fund in 2023 to strengthen micro and small creative enterprises, with the goal of improving their skills, innovation and business performance. The outputs of each project are either an early-stage scale-up, a prototype or an innovative business model.

Croatia also reported an initiative that supports the development of creative business models across the cultural and creative industries through an annual project call. The programme, entitled 'Entrepreneurship in Cultural and Creative Industries', is implemented by the Ministry of Culture and Media and represents a revitalized version of a scheme originally launched over a decade ago in collaboration with the Ministry of Economy, Labour and Entrepreneurship. This updated programme aims to strengthen the capacity and competitiveness of the cultural and creative industries, boost their visibility, and foster new networking opportunities.

Figure 1.4

Most frequently reported types of job creation measures



Source: UNESCO (2005 Convention)

Measures reported by Parties for dedicated support to the creative sector sometimes overlap with support provided through more generic small and medium-sized enterprise and innovation policies. For instance, Tunisia reports a series of initiatives aimed at creating a dynamic environment for startups; it has been in operation since 2016, and was most recently reiterated in the national Digital Transformation Strategy 2021-2025. The Strategy includes 'Startup Invest', a financing framework that includes a startup guarantee fund and an incubator of management companies, among other elements. Creative startups can be supported through this programme, as can those in other sectors.

In Ecuador, the Organic Law of Culture establishes a framework for supporting artistic creation and cultural industries within the National Development Plan (2017-2021), emphasizing the significance of culture in economic development, job creation and the overall contribution of GDP, reinforcing the status of arts and culture as a priority sector in the economy. Key measures include tax deductibility (companies can deduct up to 150% of cultural investments from their income tax, effecting a return of US$1.50 for every dollar sponsored in the cultural sector); zero value-added tax (VAT) on artistic services (since 2019, artistic and cultural services have been exempt from VAT, with specific guidelines for qualifying shows and venues); and foreign-trade tax exemptions (which apply to imported goods used for artistic purposes by registered cultural entities, aimed at bolstering the cultural economy).

Viet Nam showcased the outcomes of various policies and mechanisms introduced under the Decision No. 844/QĐ-TTg (2016-2021), including the establishment of several startup ecosystem platforms, the creation of organizations supporting startup companies, the integration of business startups into educational programmes, and capacity building for ecosystem actors. These efforts paved the way for the adoption of Decision No. 188/QĐ-TTg, which aims to foster a more supportive environment for innovative startups.

These examples ably demonstrate that part of the answer to how to develop policy for dynamic cultural and creative sectors is to ensure that they are included within mainstream economic development and innovation funding. Once again, this underlines the importance of interministerial collaboration and transversal policy making. Collaboration with different departments and offices of government helps to crowd in resources to the cultural and creative sector, as well as bringing with it different expertise and capacity.

Lastly, as reported in several of the periodic reports, an important concern across many countries is the formalization of cultural and creative sector activities to bring them within the remit of the formal economy and governance. Such measures often include professionalization, accreditation or certification for cultural practitioners. In Bolivia, for example, a specific government agency has been created for this purpose: the Vice Ministry of Micro, Small Businesses and Handicrafts. It facilitates access to credit, public procurement, technical assistance and market opportunities, with a particular emphasis on community and cooperative enterprises, in sectors like textiles and leather, with the ultimate aim of integrating the micro, small, and artisanal workforce and enterprises into national economic strategies.

Box 1.4 • Clustering and creative hubs

A substantial body of international policy and research evidence indicates that geographical clusters and creative districts of cultural assets and actors – their grouping together within a given geographic area, or even within the same building – are associated with multiple benefits (Gill et al., 2019; Pratt, 2021). These include enhanced skills formation and the development of specialized local labour markets (UNESCO and UNDP, 2013), knowledge sharing and greater innovation (Jang et al., 2017) as well as stronger firm performance (Tao et al., 2019).

While clustering in the cultural and creative industries can happen organically over time, many successful clusters and cultural districts have additionally benefited from supportive, sustained and coordinated policy actions (BOP Consulting and KRIHS, 2019).

The 2021-2024 Quadrennial Periodic Reports provide examples of policy interventions of this kind. For example, Parties have reported initiatives applying the concept of clustering across an expanding range of sectors. In Viet Nam, creative hubs constitute a pillar of the country's strategy to foster creativity and innovation, shaping a dynamic ecosystem that bridges creative, educational and business communities. In Qatar, Media City was established to serve as a hub for innovation in the media and digital communication sectors. In Kenya, the Talanta Hela Digital Hub, launched in 2023, aims to 'identify, recruit, nurture, and monetize' talent in the sports and creative sectors. In South Africa, the DSAC (Department of Sport, Arts and Culture) Publishing Hub was created to support the growth of local publishing and literature, resulting in 2024 in the writing and publication of 21 new books and the translation of four titles into braille.

