



unesco

CULTURE FOR ALL

A toolkit for gender equality
in policymaking



Published in 2025
by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
7 place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France

© UNESCO 2025
ISBN 978-92-3-100791-0
<http://doi.org/10.63813/GKQV1939>



This publication is available in Open Access under the Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 IGO (CC-BY-SA 3.0 IGO) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/igo/>). By using the content of this publication, the users accept to be bound by the terms of use of the UNESCO Open Access Repository (<https://www.unesco.org/en/open-access/cc-sa>).

The images marked with an asterisk (*) in this publication do not fall under the abovementioned CC-BY-SA licence and may not be used or reproduced without the prior permission of the copyright holders.

The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNESCO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

The ideas and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors; they are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organization.

Authors: Anna Villarroya and Berta Ollé
(Universitat de Barcelona)

This toolkit is the result of a cooperation between the Division for Gender Equality (Director, Begoña Lasagabaster) and the Culture Sector (Assistant Director-General, Ernesto Ottone R.).

Editorial team led by Danielle Cliche including Caroline Bordoni, Florisse Hendschel, Melika Medici (Gender Equality Division) and Yulia Cherdantseva, Emmanuelle Robert and Yiline Zhao (Culture Sector). Independent external reviewers: Hiroko Tsuboi-Friedman (Japan) and Unathi Lutshaba (South Africa). Internal peer reviewers: Laura Nonn (Culture Sector) and Lázaro Rodríguez (Santiago Office)

Cover Illustration: © Sonia Navarro, Rojo, 2010. All rights reserved / Adagp, Paris, 2025.*

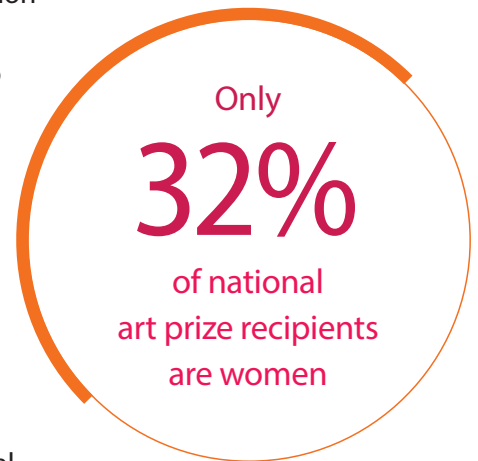
Graphic design & cover design: Corinne Hayworth
Printed by UNESCO.

Making cultural policies work for gender equality

Culture is now widely recognized as a global public good. Yet, a critical question remains: is it a public good for all?

Despite progress, significant gender inequalities persist across the cultural and creative sectors. While women make up the majority of students in culture-related fields and hold a significant share of jobs in these sectors, they continue to face numerous barriers throughout their careers – from unequal access to and participation in cultural life, to underrepresentation in leadership roles, limited visibility and recognition, pay and funding gaps, and exposure to harassment and gender-based violence. With less than a third of national art prize winners and only a quarter of World Heritage site managers being women, the data leave no doubt about who gets recognized and who holds influence in the cultural and creative sectors.

One way of combating these inequalities is to better integrate gender equality into cultural policies, which is not yet a widespread practice. This first-of-its-kind toolkit offers effective actionable strategies for advancing gender equality in the cultural and creative sectors. It promotes a rights-based approach, affirming that all individuals have the right to access, participate in, and contribute to cultural life. With step-by-step guidance, real-life best practices, and scenarios, it equips policymakers with the tools to drive meaningful, measurable and transformative change for all.



CULTURE

***The status of women
in culture and in the world
affects us all and requires
our commitment. No matter our
social or geographical origins,
we citizens are in a world in
which inequality is prevailing.***

Rossy de Palma

UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Cultural Diversity

FOR ALL

CULTURE FOR ALL

**A toolkit for gender equality
in policymaking**

CONTENTS

1	PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE TOOLKIT	5
2	WHY GENDER EQUALITY MATTERS IN CULTURAL POLICY?	11
3	TACKLING GENDER IN CULTURAL POLICIES AND MEASURES: SETTING THE FRAME	16
4	KEY PROCESSES AND PRACTICES FOR INCLUSIVE CULTURAL POLICIES AND MEASURES	21
5	INTEGRATING GENDER EQUALITY IN CULTURAL POLICIES AND MEASURES: A STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH	25
	1. DESIGN	27
	2. IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING	40
	3. EVALUATION AND COMMUNICATION	44
6	A CALL TO ACTION: PLACING GENDER EQUALITY AT THE HEART OF CULTURAL POLICIES AND MEASURES	47
	A TOOLKIT FOR ACTION.	49
	ANNEX: Key concepts and definitions	51
	References	54

1

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE TOOLKIT

In the face of accelerating global challenges, this toolkit makes the case for the integration of gender equality as a core component of cultural policy. It underscores that **mainstreaming and targeting gender equality in cultural policies and measures not only aligns with international commitments towards upholding fundamental human rights but also enhances the transformative role of culture – across all its dimensions – to achieve sustainable development.**

The toolkit is designed to inform reflection and inspire policy action at all levels. At the global level, it contributes to ongoing efforts under the framework of the *UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development – MONDIACULT*. Convened for the first time in 1982, MONDIACULT has served as a landmark forum for global cultural policy dialogue. Its most recent edition, held in 2022, marked a major breakthrough, with Ministers of Culture from 150 countries across the world reaffirming culture as a global public good and committing, *inter alia*, to uphold cultural rights for all as fundamental human rights, grounded in international standards. The Ministerial Declaration notably called upon the inclusion of culture as a stand-alone goal in the global development agenda beyond 2030.

Advancing culture as a specific goal in the global development agenda is now a central priority. UNESCO is intensifying its advocacy, policy advice and knowledge-building efforts to support countries in harnessing culture as an integral component of sustainable development, in line with the *UN Pact for the Future*. In this regard, it is actively supporting the integration of culture into national and international policy frameworks to ensure that heritage – both tangible and intangible –, cultural and creative sectors, and cultural policies and measures as a whole, serve as catalysts for addressing global challenges and shaping a more inclusive and peaceful future.

While MONDIACULT 2022 helped raise the global ambition for culture in sustainable development, its commitments on gender equality must go further.

Building on the momentum of 2022, MONDIACULT 2025 provides a critical opportunity to explicitly integrate gender equality into a possible future global goal on culture. This would ensure that gender equality is not only a guiding principle but also a strategic, measurable and cross-cutting dimension of cultural policies and measures, reinforcing the multifaceted impact of culture in advancing inclusive and rights-based development.

This toolkit is designed to **support a broad spectrum of stakeholders** in translating gender equality commitments into meaningful cultural policies and measures, across all dimensions of culture and creativity, from tangible and intangible heritage to the cultural and creative sectors. It offers practical guidance for:

- + **National-level policymakers**, including Ministries of Culture, Arts Councils, and ministries responsible for gender, education, and social development.
- + **Intergovernmental organizations** working regionally to support Member States in advancing Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) and other gender equality goals through culture.
- + **Local and city-level governments**, such as cultural affairs offices, urban planners, and local councils.
- + **Cultural institutions** – including but not limited to museums, cultural centres, libraries, and heritage sites.

In addition to offering step-by-step guidance for integrating gender perspectives into cultural policies and measures, the toolkit also serves as an advocacy and capacity-building resource for cultural institutions, professional organizations of the cultural and creative sectors, cultural professionals and practitioners, as well as women's rights organizations, who are all called upon to play a crucial role in the design, implementation and monitoring of more inclusive cultural policies and measures.

The toolkit may also serve as a strategic reference for public and private partners in the cultural and creative sectors, helping them align their funding strategies with gender equality priorities.

In sum, this toolkit is designed to **support policymakers to:**

- + **Integrate gender considerations into national cultural policies and measures**, ensuring that they reflect and advance gender equality.
- + **Embed gender perspectives into regional and sub-regional cultural policy frameworks and strategies** to foster inclusive and equitable regional cultural development.
- + **Promote local cultural policymaking that incorporates gender equality** by providing municipalities with tools and guidance for inclusive cultural planning and programming.
- + **Advocate for the inclusion of culture into regional, national, and local gender policies and frameworks.**

**GENDER
EQUALITY**
priorities



Closing the Gender Gap in the Cultural and Creative Sectors: Current Realities and Challenges

Despite decades of advocacy and some encouraging progress, gender inequality remains deeply entrenched in the cultural and creative sectors. The persistence of structural barriers, as well as digital divides and risks, not only limits the rights and potential of all individuals but also undermines the capacity of culture to foster inclusive and sustainable societies.

Women continue to be underrepresented in leadership, decision-making and highly visible roles across cultural industries and sectors as well as cultural institutions and public bodies. While they are often the majority in fields such as culture and arts education, they are severely underrepresented in sectors linked to digital technologies. Overall, the limited data available shows that women earn less than their male colleagues doing the same work and receive less funding grants.

Additionally, working conditions in the cultural and creative sectors are often informal and precarious, particularly for freelance professionals, with women disproportionately affected by project-based work involving irregular hours, income insecurity, insufficient access to social protection and benefits and inadequate caregiving support, while unpaid caregiving responsibilities continue to fall largely on them. This precariousness goes hand in hand with alarming levels of gender-based violence, including physical, psychological and sexual abuse, which contribute to unsafe working environments.

Rising online harassment and cyberviolence have further led many women artists to self-censor or withdraw from digital platforms. In certain contexts, legal and social constraints prevent women artists from expressing themselves freely, often leading to self-censorship. In crisis situations – from conflict to forced displacement or climate-induced disasters – many women cultural professionals lack the protections and resources they need to continue their work. Here, artistic expression is not only a right, but a form of resistance and resilience.

Over the past two decades, significant steps have been taken to address these challenges.

Governments and institutions have developed policies and measures to increase the participation of women in cultural life, promote leadership in ministries and public institutions, as well as introduce gender equality in training and mentorship schemes. Efforts have also been made to integrate gender in cultural budgets and evaluations, to tackle gender stereotypes in cultural content, as well as to address sexual harassment and gender-based violence in the workplace. Measures to ensure more equitable access to grants, prizes, and awards have also been introduced.

AI and digital technologies are vital tools for safeguarding Kenya's cultural heritage and empowering women artists by offering them new platforms in global markets.

H.E. Ms. Ummi Bashir

Principal Secretary, Ministry of Gender, Culture, the Arts and Heritage, Kenya

Yet, despite some progress, gender equality in the cultural and creative sectors remains uneven, fragmented, and often insufficient. Recent shifts in the policy landscape and backlash against gender equality threaten progress achieved to date. Additionally, many existing cultural policies and measures focus on surface-level interventions – such as ad-hoc programmes or awareness campaigns – without tackling the structural roots of inequality. A critical barrier is the widespread absence of sex-disaggregated data, which hampers the identification of gaps and limits effective monitoring and evaluation. Moreover, cultural policies and measures frequently overlook intersectionality, failing to account for how gender inequality intersects with ethnicity, class, age, disability, and migration status. The absence of an intersectional lens leads to blind spots in policy design and implementation and often reinforces existing exclusions. Economic disparities persist, with pay gaps and income insecurity disproportionately affecting women.

Those structural inequalities are further deepened by risks and challenges in the digital environment, particularly with the advent of artificial intelligence (AI).

Algorithmic bias, automation effects, content moderation practices, platform gatekeeping, and the rise of AI-generated content threaten the visibility, authorship and the discoverability of works by women creators and can lead to job displacement – posing new and complex challenges for policymakers, especially considering the rapid pace of technological advancement.

In some parts of the world, women are forbidden to create and are silenced. According to Freemuse, 60% of reported cases by women artists involve harassment, threats, imprisonment and other serious attacks, and 40% are censorship cases.¹ Women artists also face attacks stemming specifically from their gender, highlighting the challenging intersections between gender equality, cultural rights and artistic freedom. These realities underscore the need for further and stronger alignment between national legislation on culture and international human rights frameworks. The risks of inaction are considerable. Without sustained, systemic efforts to dismantle entrenched inequalities, the cultural and creative sectors will continue to replicate – and potentially intensify – existing discrimination. Rather than serving as a space of creativity, emancipation, resilience and inclusion, it risks reinforcing exclusion and marginalisation.

Yet, policymakers should move beyond viewing gender equality as solely a women's issue and recognize it as a fundamental human right and societal imperative.

Advancing gender equality requires a shared commitment from all members of society. This includes the active participation of men and boys as advocates, allies, and decision-makers. Structural inequalities are reinforced by deeply embedded social norms and power dynamics that affect people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expressions, and/or sex characteristics (SOGIESC).

