

# CULTURE POLICIES AND ACTIONS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19: AN ASIA-PACIFIC PERSPECTIVE



# FOREWORD



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Governor of Jeju Special Self-Governing Province  
Lead of UCLG ASPAC Culture Committee

Greetings to members of UCLG ASPAC.

Local governments around the world are carrying on the fight against the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. 2020 has been a difficult time for all of us as people’s lives and safety are put at risk and livelihoods destroyed.

Humans, social creatures, are required to be socially distant from one another, and isolation and lockdown have become common around the world.

Yet, COVID-19 has shown us that international cooperation is more important now than ever before. One region’s success in prevention and control of the pandemic cannot end this crisis.

The power to overcome this novel infectious disease lies in sharing information and strengthening collaboration.

Local governments must put our heads together to further improve the infection control system and overcome the economic crisis.

Entering the era of COVID-19, we have come to realise the importance of joining hands in response to global climate action and contributing to sustainable development.

Jeju Special Self-Governing Province of the Republic of Korea is an international tourist destination visited by 15 million tourists annually.

Reflecting its island characteristics, Jeju has been implementing a border-level disease prevention system at the airport and seaport since the initial stage of the pandemic. As a result, Jeju was able to quickly trace, test, and isolate high-risk groups and prevent the spread of the virus through follow-up epidemiological investigation.

Vulnerable facilities such as convalescent hospitals are being disinfected in a pre-emptive manner and are closely monitored.

The prolonged pandemic has also had a devastating impact on the economy. In response, Jeju granted coronavirus relief funds for all residents suffering from economic difficulties and emergency subsidies for SMEs, micro-enterprises, and those working in cultural arts.

It is thanks to the active participation of Jeju residents and the devotion of medical professionals that we were able to keep Jeju safe and clean for everyone.

Local governments stand at the first line in this war against COVID-19. Compiling the experience and wisdom gained, the publication of Culture Policies and Actions of Local Governments in Asia-Pacific in Response to COVID-19 comes at a very meaningful time.

I look forward to seeing our solidarity and cooperation further promote exchange and become a beacon of hope for the pandemic-hit world.

Thank you.



**Dr. Bernadia Irawati Tjandradewi**  
Secretary General, UCLG ASPAC

2020 will be remembered as a year of changes. COVID-19 took millions of lives and affected countless families and communities worldwide. Culture offered solace to our grieving and weary hearts and connected us to each other through various art forms such as music, theatre and film.

Even prior to the pandemic, cities and local governments around the world have been working together to promote culture’s role in sustainable development through the Agenda 21 for culture and the #culture2015goal campaign which later evolved to the #culture2030goal. In Asia-Pacific, the UCLG ASPAC Culture Committee was formed to take the lead in supporting this goal.

I would like to congratulate the UCLG ASPAC Culture Committee for putting together this publication. This raises awareness among the international community on the efforts of cities and local governments in ensuring that cultural policies are in place and people will still have access to culture during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. This publication is an important milestone in encouraging knowledge exchange and enabling local governments to address the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Culture has been a relevant factor in how we respond to COVID-19. Local wisdom, the way people communicate, self-help supporting system, are about culture, which has been found effective in minimising the spread of COVID-19.

Effective communication on raising awareness amongst people of health protocol using different means was used in flattening the curve. UCLG ASPAC has been working closely with cities and local governments on showing the relations between COVID-19’s responses and recovery to the Sustainable Development Goals. Culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development is the fundamental aspect in recovering better and stronger from COVID-19.

**“Culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development is the fundamental aspect in recovering better and stronger from COVID-19.”**



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has heavily affected the cultural sector thereby limiting people's access to culture. Jobs in the cultural and creative sectors are at risk from 0.8 to 5.5 percent of employment in OECD regions<sup>1</sup>. Recognising that culture serves as an antidote to the secondary effects of the pandemic<sup>2</sup>, the UCLG ASPAC Culture Committee initiated this publication following the discussion from the Committee's meeting held last 21 August 2020.

Various cultural networks of cities collected initiatives that respond to the pandemic and launched dedicated pages on the subject: the global UCLG Culture Committee,<sup>3</sup> UNESCO's Creative Cities Network and Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities. By mobilising the Culture Committee and its members, UCLG ASPAC will be able to analyse the culture policies and actions of local governments in the region and facilitate knowledge exchange that can support recovery efforts.