Clustering can also have benefits for audiences, and cultural consumption and participation. Examples of policy supporting clustering of cultural infrastructure from the 2021-2024 Quadrennial Periodic Reports include the construction of a library and archive complex in Ethiopia, and Tunisia's Cité de la Culture, a nine-hectare site bringing together cultural assets in music, opera, ballet, choreography, theatre, performing arts and literature.

Source: Ethiopia QPR, 2024; Kenya QPR, 2024; Qatar QPR, 2024; South Africa QPR, 2024; Tunisia QPR, 2024; Viet Nam QPR, 2024; Gill et al., 2019; Pratt, 2021; UNESCO and UNDP, 2013; Jang et al., 2017; Tao et al., 2019; BOP Consulting and KRIHS, 2019

Self-employment and micro-enterprises: flexibility and precarity

Designing business support for cultural enterprises can be difficult, particularly as most businesses in the cultural sector are either micro-enterprises – with a handful of workers – or freelance self-employed professionals. In the EU, where the most recent data is available, almost one-third (31.7%) of cultural workers were self-employed in 2024, compared to an average of 13.6% in the whole economy (Eurostat, 2025). Micro-enterprises have fewer resources to dedicate to both social support and business support. Self-employment has many positive aspects such as flexibility, but it also has downsides in terms of social and economic sustainability. Furthermore, it leaves industries and workers vulnerable to 'coordination' issues where labour markets and business transactions do not operate fluidly. Self-employment can cut off workers from the social support mechanisms provided in workplaces, leaving them reliant upon social networks to navigate the labour market and limiting their access to financial resources.

An area of concern for cultural and creative sector policy makers has been the precarity of work in the sector, in part due to high levels of non-standard forms of work (self-employment, part-time, secondary and intermittent employment). Countries such as France have intervened historically via policies that mitigate the problems of intermittent work patterns and payment for cultural sector workers. However, there is a wider concern with the relative lack of social benefits (compared to other sectors of the economy), such as pensions, childcare and sick pay that cultural workers can access (an issue explored in more detail in Chapter 10). These issues came to wider attention during the COVID-19 pandemic when business and job-continuity was compromised for all, but it also highlighted the intrinsic challenges that intermittent work in the cultural and creative sector manifests. This wider issue of lack of social support services for cultural workers was mentioned in reports by Austria, Côte d'Ivoire, Estonia, Jordan, Madagascar, Peru and Slovenia.

Not only does this fact affect current workers but it also dissuades new entrants, the cultural and creative sector workforce of the future. The idea of a basic income for artists has been the subject of an experimental initiative in Ireland (Box 1.5) and underpins thinking about a more sustainable pattern of cultural work. The Irish example offers an interesting test case for a 'Basic Income for the Arts' model. It emerged not only in response to the COVID-19 crisis but also from the deeper reflections contained in *A Life Worth Living: The Report of the Arts and Culture Recovery Taskforce* (Arts and Culture Recovery Taskforce, 2020), which examined the challenges of supporting and sustaining artistic careers.

This issue has become even more pressing given the widespread concerns about AI companies using the copyrighted works of artists without compensation (an issue explored in more detail in Chapter 3).

Such initiatives in Ireland and elsewhere that look to address some of the current structural labour market challenges of the cultural and creative sector represent a significant shift within cultural policy – from a dominant concern regarding cultural forms and audience experiences, to one that recognizes the interdependencies of the whole cultural ecosystem, and the situatedness of cultural workers in communities and families. Clearly, if the cultural sector is to be sustainable, independent cultural workers should be able to pursue careers that offer fair and equal opportunities and allow them to secure a dignified livelihood.

Box 1.5 • Ireland: basic income for the arts

Ireland's Basic Income for the Arts Pilot Scheme, launched in 2022, provides 2,000 artists and creative workers with a weekly income of 325 euros for three years. Emerging from the Arts and Culture Recovery Taskforce report during the COVID-19 crisis, *A Life Worth Living: The Report of the Arts and Culture Recovery Taskforce*, the scheme aims to give artists stability to focus on their practice, test the viability of self-employment, and reduce reliance on social protection support. Developed through sector-wide consultation and international research, it represents a pioneering effort to address precarity in the arts while informing future government policy.

