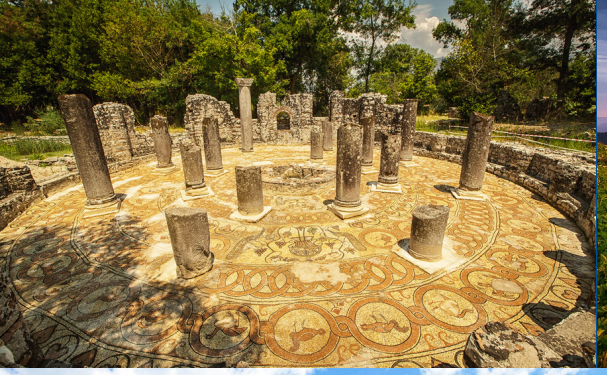
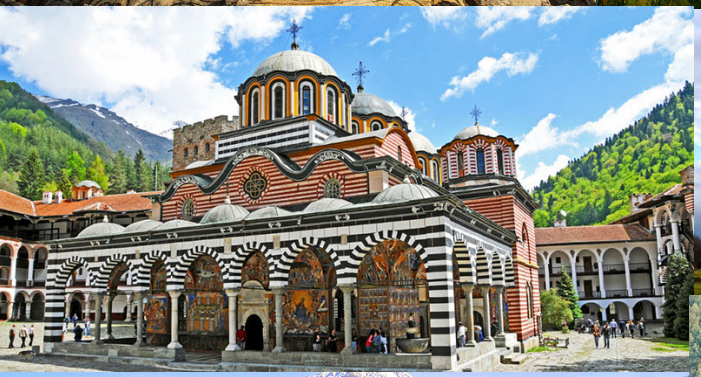
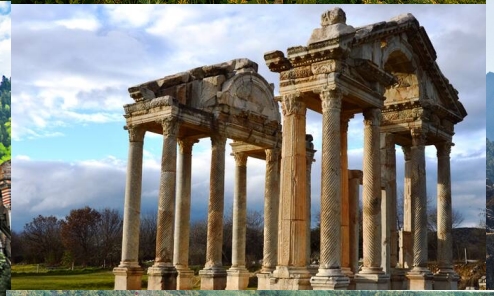
Cultural Tourism and Digital Transformation in the BSEC Region and Beyond: Lessons learned in the context of Covid-19 Pandemic

10 November 2021

(Peter Janech, Deputy Director for Europe)



UNSECO WORLD HERITAGE

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

World Heritage Convention

- Albania – 4 (2 Cultural; 1 Natural; 1 Mixed)
- Armenia – 3 Cultural
- Azerbaijan – 3 Cultural
- Bulgaria – 10 (7 Cultural; 3 Natural)
- Georgia – 4 (3 Cultural; 1 Natural)
- Greece – 18 (16 Cultural; 2 Mixed)
- North Macedonia – 2 (1 Natural; 1 Mixed)
- Republic of Moldova – 1 Cultural
- Romania – 9 (7 Cultural; 2 Natural)
- Russian Federation – 30 (19 Cultural; 11 Natural)
- Serbia – 5 Cultural
- Turkey – 19 (17 Cultural; 2 Mixed)
- Ukraine – 7 (6 Cultural; 1 Natural)

TOTAL: 115

During the crisis, 90 per cent of countries fully or partially closed World Heritage sites, and around 85,000 museums were temporarily closed

Source: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373530

Sociocultural Impacts of COVID 19
General Observations

- **The global wealth of traditions, culture and diversity are among the principal motivations for travel**