## THE UCLG ASPAC CULTURE COMMITTEE

The UCLG ASPAC Culture Committee was established in 2015 under the leadership of the Jeju Special Self-Governing Province with the goal to promote culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development in Asia Pacific cities and local governments. It aims to influence policy formulation, facilitate knowledge-sharing of cultural policies and exemplary practices, and establish an active culture network in the region. Along with Jeju, the committee includes Raipur City, Solo City, Vigan City, and Wuhan City as its founding members, and Baguio City, Galle Municipal Council, Kiribati Local Government Association, Makati City, and Vadodara Municipal Corporation as members.

The work of the committee focuses on 5 major themes: culture and environment; culture, urban planning and public space; governance of culture; culture and economy; and heritage, diversity, and creativity.

<sup>1</sup>OECD Culture Shock: COVID-19 and the cultural and creative sectors

<sup>2</sup>UCLG Decalogue for the COVID-19 aftermath

<sup>3</sup>It published a page in its website (March 2020) and the report "Culture, Cities and the COVID-19 Pandemic - Part 1: Documenting the Initial Measures and Drafting Challenges Ahead" (June 2020).

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

### ANDONG CITY:

### AMA-DO ARTIST PROJECT AND ANDONG-E GAMYEON FESTIVAL

The COVID-19 pandemic severely affected the tourism and cultural art sectors, ushering in nationwide efforts to support the economic activities of the workers in these fields. In Andong City, those employed for local cultural arts have been hard-hit due to the cancellation of local cultural art events. The City of Andong introduced the Ama-do Artist Project and Andong-e Gamyeon Festival to support the economic activities of the local cultural artists and overcome the surge of the COVID-19 fatigue through the power of culture.



The "Ama-do Artist" Project – meaning "Maybe it's art" Project – was held to support the livelihood of local cultural artists and help the community relish the rights to cultural life with local cultural art events. From 5 to 13 June 2020, the project utilised eight (8) local cafes in the city as a gallery since galleries and museums were temporarily closed to observe social distancing. The cafes featured works of 15 Andong-born artists and held meetings with these artists which introduced a new way of appreciating art. The events were held for small groups with all participants mandated to rigorously follow quarantine measures. Each event limited the number of participants per session to 20 with seating distanced at two (2) meters, finishing safely without incidence of a confirmed case. Participants had a positive response to the project and hoped for this kind of cultural event to be available in diverse formats in the future.





"Andong-e Gamyeon" has two meanings – a traditional mask which serves as a symbol of Andong and "when we go to Andong" as a way to encourage people to visit Andong. Held on 26 October to 01 November 2020, the Andong-e Gamyeon Festival aimed to offer the public an opportunity to appreciate and enjoy Andong's festivities, particularly the Andong Mask Dance Festival which had to be cancelled this year due to the pandemic.



The Andong-e Gamyeon Festival restricted large-scale audience gathering and modified festival sites to accommodate a small number of visitors. It brought together local cultural artists and other culture-related persons, such as system operators and YouTubers, to collaborate for the newly attempted integration of on- and off-line events. The Festival consisted of the 'Busking Performance Outreach' held in 20 tourist and UNESCO World Heritage Sites such as Hahoe Folk Village and Bongjeongsu Buddhist Temple, the special performance at the Mask Dance Park to encourage local cultural art performance, and the live broadcasting by local YouTubers with backdrops of Andong tourist sites.

Specific measures were undertaken to ensure the health and safety of the audience during the Andong-e Gamyeon Festival. For the special performance, the city installed two-man tents in some of the existing seats to help the audiences avoid close contacts, provide space to appreciate performances at ease as in camping, and offer an opportunity to promote the Andong tourism and watch cultural art performances, all at once. The Festival limited admission to its sites to one person per four (4) square meters as the quarantine measure for special performance allows some large-scale events in the non-metropolitan area. Indoor and outdoor gatherings were not allowed for more than 50 participants and 100 participants in the metropolitan area, respectively. Specially designed masks printed with the festival logo were distributed to verify the guests' admission.