In October 2025, the Irish Government announced that the scheme would become permanent, with between 2,000 and 2,200 beneficiaries to be selected in 2026. The decision took into account the positive assessment made of the pilot project, in terms of artists' ability to devote more time to their creative practice, improved economic situation, and reduced levels of anxiety or depression. Furthermore, a cost-benefit analysis showed that society received 1.39 euros in return for every 1 euro of public money invested in the scheme.

Source: Ireland QPR, 2024; Dagg, 2025

Copyright: securing a business model for creators

Intellectual Property[2] offers a clear illustration of how formalization supports more resilient business models in the creative sector. Intellectual Property rights, especially copyright, are important to creators in two ways. First, they identify a work as an original creation belonging to a creator, giving them the right to prevent derogatory changes to the work ('moral rights'). Second, copyright is an economic right that entitles the creator to exclusively profit from their creations.

In both senses, this requires legal recognition concerning the protection of Intellectual Property and copyright, and a method and institution to collect and redistribute earnings. Central to the second action is the role of collective management organizations (CMOs). These organizations are typically non-profit entities that act as intermediaries for authors, artists and other rights holders, licensing their rights to users (for example, broadcasters) and collecting royalties the copyright owners are due from the transaction. Without their existence, it is much harder for individual artists and creators to benefit financially from the Intellectual Property that they create through their work.

As Table 1.1 shows, there is a lack of effective and functioning CMOs in many regions and countries. There is also particularly poor coverage of such organizations outside the realm of music, and even music's reach is on average just over two-thirds of Parties in 2025.

Ineffective – or inefficient – CMOs, or a lack of public respect for copyright, make it difficult to operate a creative enterprise that is based on Intellectual Property and copyright. Building trust and understanding of Intellectual Property and copyright systems takes time, and operating CMOs across all domains can be expensive. However, with digitization this cost is falling. For example, the Mexican National Institute of Copyright (Indautor) launched in 2022 the online platform INDARELÍN, which stands for *Indautor en línea* (Indautor online), to simplify and modernize the process of registering literary and artistic works. Artists and creators can complete the registration process entirely online, uploading a copy of the work and receiving an official registration certificate digitally. This online service is supported by ongoing efforts to promote and raise awareness of copyright.

2. According to the World Intellectual Property Organization, 'Intellectual Property (IP) refers to creations of the mind, such as inventions; literary and artistic works; designs; and symbols, names and images used in commerce. IP is protected in law by, for example, patents, copyright and trademarks, which enable people to earn recognition or financial benefit from what they invent or create. By striking the right balance between the interests of innovators and the wider public interest, the IP system aims to foster an environment in which creativity and innovation can flourish' (https://www.wipo.int/en/web/about-ip).

Table 1.1

Percentage of Parties with collective management organizations and reproduction rights organizations across cultural domains, by region and by developing and developed countries

	Any domain	AGP*	Audio-visual	Dramatic	Literary	Musical
Developing and developed countries						
Developing countries	65%	23%	24%	40%	23%	62%
Developed countries	82%	68%	62%	40%	74%	78%
Global total	**71%**	**38%**	**36%**	**40%**	**40%**	**68%**
Region						
Western European and North American States	96%	75%	67%	50%	92%	96%
Eastern European States	96%	46%	58%	46%	63%	96%
Latin American and Caribbean States	72%	34%	22%	31%	34%	69%
Asian and Pacific States	50%	31%	19%	0%	38%	44%
African States	61%	29%	32%	34%	46%	56%
Arab States	36%	0%	14%	21%	29%	29%
Global total	**71%**	**38%**	**36%**	**40%**	**40%**	**68%**

*AGP stands for *arts graphiques* et *plastiques* and covers visual arts, photography and graphic design
Source: CISAC (2025) / BIEM (2025) / IFRRO (2025) / BOP Consulting (2025)

The use of the web led to a significant increase in online registration of works, surpassing other registration methods. Between 2019 and 2023, over 212,700 works were registered. Additionally, outreach activities helped strengthen advocacy and the protection of copyright and related rights. However, once again, policies and monitoring need to focus on these detailed subdomains if comprehensive progress is to be made visible.

Box 1.6 illustrates an initiative to promote and support Intellectual Property and copyright holders based on creating knowledge of, and respect for, copyright protection. Again, this highlights how capacity building in cultural fields can be complex and must be tailored to a particular art form, place and history. The challenge is not simply legislative support, nor even institution building to facilitate a financial redistribution model. It also involves changing the everyday practice of consumers. For successful creative work and businesses, all these three components must be deployed and made to work together.