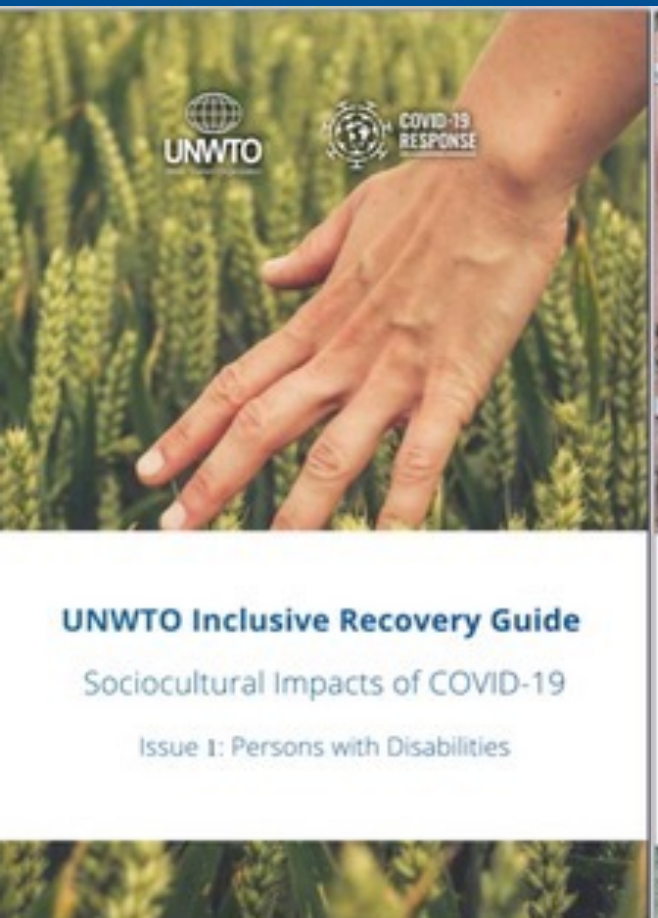
- The impact of COVID-19 on tourism places further pressure on heritage conservation in the cultural sector, as well as on the cultural and social fabric of communities, particularly indigenous people and ethnic groups

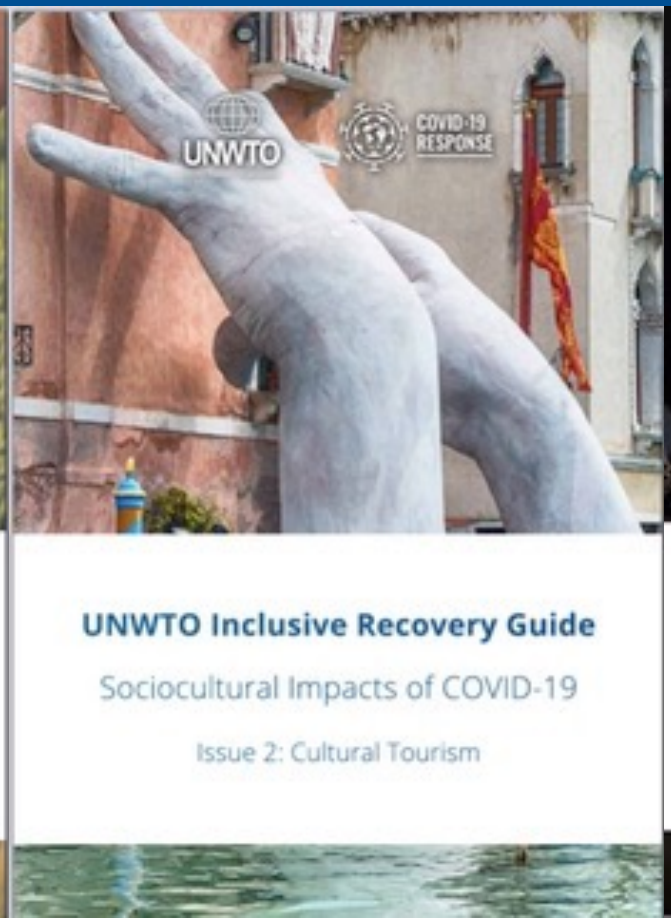
- Many intangible cultural heritage practices such as traditional festivals and gatherings have also been halted or postponed, with important consequences for the social and cultural lives of communities everywhere