More than 100 dancers, performers, and producers participated in the virtual performances which were broadcasted on four (4) local Youtube channels. The Busking Performance Outreach was held for seven (7) days and broadcasted in five (5) personal Youtube channels. The special performances were held for three (3) days and broadcasted in two (2) Youtube channels.

The Ama-do Artist Project and the Andong-e Gamyeon Festival, initiated by the city and supported by various stakeholders, promoted economic invigoration and inspired cultural awareness among the people of Andong City.

These initiatives are in line with the Committee's work on HERITAGE, DIVERSITY, and CREATIVITY. It also complements the Rome Charter's Cultural Capabilities to ENJOY cultural resources and spaces (supporting for the widest spectrum of cultural activity and expression, innovating in making culture accessible in and through the digital world) and SHARE cultures and creativity (creating inclusive cultural platforms of different kinds and scale, supporting community groups to bring their work into public spaces).

## LINKS:



- ▶ Andong-e Gamyeon Stream by Munhwa Broadcasting Center
- ▶ Andong-e Gamyeon Stream by TV Let's do something channel
- ▶ Andong-e Gamyeon Stream by Popcon (contents playground) Channel
- ▶ Andong-e Gamyeon Stream by MC Haru channel
- ▶ Andong-e Gamyeon Stream by Come and Play My Town! TV channel
- ▶ Andong-e Gamyeon Stream by Mr. Gwon's Oso Taxi channel



## BAGUIO CITY:

### 3<sup>RD</sup> CREATIVE CITY FESTIVAL



Baguio City is the first city in the Philippines to be designated as a City of Crafts and Folk Art by the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) in 2017. The institutionalisation of the Baguio Creative Arts Festival which was formalised through City Ordinance number 128 series of 2018 is one of the major commitments of the city to the UCCN. Since 2018, the City has been celebrating the Baguio Creative City Festival every November of the year. As the COVID-19 pandemic severely affected Baguio's creative and cultural sector, the celebration of the 2020 Creative Festival was conducted differently from those held previously.

The Baguio City Government, together with various government and private sector stakeholders, organised the IBagiw 2020: the 3<sup>rd</sup> Baguio Creative City Festival with the aim of making an inspiring Creative City that is overcoming the pandemic crisis through creative resiliency, sustainability and innovation. The Festival also aimed to raise awareness, interest and purchase intent for Baguio creative products and provide opportunities for Baguio Artists, Artisans and Cultural Workers to showcase and uplift their craftsmanship.



During the Festival, several activities were held simultaneously at the various creative hubs within and outside the city. The "Interlinked Contemporary Art Exhibit" was an exhibit at the Baguio Convention Center which featured the works of around thirty (30) local artists and artisans. The "Mandeko Kito Artisan's Fair" was an activity organised to help local artists recover from economic backlash brought by the crisis and was held every weekend of November at the University of the Philippines Baguio. "Art in the Park" featured live painting and weaving sessions, and showcased craftsmanship and musical performances at the City's Sunshine Park. The "Creative Crawls Tour" highlighted the various creative hubs and spaces in the City. The "Arts and Crafts Innovation and Competition" is an annual competition that is specially held for the Baguio Creative City Festival. The competition was composed of five (5) categories namely the Urban Garden, Woodcarving, Metalcraft, Weaving and Basketry Competitions where cash prizes were given to the top three (3) winners of each category. Innovative skills trainings and workshops for local artists and artisans were also conducted during the festival.

More than 200 local artists and artisans from different creative sectors participated in the month-long Festival. Highlights of the IBagiw 2020: the 3<sup>rd</sup> Baguio Creative City Festival, including the opening and closing ceremonies, were made available on social media platforms to give access to people who were unable to visit Baguio due to the implementation of community quarantine across the country. The Baguio Creative City Facebook page was able to reach more than 2 million individuals during the conduct of the month-long Festival.

Through the Baguio Creative City Festival, the city government supported artists, artisans, and the people to bounce back from the crisis.