Rigid models of masculinity, for example, can also cause harm to men by limiting their roles, behaviours, and emotional and creative expression. Cultural policy has a unique role to play in challenging these norms. **By promoting inclusive narratives and diverse representations, the cultural and creative sectors can help foster more equitable, respectful, prosperous and just societies – benefiting everyone.**

The real challenge for governments is not just preserving human creativity, but ensuring artists, with special attention on women creators, can still live from their work in an AI-driven world.

H.E. Ms. Nina Obuljen Koržinek
Minister of Culture and Media, Croatia

Policy Pathways to Gender Equality in Culture: Shared Commitments

Member States have demonstrated a strong and evolving commitment to advancing gender equality in the cultural and creative sectors through various international agreements and actions (**Box 1a**) and by integrating gender considerations into UNESCO's Culture Conventions and Recommendations (**Box 1b**).

Box 1a • Advancing gender equality through international agreements and actions

→ **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women** (1979) that defines in article 1, discrimination is understood as "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex...in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field"

→ **UN World Conference on Women and the resulting Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action** (1995) with a specific chapter on women and the media that UNESCO has been monitoring ever since.

→ UNESCO, **Our Creative Diversity**, Report of the World Commission on Culture and Development (1995) that introduced for the first time a chapter on gender equality and culture with specific policy priority areas

→ UNESCO, **1998 Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development with its resulting Stockholm Declaration and Action Plan** that for the first time called on governments to adopt economic and legal frameworks addressing the unique challenges faced by women in the culture sector.

→ UNESCO **Culture for Development Indicators Suite** (CDIS), 2009 presents an innovative approach and methodology to document the multidimensional role of culture across national development processes, including gender indicators.

Box 1b • **Advancing gender equality through UNESCO's culture conventions and recommendations**

UNESCO's standard setting instruments in the field of culture are committed to advancing gender equality, and notably:

- + **To ensure inclusive participation and representation** by promoting gender-balanced stakeholder engagement in all cultural policy decision-making processes.
- + **To align national cultural policy with global goals**, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.
- + **To engage in monitoring efforts that integrate sex-disaggregated indicators and data** and contribute to global dialogues and global reports.

In particular, specific gender equality commitments are included in UNESCO's normative instruments.

- **1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage:** To ensure gender-balanced participation in the safeguarding of cultural and natural heritage and promote inclusive stakeholder engagement in heritage-related decision-making processes.
- **2001 Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage:** To expand access to education and training programmes, particularly for women and girls, to foster greater inclusivity and equal opportunities within the cultural and creative sectors.
- **2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage:** To recognise the role of intangible cultural heritage in shaping gender identities and promote inclusive dialogues that reflect diverse gender perspectives.
- **2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions:** To introduce cultural policies and measures that pay attention to the needs of women creators, producers, distributors of diverse cultural expressions.
- **1980 Recommendation on the Status of Artists:** To support equal opportunities for women in the arts and culture sectors, as well as ensure their equal access to artistic education and vocational training programmes.
- **2015 Recommendation concerning the protection and promotion of museums and collections, their diversity and their role in society:** To foster respect for human rights and gender equality in and through museums.

Through this toolkit, **UNESCO calls upon Member States to take concrete actions that translate global commitments for culture into effective and measurable policies and measures that promote gender equality** not as a peripheral or isolated concern but as a strategic and cross-cutting priority in cultural governance.

2

WHY GENDER EQUALITY MATTERS IN CULTURAL POLICY?

Despite notable progress, the cultural and creative sectors continue to face systemic gender inequalities and persistent gender-based violence.

Despite being usually overrepresented in tertiary education, particularly in cultural fields such as journalism, humanities, languages, and the arts, **women remain significantly underrepresented in key areas.** Recent data show that women's representation in the creative industries varies widely – with a global average of approximately 38%.² They remain underrepresented in key creative industries – particularly those driven by fast-growing technologies – and in leadership roles and are mostly confined to traditional roles or functions. For instance, in 2024, men accounted for over two-thirds of game developers, while only 23% of developers surveyed were women.³

In the music sector, women comprise only 13% of conductors in the top 100⁴ and 30% of performers in electronic music festivals.⁵ Similar trends are ongoing in the film sector, where a 2019 analysis of 60 major international festivals found that women received just 33% of awards in the main categories. Only 24% of Best Director and Best Screenplay awards went to women artists and producers⁶ – highlighting persistent gender disparities in recognition and visibility across a wide spectrum of creative industries.


Overall, 32% of national art prize recipients are women.⁷ These findings demonstrate that gender stereotypes continue to shape the cultural and creative sectors, influencing both the roles women are assigned and expected to occupy, but also the opportunities they are given to advance in their careers and the value attributed to their work. **Women also face a heightened risk of violence and harassment – including online and offline abuse** – , risks that are often compounded by intersecting forms of discrimination such as ethnicity, class, age or disability.⁸ These structural disparities are often overlooked or inadequately reflected in cultural policies and measures, institutional strategies, funding frameworks, and governance structures. Addressing these critical gaps must be a priority for policymakers responsible for the cultural and creative sectors.

23% of game developers

30% of performers in electronic music festivals

32% of national art prize recipients

ONLY
ARE WOMEN



Fundamental shared values and principles on both culture and gender equality are enshrined in international human rights frameworks.

Gender equality is a fundamental component of human rights, ensuring that all individuals enjoy equal rights, opportunities, and protections, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 and the two International Covenants of 1966. As with all human rights, cultural rights are universal, indivisible, and interdependent. Achieving equal cultural rights requires that women and girls have the same rights and opportunities to access, participate in, and contribute to all aspects of cultural life. This includes upholding women's socio-economic rights and artistic freedom and ensuring their equitable access to cultural production, dissemination, and decision-making roles, as well as their right to define and interpret cultural heritage – determining which traditions, values, or practices should be preserved, adapted, or discontinued.⁹ Despite progress, significant gaps remain: for instance, women currently hold only 31% of executive roles in the arts and manage 25% of World Heritage sites.¹⁰

Culture and gender equality are closely interconnected, and their relationship plays a vital role in shaping inclusive and equitable societies. When embraced together, culture and gender equality can reinforce one another. This intersection results in a culturally diverse society that brings a wide range of viewpoints and experiences, which can enrich discussions around cultural rights as well as challenge gender stereotypes. Societies that promote equal rights and opportunities also tend to be more inclusive, stable, and resilient.

For example, empowering women to take part in community decision-making can lead to more representative and inclusive cultural governance. Thus, gender equality is not only a human rights imperative, but also a key contributor to social cohesion.

Gender equality also lays the foundation for a culture of peace by reducing the likelihood of conflict and contributing to more inclusive and lasting peace agreements and recovery processes.

Research consistently shows that women play a critical role in such efforts, contributing to social cohesion and long-term resilience. Similarly, artists and cultural professionals act as agents of change by shaping narratives, promoting reconciliation, creating and preserving cultural expressions and heritage, and fostering community resilience.¹¹ However, despite their potential, women artists and cultural professionals remain underrepresented and marginalised in crisis response and recovery, as well as in peace processes. They also face distinct challenges, including increased unpaid caregiving responsibilities and gender-based violence online and offline, which are too rarely accounted for. Besides women artists and cultural professionals' direct contributions, an inclusive approach to rebuilding the cultural and creative sectors during and after crises is needed. This would not only avoid reinforcing outdated stereotypes, discrimination, and inequalities, but also ensure the sectors' resilience and sustainability in the future. For now, whether in conflict, displacement or climate-related disasters, gender inequalities continue to limit the full positive impact of culture in post-crisis contexts.

Not integrating gender would be a missed opportunity for economic development and innovation in the cultural and creative sectors.

Gender equality significantly contributes to economic growth by expanding the talent pool, enhancing productivity, and driving innovation. Greater representation of women means a more diverse workforce and the engagement of perspectives, skills, and experiences that stimulate creativity and innovation, ultimately increasing overall productivity. Indeed, research shows that gender gaps in the workforce, including in management positions, significantly cost the global economy. Closing this gap could boost economic activity by 7% (equivalent to USD 7 trillion) across OECD countries, with potentially even greater gains in developing countries.¹² In the fast-growing creative economy, which generates between 0.5% and 7.3% of GDP and employs 0.5% to 12.5% of the labour force depending on the country, achieving gender equality could therefore represent a direct win for the economy.¹³

The case for gender-balanced workplaces is increasingly supported by evidence.

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), companies with inclusive cultures and gender-equal policies and measures are significantly more likely to report better business results – including higher profitability (63% more), improved talent retention (60%), greater creativity innovation (59%), and stronger reputations (58%). Gender-balanced boards boost overall performance by nearly 20%, confirming that gender equality is both a rights issue and a strategic advantage.¹⁴


Tackling the gender gap in the intellectual property system is another key step towards more innovation and creativity.

Research by WIPO found that far fewer women than men use this system.¹⁵ As a result, women are less protected and rewarded as creators and innovators, which in turn reduces their incentive to create. In the cultural and creative sectors, copyrights and related rights generate revenue streams for artists and creators (e.g. royalties, licensing). However, because these rights arise automatically, they are more difficult to track and quantify. As noted by WIPO, “all the available information suggests that women lag behind their male counterparts in the creative industries”.

Given the complex innovation demands of the 21st century, the creativity, leadership and knowledge of more than half the population can no longer be repressed or underestimated due to gender.¹⁶ In this context, gender equality is not just a matter of justice for women:

it ensures that all individuals have an equal opportunity to contribute their talents, ideas, and perspectives. When women and men are equally empowered and have the same opportunities, societies become more prosperous, inclusive, and resilient.

GENDER EQUALITY
contributes to economic growth



Culture is uniquely positioned to advance gender equality across societies.

Culture shapes collective values, challenges stereotypes, tells untold stories, and amplifies diverse voices.

Creative expressions such as theatre, music, literature, and film offer valuable insights into the human experience from the perspectives of people in all their diversity.¹⁷ Cultural events and artistic productions can also raise awareness about gender inequalities, helping to shift societal attitudes and promote a more inclusive society. By promoting representations of women and men, boys and girls in all their diversity, culture can foster a more inclusive understanding and inspire individuals to question traditional roles, paving the way toward a fairer and more equitable society.¹⁸

In addition, living heritage practices – such as oral traditions, knowledge, or rituals – shapes social values and behaviours, including gender norms. These expressions can either reinforce or challenge gender stereotypes. Likewise, built heritage and cultural sites reflect collective memory and societal structures. As shared legacies, they tell the story of communities but often exclude or overlook women’s roles. When both intangible and tangible heritage are approached through a gender lens, they become powerful tools to promote gender equality, highlight underrepresented contributions, and reshape cultural narratives.

Cultural policies and measures must ensure that heritage preservation and interpretation actively address gender bias and foster inclusive representation as an investment in the future.

Culture and gender are both dynamic, shaped by evolving norms, narratives, and practices.

As cultures transform, so too can gender norms – opening pathways to greater freedom, equity, and inclusion. Promoting the full participation of women in cultural life is key to reshaping these norms and expanding democratic and imaginative horizons. The cultural and creative sectors play a critical role in this transformation by amplifying underrepresented voices, including women of colour, LGBTQ+ individuals, and those from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. This inclusive approach not only enriches our understanding of the human experience but also highlights how intersecting identities – such as ethnicity, class, gender, age or disability – can compound inequality.

CULTURE

can fuel gender equality

Advancing gender equality and sustaining strong and resilient cultural and creative sectors are mutually reinforcing policy objectives.

As outlined in this chapter, culture plays a critical role in advancing gender equality by shaping values, challenging norms, and amplifying diverse voices. At the same time, gender equality is essential for building inclusive, resilient, and innovative cultural ecosystems. As shown in **Figure 1**, this reciprocal relationship creates added value for both cultural policy and gender equality agendas.

We must go further. Cultural policies that do not actively empower women and girls risk reinforcing existing inequalities and limiting the transformative power of culture itself.

Ernesto Ottone R.
Assistant Director-General for Culture, UNESCO

Figure 1 • The added value of integrating gender equality in cultural policies and measures

CULTURE NEEDS GENDER EQUALITY

- + To uphold human and cultural rights
- + To enhance cultural diversity
- + To unlock a broader pool of talent
- + To boost innovation and economic growth
- + To strengthen peacebuilding and social cohesion
- + To enhance resilience and recovery in times of crisis
- + To refine and reinterpret heritage and creative contents

GENDER EQUALITY NEEDS CULTURE

- + To challenge harmful social norms and gender stereotypes
- + To raise awareness and promote diverse voices and perspectives
- + To raise awareness of gender inequality and its impacts
- + To foster equitable, inclusive, free and participatory societies
- + To refine and reinterpret heritage from a gender perspective lens

3

TACKLING GENDER IN CULTURAL POLICIES AND MEASURES: SETTING THE FRAME

Advancing gender equality in the cultural, creative and heritage sectors requires bold policy commitment and a strategic and multifaceted approach. Integrating gender considerations into cultural policy must go beyond *ad hoc* initiatives or symbolic gestures; it calls for a comprehensive and coherent framework that addresses structural inequalities, institutional practices, and the cultural narratives that shape societal norms. Central to this effort is the need for strong political will and sustained institutional commitment. This notably includes securing adequate financial resources, building institutional capacity and creating accountability mechanisms to ensure lasting impact. A long-term vision – anchored in leadership at all levels – is equally essential to ensure that gender equality is not only integrated into cultural policies and measures but also effectively implemented, monitored, and adapted over time.