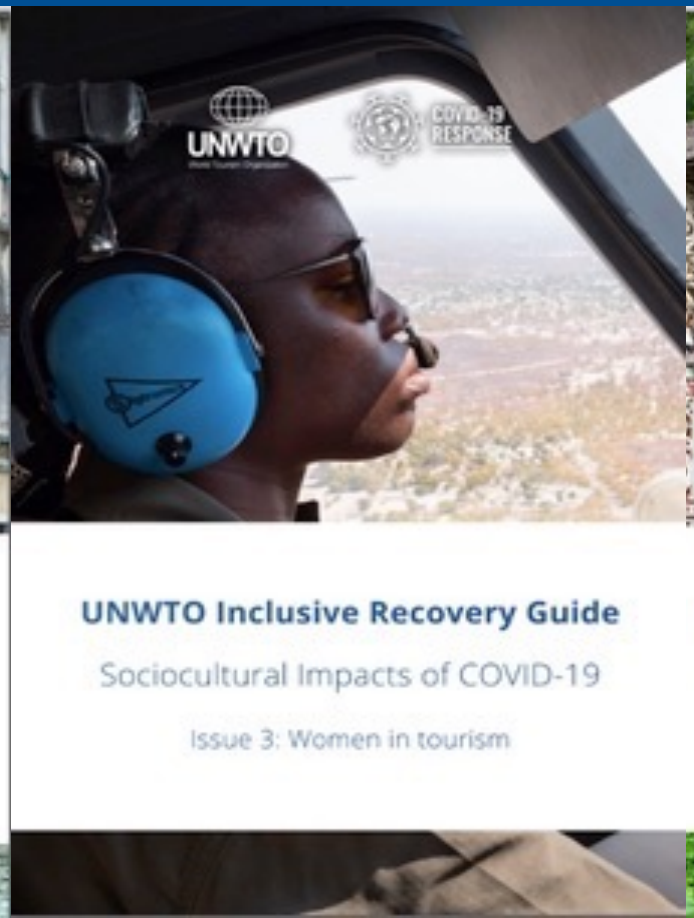
- **Cities** have traditionally played a major role in cultural tourism. They were the first, but also among the most to be affected by the pandemic, that resulted in restrictions and shutdowns in urban tourism. However, being hubs of innovation and creativity, they were the first allowing their inhabitants and people around the world to embrace culture in alternative ways

- On the other hand, tourism in rural areas offers important opportunities for recovery as travellers seek less crowds, open-air experiences and local cultures

UNWTO Incusive Recovery Guide
Sociocultural Impacts of COVID 19







Recommendations on Cultural Tourism

- **Promoting synergies today will strengthen the cultural tourism of tomorrow**
  -Create participatory governance structures

- **Strengthening the revival of urban and rural experiences**
  -Reinforce urban–rural connectivity

- **Building a more resilient tourism and culture workforce through the digital transition**
  -Digital upskilling of women, youth, indigenous peoples

- **Protecting nature is key to safeguarding culture**
  -Ensure the protection of natural heritage and biodiversity in cultural tourism destinations.

- **Fostering community-based tourism through living heritage**
  -Actively involve communities and cultural practioners in tourism strategies and management planning

- **Harnessing technology to make cultural tourism more competitive**
  -Consolidate alliances with technology and media partners

- **Supporting culture as a win-win for tourism destinations**
  -Inspire travellers to re-discover their local culture and creative industries

#RESTARTTOURISM:
LANDMARK UN POLICY BRIEF

5 priority areas to reimagine and rebuild a resilient tourism industry for our communities and the planet:

i. Mitigate socio-economic impacts on livelihoods

ii. Boost competitiveness and build resilience

iii. Advance innovation and digital transformation

iv. Foster sustainability and green growth

v. Enhance coordination and partnerships to restart and transform sector towards achieving SDGs

Recovery of tourism destinations and companies will be fully dependent on their capacity to take advantage of technology to better understand and monitor travellers' needs and trends, create and market innovative experiences, use digital platforms to enhance the competitiveness