This initiative is in line with the Committee's work on HERITAGE, DIVERSITY, and CREATIVITY. It also complements the Rome Charter's Cultural Capabilities to ENJOY cultural resources and spaces (supporting for the widest spectrum of cultural activity and expression, innovating in making culture accessible in and through the digital world), CREATE cultural expressions (ensuring equitable access to education and training in art and cultural professions), SHARE cultures and creativity (creating inclusive cultural platforms of different kinds and scale, supporting community groups to bring their work into public spaces), and PROTECT common cultural resources (legislative protection for tangible and intangible cultural heritage, embedding cultural considerations throughout local government's work).

#### LINKS:



Ibagiw Creative Festival website



Baguio Creative City Facebook page



## JEJU SPECIAL SELF-GOVERNING PROVINCE: CULTURE SESSION IN JEJU FORUM FOR PEACE AND PROSPERITY 2020

The Jeju Special Self-Governing Province first launched the Jeju Peace Forum in 2001 as a regional platform to promote peace and prosperity in Asia. It has been held biennially until 2009 and started to be held annually since 2011 when it was renamed as the Jeju Forum for Peace and Prosperity.



The Jeju Forum for Peace and Prosperity 2020, with the theme "Reinventing Multilateral Cooperation: Pandemic and Humane Security", was held from 5 to 7 November at the Lotte Hotel, Jeju. One of its sessions focused on "The Role of Art and Culture amidst COVID-19". During the session, Chinese contemporary art painter Mr. Zhengjie Feng expressed a positive outlook that Jeju can take a leap forward as Asia's representative cultural and art hub. Mr. Sadatoshi Oshiro, a novelist and former professor at Ryukyus University, discussed how the "universal power" of literature can encourage people during the pandemic. Film director Mr. Byung Hun Min was optimistic and stated how there is paradox in the crisis – the pandemic is creating new opportunities for art. Ms. Neunghee Oh, Director of the Jeju Opera Research Laboratory, urged to look back on the cultural strengths of Jeju and to take pride as Jeju people. UCLG Committee on Culture Special Advisor Ms. Catherine Cullen stated that art has the power to unite society and connect people in crisis.

Taking into consideration the COVID-19 situation, the Culture session was held in a hybrid manner with a combination of face-to-face and virtual session. The session limited in-person attendance to 50 people in the conference hall while over 1,100 people watched the session through the Jeju Forum Youtube channel. By organising this session, Jeju Special Self-Governing Province ensures that culture remains in the international policymaking agenda of cities and local governments.

This initiative is in line with the Committee's work on GOVERNANCE OF CULTURE and complements the Rome Charter's Cultural Capabilities to SHARE cultures and creativity (supporting international cooperation, exchanges and network) and PROTECT common cultural resources (embedding cultural considerations throughout local government's work).



### LINKS:



Jeju Forum Website



Jeju Forum Youtube Channel



Jeju Forum Instagram Account

## SEOUL METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT: SEJONG CENTER'S CHEER UP CONCERT

The Sejong Center was established by the Seoul Metropolitan Government as a hub for the performing arts. First opened in 1978, the Center is currently home to nine (9) resident art groups including the Seoul Metropolitan Traditional Orchestra, Seoul Metropolitan Dance Theatre, Seoul Metropolitan Chorus, Seoul Metropolitan Musical Theatre, Seoul Metropolitan Theatre, Seoul Metropolitan Youth Orchestra, Seoul Metropolitan Junior Chorus, and Seoul Metropolitan Youth Traditional Music Ensemble.

Due to COVID-19, several scheduled performances were cancelled. In order to support the arts and culture community, Sejong Center presented the Cheer Up Concert. Under this campaign, support for production costs amounting to around US\$27,000 can be provided to artists and art groups with cancelled performances. The application for the Cheer Up Concert was open from 20 to 25 March 2020 and performances were scheduled from 7 to 28 April 2020.



A total of 12 groups and 14 performances from various genres such as popular music, traditional art, music, musical, theater, dance, and classic were supported under Sejong Center's Cheer Up Concert. Some of the selected artists and groups include Billy Carter, Millennium Symphony Orchestra, Kim Bo Ra, Aday, Forte di Quattro, DTSQ and Seoul Dance Company. Some of the performances are the musical "Secretly Greatly -The Last", dance musical "Sachum 2 – Let's Dance, Crazy" and creative dance play "N.O.T."