To advance gender equality in the cultural and creative sectors, governments can adopt a dual approach that combines gender-targeted actions with gender mainstreaming strategies. These two approaches, while distinct in scope and application, are mutually reinforcing and essential for building inclusive and equitable cultural ecosystems.

Gender-targeted measures are specifically designed to advance gender equality as their primary goal. They may take the form of policy reforms (e.g., mandatory gender quotas in cultural institutions) or initiatives (e.g., programmes addressing barriers such as limited access of women to funding, leadership roles or artistic recognition), and such measures are crucial for correcting historical imbalances and ensuring that women have access to opportunities and resources (**Box 2**). While such targeted actions are essential for addressing systemic inequalities affecting women across the cultural and creative sectors, they are equally critical for supporting women in more specific contexts – such as those active in informal, freelance or community-based areas of cultural work – which often fall outside the scope of mainstream policies and protections.

▶ Gender-targeted actions

▶ Gender mainstreaming strategies

A DUAL
APPROACH

Box 2 • Institutional mechanisms to combat gender harassment and sexual violence in the Republic of Korea's culture sector

Since 2018, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism of the Republic of Korea has introduced a series of institutional measures aimed at creating a safe and supportive environment for women artists, in order to address gender-based discrimination in the arts and culture sector.

First, five institutions under the Ministry have been designated to handle reporting and counselling on cases of sexual harassment and violence, which disproportionately affect women in the arts. These bodies provide support to artists and cultural contractors by addressing unfair practices and delivering prevention training, thereby contributing to a safer and more equitable working environment. This reflects a recognition of the gendered nature of harassment and the need for targeted interventions.

Second, in 2021, the government amended the Promotion of Motion Pictures and Video Products Act to require mandatory sexual harassment and violence prevention training prior to filming. This legislative change is a direct response to gender-based risks in the film industry, where hierarchical structures and informal work environments have often enabled abuse. The amendment also mandates the publication of annual reports and guidelines to prevent sexual violence, reinforcing accountability and transparency in a sector where women have historically been underrepresented and particularly vulnerable.

Finally, the Ministry has established a comprehensive support system to prevent sexual harassment and violence across the arts and culture field. This includes sanctions, such as the withdrawal of public support from perpetrators.

These measures are explicitly designed to protect women and promote gender equality, making them a clear example of gender-targeted policy in cultural governance.

Source: Republic of Korea, 2022, *Quadrennial Periodic Report on the Implementation of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*.

Gender mainstreaming takes one step further beyond gender targeted measures to ensure gender equality is systematically integrated into broader policy frameworks.

For example, a general law on the status of artists – applicable to both men and women – may include specific provisions to support women artists, such as maternity leave, without making gender the sole focus of the law. In other words, gender mainstreaming involves integrating gender equality considerations at every stage of policy development – from design and budgeting to implementation and evaluation – making gender equality a transversal and holistic concern.

This approach ensures that cultural policies, measures, and programmes are inclusive and equitable, addressing the diverse needs of women and men, helping to reduce inequality and advance gender equality. Key elements of a gender mainstreaming strategy include conducting gender analysis, using gender-inclusive language in policy documents, collecting sex-disaggregated data, and guaranteeing equal access to cultural resources and opportunities (**Box 3**).

Box 3 • Gender Mainstreaming in Malawi's Cultural and Creative Sectors

In 2024, the Department of Arts within Malawi's Ministry of Local Government launched a three-year initiative (2024–2026) aimed at increasing diversity and inclusion in the country's cultural and creative sectors.

Taking the next step beyond gender-specific programming, the Department decided to implement a comprehensive gender mainstreaming approach to ensure that gender equality is systematically integrated across all aspects of its cultural policy design, planning, and implementation.

A key feature of this approach is its institutional design, which seeks to anchor gender equality within the structures that govern cultural policy. For instance, the project includes the deployment of gender desk officers responsible for monitoring and tracking gender integration across programmes and initiatives.

In parallel, the initiative supports the review and revision of national cultural policies and strategies to better reflect gender equality objectives and commitments.

This case illustrates how gender equality can be effectively mainstreamed – not by treating it as a standalone issue or developing a separate women's cultural policy, but by embedding it as a cross-cutting priority across all levels of governance, planning, and communication within the cultural and creative sectors.

Source: UNESCO, 2024, *Mainstreaming Gender Equality in Malawi's Cultural and Creative Sector* project supported by the International Fund for Cultural Diversity.

In sum, while gender-targeted interventions focus on addressing specific needs and disparities required to empower women – often through positive actions, legislation or dedicated programmes – gender mainstreaming strategies and processes seek systemic transformation and equal treatment for all in all policies.

Gender mainstreaming and gender-targeted approaches are complementary and are both essential to addressing the complex challenges women face in the cultural and creative sectors.

Spain's Equality Plan in Culture 2024–2026 integrates both gender mainstreaming and gender-targeted measures, recognising their distinct but complementary roles in advancing gender equality in the cultural sector. Grounded in cultural rights, the Plan recognizes that transforming the cultural sector requires both systemic change and targeted interventions (**Box 4**).

The strongest results in fixing the root causes of gender inequalities are achieved when the two approaches are combined in the design, implementation, and evaluation of cultural policies and measures.

Meaningful and transformative results go beyond surface-level improvements and lead to deep, systemic change. These results challenge and alter the underlying structures, norms, and power dynamics that perpetuate gender inequalities in the culture and creative sectors and beyond, ensuring that progress is not only measurable but also sustainable and inclusive.

Systemic transformation

**EQUAL
TREATMENT
FOR ALL**

Box 4 • Integrating Gender Mainstreaming and Gender-Targeted Measures: Insights from Spain's Equality Plan in Culture 2024-2026

GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE PLAN

Gender mainstreaming is reflected in the Plan's commitment to embedding a gender perspective across all areas of cultural governance, institutions, and policymaking processes. This includes:

- ▶ **Policy design and implementation:** The Plan establishes gender equality as a strategic and structural pillar of the Ministry of Culture, ensuring that all cultural policies are developed and evaluated through a gender lens.
- ▶ **Multi-stakeholder participatory approach:** The Plan is grounded in genuine collaboration with the cultural ecosystem, moving beyond traditional consultation models to adopt a multi-stakeholder, participatory approach.
- ▶ **Institutional training:** Ministry staff are trained in intersectional gender equality, building institutional capacity to recognize and address gender disparities.
- ▶ **Data and evidence:** The Plan strengthens the collection of sex-disaggregated and intersectional data to inform evidence-based decision-making.
- ▶ **Monitoring and evaluation:** Gender equality results are tracked through defined Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), a mid-term review (2025), and final evaluation (2026), led by the *Observatorio de Igualdad de Género en la Cultura* (Observatory of Gender Equality in Culture)

These measures help ensure that gender equality is treated as a crucial cross-cutting dimension that informs all aspects of cultural governance.

GENDER-TARGETED MEASURES IN THE PLAN

Targeted measures address specific barriers and inequalities faced by women and in particular women from vulnerable groups in the cultural and creative sectors. These include:

- ▶ **Reducing the gender gap and economic insecurity:** Actions focus on improving working conditions and economic stability for women in cultural professions.
- ▶ **Visibility and recognition:** Initiatives highlight the contributions of women artists, particularly those from underrepresented groups, including migrant, racialised, and rural women.
- ▶ **Combating gender-based violence:** Specific programmes and guidelines are developed to prevent and respond to gender-based violence within the cultural field.
- ▶ **Support for community-based participation:** The Plan promotes community-based cultural creation and participation through an intersectional gender lens.

These targeted interventions are essential for addressing longstanding structural inequalities and ensuring that women – especially those facing multiple forms of discrimination – can fully participate in and shape cultural life.

WHY THE COMBINED APPROACH MATTERS?

By uniting gender mainstreaming with targeted measures, the Plan ensures both structural transformation and focused support where it is most needed. This dual strategy recognizes that while systemic inclusion is vital, real progress also requires addressing concrete, lived inequalities.

Together, these approaches reinforce each other: mainstreaming builds inclusive systems, while targeted measures ensure immediate impact and visibility – contributing to a cultural sector that is more equitable, diverse, and driving meaningful social change.

4

KEY PROCESSES AND PRACTICES FOR INCLUSIVE CULTURAL POLICIES AND MEASURES

Achieving long-lasting transformative gender results requires cultural policies and measures to consider and address, in every stage, several crosscutting practices (Box 5):

+ A **multistakeholder approach** involves the active participation and collaboration of a diverse range of actors who either have a vested interest in the cultural and creative sectors and gender equality, or whose involvement is crucial for the effective implementation of related policies and measures – even if they are not directly connected to the cultural and creative sectors. Multistakeholder approaches are essential to detect and engage diverse key agents. These include various ministries whose portfolios directly impact the cultural and creative sectors and gender equality – such as the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour and Welfare, and Ministry of Gender Equality, thus contributing to enhance the integration of culture across the broader public policy spectrum.

They also encompass civil society organizations, including women’s rights groups, professional associations, and cultural institutions, as well as individuals like gender equality advocates, artists, cultural professionals, and community leaders. The goal is to involve them in all the stages of design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.¹⁹ This approach encourages cross-sector collaboration and reduces fragmented or isolated efforts, promoting more cohesive and sustainable cultural policies and measures.²⁰

+ Involving a large range of stakeholders in the planning, implementation and evaluation of cultural policies and measures requires **transparent participatory processes**. Organising consultations across the policy cycle ensures that interventions are evidence-based, aligned with stakeholder needs, and informed by best practices. Collaborating gender experts in consultations can be particularly valuable to lay the groundwork for participatory processes, as they help ensure that stakeholders are informed and share a common understanding of gender equality. Such processes lead to better-tailored and sustainable solutions that are more effective in addressing gender equality issues.

TRANSFORMATIVE
impact

It is also important to reflect stakeholders' concerns and suggestions in the policy's goals, especially where gender gaps or inequalities are identified. To this end, it is recommended to keep a record of the consultation and share back with participants how their input on gender issues has been considered, since this helps to build trust, increase accountability on the part of policymakers and encourages further engagement in more inclusive policymaking. Beyond consultations, stakeholders should be actively involved in decision-making at each policy stage. Incorporating diverse perspectives helps address the structural drivers of gender inequality – such as social norms and institutional practices – while enhancing stakeholders' ability to act, confidence in their contributions and ownership. Ultimately, participatory processes are key to building broader support and fostering political and collective ownership.

- + **Intersectional approaches**, that support women artists and cultural professionals with an ethnic minority background, migrant women, women of colour, women with disabilities, women from underserved communities and LGBTIQ+ individuals in all stages of their careers and ages,²¹ help to address systemic barriers and increase the diversity of voices.

Intersectional approaches in cultural policies and measures move us beyond simplistic understandings of identity and inequality, leading to fairer and more inclusive cultural ecosystems for all.

- + **Gender balanced participation in decision-making** ensures that both women and men have an equal voice in shaping cultural policies and measures, leading to outcomes that reflect the needs, interests, visions and experiences of all. In this regard, the Beijing Declaration, which was adopted at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women and remains a key international reference for advancing gender equality, states that *“equality in political decision-making performs a leverage function without which it is highly unlikely that a real integration of the equality dimension in government policymaking is feasible”*. For its part, the Action Plan on Cultural Policies for Development, adopted by the 1998 Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development, underscores that to promote creativity and participation in cultural life, it is crucial to *“give recognition to women’s achievements in culture and development and ensure their participation in the formulation and implementation of cultural policies at all levels”*. In other words, without balanced participation, it is unlikely that gender equality will be meaningfully embedded in policy results.

Cultural policies and measures must respect gender equality, fully recognizing women’s parity of rights and freedom of expressions and ensuring their access to decision-making positions.