Advancing innovation and the digitalization of the tourism ecosystem

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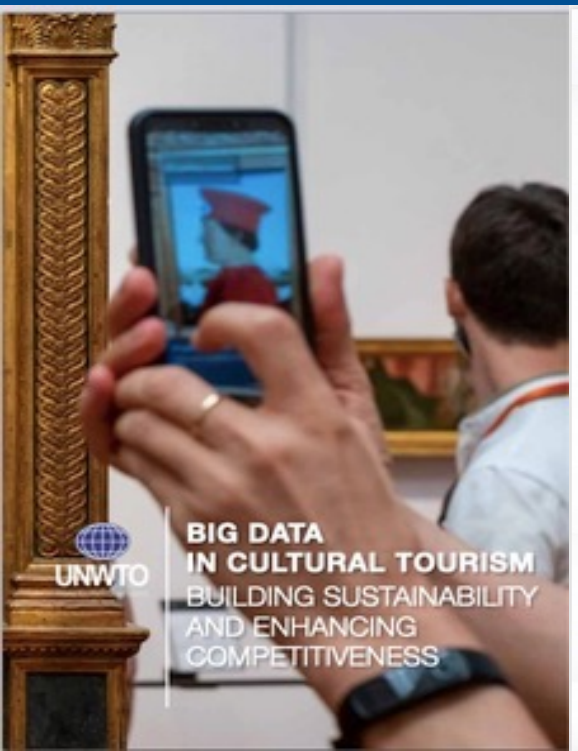


UNWTO-Instagram Partnership

Objectives:

-To help destinations and business harness the power of digital and visual storytelling to reach new audiences and return to growth;

-To provide everyone from governments and tourism bodies to local businesses and tour guides tips and recommendations on how they can use the power of digital to reconnect with travellers around the world — or right in their local communities

-To illustrate how the sector is ready to welcome tourists back safely and responsibly;

-To explore the best ways to encourage renewed local travel, while raising environmental awareness

2021 has been declared as the **International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development** by Resolution A/RES/74/198 *(December 2019).*

High-Level Event: Culture and Sustainable Development: "Building back better: towards a more resilient and impactful culture sector throughout COVID-19 and The Decade of Action", *(21 May 2021)*

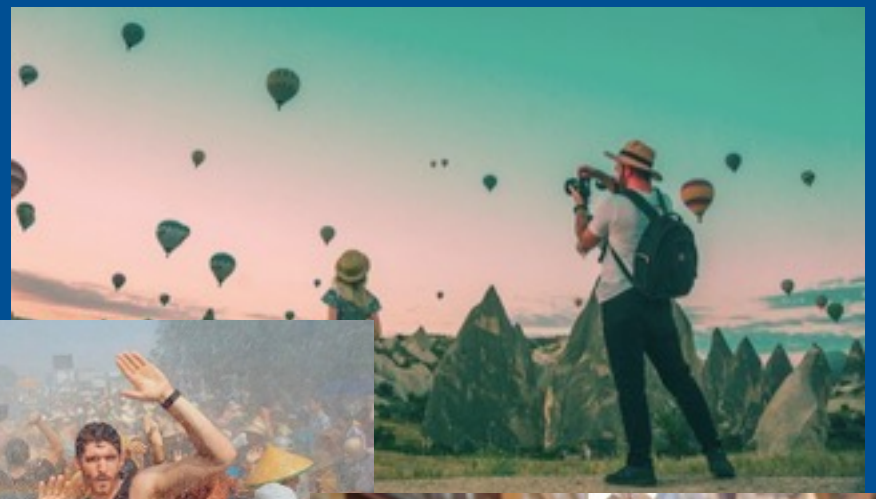
*-The event highlighted **best practices** and **policy adaptations** needed to ensure the cultural and creative industries contribution to COVID-19 relief and recovery strategies and to fully recognize culture's transformational potential as an underutilized accelerator for implementing the SDGs.*

