



**UNESCO CREATIVE CITIES NETWORK - ONLINE MEETING**

**UNESCO Creative Cities:  
Build back better from COVID-19**

**6 - 7 July 2021**

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# CONCEPT NOTE


Since its outbreak, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a substantial impact on all the aspects of human life across the entire globe. With high concentration of inhabitants, and as major hubs of economic, social, and cultural activities, cities have been on the frontline of the crisis and have been mobilized to provide swift responses to the multifaceted impact of the pandemic.


Beyond the most immediate, urgent measures undertaken to contain the spread of the virus and provide necessary medical services despite lockdown and other social distancing measures, cities have endeavored to maintain education, social cohesion, and the cultural life of their inhabitants.

Cultural and creative sectors have, in particular, been deeply affected: cultural events, festivals, musical and artistic performances have been cancelled or postponed, museums, theatre, cinema and libraries among others, have been temporarily closed. This has significantly jeopardized people's access to cultural and creative activities, as well as impacted the livelihoods of artists and professionals, thus affecting the entire cultural and creative economy.

In light of this, cities have demonstrated their inventiveness, their capacity for adaptation as well as their proactive strength to respond to the challenges which have emerged throughout this unprecedented situation, notably in regard to the cultural and creative sectors. This includes numerous and diverse actions and measures at the local level. Access to education and participation in cultural activities have been ensured by means of online communication; advancement of support measures for creative practitioners and workers, including financial assistance. Design and innovation have been further utilized to devise sustainable solutions to a wide range of urban challenges. Through the strategic placement of culture and creativity as major enablers for social cohesion and a unique source of resilience, local policymakers have also leveraged cultural capital to recreate a sense of community and solidarity among their residents.

Recognizing the essential role of cooperation and mutual learning in times of crisis, the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN), along with its 246 member cities from over 80 countries, have taken action to further strengthen collaboration, and encourage the sharing and exchange of good practices amongst Creative Cities and beyond. The global call launched by the UCCN Secretariat in March 2020 resulted in a dedicated publication titled 'UNESCO Creative Cities' Response to COVID-19', which gathered culture and creativity enabled initiatives from more than 90 Creative Cities of 44 countries. One year later, a second call was launched with a special focus on activities related to post-pandemic recovery.





To contribute to this rising momentum, UNESCO, in collaboration with Santos (Brazil), the Host City of the XIV UCCN Annual Conference, will organize a two-day online meeting under the theme 'UNESCO Creative Cities: Build back better from COVID-19' on 6 and 7 July 2021. It will focus on the role of culture and creativity in urban recovery and sustainable development within the current global context and wider scope. The online meeting will offer Creative Cities a forum to exchange their good practices, lessons learnt, as well as discuss short and mid-term development visions and strategies.

Considering the pandemic not only as a crisis but also as an opportunity, the meeting will encourage Creative Cities and other stakeholders and actors, including Member States, to further nurture the power and potential of culture and creativity in achieving the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It will also strengthen the call for taking additional action towards building resilient, inclusive and people-centred cities in the long-term.

## SESSIONS

### DAY 1 (Tuesday 6 July)

#### Spotlight on Mayors

As part of the opening of the two respective days, Mayors of Creative Cities will share their visions on the contribution of culture and creativity for sustainable urban development, illustrated by concrete cases and initiatives implemented by cities to address the pandemic. In addition to enhancing inter-city cooperation and peer-learning, this special session will also aim to provide encouragement and inspiration to fellow Creative Cities in their own responses to and recovery from the pandemic.

#### Presentation by the UCCN Secretariat

The UCCN Secretariat will provide an update on some of the Network's activities as well as provide a brief summary on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its work. In this regard, the Secretariat will showcase the efforts undertaken since the outbreak of the pandemic to further foster the exchange of good practices between cities and stimulate mutual learning, notably through its two Global Calls for culture and creativity enabled urban responses.

## **Creative Cities' responses to COVID-19: leveraging the power of culture and creativity**

Structured around a set of themes, this session will discuss how Creative Cities have been tapping into their cultural and creative assets, as well as devising innovative measures in response to the socio-economic and other resultant impacts of the pandemic. Built on selected cases from the first Global Call, the session will not only illustrate various ways in which culture and creativity have been utilized to respond to the pandemic, but also in diverse areas such as access and participation to cultural activities, support policies and measures, education and learning, and inter-city cooperation, amongst others.

### **DAY 2 (Wednesday 7 July)**

#### **Building cities back better through culture and creativity**

##### **Part I - Experiences and knowledge exchange: cases from Creative Cities**

With a forward-looking approach and a special focus on the recovery, this session will invite stakeholders to deepen the collective reflection on the role of culture and creativity in dealing with major urban challenges and opportunities in both short-term immediate responses as well as long-term recovery plans. Throughout the session, illustrative cases from different creative fields of the Network will be introduced, with the aim of inspiring cities worldwide to adapt, recover and innovate.

##### **Part II - Recovery of urban tourism: challenges and opportunities**

Being one of the sectors hardest hit by the pandemic, the travel and tourism landscape, especially in urban areas, has shifted dramatically. As cities and domestic tourism have been slowly reopening in some parts of the world, it is essential to initiate a coordinated and holistic recovery action at the international level to fulfill tourism's potential as an enabler of sustainable and inclusive recovery and growth for cities.

In this context and based on the lessons learnt from cases initiated by Creative Cities, this session will explore how to revitalize urban tourism and what structural transformation is needed to shape a more sustainable and resilient tourism through culture and creativity.