Action Plan for Cultural Policies for Development, Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development (UNESCO 1998)

+ Periodic collection of both quantitative and qualitative data disaggregated by sex is essential for identifying structural barriers and biases in the cultural and creative sectors. Such data supports evidence-based policymaking by revealing gaps and trends in participation, access to resources, remuneration, working conditions, representation, and leadership between men and women across cultural fields. This means that, in addition to data on women's participation in cultural life, it is essential to collect information such as the number and proportion of funding and awards received by women, the types of contracts held by women and the gender pay gap, the number and share of women in training programmes and professional cultural fields, the share of women leaders or the number of reported cases of gender-based violence in the cultural and creative sectors. Sex-disaggregated data not only highlights measurable inequalities, but also – when complemented with qualitative evidence such as testimonies, case studies, and personal narratives – provides deeper insights into lived experiences and less visible forms of discrimination.

These qualitative inputs are crucial for capturing the complex, intersectional realities that numbers alone cannot reflect. For instance, in 2022-2023, The Gambia National Centre for Arts and Culture conducted a nationwide survey on the status of women artists. This survey was administered by a team of predominantly women enumerators who facilitated the collection of gender-related data.²² The resulting dataset enabled the identification of context-specific challenges that informed targeted policy actions. Regular data collection also supports progress tracking, accountability, and timely policy adjustments, helping tailor cultural policies and measures to the diverse realities of women and men and foster a more inclusive cultural ecosystem.

+ Using gender-inclusive language at every policy stage is essential to build fair, effective, and representative cultural policies and measures that empower women and men. Inclusive language avoids gender-biased expressions and stereotypes, making gender visible when relevant and invisible when it is not.²³ This differs from gender-neutral language, which omits any reference to gender altogether. In addition to inclusive language, all communication materials should feature diverse and non-stereotypical imagery to promote an equitable and accurate portrayal of women and girls, men and boys.²⁴ Finally, it is important to use clear, accessible language and avoid technical jargon to ensure the policy is applicable to a wide range of stakeholders.²⁵ Following this approach, Chile's Ministry of Cultures, Arts and Heritage introduced a gender-inclusive language guide in 2016, which was revised in 2022. The guide is intended for use by civil servants and is now mandatory in public procurement processes.²⁶



Data makes
gender
inequalities
measurable

Box 5 • Sarajevo Film Festival: A Case of Gender Equality Mainstreaming

The Sarajevo Film Festival offers a compelling example of how gender equality can be meaningfully integrated or mainstreamed into cultural event design and governance.

As a committed signatory of the **5050x2020 Charter** for gender parity in the film industry, the Sarajevo Film Festival has, in recent years, systematically integrated a gender perspective into its organizational structure, programming, and strategic partnerships. This commitment involves collecting and publishing gender-disaggregated data on film submissions and selections, as well as ensuring gender parity in leadership and decision-making roles within the festival.²⁷ These measures reflect a proactive approach to institutional accountability and transparency in promoting gender equality in the film industry.

Further advancing its commitment, in 2021, the festival introduced the Special Award for Promoting Gender Equality in Film,²⁸ reinforcing its role as a platform for inclusive storytelling and representation.

Most recently, in 2025, the festival partnered with UNIQA to launch the Female Filmmakers Support Programme, aimed at empowering women in film across six Southeast European countries.²⁹ This initiative reflects the festival's commitment to regional collaboration, long-term capacity building, and a multi-stakeholder approach. By engaging partners beyond the cultural and creative sectors – such as UNIQA, an insurance company – it promotes cross-sector collaboration, helping to drive more sustainable and inclusive initiatives.

5

INTEGRATING GENDER EQUALITY IN CULTURAL POLICIES AND MEASURES

A STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH

DESIGN

- ACTION 1.** Carry out a gender analysis
- ACTION 2.** Define expected gender equality impacts, results and actions for the cultural policy or measure
- ACTION 3.** Establish a gender-inclusive budget
- ACTION 4.** Define gender-related indicators

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

- ACTION 1.** Ensure gender expertise in the implementation team
- ACTION 2.** Promote inclusivity among beneficiaries and raise awareness
- ACTION 3.** Establish inclusive feedback mechanisms

EVALUATION AND COMMUNICATION

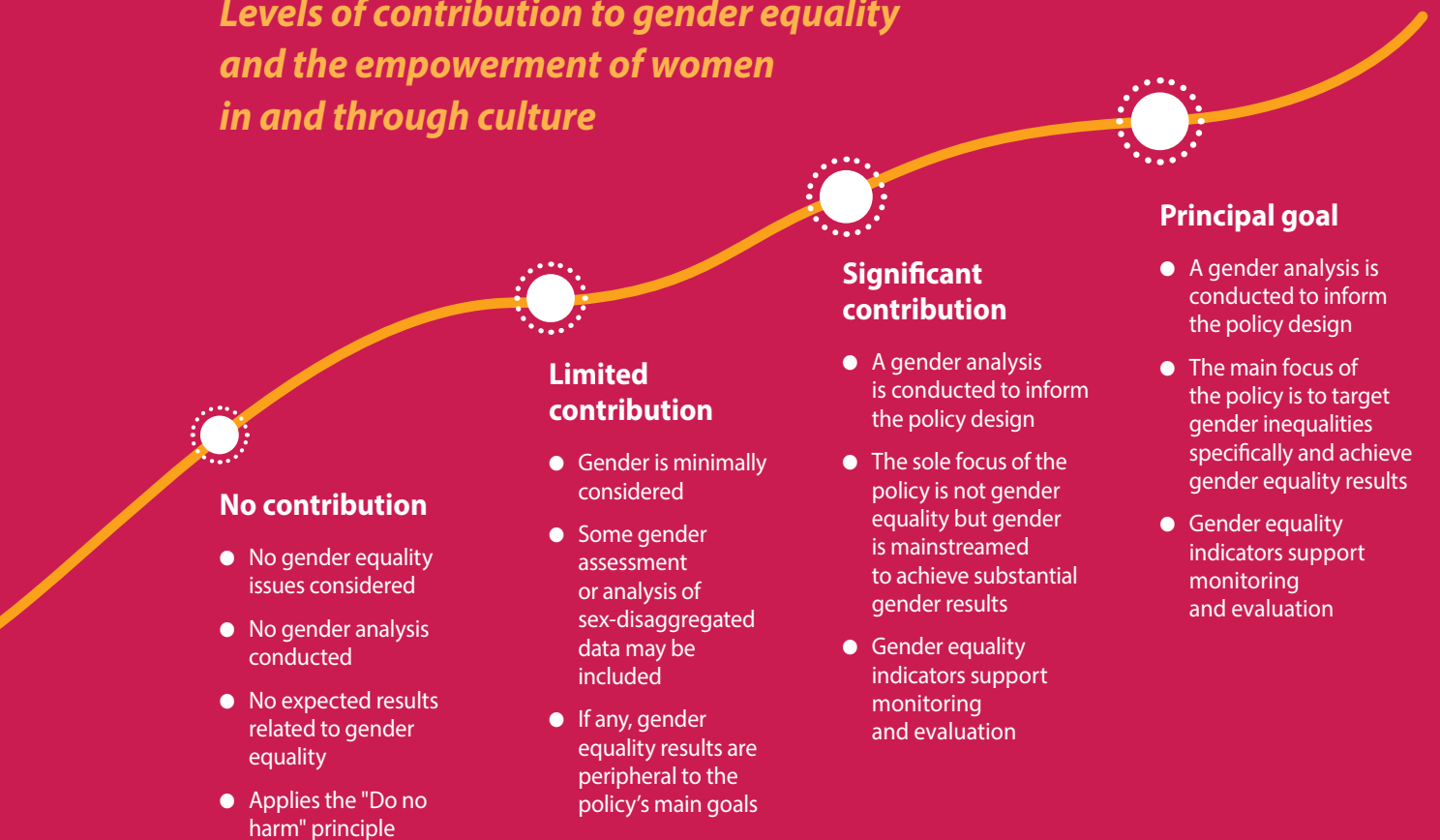
- ACTION 1.** Evaluate the transformative impact of cultural policy on gender equality
- ACTION 2.** Promote knowledge-sharing for replicating successful practices

Recognizing that achieving gender equality in the cultural and creative sectors requires a structured and deliberate approach across all stages of the policy cycle, this section offers actionable steps to guide stakeholders in designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating cultural policies and measures that address gender inequalities.

Each stage of the policy cycle is broken down into specific actions to ensure that gender considerations are not only included but also contribute meaningfully to lasting changes in the cultural and creative sectors – and in society at large. To support this approach, **Figure 2** outlines four levels of contribution to gender equality in cultural policies and measures.

Figure 2 •

Levels of contribution to gender equality and the empowerment of women in and through culture



Source: : Adapted from UNESCO, 2024, *Guidelines for the implementation of the Gender Equality Markers (GEM)*.

DESIGN

DESIGN

ACTION 1

Carry out a gender analysis

The aim of this initial phase is to conduct a detailed analysis of the area targeted for intervention, considering the specific realities, rights, opportunities, and needs of both women and men. This approach helps to understand the context from a gender perspective, prevent gender discrimination and support the design of cultural policies and measures that actively promote gender equality (**Box 6 A**). To proceed effectively, start by:

- + **Mapping existing studies** on gender in the cultural and creative sectors and **reviewing equality in current policies and measures** – at both national and local levels – that impact the cultural field, with a focus on how these measures are being implemented in practice.
- + **Identifying existing institutional mechanisms** that promote gender equality in the cultural and creative sectors, including relevant government bodies, policy frameworks, and inter-ministerial coordination groups.

The first stage lays the foundation for developing cultural policies and measures that effectively promote gender equality and the empowerment of women in and through culture. At this stage, it is essential to prioritize gender equality in goal setting, policy design, and planning.³⁰

Incorporating explicit gender equality expected impacts, goals and indicators not only ensures that gender equality issues are addressed from the outset but also strengthens accountability for achieving progress on gender equality.³¹

At this stage, it is essential to recognize that promoting gender equality is a shared responsibility. Cultural policies and measures should actively engage men as partners and agents of change, encouraging their involvement from the outset in challenging gender-based stereotypes and addressing inequalities

In addition, consider the role of civil society organizations and community leaders in shaping gender norms and advancing equality within cultural spaces.

- + **Identifying sub-sectors or communities** particularly at risk of exclusion or discrimination, including women from minority backgrounds, those in rural areas, with disabilities, of diverse age groups and affected by emergency situations.
- + **Researching the legal, social, and historical factors** – as well as the normative and institutional frameworks – that influence gender inequality in the cultural and creative sectors. This helps uncover systemic barriers and entrenched cultural norms that perpetuate gender bias. It should account for multiple levels of governance, including national, subnational, and local contexts, to inform more targeted and effective policy responses.³² **Figure 3** offers a fictional case from the museum sector to illustrate how legal, social, and historical factors can intersect to shape gender dynamics.

+ **Understand the needs:** Identify gender-specific needs, priorities, and opportunities to better tailor interventions. The analysis should examine the barriers to cultural participation, the formation and impact of gender stereotypes, and the factors that hinder women from fully contributing to and participating in cultural life.³³

Figure 3 •
Exploring Legal, Social, and Historical Factors in the Museums Sector

Legal

- + Absence of laws that specifically promote the recovery of women's historical and artistic memory, ensuring the active participation of women in the process
- + Anti-discrimination laws target hiring practices but leadership roles and artist representation remain overwhelmingly dominated by men
- + Reporting mechanisms for gender-based violence fail to provide actual protection for victims, discouraging their use

Social

- + Gender stereotypes affect how collections are curated and interpreted
- + Women, particularly those with caregiving responsibilities, face pay gaps and structural barriers to promotion and career mobility

Historical

- + Gender representation in artworks conveys gender stereotypes
- + Efforts to recover and showcase women's contributions to art, history and culture remain fragmented and underfunded
- + Women artists' presence within existing collections and acquisition campaigns remains very low
- + Women artists, patrons, collectors and cultural figures are often missing from historical narratives presented in museums

Box 6a • Checklist: Gender Analysis in the Cultural and Creative Sectors

- + Review national and local cultural policies and measures** on gender equality with an impact in culture and creative sectors.
 - Are there specific cultural policies and measures that address gender equality?
 - How have these policies and measures been implemented and monitored?

- + Assess country's commitments to global gender equality standards** (e.g., the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action or the gender dimensions of UNESCO's standard setting instruments in the field of culture).
 - Have these international standards been integrated into national or local cultural policies and measures?
 - Is there reporting or documented evidence of their impact within the cultural and creative sectors?

- + Map the key drivers of change promoting gender equality** within the cultural and creative sectors.
 - Which individuals, groups, movements, or networks are actively advocating for gender equality in culture?
 - What tangible changes or impacts have these actors achieved so far?
 - What are they advocating for? What are the remaining challenges they have identified on the ground?