Box 1.6 • Cabo Verde and Rwanda: the Copyright Label project

The Copyright Friendly Label project, launched in 2019 by the International Confederation of Societies of Authors and Composers in Cabo Verde as a pilot country on the African continent, aimed to promote copyright compliance as an economic and cultural asset. Implemented through the local collective management organization *Sociedade Cabo-verdiana de Música* (Cape Verdean Music Society), the initiative began in Santa Maria on the island of Sal, which became the world's first city to receive the Copyright Friendly Seal. Managed by a steering committee involving national and local authorities, the label rewards cities and users who pay royalties, helping them position themselves as trusted partners to creators. The programme gained traction across Cabo Verde and saw its broader success when the 2024 African Cup of Nations incorporated copyright licensing for stadium and fan zone music through the Ivorian collective management organization BURIDA. The initiative's reach extended to Rwanda, where the Kigali Triennial and Rwanda Arts Initiative were also recognized, solidifying the label's role in supporting creative industries and responsible cultural tourism across Africa.

Source: CISAC, 2024

Education and vocational training: from STEM to STEAM

Educational and vocational training are key factors and reliable predictors of the vitality of the cultural and creative sector in any given territory. In the last decade, there has been a global shift in higher and further education towards 'STEM' subjects (science, technology, engineering and maths), as opposed to arts, humanities and social sciences. For example, between 2015 and 2018, the uptake of humanities subjects at bachelor, master's and doctoral levels declined in 24 of the 36 OECD countries (Goldstein, 2021). While policy makers justify this focus on STEM by pointing to technological change and its economic potential, this emphasis risks sidelining the value of cultural education, which also contributes significantly to social, cultural and economic development. Arts and culture rely heavily on humanities graduates, and without cultural education, both production and engagement with the arts decline. Worryingly, there has been a global decline of 10.67% in the share of arts and humanities graduates across the OECD countries over the decade from 2013 to 2023, even as the share of STEM graduates increased by 4.12% (OECD, 2024b).

However, the relationship between arts and science-based education is not an either/or choice: they are increasingly seen as complementary. This recognition has been referred to as the STEAM or STE(A)M education approach (science, technology, engineering, arts and maths). For example, Cyprus has integrated a STEAM-based curriculum into educational workshops, aiming to foster both social and technological skills among Cypriot youth. At Youth Makerspace Larnaka, this curriculum played a key role in allowing youth participants to develop and launch technology-driven business projects.

At one level, this shift in thinking is associated with the transversal culturalization of all forms of economic and industrial production – where design and aesthetics, as well as cultural difference and identity, have become as important, if not more, than simply price signals. On another level, it is being driven by the increasing technological sophistication and complexity of the cultural and creative industries themselves. Computer games have, for some time, been the cultural industry subsector that generates the greatest revenues, and making computer games requires STEAM: an integration of storytelling and artwork with coding skills and mindsets. This is even more pronounced in the emerging area of immersive audio-visual products and experiences that use creative artificial and virtual reality, as well as virtual production technologies and large-scale LED technologies. Such technologies are used increasingly in major live event and theatrical productions as the centrepiece of new cultural experiences.

Seeking to capitalize on the momentum of this rapidly expanding creative sector, several Parties to the 2005 Convention have integrated gaming into their national cultural and digital strategies. The growth of this field, rooted in both technology and art, however, requires training, capacity building, and the strengthening of professional networks. In Uruguay, the Ministry of Industry, Energy and Mining established the Video Games Roundtable to formalize collaboration among national stakeholders – including the Ministry of Education, the Film and Audiovisual Agency of Uruguay, and the Technological Laboratory of Uruguay – demonstrating a coordinated, cross-sectoral approach to developing the creative economy. In Chile, the Centre for the Technological Revolution in Creative Industries, supported by the Production Development Corporation, was established to strengthen technological infrastructure and drive innovation. With funding secured until 2030, the Centre has already trained more than 100 cultural professionals in the use of Unreal Engine, a 3D creation and video game design software.

