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UNESCO: Global Report on Convention on Diversity of Cultural Expressions

On 14 December 2017, UNESCO published its Global Report on the implementation of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. The Convention, adopted in 2005, and ratified in 2007, seeks to protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions, and reaffirm the sovereign rights of States to maintain, adopt and implement policies and measures that they deem appropriate for the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions on their territory (see IRIS 2005-10/1 and IRIS 2007-2/1).

The 250-page Report, entitled “Re-Shaping Cultural Policies”, is designed to analyse progress achieved in implementing the Convention, which has now been ratified by 146 Parties, including the European Union. The Report is the work of ten independent experts, together with the Secretary of the Convention, and a consulting firm specialised in data collection and analysis. The Report is grounded in analysis of “Quadrennial Periodic Reports” submitted by the parties, and is divided into four overall thematic sections, which reflect a framework to monitor the impact of the Convention’s implementation.

The first goal is to support sustainable systems of governance for culture. In particular, the first four chapters address this challenge, including analysing policies and measures to promote the diversity of cultural expressions (Chapter 1); public service media as producers, commissioners, distributors, disseminators and mediators of high-quality cultural content (Chapter 2); the implications of the rapidly evolving digital environment (Chapter 3); and the contribution of civil society actors to policy implementation in areas such as the production and distribution of cultural goods and services (Chapter 4). Notably, a key finding is that new policy frameworks adapted to the digital context are beginning to respond to the challenges of horizontal and vertical media convergence.

The Report’s second section concerns the goal of achieving a balanced flow of cultural goods and services. In this regard, Chapter 5 analyses the mobility of artists and other cultural professionals; Chapter 6 analyses recent trends with regard to flows of cultural goods and services, and notes that digital distribution platforms, exchange networks and export strategies, mostly in the audiovisual sector, are helping “global South” countries enter the international market of cultural goods and services; and Chapter 7 examines the influence of the Convention on other international legal treaties and agreements, notably in the trade arena. Furthermore, a key finding is that domestic quotas are an effective measure to increase national audiovisual production, eventually leading to an increase in exports.

Next, the third section addresses the goal of integrating a cultural dimension in sustainable development frameworks. Chapter 8 analyses how implementation of the Convention has had a positive impact on policies, plans and programmes in the domain of sustainable development. Notably, 86% of the parties that have adopted a national development plan or strategy have included references to the cultural dimension of development, and over two-thirds of these are from the “global South”.

The final section of the Report concerns the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Chapter 9 examines gender equality, and finds that the 2005 Convention cannot be properly implemented without actively promoting gender equality among creators and producers of cultural expressions, as well as among citizens, in terms of access to and participation in cultural life. Lastly, Chapter 10 discusses artistic freedom, and reports that attacks on artistic freedom in 2016 perpetrated by both state and non-state actors, mostly against musicians, rose significantly; while laws dealing with terrorism and state security, criminal defamation, religion and “traditional values” have been used to curb artistic and other forms of free expression.

• UNESCO, 2005 Convention Global Report “Re-Shaping Cultural Policies”, 14 December 2017

<http://merlin.obs.coe.int/redirect.php?id=18926>

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• UNESCO, 2005 Convention Global Report “Re-Shaping Cultural Policies” - Summary, 14 December 2017

<http://merlin.obs.coe.int/redirect.php?id=18927>

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