- + Identify the key challenges and opportunities** for advancing gender equality within the cultural and creative sectors.
 - Identify how women are underrepresented or disadvantaged and the barriers they face whether legal, economic, social, cultural, etc?
 - Are there emerging opportunities – such as new funding programmes, policy initiatives, or increased media attention – that could support progress toward gender equality? What are the incentives to promote gender equality in the cultural and creative sectors?

- + Explore the informal power dynamics and cultural norms** that shape gender roles and participation in the cultural and creative sectors.
 - Who holds influence in the local cultural scene (e.g., gatekeepers, curators, funders)?
 - Are there unspoken norms, stereotypes, or cultural expectations that affect visibility, access, or participation?

Source: Adapted from UN Women, 2022, *UN Women Handbook on gender mainstreaming for gender equality results*.

Box 6b • Applying Gender Analysis in the Cultural and Creative Industries: A Practical Case

Launched by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) in 2023, the supra-regional project *Cultural and Creative Industries* – which aims to enhance employment and income opportunities for creative professionals in six partner countries (Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Kenya, Senegal, and South Africa) – commissioned a gender analysis to address inequalities and strengthen the enabling environment and ecosystem of the cultural and creative sectors.

The gender analysis aimed to initiate constructive dialogue and inform evidence-based project activities. It focused on four cultural and creative industries' subsectors – fashion, music, new media/animation, and design – across the project's six partner countries. In addition to highlighting the unique challenges within each subsector, the analysis explored the multifaceted dimensions of gender across diverse contexts in sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East.

The research followed a three-tiered analysis based on desk research, stakeholder interviews, and focus group discussions. It examined the challenges and opportunities women face in building meaningful careers and entrepreneurial ventures. At the first level, it explored the prevailing entrepreneurial and creative culture in the six countries. The second level focused on the business and investment environment, while the third examined multi-stakeholder partnerships and practices.

As a result, the gender analysis highlights disparities in the distribution of resources, opportunities, constraints, and power within the cultural and creative industries. It serves as a foundational step toward developing a comprehensive roadmap for gender mainstreaming across all stages of the project design cycle.

Source: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), 2023, *Cultural and Creative Industries Gender Study: Breaking Barriers, Driving Change: Unveiling Gender Dynamics in the Cultural and Creative Industries*.

GENDER
ANALYSIS
unmasking power dynamics

ACTION 2

Define expected gender equality impacts, results and actions for the cultural policy or measure

At the core of designing a cultural policy or measure is the definition of clear, achievable results for gender equality, along with the actions and processes needed to achieve them. This step is crucial to ensure that gender considerations are not only acknowledged but fully integrated into the planning process.

Specifically, a gender equality result in a cultural policy or measure should:

- + Focus on **addressing a specific gender inequality** or barrier,
- + Be **simple, understandable**, and clearly linked to the cultural context, and
- + Be **actionable** – able to guide concrete measures, initiatives, or institutional changes.

To illustrate what a gender equality result can look like, **Box 7** presents several examples that can be adapted or directly applied in cultural policies and measures.

Box 7 • Examples of gender equality results in a cultural policy

- ▶ **Increased representation of women creators** in publicly funded arts programmes by ensuring that at least 40% of grants are allocated to projects led by women.
- ▶ **Equal access to public cultural spaces and resources ensured** by reviewing and revising eligibility criteria that may unintentionally exclude women.
- ▶ **Gender balance in decision-making bodies** promoted by requiring gender parity in the composition of cultural policy committees, selection panels, and advisory boards.
- ▶ **Economic empowerment of women in the cultural and creative sectors supported** through targeted training programmes, entrepreneurship support, and equal pay audits.
- ▶ **Zero-tolerance policies and measures** against gender-based harassment and discrimination implemented in all cultural workplaces and institutions.

Complementarily, and based on the findings of the gender analysis, policymakers should also define:

- + **Impacts:** the long-term, transformative changes that a policy or measure seeks to achieve. These reflect shifts in structures, behaviours, and cultural norms that sustain gender inequality.

EXAMPLE

More prosperous, diverse, equitable and inclusive cultural and creative sectors where women artists and cultural professionals enjoy equal visibility, safety, and recognition.

- + **Actions:** the specific, practical steps required to achieve the defined results and long-term impacts.

EXAMPLES

Revise grant application criteria to eliminate gender-biased language and requirements.

Develop mentorship and networking programmes specifically for women creators.

Provide mandatory training on gender-inclusive practices for staff in cultural institutions and funding bodies.

The methodologies, target beneficiaries, scope, and execution period must be clearly defined, always upholding the principle of equality and non-discrimination against women. These elements should be explicitly aligned with gender equality goals, avoiding vague or general formulations.

Moreover, the gender equality expected impacts and results should be realistic, achievable within a defined timeframe and measurable.

- ▶ **realistic**
- ▶ **achievable**
- ▶ **measurable**

RESULTS IMPACTS & ACTIONS

To support the design of effective gender equality actions in the field of culture, policymakers may refer to the following non-exhaustive typology of interventions. These examples should be contextualised to reflect the specific realities, needs, and dynamics of each local or national setting.

Legal, institutional, and policy frameworks

+ Legal and anti-discrimination frameworks: Develop and strengthen legal and policy frameworks that promote gender equality and prevent discrimination in the cultural and creative sectors, including in hiring processes, employment practices and cultural participation. This includes robust protections against gender-based violence, harassment, and bias – both offline and online. For example, in 2022, the Peruvian Ministry of Cultures published a *Practical Guide for the Prevention of Gender-based Violence*.³⁴ Prepared with the support of the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations, it provides tools and guidance to prevent and eliminate sexual harassment in music, performing and visual arts.

+ Protection mechanisms and support services: Establish comprehensive protection systems to address all forms of gender-based violence in the cultural and creative sectors. These should include clear and confidential reporting protocols, whistleblower protections, accessible legal and psychosocial support services, and dedicated help centres. Digital safety should be a priority area of intervention, particularly in response to emerging threats such as synthetic and AI-generated harmful content (e.g., deepfakes), which disproportionately target women in cultural contexts.

Beyond addressing digital harassment explicitly, safe and inclusive physical and digital environments where women can express themselves without fear should be actively promoted. For example, Canada launched the *Respectful Workplaces in the Arts* initiative, which provides tools, resources, and training to prevent harassment and create safer, more respectful environments in the arts and culture sector.³⁵

+ Support for women artists and cultural professionals at risk in emergency situations: Reinforce or adapt policies and laws to protect the freedom and safety of women artists and cultural professionals. Provide targeted support and design tailored mechanisms to ensure the protection of women artists and the continuation of their creative work during emergencies, recognising the vital role of culture and the arts in community resilience. Establish safe corridors for the international exhibition and sale of their work and offer grants to sustain their creative endeavours in exile. Strong support networks at local, national, and international levels are essential, alongside gender- and trauma-informed training for organizations to better support women artists in crisis contexts. In 2022, UNESCO's Heritage Emergency Fund, in partnership with Artists at Risk, supported 38 Ukrainian women artists and their dependents to find a safe artistic residency in 27 cultural institutions across 13 European countries, allowing them to maintain their creative work.

Economic measures and incentives

- + **Funding schemes, subsidies and other incentives:** Introduce targeted public funding and financial mechanisms to promote gender equality in the cultural and creative sectors. This can include dedicated funding lines for women-led cultural projects, financial support for gender equality initiatives in culture, or the inclusion of bonus points in grant evaluations for proposals that demonstrate a strong gender perspective or promote gender balance in cultural staffing, leadership, or content. In Brazil, the process for awarding the Cultura Viva – Sérgio Mamberti cultural cash prizes was revised to grant an additional three points to women applicants, acknowledging the historical advantage men have had in accessing such funding source. As a result, women accounted for 52% of recipients.³⁶
- + **Quotas:** Implement quotas can help ensure fair distribution of resources and promote equitable representation in leadership and decision-making roles. For example, quotas may allocate a minimum percentage of cultural grants to women-led projects. In 2019, Argentina enacted a pioneering law requiring that at least 30% of performers at music festivals be women. Championed by the National Institute of Music (INAMU), this was the first law of its kind in Latin America and has been credited with increasing visibility and opportunities for women in the music industry.³⁷

Capacity building and professional support

- + **Training programmes:** Develop and deliver targeted training sessions to enhance awareness, skills, and institutional capacity for advancing gender equality across all levels – ranging from policymakers and public institutions to cultural professionals, women’s organisations, private sector actors, and implementation staff. These programmes should cover a range of topics, such as unconscious bias, inclusive practices, and policy design with a gender perspective. To be effective, trainings must be tailored to specific roles and institutional contexts and facilitated by qualified gender experts. For example, the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic offers gender-focused training to its employees to strengthen understanding and integration of gender issues across its operations.³⁸
- + **Networking, mentorship and sponsorship schemes:** Establish long-term professional development programmes that foster meaningful connections among women artists and cultural professionals – linking emerging talents with established practitioners, as well as with institutional leaders, funders, and decision-makers. These schemes support skill-building, access to resources, and career advancement. For example, in 2023, UNESCO launched a Mentorship Programme to train young African experts on World Heritage, aligned with its Global Priorities for Africa and Gender Equality. The initiative mentored 50 women experts to support African Member States in implementing the World Heritage Convention, empowering them to participate in reactive monitoring, advisory missions, and evaluation processes.³⁹

Representation and awareness

- + **Visibility incentives:** Develop awards, public recognition campaigns, and other visibility mechanisms to elevate the profile of women artists and cultural professionals, and to highlight their contributions to cultural life. These initiatives help shift public narratives, challenge stereotypes, and inspire broader societal recognition. For instance, the 2019 UNESCO campaign *#WeAreYennenga* spotlighted on the contributions of West African women film directors and producers, while also raising awareness of the gender inequalities and challenges they continue to face in the industry. The campaign reached 3 million internet users and was amplified by international media coverage.
- + **Awareness campaigns:** Design and implement strategic communication campaigns and platforms that recognize women's creative talents and innovations. These efforts should aim to challenge gender stereotypes, promote inclusive narratives, and engage diverse audiences in advancing gender equality in cultural life.

Inclusive cultural environments

- + **Adaptation of cultural infrastructures:** Modify cultural institutions and venues to better support the participation of women. This includes practical measures ranging from providing separate dressing rooms, washroom facilities to offering on-site childcare, adopting flexible scheduling, ensuring physical accessibility, and creating safe, welcoming spaces. These adaptations help remove structural barriers and foster broader inclusion in cultural life, in line with a cultural rights-based approach. As part of the *Concilia* program led by the Barcelona City Council, six cultural and event venues offer a free babysitting service. The initiative supports individuals with dependent children and work-life balance challenges, enabling broader access to cultural participation.⁴⁰





ACTION 3

Establish a gender-inclusive budget

Once the gender related impacts, results and actions of the cultural policy have been defined, it is crucial to ensure that financial resources are allocated in a fair and transparent manner in order to be effective.

A gender-inclusive budget ensures that funding equitably supports the goals established at the outset and contributes to reducing gender disparities (**Box 8**). To begin implementing a gender-inclusive budget, policymakers can follow these steps:

+ Review and plan the budget with a gender lens: Examine the budget across all stages – planning, implementation, and evaluation – to determine whether resources are equitably allocated and effectively support your gender equality goals. This involves analysing who currently benefits from cultural funding, identifying gaps or imbalances, and making targeted adjustments to better meet the needs of women as identified in your gender analysis. For example, if a national fund for artistic residencies is predominantly accessed by men in urban areas, funding criteria could be revised to prioritize support for women artists not only from urban areas but also from rural communities. Sound budget planning should also ensure that resources are allocated for the evaluation of the policy from the outset.



Ensure that financial resources are allocated in a fair and transparent manner

+ Track progress: Monitor how funds are allocated and spent from a gender perspective. This can be integrated into regular cultural policy monitoring or conducted through specific budgeting reviews. For example, tracking whether subsidies intended to support women's participation in rural cultural programmes were fully allocated – and whether they effectively reached the intended beneficiaries – can help identify implementation gaps and inform adjustments to future funding strategies.

A BUDGET WITH

Box 8 • Austria's Gender Budgeting in the Film Sector: A Case of Policy in Action

In 2021, the Supervisory Board of the Austrian Film Institute (ÖFI) adopted a landmark decision to promote gender equality in the film industry by committing to equal distribution of public funding. This commitment led to the implementation of two complementary measures aimed at addressing structural gender imbalances in project financing.

The first measure, known as the *Gender Incentive*, targets film industry professionals by offering additional funding to productions that hire more women. This incentive is designed to encourage greater women participation across all levels of film production, particularly in roles where women have been historically underrepresented, such as directing, scriptwriting, producing, and technical departments.