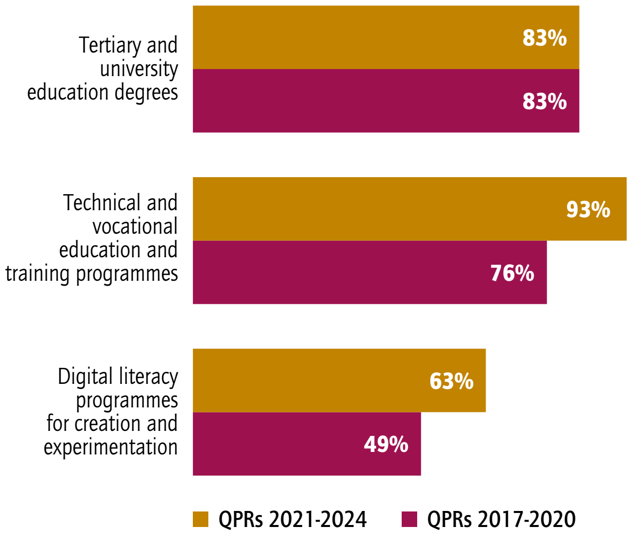
The applicability of gaming-related skills extends well beyond the entertainment industry: in Germany, for example, the Film and Media Foundation of North Rhine-Westphalia launched a 'gamification' programme in 2023 to explore the educational and social uses of video game tools, supporting the development of projects in urban planning, environmental awareness and civic engagement. These varied initiatives illustrate how gaming has become a catalyst for innovation, skill development and transversal collaboration.

Recognizing the complementarity between STEM and the arts has created a renewed respect for cultural education in the increasingly digitized world. Indeed, a recent modification to the Programme for International Student Assessment test has sought to include measures of creativity (OECD, 2024a). Likewise, organizations such as the World Economic Forum have highlighted how creative skills (however defined) are critical in the current and future workplace (WEF, 2019). All these trends suggest that cultural and arts education is not just a 'nice to have' skill, but rather a socio-economically vital one.

Looking more closely at education and training in the cultural and creative sector, there has been a significant shift since the previous periodic reporting period in 2017-2020. While the proportion of Parties offering tertiary and university education degrees in cultural and creative sectors is unchanged at 83%, the proportion of Parties reporting existing technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programmes in cultural and creative sector-relevant fields has risen from 76% to 93% (Figure 1.5).

Figure 1.5

Proportion of Parties with education and training programmes, by type



Source: UNESCO (2005 Convention)

In the sector, TVET is often used to meet labour market shortages in the technical and production workforce (encompassing roles related to lighting, sound, video and image production) as well as in the teaching of crafts and trades. For example, China's Culture and Entertainment Industry Association has collaborated with government agencies and universities to set up a vocational skills training and accreditation system to improve on-the-job skills and develop career pathways for practitioners in music and performing arts entertainment, gaming, e-sports, and location-based experiences.

Almost two-thirds of Parties to the 2005 Convention reported 'digital literacy programmes for creation and experimentation' (63%), a significant 14 percentage point increase from the previous reporting cycle. This growth reflects the cultural and creative sector's adaptability to technological change accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic and showing no signs of slowing. While this rise is to be welcomed, greater coverage of digital education programmes will be increasingly needed over the next reporting period if Parties wish to meet the creative labour force needs generated by digitalization, and particularly the rapid development of Generative AI (Chapter 3 explores in greater details the needs for skills development in the digital environment).

The recent Reflection Group on the diversity of cultural expressions in the digital environment made two interconnected recommendations in this sense: it recommended that Parties implement national digital-culture capacity plans to enhance digital literacy and AI skills among cultural actors (Recommendation 7) and that Parties update their arts education curricula and methodologies to incorporate comprehensive training on AI technologies for both students and educators, with a particular focus on arts schools and higher education institutions specializing in the arts (Recommendation 8) (UNESCO, 2025). Additionally, a key objective of the UNESCO Framework for Culture and Arts Education is to support countries to benefit from the opportunities opened up by technology and promote reflection, creativity, initiatives, and ethical and responsible use in this domain (UNESCO, 2024).

