



Comments from the International Federation of Coalitions for Cultural Diversity

in the context of the

The 2022 call for written contributions on the following themes:

- (i) the challenges faced in the context of COVID-19 in relation to the diversity of cultural expressions, both offline and online; and
- (ii) the importance of the participation of micro, small and medium-sized cultural and creative enterprises.

presented to the

Intergovernmental Committee of the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions

November 28, 2022

## **1. IFCCD Presentation**

The IFCCD was founded in Seville (Spain) on 19 September 2007 to replace the International Liaison Committee of Coalitions for Cultural Diversity (ILC). This Committee was created in 2003 at the initiative of the Coalitions for Cultural Diversity to facilitate cooperation and the development of common positions and actions. In particular, the ILC encouraged the elaboration of UNESCO's Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions by coordinating the participation of civil society representatives and professionals from the cultural sector in international negotiation sessions. The adoption of the Convention in 2005, and its entry into force on March 18, 2007, gave a new direction to the work of the ILC, which became the International Federation of Coalitions for Cultural Diversity (IFCCD). The IFCCD now brings together about 30 cultural professional organizations representing creators, artists, independent producers, distributors, broadcasters and publishers in the book, film, television, music, performing arts and visual arts sectors from some 30 countries. The Federation is incorporated in Canada and its General Secretariat is based in Montreal. The French Coalition for Cultural Diversity represents the IFCCD at UNESCO in Paris.

## **2. Call for written contributions: the challenges faced in the context of COVID-19 and the importance of the participation of micro, small and medium-sized creative and cultural enterprises**

The Federation hereby responds to the invitation issued by the Secretary of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, which seeks comments on:

- The challenges faced in the context of COVID-19 in relation to the diversity of cultural expressions, both offline and online; and
- The importance of the participation of micro, small and medium-sized creative and cultural enterprises.

In this intervention, we reiterate the Federation's positions on these two topics.

### **2.1 The challenges faced in the context of COVID-19 in relation to the diversity of cultural expressions, both offline and online**

It is now recognized that the COVID-19 pandemic has hit the cultural sector particularly hard around the world. Its effects have been multiple and will be felt over the long term. This global crisis has generally posed direct economic challenges related to the resumption of activities after a more or less long absence, depending on the country, and in the presence of highly variable support measures. That being said, it is also recognized that the pandemic, rather than creating new problems, has highlighted and exacerbated existing ones. The ResiliArt discussion, held on May 14, 2020 as part of a partnership between UNESCO and the IFCCD, identified several of these, which we recall here. The COVID-19 pandemic, all over the world, to varying degrees, has exacerbated the difficulties related to:

- the socio-economic conditions of creators and the absence or thinness of the social net that supports them
- gender inequalities, the pandemic being recognized as having had a greater negative impact on women than on men;
- international cooperation, more necessary than ever in a context of generalized fragility of cultural industries and sectors and in an uncertain economic context;
- the need for training and professionalization of the cultural sectors, especially in view of the accelerating challenges linked to digital technology;
- the issues arising from unequal access to the Internet;
- the widespread lack of regulation of the major digital players;
- the unequal respect of copyright in different countries;
- the unequal presence of public broadcasters, which are essential for maintaining the diversity of cultural expressions
- the difficulties related to the mobility of artists;
- the challenges posed to the freedom of expression of creators;
- access to standardized, evidence-based data to measure the diversity of cultural expressions.

The support measures put in place by UNESCO member states have varied. It should be noted that the Secretariat of the Federation has prepared and published an [inventory](#) of these measures. This overview, although not exhaustive, has shown that support measures are rare outside of the world's richest countries - and that there have even been setbacks in some countries: a very worrying situation for the diversity of cultural expressions, both at the local and international levels. This risks further widening global inequalities in the circulation of cultural goods and services. In many countries, the weakness or even absence of cultural policies was already deplored. It will probably be necessary to rely more on community solidarity and networks to provide some support to the cultural sector in these countries, but also on the role that organizations such as UNESCO can and must play at the international level.

In addition, last September, the World Bank issued a [press release](#) entitled "Risk of a global recession in 2023 increases as interest rates rise", which presents a study warning of "the need to act to curb inflation without exacerbating the risk of recession". The pandemic has weakened the economic situation of several countries, which primarily affects the cultural industries. This has led to fears that public support for culture and social protection measures for creators - where they exist - will be reduced, in addition to fears of reduced consumer spending. A weakening of cultural ecosystems in countries with cultural policies, in the long run, risks weakening international solidarity networks as well.

In this context, it is essential to strengthen the participation of civil society in UNESCO's bodies so that it can contribute to the design and implementation of policies aimed at mitigating the significant and lasting effects of the pandemic.

## **2.2 The importance of the participation of micro, small and medium-sized creative and cultural enterprises**

The Federation is a leading civil society actor in UNESCO's work on the 2005 Convention. The legal and organizational forms of our members vary, but represent creators, artists, independent producers, distributors, broadcasters and publishers in the book, film, television, music, performing arts and visual arts sectors. In other words, a plethora of micro, small and medium-sized businesses are represented<sup>1</sup>.

In many cultural sectors, the diversity of cultural expression depends on the ability of creators to become entrepreneurs themselves to give life to their work and make a living from it, or to turn to local independent businesses to support them.

These independent cultural enterprises have a central place in the IFCCD and their voice is essential in UNESCO's forums where many issues that concern them are discussed.

That said, these companies often operate with very limited financial and human resources. It is unrealistic to expect them to become directly involved in international public policymaking. In the spirit of strengthening existing mechanisms and avoiding duplication, we therefore suggest ensuring that these voices continue to be represented and considered by civil society organizations, rather than multiplying the number of forums in which they would be solicited individually.

### **2. Conclusion**

We thank the Secretariat of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions for this opportunity to express our views on the two topics addressed in this intervention.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, the Canadian Coalition for the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, for example, estimates that it speaks on behalf of 2,900 businesses in the cultural sector, including artist-producers. The members of the French Coalition also represent many businesses: 720 book publishers are members of the SNE, and 50 of the Syndicat des Éditeurs Alternatifs; in the audiovisual and film sectors, the USPA represents 250 production companies, the spi represents 450 independent production companies, the SPECT 44 companies; the Syndicat des Distributeurs Indépendants (Cinéma) represents 39 companies, and the FICAM brings together more than a hundred companies whose activity covers all the trades and technical know-how of image and sound; finally, the UPFI represents 112 independent music production companies. The Austrian Coalition represents about 7000 micro, small and medium-sized companies.