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Report of the Institute for Statistics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on cultural statistics

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2020/211 and past practices, the Secretary-General is honoured to transmit the report of the Institute for Statistics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on cultural statistics. The report provides updated information on recent developments in international cultural statistics. In particular, it provides information on the launch of the new survey of expenditure on cultural and natural heritage (indicator 11.4.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals) and the UNESCO framework of thematic indicators for culture in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and serves to highlight progress in terms of other relevant activities. The report also includes information on the cultural statistics programme strategy of the Institute, with specific attention paid to current challenges. The Statistical Commission is invited to take note of the report.

* E/CN.3/2021/1.



Report of the Institute for Statistics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on cultural statistics

I. Introduction

1. The present report on the status of the cultural statistics programme of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization is submitted pursuant to a request made by the Statistical Commission. The report provides updated information on recent developments in international cultural statistics. In particular, it provides information on the launch of the new survey of expenditure on cultural and natural heritage (indicator 11.4.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals) and the UNESCO framework of thematic indicators for culture in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and serves to highlight progress in terms of other relevant activities. The report also includes information on the cultural statistics programme strategy of the Institute, with specific attention paid to current challenges.

II. New cultural statistics programme strategy

2. UNESCO is the lead agency within the United Nations system for culture, and the Institute for Statistics is the lead agency for global statistics on culture. In line with the decisions taken by its Governing Board in 2020, the Institute is focusing its activities on four key roles, namely: (a) trusted producer; (b) expert voice; (c) coalition-builder; and (d) capacity-builder.

3. Within the context of those key roles, the cultural statistics programme will continue to: (a) improve existing, and develop new, methodologies, standards and norms in cultural statistics; (b) collect, analyse and disseminate internationally comparable cultural data and indicators; and (c) provide training and capacity-building in cultural statistics to countries.

4. Regarding data and indicators, in 2020, the Governing Board directed the Institute to prioritize its data collection programme so as to focus on the production of a set of core data and indicators to support global and thematic monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals. For the cultural statistics programme, the initial core set of indicators is presented in table 1.

Table 1

Preliminary core cultural data and indicators of the Institute for Statistics

	<i>Indicator</i>
Global	Total per capita expenditure on the preservation, protection and conservation of all cultural and natural heritage, by source of funding (public and private), type of heritage (cultural and natural) and level of government (national, regional and local/municipal) (indicator 11.4.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals)
Thematic	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Indicator 11.4.1 of the Goals (see global indicator) 2. Percentage of persons employed, by occupation, sex, age and level of education 3. Share of cultural exports among all goods

Indicator

4. Share of cultural exports among all services
 5. Number of indoor cinema sites
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5. The Governing Board directed the cultural statistics programme to undertake a global consultation on the indicators produced from the Institute's survey on cultural employment statistics and the survey on feature film statistics, as well as from the indicators produced for cultural trade statistics on the basis of data extracted from the United Nations International Trade Statistics Database (UN Comtrade). The consultation process consisted of two stages: (a) consultation with the UNESCO Culture Sector; and (b) consultation with UNESCO member States on the list of indicators emerging from the first stage.

6. The list of endorsed indicators resulting from the consultation process will be included in the final list of core cultural data and indicators for production by the cultural statistics programme. At the time of writing the present report, the consultation with the UNESCO Culture Sector was completed. The consultation with countries is planned for the first quarter of 2021.

7. The culture statistics programme will continue to develop international norms, standards and methodologies related to the field of culture statistics in order to support the improvement and development of cultural statistics at the country level. That work will start with revisions to the 2009 UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics, which, 11 years after its creation, is in need of an update.

8. With regard to data and indicators, it is expected that the new strategy will begin to be implemented in mid-2021, with the launch of a single survey on cultural indicators, which will be focused on the collection of internationally comparable data for the production of the Institute's core culture indicators. The survey of expenditure on cultural and natural heritage (indicator 11.4.1 of the Goals) will continue to be administered in order to support the national and global monitoring of indicator 11.4.1.

9. In addition, the Institute's cultural statistics programme will increase its use of secondary data sources where feasible as well as begin to explore big data and the use of data analytics as a source of data to measure culture phenomenon.

10. Lastly, the cultural statistics programme of the Institute will continue to support capacity-building efforts at the country level through various modalities, including, but not limited to, the following:

- (a) Production of online webinars and training materials to support the core indicators for culture;
- (b) Delivery of online and in-country technical advice in cultural statistics on a country demand basis;
- (c) Delivery of online or in-country training workshops.

III. Survey of expenditure on cultural and natural heritage (indicator 11.4.1)

11. In December 2018, the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators reclassified indicator 11.4.1 of the Goals from tier III to tier II. The Institute subsequently launched its survey of expenditure on cultural

and natural heritage (indicator 11.4.1), and the first data collection exercise took place on 29 June 2020, using an online survey instrument. The survey was sent to a total of 211 countries and territories. The response rate for the survey as at 26 November 2020 is shown in table 2.