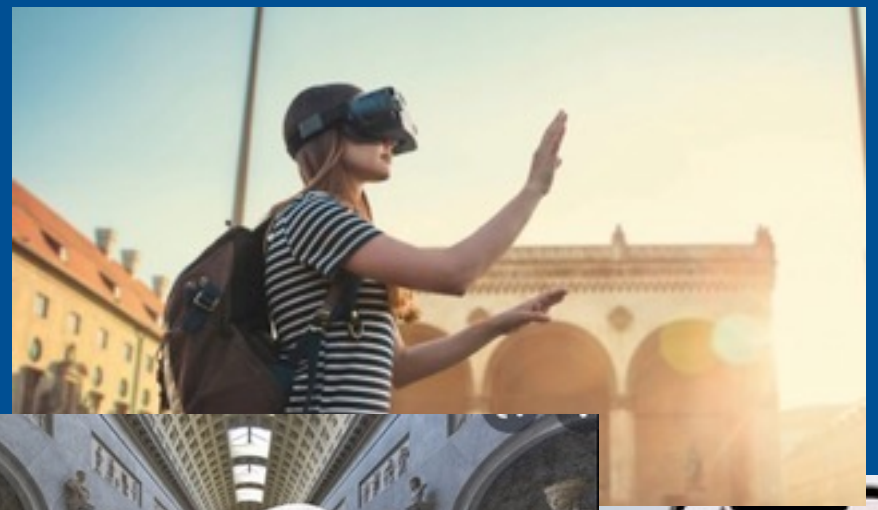
UNWTO World Tourism Organization

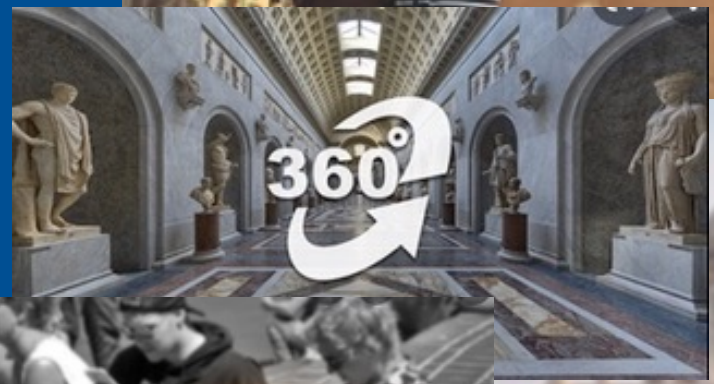
COVID-19 RESPONSE

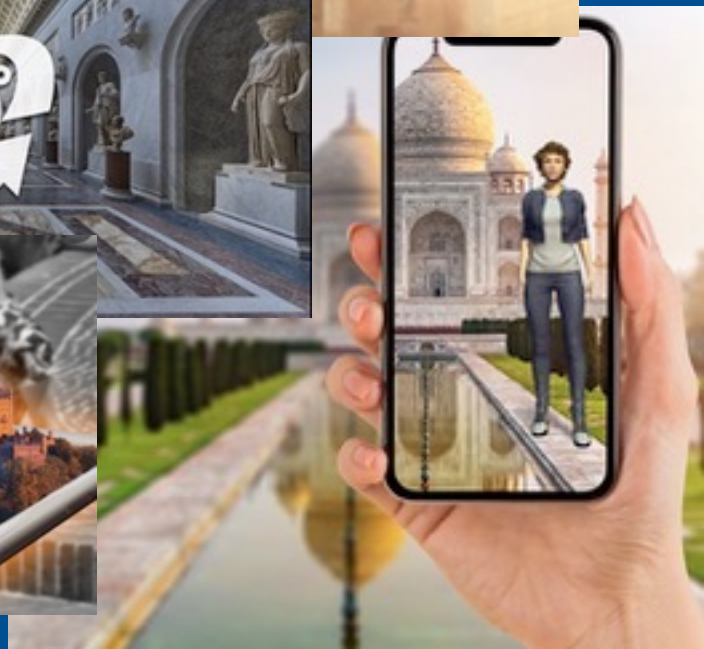
The incomparable and enriching experience of travel:

#TravelEnjoyRespect









Thank you for your attention!

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