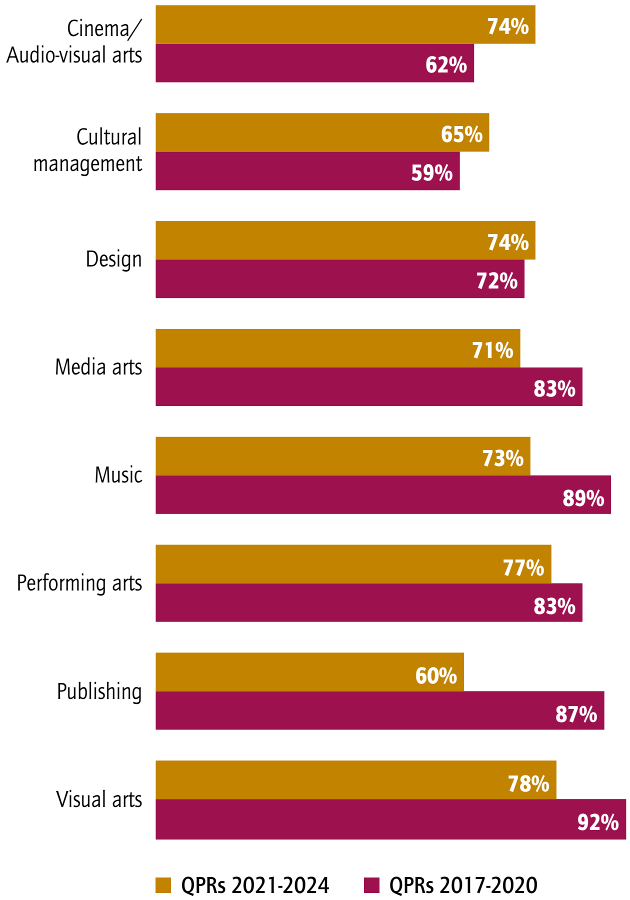
While education and training programmes in the cultural and creative sector remain available across most Parties, significant disparities exist between cultural domains and types of programmes (Figures 1.6 and 1.7). In recent years, most cultural and creative domains monitored through the Convention's periodic reporting mechanism have experienced a notable decline in the university-level educational offerings: media arts dropped from 83% to 71%, music from 89% to 73%, performing arts from 83% to 77%, and visual arts from 92% to 78%. The publishing sector – once well supported through formal university programmes and TVET – has experienced a steep decline, dropping from 87% to 60% in tertiary education and from 74% to 63% in TVET, making it the least supported in terms of both tertiary education and TVET. This decrease is likely due to budget cuts or shifting priorities that have disadvantaged what could be considered traditional creative sectors. Although the exact reason remains unclear, the drop warrants attention and continued monitoring.

Although training in cultural management has shown modest growth – rising to 65% for both academic and TVET offerings from 59% and 62% respectively during the 2017-2020 monitoring period – it remains the second least supported field after publishing. This indicates that an important training gap persists. This field requires specialized expertise to effectively manage and govern the cultural and creative sector, yet only limited training opportunities exist.

In contrast, cinema and audio-visual arts stands out as a domain that has seen significant growth, reversing previous trends. Once among the domains with the lowest university-level offering (62%) – despite being the most frequently targeted by policies and measures in periodic reports – the field now benefits from 74% coverage in tertiary education and 78% in TVET.

Figure 1.6

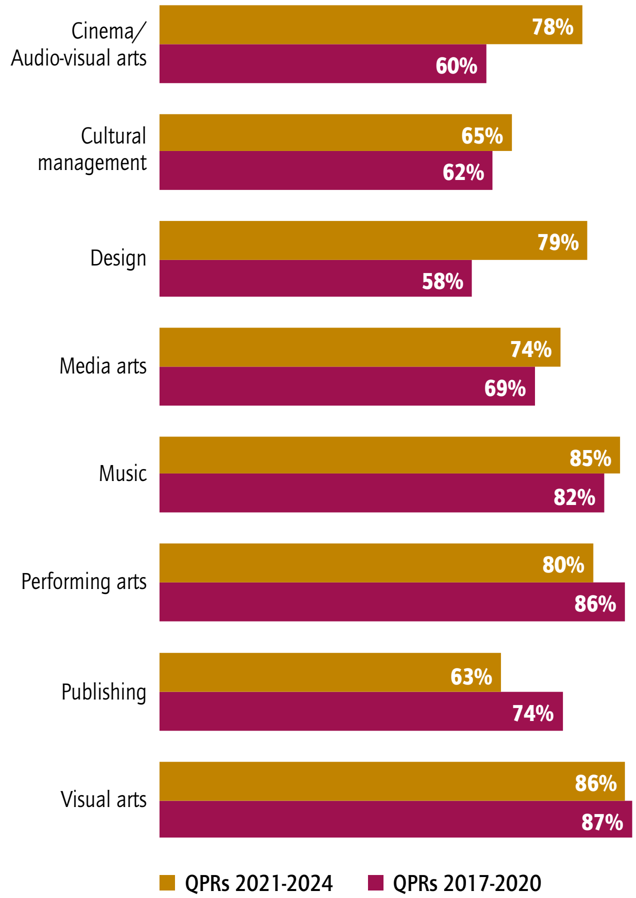
Proportion of Parties reporting tertiary and university education degrees, by cultural domain



Source: UNESCO (2005 Convention)

Figure 1.7

Proportion of Parties reporting technical and vocational education and training programmes, by cultural domain



Source: UNESCO (2005 Convention)

Several converging factors may have contributed to this progress: the sector's strategic importance reflected in policy attention, rapid technological advancements driving demand for audio-visual content, and increased scrutiny following the #MeToo movement, which highlighted systemic issues within the industry. Together, these developments appear to have prompted educational institutions to expand their offerings in this field.