The second and more systemic measure is the *Gender Budgeting Strategy*, which focuses on how the ÖFI allocates its funding. With this strategy, the Institute set a clear objective: to progressively achieve gender parity in approved funding decisions. Specifically, the goal was to ensure that by 2024, funding would be distributed equally – defined as 50% with a permissible variation of $\pm 5\%$ – between men and women film professionals.

Progress has been both measurable and encouraging. According to the ÖFI's 2024 Annual Report, the target of approximate gender parity in production and project development funding was already met by 2023. This early achievement underscores the effectiveness of gender budgeting as a policy tool for fostering equality in the cultural and creative sectors.

Beyond parity in distribution, the gender budgeting approach has delivered broader benefits. It has made the allocation of public funds more transparent and accountable, while continuous monitoring and annual reporting have helped expose persistent gender gaps. These mechanisms not only track progress but also hold stakeholders responsible for advancing gender equality.

Importantly, the ÖFI's strategy links funding decisions to gender balance in key creative roles such as directing and producing. This has created tangible incentives for production companies to hire more women in leadership and creative positions. For instance, by 2021, nearly half of all cinema documentaries in Austria were led by women creatives – a notable shift in a traditionally male-dominated field.

Austria's experience demonstrates how targeted financial policies and measures, when combined with clear goals and accountability mechanisms, can drive meaningful change. The ÖFI's gender budgeting model offers a replicable framework for other cultural institutions seeking to align their funding practices with broader commitments to gender equality.

Source: Austrian Film Institute, 2024, *Third Austrian Film Gender Report*.

A GENDER LENS

ACTION 4

Define gender-related indicators

To ensure that cultural policies and measures meaningfully contribute to gender equality, it is essential to define specific gender-related indicators from the outset. These indicators help track whether actions are producing tangible results and highlight areas where adjustments may be needed to improve impact.

In this sense, stakeholders can begin by:

- + **Reviewing existing data sources**, such as national censuses and cultural surveys, to identify information that can be disaggregated by sex.
- + **Collaborating with national statistical offices** to enhance data collection and pinpoint areas where sex-disaggregated data is lacking or could be improved. UNESCO tools, such as the *2025 Framework for Cultural Statistics* and the *Culture|2030 Indicators*, can help to guide this exercise and support national initiatives.
- + **Combining quantitative and qualitative indicators**, including interviews and focus groups, to capture lived experiences and insights that numerical data alone may not reveal.
- + **Using proxy indicators** when direct data is unavailable. For example, if data on women's participation is limited, alternative measures – such as or the proportion of women applicants to funding calls or in cultural programming – can provide valuable insights.

INDICATORS

To comprehensively assess the effectiveness of a cultural policy or measure

To comprehensively assess the effectiveness of a cultural policy or measure, three types of indicators can be considered (Figure 4).⁴¹

- 1. Impact indicators** measure the long-term effects of the policy in achieving gender equality. Examples include shifts in societal norms, or changes in public attitudes toward gender inclusivity in the cultural and creative sectors.
- 2. Result indicators** focus on the intermediate results directly attributed to the policy's implementation. Examples include the number of women who accessed cultural grants, increased representation in artistic programming, or the adoption of inclusive practices within cultural institutions.
- 3. Process indicators** focus on the steps taken to achieve desired results, helping to monitor whether planned processes are being carried out as intended. These indicators provide timely information on the efficiency, quality, and reach of interventions, enabling policymakers to adjust strategies and ensure effective delivery. Examples include the number of workshops focused on gender awareness and inclusion held, the creation of safe reporting mechanisms for gender-based discrimination, or the establishment of quotas for women in decision-making roles in the framework of the policy or measure.

Figure 4 • Gender-related indicators in cultural policies and measures

IMPACT INDICATORS

- Proportion of women in leadership positions within cultural institutions (e.g., directors, board members, department heads).
- Reduction in gender pay and pension gaps among cultural sector professionals.
- Assessment of media and cultural productions for gender bias and stereotypes, with targets for more balanced and diverse representations.
- Percentage increase in women's attendance and participation in cultural events and programmes over time.
- Increase in the proportion of women managing heritage sites, including museums, archives, and cultural landmarks.

RESULT INDICATORS

- Ratio of women to men employed across various cultural sectors, including the arts, heritage, and media by function and types of employment.
- Number of cultural institutions that have adopted gender equality policies, such as flexible working arrangements, anti-discrimination measures, or parental leave provisions.
- Percentage of cultural grants and funding allocated to projects led by women or focused on women's experiences and perspectives.
- Share of women represented in cultural programming, such as exhibition rosters, festival line-ups, publishing lists, or film productions.

PROCESS INDICATORS

- Number of workshops, exhibitions, or performances specifically focused on gender themes or highlighting women's contributions to culture.
- Number of educational sessions delivered to cultural sector staff on gender awareness, inclusivity, and unconscious bias.
- Number of training and mentoring programmes targeting women professionals in cultural fields where they are underrepresented (e.g. film direction, sound engineering, cultural management).
- Number of cultural infrastructures adapted (e.g. flexible hours, childcare facilities, accessible venues) to ensure full and meaningful participation of women and gender-diverse individuals in cultural life.

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

The implementation stage of a cultural policy is a critical moment when theoretical commitments to gender equality are translated into concrete actions and measurable results. To ensure effective gender mainstreaming during this stage, the following core actions are essential.

ACTION 1

Ensure gender expertise in the implementation team

The success of a policy in advancing gender equality depends significantly on the implementation team's understanding of how gender shapes participation and results in the cultural and creative sectors.⁴² While it is essential to include gender specialists as permanent members of the team to provide expert guidance, promoting gender equality must be a shared responsibility. It should be embedded across all roles and functions – not seen as the sole responsibility of gender experts.

Key implementation steps include:

- + **Hire or collaborate with dedicated gender specialists.** When hiring is not feasible, policymakers can adopt alternative strategies to strengthen gender mainstreaming in cultural policy. This may include collaborating with other ministerial departments or national gender equality agencies to access expert advice and share resources. Engaging international cooperation partners can also provide valuable guidance, drawing on global experiences and good practices. In addition, fostering peer-to-peer learning with countries that have successfully integrated gender equality into their cultural policies and measures can support capacity building and inform context-specific approaches.

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

ACTION 2

Promote inclusivity among beneficiaries and raise awareness



At this stage, it is essential to ensure diversity among beneficiaries by actively including women with intersecting vulnerabilities – such as those related to ethnicity, age, or disability.⁴³ Tailoring measures to reflect specific cultural needs and expectations helps ensure that initiatives equitably reach all intended beneficiaries, thereby contributing to more inclusive cultural and creative sectors.

- + **Organize initial and ongoing training sessions** from its own resources or resources developed by specialized actors (international organisations, gender equality institutions, professional cultural organisations, women’s rights organisations, etc.) for all implementation team members to enhance their understanding of gender equality, gender bias and intersectionality, and to take ownership. In parallel, the trainings should proactively address potential resistance to gender equality by prioritizing tailored, context-sensitive strategies relying on local gender experts and by drawing on available toolkits and resources designed to overcome barriers to structural change. Encouraging peer-to-peer learning and identifying trusted local champions can further support these efforts and sustain engagement
- + **Encourage the formation of internal communities of practice** to foster continuous knowledge sharing and mutual support among staff and partners during the implementation phase of the policy or measure. Various modalities can be explored such as trainings of trainers, peer-to-peer learning exchanges, or knowledge sharing platforms.

A key step in advancing gender equality is removing barriers to participation.

This includes adapting to the preferred language(s) of participants, adjusting the timing, location, and format of events, as well as providing essential support services – such as childcare, transportation, and accessible facilities with appropriate equipment and internet connectivity – as well as other measures that address economic inequalities – (e.g., reduced ticket pricing) for both audiences and cultural professionals.

During the implementation phase, awareness-raising and communication activities should be organized when engaging with beneficiaries. They aim to ensure that efforts to promote gender equality are not only sustained but also widely understood and accepted. It is crucial to proactively address misconceptions, stereotypes, and resistance that may hinder the implementation of the cultural policy or measure, thereby creating a more enabling environment for a successful uptake.



ACTION 3

Establish inclusive feedback mechanisms

To ensure that cultural policies and measures remain aligned with gender equality goals, it is crucial to regularly assess their progress and gather input from all stakeholders. This can be achieved through inclusive feedback mechanisms and periodic gender audits (Box 9). Key practical steps include:⁴⁴

- + **Listening to everyone** by establishing inclusive feedback mechanisms. This involves creating accessible communication channels – such as community consultations, online surveys, and multilingual platforms – that reflect diverse needs and contexts. These mechanisms should be designed to promote inclusive participation, enhance representation, and support continuous dialogue between policymakers and cultural stakeholders.
- + **Checking progress** by conducting regular gender audits to assess whether the policy is effectively reducing gender inequalities and incorporates practices and results that promote gender equality. These audits should be based on clear baselines, measurable quantitative indicators – such as participation rates, leadership representation, or funding allocation – and qualitative measures, including personal experiences and stakeholder perceptions, and defined objectives for gender equality results foreseen in the policy or measure.
- + **Sharing results** by ensuring regular and transparent public reporting on the implementation of cultural policies and measures, including how funds have been used and what progress has been made. Reports should clearly highlight whether gender-related goals are being met, identify any existing gaps or delays, and outline key lessons learned. Sharing these insights not only strengthens accountability but also supports continuous improvement and may inspire other institutions and countries to adopt similar gender approaches.
- + **Improving with feedback loops** by using audit findings and stakeholder input to revise implementation plans. This process should go beyond identifying problems to clearly outlining corrective actions and driving continuous improvement.

LISTENING
CHECKING
SHARING
IMPROVING

Women are key to preserving our nomadic culture, yet the survey showed they were mostly in service roles, not leadership positions. This insight led us to create mechanisms to empower them.

H.E. Ms. Chinbat Nomin

Minister of Culture, Sports, Tourism and Youth, Mongolia

Box 9 • A fictionalised case study illustrating the implementation of feedback mechanisms

Based on the statement from the Minister of Culture of Mongolia, the following fictionalised case illustrates how inclusive feedback mechanisms can be implemented in a practical way to contribute to the creation of mechanisms that empower women:

▶ **Listening to everyone**

A national survey was conducted in local dialects across rural regions, specifically targeting women artists from nomadic communities. Through in-person gatherings, women were given the opportunity to share their roles, aspirations, and the barriers they face in cultural life.

▶ **Checking progress**

The Ministry of Culture carried out a gender audit of funding programmes related to intangible cultural heritage. The audit combined quantitative data and qualitative insights, revealing a significant disparity: although women represent 60% of cultural practitioners, they received less than 20% of grants and held only 10% of leadership roles.

▶ **Sharing results**

The findings of the audit were published in an open-access online report and presented at local community meetings. These presentations were translated into local languages and featured visual storytelling and personal testimonies from women in the field, highlighting both challenges and achievements.

▶ **Improving with feedback loops**

In response to the audit results, the Ministry revised its cultural policies and measures by introducing a mentorship programme for women in cultural leadership, reserving funding quotas for women-led projects, and establishing annual reporting mechanisms with nomadic communities to monitor and reassess progress.

EVALUATION AND COMMUNICATION

EVALUATION AND COMMUNICATION

Evaluation is essential for advancing gender equality, as it strengthens the evidence base for strategic decision-making, improves development planning, ensures institutional accountability for gender commitments, and facilitates knowledge building and sharing – enabling continuous improvement and replication.

Thus, gender equality considerations should be integrated throughout the evaluation process – into its goals, methodology, implementation, and the dissemination of results. This ensures an assessment of whether the cultural policy effectively addresses the diverse priorities and needs of women and men. Moreover, the evaluation must incorporate and analyse both qualitative and quantitative data and information to effectively evaluate the policy’s impact on gender inequalities.

ACTION 1

Evaluate the transformative impact of cultural policy on gender equality

Evaluation builds on monitoring by assessing the changes resulting from cultural policy implementation. It involves measuring gender-related results and, importantly, examining structural shifts in cultural practices, values, attitudes, and power dynamics. This approach enables a deeper understanding of whether the policy is effectively advancing gender equality at a systemic level. Key steps include:^{45 46 47}

- + **Plan and design the evaluation** to effectively assess gender-related results and changes. The first step is to clearly define the purpose of the evaluation – both to generate learning from what has and hasn’t worked, and to hold institutions accountable for their gender equality commitments.