Table 2

Response rates for survey on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 11.4.1, by region, as at 26 November 2020

<i>Region</i>	<i>Number of countries and territories</i>	<i>Responses received</i>	<i>Response rate (percentage)</i>
Africa	47	6	13
Arab States	19	4	21
Asia and the Pacific	49	7	14
Europe and North America	54	28	52
Latin America and the Caribbean	42	11	26
Total	211	56	27

12. The response rates shown in the table reflect the varying statistical capacities that exist in countries and regions across the globe. There is also an inherent difficulty in producing such expenditure data. For example, the pilot survey showed that data for private heritage expenditure would be difficult to obtain from the majority of countries at the present time. Consequently, it will be necessary to support the development of heritage finance statistics in countries to allow them to produce and report those data for both national and international monitoring efforts.

13. As part of efforts to improve the ability of countries to produce and report those data, the Institute will support countries in implementing the methodology, with the aim of increasing the response rate over the next several years, in order to achieve tier I status for the indicator. This will include the production of a data and methodological guide for indicator 11.4.1.

14. In addition, the Institute will consider other alternative forms of capacity building activities such as webinars, massive open online courses and online training courses. The Institute would also work with other partners, especially regional organizations, to support capacity-building activities in heritage finance statistics.

15. The Institute will continue to administer the survey on an annual basis and produce indicators for the global monitoring of indicator 11.4.1 and its disaggregation by source of funding (public and private), type of heritage (cultural and natural) and level of government (national, regional and local/municipal). In addition, the Institute will continue to develop standards and methodologies in the area of heritage and heritage finance statistics and produce relevant analyses.

IV. Thematic Indicators for Culture in the 2030 Agenda

16. The UNESCO framework entitled “Thematic Indicators for Culture in the 2030 Agenda” is an initiative of the Culture Sector undertaken in partnership with the Institute. The initiative is in line with the cross-cutting expected result 8, concerning the integration of culture in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda across all the Cultural Conventions, of major programme IV of the approved programme and budget of UNESCO for 2020–2021 and reflected, in particular, in performance indicator 1 of that result, namely, the number of supported UNESCO member States

using cultural policies and frameworks, including conventions and recommendations, towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

17. The purpose of the UNESCO framework of thematic indicators for culture is to measure and monitor the progress of the enabling contribution of culture to the national and local implementation of the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda. The framework will make it possible to assess both the role of culture as a sector of activity and the contribution of culture across different Goals and policy areas. The initiative provides a conceptual framework and methodological instruments for countries and cities to assess the contribution of culture to the achievement of the Goals, as part of the existing implementation mechanisms of the 2030 Agenda at the national and local levels, and foster linkages between different Goals and targets. Evidence gathered will inform not only policies and decisions, but also operational actions. The initiative represents an innovative effort to establish a methodology for demonstrating and increasing the visibility of the impact of culture on the Goals in a way that helps decision makers. The global Goal indicator 11.4.1, for which the Institute is the custodian agency, is integrated into the framework, with the very first indicator being “expenditure on heritage”.

18. Implemented on a voluntary basis by countries and cities, and building on an in-depth analysis of the multiple ways in which culture contributes to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development, the initiative provides evidence of the transformative role of culture, making it more visible and tangible. Rather than monitoring the contribution of culture to each relevant Sustainable Development Goal target and globally accepted indicator, the framework considers the contribution of culture across several of the Goals and targets, with a view to linking them together. The framework allows for the aggregation of data across different Goals and targets along cross-cutting themes, in line with the programmes, activities and policies of UNESCO. By strengthening the cross-cutting visibility of culture in the 2030 Agenda, the framework will help to build a coherent, strong and evidence-based narrative on culture and development.

19. The conceptual framework, methodology and implementation mechanisms of the Thematic Indicators for Culture in the 2030 Agenda rely as much as possible on existing data sources, using qualitative and quantitative data to assess the contribution of culture, integrate data from reporting on UNESCO cultural conventions and programmes, develop instruments at both national and urban levels, prioritize capacity-building of relevant agencies, facilitate cooperation across institutions, propose a framework adaptable to different statistical capacities, and provide an aspirational tool for improvement. The framework is aimed at reaping the benefits of the unique expertise of UNESCO in collecting and analysing quantitative and qualitative data in the field of culture. Global cultural statistics gathered by the Institute are also integrated into the framework, for the indicators on cultural employment, trade in cultural goods and services and education for sustainable development.

20. Once the framework is implemented by a city or a country, the analytical material and good practices acquired will help to build a better understanding of the contribution of culture to the achievement of the Goals, with a view to developing a knowledge base, including a digital data bank on culture in the 2030 Agenda. Information collected as part of that implementation in voluntary pilot cities and countries will provide a valuable baseline from which to measure progress, in addition to directing actions at the local and national levels. The data could also contribute to the formation of a global overview of the state of progress with regard to the contribution of culture to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and provides evidence-based and analytical material to support the participation of UNESCO in

United Nations system-wide reporting mechanisms related to the 2030 Agenda and to General Assembly resolutions pertaining to culture and development.