The Cheer Up Concert performances were livestreamed for free on the Sejong Center's Naver TV channel and were made accessible until the end of May 2020. This enabled people to watch from the comfort of their homes, without having to travel to performance venues, and encouraged the observance of social distancing.

This initiative is in line with the Committee's work on HERITAGE, DIVERSITY AND CREATIVITY. It also complements the Rome Charter's Cultural Capabilities to ENJOY cultural resources and spaces (supporting for the widest spectrum of cultural activity and expression, innovating in making culture accessible in and through the digital world), and SHARE cultures and creativity (creating inclusive cultural platforms of different kinds and scale).



### LINKS:



Seoul Metropolitan Government Website



Sejong Center Website



**VIGAN CITY:  
WORLD HERITAGE CITIES SOLIDARITY  
AND CULTURAL FESTIVAL**

The City of Vigan is recognised by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a Heritage City for its rich history, culture, and traditions. Every month of September, the city government joins the world in commemorating the Solidarity Day through the Vigan City World Heritage Cities Solidarity and Cultural Festival. The Festival aims to strengthen the pride in the city's history and culture, promote friendship and diversity between countries, and serve as a great venue for forging ties and understanding through the community's involvement in the city's various activities that highlights love for culture, arts and entertainment.



During the Festival, the 39 barangays or villages and public and private elementary, high school, and colleges were clustered into five to take part in the different cultural competitions. These competitions include Kinantaran, Vocal Solo, Vocal Chorus, Daniw and Dallot for Musical Arts; On the Spot Painting, Fotografias Y Recuerdos and Letras Y Figuras under Visual Arts; Story Telling, Cultural Quiz Bowl, Sabayang Pagbigkas, Bukanegan and Historia Oral for Literary Arts, and Folk Dance Competition. The Festival also promoted cultural awareness on the classical forms of entertainment such as the Zarzuela Ilocana, particularly for the youth, for them to treasure and preserve it for the future generations.






Unlike in previous celebrations, the events during the World Heritage Cities Solidarity and Cultural Festival held from 8 to 23 September 2020 were limited and executed in accordance with the new normal protocols. Most of the events were done via online platforms to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The opening activity was streamed through Facebook Live and had 25,600 viewers.

The observance of the World Heritage Cities Solidarity and Cultural Festival is institutionalised in the city through the Vigan City Tourism Code Chapter III Article XVIII on Recognised Annual Tourism Programs and Festivals, Section 39 on Annual Festivities in the City of Vigan from January to December. Through the celebration of the Festival amidst the pandemic, the City of Vigan manifested its dedication in safeguarding the rich heritage of its people.

This initiative is in line with the Committee's work on HERITAGE, DIVERSITY, and CREATIVITY. It also complements the Rome Charter's Cultural Capabilities to ENJOY cultural resources and spaces (supporting for the widest spectrum of cultural activity and expression, innovating in making culture accessible in and through the digital world), SHARE cultures and creativity (creating inclusive cultural platforms of different kinds and scale), and PROTECT common cultural resources (legislative protection for tangible and intangible cultural heritage, embedding cultural considerations throughout local government's work).

**LINKS:**



-  [Vigan City Website](#)
-  [Vigan City Facebook Account](#)
-  [Vigan Production World Heritage Cities Solidarity Festival 2020 Highlights](#)



## XI'AN MUNICIPAL PEOPLE'S GOVERNMENT: XI'AN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA ONLINE CONCERT SERIES

Founded in 2012, the Xi'an Symphony Orchestra (XSO) is the only municipal orchestra representing the city of Xi'an and serves as the resident orchestra of the Shaanxi Performing Arts Center and Xi'an Concert Hall.



Due to the pandemic, performances of the XSO were cancelled, postponed, or cannot operate normally. The Orchestra immediately adjusted its strategic and program planning. Artists were brought from the concert hall to a virtual platform, thereby moving the concert hall from offline to online. Under the guidance of provincial and municipal governments, the XSO continued to make innovations and a series of concerts were held. Such innovations encouraged artists to perform online and merge the beauty of music with the charm of nature, providing a free and extraordinary audio-visual banquet to people.

