

Context and purpose

The conference Localising the Sustainable Development Goals Through Museums and Libraries III was initiated through the UNESCO Participation Programme project "Fostering peaceful and resilient communities through museums and libraries". This initiative aims to foster and strengthen partnerships for museum and library professionals; to share good practices, experiences and lessons learned; and to foster international co-operation between professionals. The partnership has extended its membership welcoming Ukraine to join Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Moldova and Georgia.

Building on the previous two editions of the conference, the event focused on the many ways in which museums, libraries, culture, heritage and peace intersect with one another, and the power of culture in a challenging and changing world.

The online conference was viewed by 650 people.

Peacebuilding, resilience and heritage

High-level contributions from UNESCO, including Ukrainian and Latvian National Commissions, highlighted how culture - in many forms - is an integral part of sustainable development. Democratic and creative culture, and peacefully co-existing cultural identity are essential aspects of safe and resilient communities and societies. Libraries and museums are essential basic resources for people's and communities' cultural lives.

Libraries and museums acting at a local level

Many libraries and museums are already fostering peaceful and resilient communities and societies, supporting a range of activities including Disaster Risk Reduction, democratizing digital information and advancing media literacy. Libraries and museums can be spaces where people interact and come in contact, building trust across difference. They can positively contribute to people's individual and collective identities.

Peacebuilding through heritage before, during and after conflict

Tangible and intangible cultural heritage are powerful resources that can be drawn upon by people and communities before, during and after difficult times. Ensuring heritage is protected and developed by and for communities is essential for peaceful, resilient communities and wider sustainable development. This requires culture, creative industry and heritage to be effectively factored into disaster management, response and recovery plans, and the risks to heritage to be identified, reduced and eliminated where possible.

Ensuring people are able to access, participate in, and contribute to the cultural life of their community is a basic right. This includes interpretation, community engagement and empowerment, advocacy, and establishing safe spaces.

Library and museum organisations can contribute to the reduction of social challenges and tensions before, during and after conflicts. They bring hope, belonging, learning and joy.

Key messages from the conference

1. Peace may be both strong and fragile at the same time, and the sector needs to engage in discussions and methodological approaches to peace and peacebuilding.
2. Key words can be reimagined as powerful catalysts for activism, advocacy and growth. Key words may include 'hope', 'humility', 'curiosity' and 'transformation', and 'peace' itself.
3. It is important to develop the skills and courage to have and to manage difficult conversations and topics.
4. Cultural professionals, organizations and networks may face challenges as they promote peaceful and resilient communities in their daily work. Their resilience can be supported through networking, partnerships and shared activities, as well as mutual and official support, as isolation poses risks.
5. Library and museum activities to foster peaceful and resilient communities should be collected, recorded, analysed, recognized and communicated widely, ensuring integration of culture and heritage into wider policy agendas that promote holistic, people-centred sustainable development.