21. The development of the framework began in early 2017, with the review of existing methodologies to measure culture in relation to development in general. Two expert workshops, organized in collaboration with the Institute, were held in September 2017 and January 2018, to discuss the framework and the methodologies for collecting data. The workshops involved UNESCO staff (members of the secretariats of the different cultural conventions, staff of field offices with previous experience in the implementation of the UNESCO Culture for Development Indicators and Institute staff); representatives of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, Eurostat, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the World Bank, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission and some national and local statistical agencies with previous experience in cultural statistics; representatives of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation who had previously supported the Culture for Development Indicators; and international experts from various regions.

22. A refined and revised draft set of indicators and technical guidelines, developed with inputs from the Institute, was then sent to UNESCO member States in May 2019 for their consultation and feedback. The results of the consultation were presented to the Executive Board at its 207th session, in October 2019 and are available online.¹ A manual outlining the framework and presenting the indicators was published on 19 November 2019, in English and French, at the UNESCO Forum of Ministers of Culture. The launch was well received, and the publication was distributed to more than 120 Ministers of Culture (and over 900 Forum participants). In the first half of 2020, the publication was translated into the other four official languages of the United Nations (Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Spanish), and a short, animated video was commissioned to explain the implementation of the framework. The video is also available online.² In collaboration with the Institute, UNESCO organized the first international online expert workshop for the indicators, held in June 2020, at which the framework methodology was presented to 45 experts.

23. The implementation of the framework methodology was expected to start in late 2020, with two pilot countries and cities in Latin America and Asia (tentatively selected as Colombia and the Philippines), with the generous support of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation. More than 50 countries have expressed interest in implementing the framework, and discussions are ongoing with stakeholders in the European Union to support its implementation in four more pilot countries and cities in early 2021. An expert facility for the indicators will be established from the pool of experts who attended the workshop in June 2020. The methodology will be further refined and revised following the pilot implementation. An online digital data bank will also be developed to support the implementation of the framework following the pilot phase. That activity will form part of wider efforts by the Culture Sector to promote, demonstrate and strengthen the enabling contribution of culture to the achievement of the Goals, under its overall programmatic framework. Building on that experience, other complementary approaches and instruments may be developed to assess developments, progress, challenges and emerging trends in the context of cities and to guide policymaking and data collection.

¹ See <https://whc.unesco.org/document/178283>. The results are also available on the website created for the Thematic Indicators for Culture in the 2030 Agenda, at <https://whc.unesco.org/en/culture2030indicators>.

² See https://whc.unesco.org/include/tool_video.cfm?youtubeid=DfHKiWN0QfE?1.

24. More information on the framework and the indicators is available at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000371562>.

V. Current challenges

25. The field of cultural statistics is broad in nature. Moreover, policies and statistical priorities vary greatly from one to country another. Moving forward, the challenge for the Institute's cultural statistics programme will be to focus on selected policy-relevant areas that are of global interest to most countries and the global community.

26. The impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has led to reflection within the programme on the current methods used for data collection and dissemination. The pandemic has highlighted the fact that statistical agencies need to remain flexible and to be able to respond quickly to crises. The cultural statistics programme will need consider that aspect in its new strategy. In addition, given that the world changes rapidly, the programme will also need to continue to collect relevant and internationally comparable data in a timely manner and to adopt and implement new technologies for data collection and dissemination.

27. The new digital and online world has had a significant impact on the culture sector and its measurement. Consequently, the programme will need to examine the feasibility of increasing its use of alternative sources and investigate the potential role of big data and data analytics in measuring culture phenomena.

28. Lastly, and importantly, like most statistical programmes, a stable financing model will need to be implemented if the cultural statistics programme is to continue to serve member States and global stakeholders in a sustainable manner.

VI. Conclusions

29. The cultural statistics programme of the Institute for Statistics is undergoing a transformation and repositioning itself in order to best serve countries and the international community in the area of cultural statistics. This transformation has resulted in a new focus on key priority statistical areas of data and indicators as the core work of the programme.

30. The Institute will deliver its programme of cultural statistics within the context of four key roles, namely, trusted producer, expert voice, coalition-builder and capacity-builder. Within the context of those key roles, the cultural statistics programme will continue to: (a) improve existing, and develop new, methodologies, standards and norms in cultural statistics; (b) collect, analyse and disseminate internationally comparable cultural data and indicators; and (c) provide training and capacity-building in cultural statistics to countries. In order to achieve that, the Institute's culture programme will remain innovative in its approach, while improving current partnerships and seeking out new ones.

31. The Institute will continue to produce data and indicators to support the production of the global Thematic Indicators for Culture in the 2030 Agenda framework, in addition to supporting capacity-building initiatives.

32. The Commission is invited to take note of the present report.