Design is another domain that stands out, with TVET programme offerings rising significantly – from 58% to 79%. While the number of Parties offering university-level programmes has remained relatively stable, more countries have expanded their TVET options to include design. This shift may reflect the growing importance of visual content, particularly in digital and online environments.

From gaps to growth: capacity building

The ability of artists and creators to understand how to make a living from their work – such as understanding how to price their time or work, how to deploy their skills in other sectors, how the Intellectual Property and copyright systems function, and what they need to do in order to protect and exploit their Intellectual Property – is another important dimension in ensuring a dynamic creative and cultural ecosystem. Reports in relation to the 1980 Recommendation concerning the Status of the Artist show that globally, 82% of the UNESCO Member States reported having put in place capacity-building initiatives that support artists to monetize their work (Figure 1.8). The proportion of developing countries reporting these measures (85%) is greater than that of developed countries (79%). This could be reflective of the additional training required where supporting infrastructure (that is, CMOs) is weaker.

Figure 1.8

Proportion of UNESCO Member States with policies, measures or programmes that provide artists capacity building, training or other support to monetize their artistic work, by developing and developed countries

Source: UNESCO (1980 Recommendation)

However, ‘capacity building’ encompasses a much broader range of activity than copyright and monetization training, covering technical, digital, management and entrepreneurship skills across all areas of the cultural and creative sector. While closely related to education and vocational training, it typically focuses on professionals working in, or adjacent to, the cultural and creative sector, as opposed to potential new entrants. In the context of this chapter, capacity building is also characterized by its punctual nature and strong focus on strategic skills for institutional development, and policy design and implementation.

For example, data from the periodic reports show that Türkiye’s cultural management capacity-building programme targets those working in local government, including those in cultural tourism, youth, sports or urban planning roles, with the aim of improving the effectiveness of devolved management of cultural projects and services. In Brazil, the National Arts Foundation runs a capacity-building programme for artists and technicians in the performing arts to strengthen and enhance the sector’s production capabilities, while in Canada, the ‘AcceleratiON’ programme offers mentorship and capacity-building support targeted at Black and Indigenous-owned music businesses, to address structural inequalities in the sector.

While these are just a few examples, capacity building represents a significant proportion of the policy making approaches used by the Parties to support and develop the cultural and creative sectors. Across almost 1,000 measures reported through the Quadrennial Periodic Reports under the monitoring area ‘cultural and creative sectors’, over 30% are related to funding, capacity building or development programmes for artists (Figure 1.9). This is reflective of the centrality of human capital to value generation in the cultural and creative sector: countries recognize that investing in the sector means investing in its people.

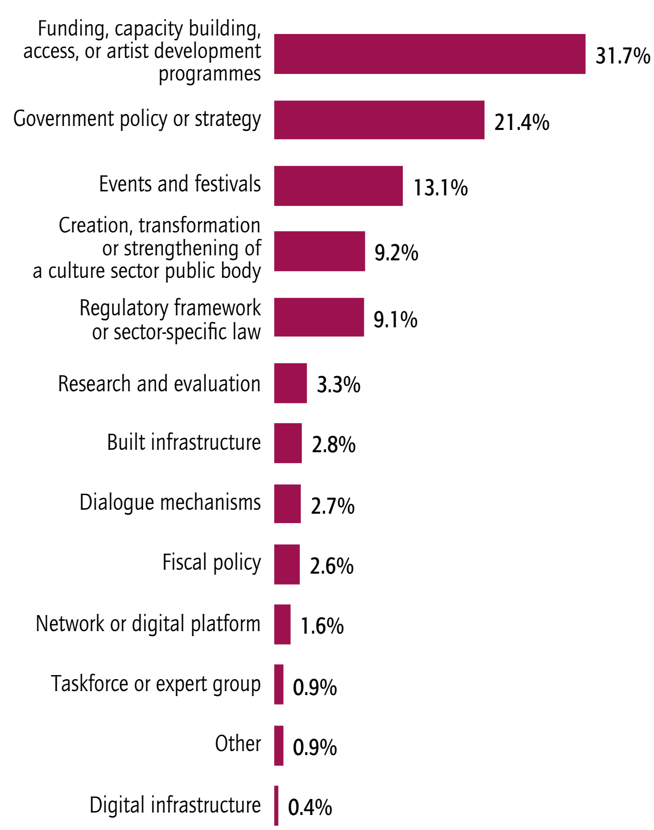
Box 1.7 • Ethiopia: digital capacity-building workshop