ACTION 2

Promote knowledge-sharing for replicating successful practices

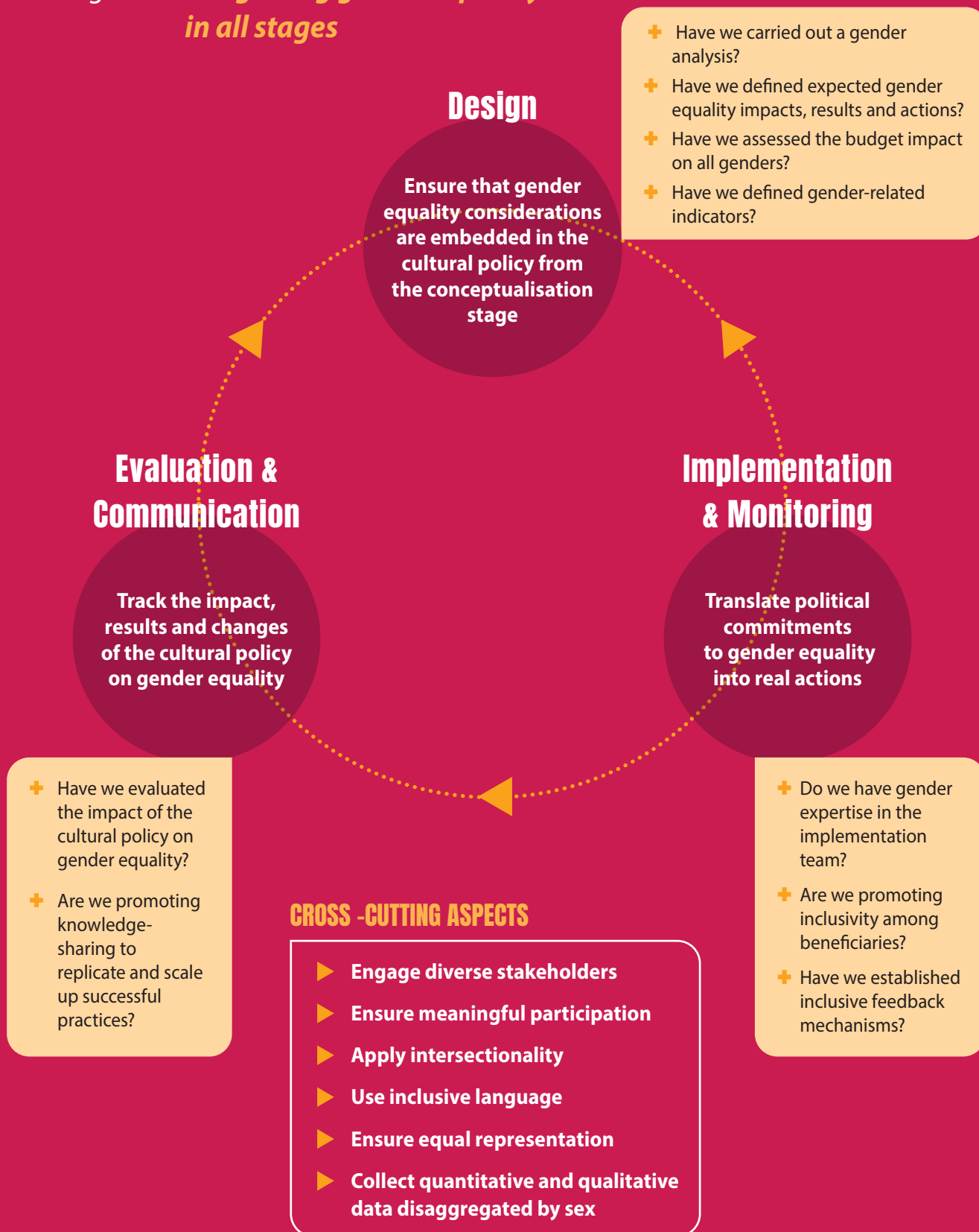
To effectively advance gender equality, evaluation must go beyond merely reporting findings – they should serve as both a catalyst and a tool to drive systemic change. This means using evaluation results to inform future policymaking, while promoting transparency and accountability throughout the policy cycle. This involves the following:

The evaluation framework should include gender-related indicators identified during the design phase. A gender perspective should be integrated into the evaluation methodology and terms of reference (TORs). Moreover, inclusive consultation methods must be employed to ensure that all stakeholders – particularly women from underrepresented or vulnerable groups – have the opportunity to participate and be heard.

- + **Conduct the evaluation** with a clear emphasis on identifying real changes in gender equality. Assess whether the policy has led to improvements in access, participation, representation, or attitudes toward gender within the cultural and creative sectors. Where data is lacking, use tools such as surveys or interviews to fill information gaps and gain deeper insights into people's lived experiences. When drafting the evaluation report, explain clearly how gender considerations were integrated throughout the evaluation process. The report should present evidence-based findings and offer actionable recommendations to strengthen gender equality in future cultural policies and measures.

- + **Disseminate findings:** Share the evaluation report with relevant stakeholders and/or the public, highlighting key achievements – such as shifts in cultural norms, reduced inequalities, and improved representation and participation. For example, key findings and best practices could be shared in reports on progress toward SDG 5 on gender equality and could also be reflected in dedicated periodic reporting processes for UNESCO Culture Conventions and Voluntary National Reviews. Clear communication of results reinforces transparency, fosters ownership and engagement, and supports informed decision-making.
- + **Promote the replication of successful practices for gender equality in and through culture:** Identify successful policy measures and interventions with potential for broader impact. Facilitate their adaptation across different cultural, institutional, or geographic contexts by sharing them through toolkits, case studies, and practical guidance.
- + **Integrate lessons learned into future planning cycles:** Use evaluation findings to refine existing cultural policies and measures and guide the design of new ones, ensuring they effectively promote gender equality and women's empowerment. Incorporating this iterative learning process into cultural policy development supports continuous improvement and ensures cultural policies and measures remain aligned with evolving gender dynamics and cultural contexts.

Figure 5 • **Integrating gender equality in all stages**



6

A CALL TO ACTION: PLACING GENDER EQUALITY AT THE HEART OF CULTURAL POLICIES AND MEASURES

Although significant progress has been achieved in the thirty years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the Stockholm Action Plan on Cultural Policies for Development (1998), structural and systemic gender inequalities in the cultural and creative sectors persist.

The 2025 MONDIACULT Thematic Global Consultation on Gender Equality has underscored the critical role of cultural policies and measures in empowering all women and girls and the urgency to integrate gender equality at the core of the global advocacy to establish a stand-alone goal for culture in the post-2030 agenda.

Placing gender equality at the heart of cultural policy – through both mainstreamed and targeted measures – not only fulfils international commitments but also enhances the influential role of culture in shaping inclusive, equitable and forward-looking societies (**Figure 6**).

In this context, **addressing gender inequality in the cultural and creative sectors is a strategic opportunity for meaningful and lasting change.** By identifying and responding to persistent challenges – such as gender-based discrimination and violence – policymakers can help build more inclusive, dynamic cultural ecosystems that reflect the full diversity of society.

This approach is grounded in the Culture Conventions of UNESCO, global commitments and shared values.

Advancing gender equality in cultural policy implements international human rights frameworks and promotes cultural diversity, social cohesion, and peace. It is not only a responsibility – it is an opportunity to lead with vision and purpose.

Integrating a gender perspective is also a driver of innovation and growth. Inclusive cultural policies and measures unlock the creative potential of underrepresented voices, fuel sustainable development, and strengthen the cultural and creative sectors' contribution to both the economy and society.

Crucially, culture shapes how we see and engage with the world.

When guided by a gender lens, cultural policies and measures can challenge stereotypes, amplify voices, and become powerful tools for advancing gender equality – not only within the arts, but across all areas of public life.

GENDER perspective

Figure 6 • An illustrative example of cultural policy with and without a gender perspective

WITHOUT GENDER PERSPECTIVE

Goal

Promote artistic expression by supporting the creation and dissemination of artistic works across disciplines.

Mechanisms

- + **Funding & Support:** Allocate resources to a wide range of artistic disciplines, ensuring balanced support for both established and emerging forms of artistic expression.
- + **Content Creation:** Encourage the development of diverse artistic content by supporting experimentation, cross-disciplinary collaboration, and the exploration of new formats and media.
- + **Data Collection:** Gather comprehensive data on artistic production, participation, and funding distribution across disciplines.
- + **Monitoring & Evaluation:** Evaluate success based on artistic output, audience engagement, cultural impact, and sustainability. Develop indicators that reflect the vitality and reach of artistic initiatives across different disciplines.

Limitations and risks

- + **Perpetuation of inequality:** Women artists may continue to be underrepresented in major exhibitions, commissions, and decision-making bodies.
- + **Lack of inclusive representation:** Without a gender lens, artistic narratives risk marginalizing women, leading to a limited and biased cultural landscape.
- + **Biased resource allocation:** Funding and support mechanisms might unintentionally privilege disciplines or networks dominated by men.

WITH GENDER PERSPECTIVE

Goal

Promote artistic expression by supporting the creation and dissemination of diverse and inclusive works, while ensuring equitable opportunities and advancing gender equality across the cultural and creative sectors.

Mechanisms

- + **Funding & Support:** Ensure equitable resource allocation across a wide range of artistic disciplines, balancing support between both established and emerging forms of artistic expression and addressing gender disparities - including by prioritizing support for women artists.
- + **Content Creation:** Encourage the development of diverse artistic content by supporting experimentation, cross-disciplinary collaboration, the exploration of new formats and media free from gender stereotypes, and safe creative environments.
- + **Data Collection:** Gather comprehensive sex disaggregated data on artistic production, participation, and funding distribution across disciplines.
- + **Monitoring & Evaluation:** Evaluate success not only through artistic output and audience engagement, cultural impact, and sustainability, also through indicators reflecting gender dynamics. These may include the proportion of women in funded projects, leadership positions, and featured content. Ensure that evaluation frameworks assess both quantitative and qualitative impacts on gender equity within the cultural and creative sectors.

Impact

- + **Increased diversity in artistic content:** More voices from women in all their diversity contributes to a richer cultural and social landscape.
- + **Broader market reach:** Diverse content appeals to wider audiences, potentially increasing revenue streams for creators and cultural institutions.
- + **Balanced representation:** More equitable participation of women in leadership, production, and performance roles.
- + **Job creation and innovation:** Supporting inclusive artistic production can stimulate employment and innovation in cultural and creative industries and improve the value of cultural and creative activities.
- + **Well-being:** Promoting safe, more equitable and diverse cultural and creative sectors enhances individual and collective well-being.

A TOOLKIT FOR ACTION

ACTION

Building on the above, this toolkit outlines concrete steps that Ministers of Culture, Arts Councils, and other cultural policymakers – at national, regional, and local levels – can take to translate gender equality commitments into effective cultural policies and measures.

This toolkit draws on the recommendations of the 2025 MONDIACULT Thematic Global Consultation “Art for ALL at the Heart of Tomorrow’s Cultural Policies” consultation held on International Women’s Day in Paris on 13 March 2025 – which brought together Ministers of Culture, artists, and experts to define priorities for advancing women in the cultural and creative sectors – and urges countries to place gender equality at the core of their cultural policies and measures by:

- 1. Embedding gender equality in cultural policies and measures to drive societal transformation** and designing cultural policies and measures to empower women and girls to create and fully participate in cultural life.
- 2. Investing in robust data collection and developing a monitoring framework that links gender equality to cultural policy results.**
- 3. Protecting and promoting women artists and cultural professionals at risk in emergency situations.**
- 4. Developing comprehensive programs to support women’s transition into cultural leadership roles**, particularly in creative functions and cultural and creative sectors where they are underrepresented.
- 5. Amplifying the visibility of women’s talents and contributions to the cultural and creative sectors** to shift and restore the narrative around women’s role in safeguarding heritage and contributing to the development of the culture and creative sectors.
- 6. Leveraging artificial intelligence and digital technologies to create innovative pathways for women content creators** to produce and distribute their artistic works, ensuring fair remuneration and protecting intellectual property rights while actively combating online harassment and gender bias in AI through diverse data sets and development teams.

7. Providing safe and adequate infrastructure and facilities for women and girls within cultural and artistic exhibition spaces and venues, ensuring dedicated areas and protocols for women creators and performers.

8. Promoting safety and well-being in cultural and creative sectors and implementing zero tolerance policies and measures to eliminate harassment, gender-based violence and abuse within cultural and creative organizations and workplaces, including in the digital environment.

9. Acknowledging and taking action with the cultural and creative sectors as partners to eliminate the distribution of stereotypes, violent acts and images harming women and girls and introducing media literacy approaches in arts and cultural education curricula to provide girls and boys with the critical thinking tools they require to decipher the negative images and messages about women that can be conveyed through cultural content.

To make gender equality a reality in cultural spaces, there needs to be measurable indicators, the right technologies, and dedicated financial support.

