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### HOW DOES UNESCO DEFINE “YOUTH”?

As one of its priority groups, and guided by its [Operational Strategy on Youth \(2014-2021\)](#), UNESCO believes that youth are essential to finding solutions to some of the most pressing challenges we face – from poverty to inequality to conflict. Driven by [SDG 4](#), Target 7, which calls for all learners to acquire an appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development, UNESCO works to empower young women and men to participate in the development of their societies. While the United Nations defines “[youth](#)” as persons between the ages of 15 and 24, UNESCO recognizes that youth is a fluid, ever-changing category, which varies according to country and region.

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### WHY YOUTH AND CULTURE?

The right of young people to access, enjoy and actively participate in cultural life is enshrined in international law, forming a key part of their cultural and human rights. Participation in cultural life is necessary for young people to gain an understanding of their own culture and that of others, which in turn broadens their horizons, strengthens their ability to peacefully resolve conflicts and fosters respect for cultural diversity. Moreover, as recognized by the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), culture is also a driver of sustainable development. The cultural and creative industries represent 30 million jobs worldwide and employ more people ages 15 to 29 than any other sector. With 73 million young people currently facing unemployment, expanding access to the cultural industries and supporting young cultural entrepreneurs is more vital than ever. Empowering youth to attain their cultural rights therefore lies at the heart of UNESCO’s work on youth and culture, with youth being fundamental to the implementation of its six Culture Conventions.

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### HOW DOES THE CULTURE SECTOR WORK TO EMPOWER YOUTH?

- i. **Developing educational resources.** Through the [World Heritage Education Programme](#), more than 3,500 young volunteers have learned about the value of heritage and cultural diversity by taking part in 359 youth camps in 61 countries. UNESCO has also designed the “[World Heritage in young Hands Educational Resource Kit](#)”, the short film series “[Patrimonto’s World Heritage Adventures](#)”, the “[Diversity Kit for Youth](#)” and teacher manuals on [underwater heritage](#).
- ii. **Integrating heritage into education.** UNESCO is launching a series of projects aimed at integrating intangible cultural heritage into both formal and informal education, in line with [SDG 4.7](#).
- iii. **Supporting young creators.** UNESCO supports young cultural entrepreneurs through the [International Fund for Cultural Diversity \(IFCD\)](#), with over 50% of IFCD funds invested in projects that empower youth. The IFCD has recently launched a special call for proposals for projects aimed at supporting women under the age of 40 enter the digital creative industries, as part of the “[U40 Empowered](#)” project.
- iv. **Organizing Youth Forums.** UNESCO organizes a yearly [World Heritage Youth Forum](#) in conjunction with the World Heritage Committee, offering young people the chance to learn about and respond to threats facing World Heritage.
- v. **Raising awareness among young people.** UNESCO has launched a \$2 million project on the “[Prevention of Violent Extremism through Youth Empowerment in Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia](#)”, which will include an Arab region World Heritage Youth Forum and activities in the framework of the World Heritage Volunteers initiative. UNESCO launched the [#Unite4Heritage campaign](#) at Baghdad University in 2015, empowering young people to reject the propaganda of violent extremism and defend their shared heritage.

# YOUTH AND CULTURE

## KEY MESSAGES



**The right of young people to access, enjoy and actively participate in cultural life** is enshrined in international law, forming a key part of their cultural and human rights.



**Participation in cultural life** is necessary for young people to gain an understanding of their own culture and that of others, which in turn broadens their horizons, strengthens their ability to peacefully resolve conflicts and fosters respect for cultural diversity. Empowering youth to realize their cultural rights therefore lies at the heart of UNESCO's work on youth and culture.



**UNESCO's work on youth and culture aligns with SDG 4, Target 7**, which calls for all learners to acquire an appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.



**Intangible cultural heritage and education** are inextricably linked and mutually beneficial. Education programmes provide important spaces to ensure the continued transmission of intangible cultural heritage to future generations. At the same time, intangible cultural heritage can enhance the classroom experience, making education more meaningful and relevant to the lives of young people, and fostering inclusion and a sense of belonging among previously marginalized groups.



**With 73 million young people currently facing unemployment around the world**, the cultural and creative industries can be a key source of social and economic empowerment. These industries are among the fastest growing in the world, representing 30 million jobs worldwide and employing more people ages 15 to 29 than any other sector.



**The fight against the growing destruction of cultural heritage** by extremist groups is fundamentally a battle for the hearts and minds of young people. Experience with intercultural dialogue and an understanding of the value of cultural heritage and diversity is essential for countering violent extremism and safeguarding heritage for future generations.