The Ethiopian Women Visual Artist Association, in collaboration with UNESCO and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, hosted a one-day intensive workshop aimed at empowering 50 professional Ethiopian women visual artists. The workshop focused on equipping participants with essential skills and knowledge to navigate the evolving digital art landscape while promoting gender equality in the cultural and creative sectors. Key themes included the exploration of new art mediums and digitization, strategies for strengthening the digital presence of women artists, and insights into the digital art market, including the use of non-fungible tokens (NFTs). This initiative marked a significant step towards increasing visibility, opportunity and support for Ethiopian women artists in the global digital art space.

Source: Ethiopia QPR, 2024

Figure 1.9

Most frequently reported types of policy-making tools



Source: UNESCO (2005 Convention)

RECOMMENDATIONS

For Parties to the Convention

- Develop robust regulatory frameworks that enable interministerial cooperation in areas that directly involve the cultural and creative sector or affect culture professionals and access to culture. Collaboration should include ministries or agencies responsible for culture, education, foreign affairs, labour, trade, economy and business, finance, and related domains, aligning with growing interministerial cooperation trends.
- Substantially increase direct public funding for culture, to reverse the global decline in investment and reduce the gap between developing and developed countries, especially as developing countries are beginning to increase their cultural expenditure while levels in developed countries have stagnated or declined.
- Carefully assess the purpose and impact of indirect public expenditure through fiscal incentives to ensure that these incentives support, rather than undermine, the diversity of cultural expressions.
- Invest in information systems and institutional capacities in national statistical offices and cultural ministries to ensure continuous collection and analysis of cultural statistics for evidence-based cultural policy making, and to address recurrent challenges such as limited statistical expertise, reporting and resources.
- Support the formalization of cultural and creative sector activities to integrate them into the formal economy, governance frameworks, and mainstream economic development and innovation funding.
- Address the persistent precarity of work in the cultural and creative sector through policies targeting non-standard forms of employment and limited access to social benefits. Support initiatives that promote sustainable livelihoods for independent cultural workers, including those who are self-employed or engage in intermittent work.
- Establish and ensure the effective functioning of collective management organizations (CMOs) across creative domains, and promote public respect for Intellectual Property and copyright through coordinated legislation, capacity building, and public awareness measures. Digitization offers opportunities to improve CMO efficiency, particularly in certain domains and regions where coverage is limited or fragmented.
- Monitor and reassess education and training opportunities in the cultural and creative sector, as declining numbers of university-level programmes risk impoverishing the diversity of cultural expressions, widening training gaps, and weakening local, national and regional cultural production. Integrate culture and arts education in both cultural and educational policies, aligned with the UNESCO Framework for Culture and Arts Education, and respond to shifts in tertiary and TVET offerings and rising demand for digital literacy.
- Give greater recognition to STEAM education approaches (science, technology, engineering, arts and maths), as arts and science-based education complement each other and strengthen social, cultural and economic development.
- Expand digital education programmes to meet the needs of a digitalization-driven creative workforce, particularly in the context of Generative AI, and ensure that specialized arts schools provide foundational digital skills.

For UNESCO

- Continue supporting Parties in developing, monitoring and evaluating cultural policies that respond to current needs and rapid sectoral transformations, including by facilitating integration with education, labour, trade, innovation and other relevant policy areas.
- Continue assisting Parties in establishing effective cultural information systems that align with the Convention's Monitoring Framework and the updated UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics, as reliable data and statistical capacity remain uneven across Parties.
- Build capacity in developing countries to support artists to monetize their work, compensating for weaker institutional infrastructure including limited coverage and effectiveness of CMOs beyond the music sector.
- Seize the opportunity of the Convention's 20th anniversary and the 2027 global reporting deadline to reinforce monitoring mechanisms and enhance knowledge products and tools, to better inform policy making from local to international levels and improve Parties' reporting capacities.
- Strengthen inter-agency relations by supporting sustainable cultural exchanges, co-creation processes and cooperation between actors across regions. Build on the growing integration of culture into multilateral frameworks at regional and international levels.