Begoña Lasagabaster

Director, Division for Gender Equality, UNESCO

**MAKE GENDER
EQUALITY**
a reality in culture

ANNEX:

KEY CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

This annex aims to provide a clear understanding of key concepts and terms related to gender equality and inclusion within cultural policies. By grounding the definitions of these concepts, it seeks to foster a shared language among policymakers, practitioners, and other relevant stakeholders, since this shared understanding is essential for promoting effective communication, collaboration, and the successful implementation of cultural policies that address systemic inequalities.

To this end, the definitions presented have been drawn from or aligned with established glossaries developed by authoritative sources in the field of gender equality and inclusion. These include UNESCO's *Glossary: Understanding Concepts Around Gender Equality and Inclusion in Education* and the *UN Women Gender Equality Glossary*.

+ Gender: refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context/time-specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context. Other important criteria for socio-cultural analysis include class, race, poverty level, ethnic group and age.

+ Gender analysis: Gender analysis is a critical examination of how differences in gender roles, activities, needs, opportunities and rights/entitlements affect men, women, girls and boys in certain situation or contexts. Gender analysis examines the relationships between women and men and their access to and control of resources and the constraints they face relative to each other. A gender analysis should be integrated into all sector assessments or situational analyses to ensure that gender-based injustices and inequalities are not exacerbated by interventions, and that where possible, greater equality and justice in gender relations are promoted.

- + Gender equality** (Equality between women and men): This refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognising the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centred development.
- + Gender equity:** The preferred terminology within the United Nations is gender equality, rather than gender equity. Gender equity denotes an element of interpretation of social justice, usually based on tradition, custom, religion or culture, which is most often to the detriment to women. Such use of equity in relation to the advancement of women has been determined to be unacceptable. During the Beijing conference in 1995 it was agreed that the term equality would be utilised. This was later confirmed by the CEDAW committee in its General Recommendation 28.
- + Gender gap:** refers to any disparity between the situation of boys' and girls', men's and women's condition or position in society. It is often used to refer to a difference in average earnings between women and men, e.g. "gender pay gap." However, gender gaps can be found in many areas, including economic, cultural and social participation and opportunities, educational attainment, health and survival or political empowerment.
- + Gender mainstreaming:** Gender mainstreaming is the chosen approach of the United Nations system and international community toward realising progress on women's and girl's rights, as a sub-set of human rights to which the United Nations dedicates itself. It is not a goal or objective on its own. It is a strategy for implementing greater equality for women and girls in relation to men and boys. Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a way to make women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic, cultural and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.
- + Gender norms:** Gender norms are ideas about how men and women should be and act. We internalize and learn these "rules" early in life. This sets-up a life cycle of gender socialization and stereotyping. Put another way, gender norms are the standards and expectations to which gender identity generally conforms, within a range that defines a particular society, culture and community at that point in time.
- + Gender parity:** Gender parity is another term for equal representation of women and men in a given area, for example, gender parity in organizational leadership or higher education. Working toward gender parity (equal representation) is a key part of achieving gender equality.

- + **Gender-responsive budgeting:** Gender-responsive budgeting or GRB is a method of determining the extent to which government expenditure has detracted from or come nearer to the goal of gender equality. A gender-responsive budget is not a separate budget for women, but rather a tool that analyses budget allocations, public spending and taxation from a gender perspective and can be subsequently used to advocate for reallocation of budget line items to better respond to women's priorities as well as men's, making them, as the name suggests, gender-responsive.
- + **Gender-targeted approach:** this approach refers to interventions that specifically focus on gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment or seek to 'transform' unequal gender relations between men and women and achieve gender equality as the primary objective.
- + **Intersectionality:** refers to the way in which different forms of discrimination and disadvantage combine and overlap. Characteristics such as gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, geography and socio-economic status can intersect with each other, causing multiple levels of disadvantage and marginalisation.
- + **Temporary special measures:** refer to actions aimed at accelerating de facto equality between women and men that may, in the short term, favor women. Other terms that are often used to refer to such "special measures" in their corrective, compensatory and promotional sense are the terms "affirmative action", "positive action", "positive measures", "reverse discrimination", and "positive discrimination". The CEDAW convention (Article 4, paragraph 1) clarifies that *"Adoption by States parties of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination as defined in the present Convention,*

but shall in no way entail as a consequence the maintenance of unequal or separate standards; these measures shall be discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved."

The concept consists of three parts:

- **Temporary:** Such measures should not be deemed necessary forever, even though the meaning of "temporary" may, in fact, result in the application of such measures for a long period of time. Temporary special measures must be discontinued when their desired results have been achieved and sustained for a period of time.
- **Special:** The term "special", though being in conformity with human rights discourse, also needs to be carefully explained. Its use sometimes casts women and other groups who are subject to discrimination as weak, vulnerable and in need of extra or "special" measures in order to participate or compete in society. However, the real meaning of "special" in the formulation of article 4, paragraph 1 of CEDAW, is that the measures are designed to serve a specific goal.
- **Measures:** The term "measures" encompasses a wide variety of legislative, executive, administrative and other regulatory instruments, policies and practices, such as outreach or support programmes; allocation and/or reallocation of resources; preferential treatment; targeted recruitment, hiring and promotion; numerical goals connected with time frames; and quota systems. The choice of a particular "measure" will depend on the context in which article 4, paragraph 1, is applied and on the specific goal it aims to achieve.

REFERENCES

1. Freemuse, 2018, *Creativity Wronged: How Women's Right to Artistic Freedom is Denied and Marginalised*.
2. United Nations, 2024, *Creative Economy Outlook 2024: Technical and statistical report*, Geneva.
3. GDC, 2024, *2024 State of the Game Industry report*, San Francisco.
4. Bachtrack, 2025, *All in the balance: Bachtrack's Classical Music Statistics 2024*.
5. The female: pressure Trouble Makers, 2024, *Facts 2024*.
6. Villarroja, A., 2022, "Gender equality: One step forward, two steps back", in *Reshaping policies for creativity: Addressing culture as a global public good*, Paris.
7. Ibid.
8. ILO, 2024, *The Future of Work in the Arts and Entertainment Sector*, Geneva.
9. United Nations General Assembly, 2012, *Report of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights*, New York.
10. UNESCO, 2025, *Gender Equality at the Heart of Cultural Policies*, Paris.
11. Ibid.
12. Eil K. and Holland D., 2023, *Close the Gender Gap to Unlock Productivity Gains*, Moody's Analytics.
13. UNCTAD, 2024, *Creative Economy Outlook 2024*, Geneva.
14. ILO, 2019, *Beyond the glass ceiling: Why businesses need women at the top*, Geneva.
15. WIPO, 2018, *Innovation, Creativity and the Gender Gap*, Geneva.
16. Romo M., 2024, *Obstacles to Women's Creative Contributions to Culture. US-China Education Review A*, 14(4), pp. 265-269.
17. UNESCO, 2022, *The Tracker Culture & Public Policy | Focus on Culture and Gender, The Tracker Culture & Public Policy*, 18(30).
18. Ibid.
19. International Republican Institute, 2020, *Gender-Responsive Policymaking Handbook*, Washington.
20. UNESCO, WCCAE, 2024, *UNESCO Framework for Culture and Arts Education*, Abu Dhabi.
21. Villarroja A., 2022, "Chapter 9. Gender equality: One step forward, two steps back", in *Reshaping policies for creativity: Addressing culture as a global public good*, Paris.
22. UNESCO, 2023, *Methodological Guide for the Participatory Development of a Law on the Status of the Artist*, Paris.
23. United Nations, 2025, *Guidelines for gender-inclusive language in English*, New York.
24. Centre per la Igualtat i Recursos per a les Dones, 2017, *Manual sobre la Incorporació de la Perspectiva de Gènere i Mesures d'Igualtat per a Entitats*, Barcelona.
25. UN Women, 2022, *Handbook on gender mainstreaming for gender equality results*, New York.
26. Chile, 2024, *Quadrennial Periodic Report on the Implementation of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*.
27. Sarajevo Film Festival, 2025, "Sarajevo Film Festival takes a stand for gender equality in the film industry", web article.
28. N1, 2021, "Sarajevo Film Festival introduces Special Award for Promoting Gender Equality", web article.
29. UNIQA, 2025, "UNIQA SEE FUTURE Foundation, in cooperation with Sarajevo Film Festival and Slano Film Days, launched a programme to support female filmmakers", web article.
30. UN Women, 2022, *Handbook on gender mainstreaming for gender equality results*, New York.
31. European Institute for Gender Equality, 2025, *Gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation, Glossary and thesaurus*, Vilna.
32. UN Women, 2022, *Handbook on gender mainstreaming for gender equality results*, New York.
33. Direcció de Serveis de Gènere i Polítiques del Temps, et al., 2021, *La incorporació de la perspectiva de gènere en plans i programes, Quaderns metodològics feministes*, 5, Barcelona.
34. Peru, 2024, *Quadrennial Periodic Report on the Implementation of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*.
35. Cultural Human Resources Council, 2021, *Respectful Workplaces in the Arts*, Ottawa.
36. Brazil, 2024, *Quadrennial Periodic Report on the Implementation of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*.
37. INAMU, 2025, *Ley de cupo: normativas*, Buenos Aires.
38. UNESCO, 2022, *The Tracker Culture & Public Policy | Focus on Culture and Gender, The Tracker Culture & Public Policy*, 18(30).
39. UNESCO, 2023, "Empowering female African heritage professionals: the UNESCO Mentorship Programme holds an online meeting with 8 female mentees", web article.
40. Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2025, *Concilia Cultura*, Barcelona.

41. Council of Europe, 2018, *Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit for Co-operation Projects*, Strasbourg.
42. Ibid.
43. Direcció de Serveis de Gènere i Polítiques del Temps, et al., 2022, *Incorporació de la perspectiva de gènere en plans i programes*, Barcelona.
44. UN Women, 2022, *Handbook on gender mainstreaming for gender equality results*, New York.
45. UN Women, 2015, *How to manage gender-responsive evaluation: Evaluation Handbook*, New York.
46. Centre per la Igualtat i Recursos per a les Dones, 2017, *Manual sobre la Incorporació de la Perspectiva de Gènere i Mesures d'Igualtat per a Entitats*, Barcelona.
47. UN Women, 2022, *Handbook on gender mainstreaming for gender equality results*, New York.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Anna Villarroya is an Associate Professor in the Department of Economics and Director of the Research Centre in Information, Communication and Culture at the University of Barcelona. Her main research interests include cultural policies, gender and culture, artists' labour markets, and cultural participation.

She currently serves as President of the European Association of Cultural Researchers (ERICarts Network) and has published extensively in international journals such as the European Journal of Cultural Studies, European Journal of Women's Studies, Journal of Cultural Economics, The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society, Creative Industries Journal, and the International Journal of Cultural Policy, among others.

Anna Villarroya is also Editor-in-Chief of the European Journal of Cultural Management and Policy. Beyond academia, she has contributed her expertise to numerous international organizations (including UNESCO, UCLG, the Council of Europe, and ERICarts) as well as national institutions such as the Spanish Ministry of Culture, the Catalan Department of Culture, and the "la Caixa" Social Observatory.

Berta Ollé is an information and documentation professional based in Barcelona. She holds a degree in Information and Documentation from the University of Barcelona and is currently pursuing a master's in Archival Studies and Information Governance at the Autonomous University of Barcelona.

Since 2020, she has worked on projects involving archive and library management, institutional repositories, content curation, and research support at institutions such as the Education Consortium of Barcelona, the Pompeu Fabra University, the Polytechnic University of Catalonia, and the Bosch i Gimpera Foundation.

Berta Ollé has also contributed to research projects on cultural policy and gender in culture, and has co-authored several thematic bulletins and statistical reports published by the Catalan Department of Culture.

CULTURE FOR ALL

A toolkit for gender equality in policymaking

Gender inequalities remain entrenched in the cultural and creative sectors. In response to this pressing challenge, UNESCO has developed this action-oriented toolkit to empower policymakers to make cultural policies work for gender equality.

Whether you are a policymaker at the national, regional or city level, or a professional in a cultural institution – such as a museum, a heritage site or cultural centre – if you are engaged in designing or revising cultural policies or strategies, this toolkit is for you.

It is the first resource of its kind to offer step-by-step guidance on how to integrate gender equality into cultural policies, helping to ensure that no one is left behind in cultural life.

Because culture needs gender equality to thrive – and gender equality cannot be fully achieved without culture – this toolkit is your roadmap to unlocking the transformative power of culture as a global public good. For all.

STAY IN TOUCH

gender.equality@unesco.org

www.unesco.org/gender-equality



unesco

United Nations
Educational, Scientific
and Cultural Organization

Division for
Gender Equality
Cabinet of the
Director-General
UNESCO



9 789231 007910

