

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

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HOW DOES UNESCO DEFINE CULTURAL DIVERSITY?

Much of UNESCO's work on cultural diversity is guided by the 2001 UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, adopted by Member States a few short weeks after the attacks of September 11th as an affirmation of the value of cultural diversity, and a rejection of the notion of a "clash of civilizations". The 2001 Declaration defines cultural diversity as the simple fact that culture takes diverse forms across time and space, and this diversity is embodied in the various identities of the groups and societies that make up humankind. UNESCO believes that cultural diversity represents a key part of the common heritage of humanity, which must be safeguarded for present and future generations. UNESCO also views the defence of cultural diversity as inseparable from the achievement of human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular the rights of minorities and indigenous peoples. Overall, promoting respect for cultural diversity is essential to UNESCO's mission – to foster peace in the minds of men and women through international exchange and dialogue.

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WHY CULTURAL DIVERSITY?

As stated in UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, cultural diversity is "as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature". Just as natural diversity is essential for a healthy ecosystem, cultural diversity is the lifeblood of vibrant economies and societies. It provides the fresh ideas and perspectives that enrich our lives in countless ways, allowing us all to grow and thrive together, contributing to development that is truly sustainable. Yet despite its necessity, cultural diversity is increasingly under threat. For example, gentrification and unchecked development threaten to standardize our cities, robbing them of their social diversity and vibrancy. Across the world, violent extremists have targeted cultural minorities and destroyed our shared heritage. In response to the challenges facing cultural diversity, UNESCO strives to foster intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding, recognizing that a respect for cultural diversity is among the best guarantees of international peace, security and sustainable development.

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HOW DOES UNESCO WORK TO SAFEGUARD AND PROMOTE CULTURAL DIVERSITY?

- i. **Mobilizing its normative tools.** The UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity calls for Member States to safeguard and promote cultural diversity as part of the common heritage of humanity, while the 2005 Convention on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions works to ensure that artists, cultural professionals, and citizens worldwide can create, produce, disseminate and enjoy a broad range of cultural goods, services and activities, including their own.
- ii. **Boosting the creative industries.** UNESCO supports cultural entrepreneurs and the emergence of dynamic cultural sectors through the International Fund for Cultural Diversity (IFCD), which has financed 97 projects in 54 developing countries to date.
- iii. **Research and monitoring.** In June 2018, UNESCO launched a global survey on policies and measures taken to support the economic and social rights of artists, who are facing growing threats and censorship across the globe. Through Re/Shaping Cultural Policies, UNESCO monitors the efforts of Member States to promote the diversity of cultural expressions through their policies and legislation.
- iv. **Raising awareness of the value of cultural diversity.** UNESCO celebrates cultural diversity through events such as the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, held every year on 21 May, and International Jazz Day, 30 April.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

KEY MESSAGES



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Despite its necessity, cultural diversity is increasingly under threat. Gentrification and unchecked development threaten to standardize our cities, robbing them of their social diversity and vibrancy. Across the world, violent extremists have targeted cultural minorities and destroyed our shared heritage – understanding the powerful link between people and their history.



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Now home to more than 50% of the world's population, cities are increasingly places where growth, innovation and diversity exist side by side with inequality, discrimination and conflict. To bridge this divide, cities must harness the power of cultural diversity to promote development that works for everyone. The conservation and safeguarding of urban cultural heritage in particular enhances the liveability of cities, while respecting the identities of urban residents.

For more information, visit: <http://en.unesco.org/creativity/>