The XSO, in an effort to attract the audience during its virtual performances, tried to set up broadcast equipment that will enable bullet screen comments from viewers. The first concert with this feature was held last 28 March 2020 and was watched by 42,000 people.



From April to May, the XSO integrated their performances with museums and launched the "Online National Treasure Series of Concerts". The Orchestra walked into five most iconic museums and performed six live concerts, playing classic music in front of rare treasures. Audiences were able to appreciate national treasures while listening to beautiful music. The cumulative view count of the concert series exceeded 23 million.







On 4 July 2020, the Xi'an Symphony Orchestra and the tourism industry severely affected by the epidemic selected the site of Huashan Mountain to hold "The Sea of Clouds Concert at the Top of Mount Hua". This presented to the world an online symphonic music with the vast sky of the West Peak of Huashan Mountain. The collision of humanity and nature, the blending of music and spectacles, the dialogue between local and international, penetrate the sea of clouds and resound all over the world. The view count of the first broadcast reached over 50 million views and the cumulative number of views exceeded 100 million.

Following the directives from central government on safeguarding the ecological environment of the Qinling Mountains, the XSO also started a series of six (6) concerts: "Voices of the Chinese Ancestral Qinling Mountains". The Orchestra immersed itself in the background of Qinling and presented music with green mountains and clear waters, vividly demonstrating the natural scenery of the Shaanxi Province. The cumulative view count of the concert series exceeded 36.17 million.

With the innovations of the Xi'an Symphony Orchestra, the artists and audience are able to connect with each other and experience the beauty of nature through music.

This initiative is in line with the Committee's work on **CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT**. It also complements the Rome Charter's Cultural Capabilities to **ENJOY** cultural resources and spaces (supporting for the widest spectrum of cultural activity and expression, innovating in making culture accessible in and through the digital world), and **SHARE** cultures and creativity (creating inclusive cultural platforms of different kinds and scale).

## LINKS:



Xi'an Symphony Orchestra Website



Xi'an Symphony Orchestra Youtube Channel

## WAY FORWARD



Political will of local leaders is key in ensuring that culture remains within the sustainable development agenda of local governments. The collected initiatives in this publication are embodiments of the strong commitment to culture by cities and local governments in Asia-Pacific.



People-centred programmes and projects are mostly needed at this time. The impact of cultural policies and actions should take into consideration the perspective of the artists as creators and people as co-creators and audience.



Partnership with various stakeholders ensures the responsiveness of initiatives to common objectives and inclusiveness of culture-related processes. Furthermore, this pools together resources and energies into a united undertaking.



There is a need to explore new and emerging platforms that will create or increase access to culture when use of public spaces and traditional performance venues are limited.



A sustainable business model for the culture sector is essential. It should enable artists and artisans to continue creating and co-creating art and culture, and the people to express their support to the arts and culture community through paid works and performances. Government subsidies to production costs and free streaming of performances will not be sustainable in the long term.

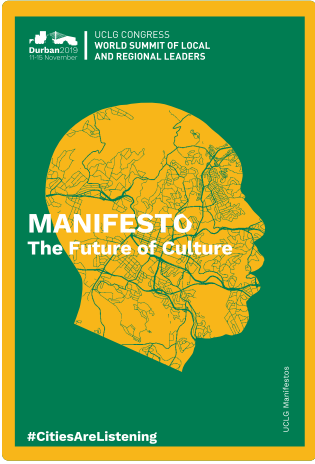
# REFERENCES ON CULTURE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS



Culture: Fourth Pillar of Sustainable Development



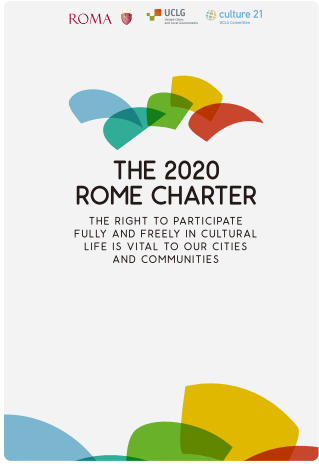
Culture 21: Actions



UCLG Manifesto on The Future of Culture



Statement by the Culture 2030 Goal Campaign



The 2020 Rome Charter

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