



Global Universities Alliance for Cultural Rights

A cooperation network among universities



Preamble

Whereas the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms that “everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits” (UDHR, art. 27), and whereas cultural rights are further elaborated in binding and guiding instruments, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, art. 15), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, art. 27, rights of persons belonging to minorities), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, art. 31), and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, art. 30).

Recalling relevant UNESCO and international standards that safeguard culture and cultural participation, including the 1970 Convention on illicit trade in cultural property, the 1972 World Heritage Convention, the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, and the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions; as well as the 1954 Hague Convention for the protection of cultural property in armed conflict, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP, 2007; e.g., arts. 11, 13, 31), and regional instruments such as the Council of Europe Faro Convention (2005) on the value of cultural heritage for society.

Consistent with the global conversation catalysed by 2025 MONDIACULT and UNESCO’s Global Report on Cultural Policies “*Culture: the Missing SDG*”, the Cooperation Agreement places culture at the core of the post-2030 agenda, drawing on consolidated evidence that culture advances rights, education, resilience, climate action, and digital transformation, and substantiates the case for a standalone culture goal in future development frameworks.

Affirming that cultural rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated with other human rights, including freedom of expression and association, education, scientific freedom and academic freedom; and recognising their essential contribution to human dignity, social cohesion, peacebuilding and sustainable development (notably SDGs 4.7, 8.9, 11.4, 12.b).

Mindful that these rights are today challenged by armed conflict and forced displacement, climate and environmental crises, language and knowledge loss, illicit trafficking and commodification, censorship and the shrinking of civic space, cultural appropriation, as well as digital transformation dynamics – including data extractivism, algorithmic bias, enclosure of knowledge, and the erasure or misappropriation of cultural expressions online.

Recognising the public mission of universities to advance knowledge, foster critical inquiry, and serve society; their capacity to connect research, education, innovation and community engagement; and their responsibility to co-create solutions with culture-bearers, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, artists, heritage professionals, youth and policymakers – guided by Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), equity, and do-no-harm ethics.



Convinced that a global, open, and practice-oriented alliance of universities active in cultural rights is urgently needed to: (i) consolidate evidence and good practice on cultural rights; (ii) build capacities and curricula; (iii) protect and enable culture-bearers and at-risk scholars; (iv) develop fair, inclusive and open knowledge ecosystems; (v) inform laws and public policies; and (vi) mobilise collective action across regions and languages.

It is therefore established the Global Universities Alliance for Cultural Rights.

What is the Global Universities Alliance for Cultural Rights?

The Alliance is a voluntary network of universities and university research centres, anchored in a commitment to safeguard, promote and operationalise cultural rights worldwide through research, education, community partnerships, and policy dialogue, in solidarity with all peoples and cultures.

The Alliance is a platform for voluntary cooperation among universities and university research centres. It is an international, unincorporated, non-profit, membership-based network.

The Alliance also adopts the attached logo (Annexe A) as its official emblem.

Purpose and Objectives

The premises detailed in the Preamble form an integral and substantial part of the Purpose of the Alliance itself. The Alliance is rooted in the ultimate objective of strengthening and informing the global debate on cultural rights by fostering international academic exchange that champions diversity, encourages thoughtful listening, and embraces the plurality of perspectives.

In particular, the Alliance aims to:

- Act as a platform of ideas. The Alliance shall create a free and safe space for the exchange of perspectives, methods, findings, and experiences on cultural rights.
- Facilitate academic research exchange and inter-university cooperation through open-access publication of research outputs and the free exchange of data, methods, and results.
- Co-produce knowledge with communities and institutions.
- Promote joint initiatives for and on cultural rights.
- Support teaching and capacity-building through shared curricula and open educational resources.
- Inform public policy through evidence-based recommendations.
- Uphold common ethical standards, including FPIC, respectful representation, fair and culturally appropriate benefit sharing, and responsible data stewardship with due protection of traditional knowledge.
- Advance inclusion, accessibility, and meaningful youth participation.



Modes of Cooperation

The Alliance exists to carry out integrated forms of scientific, educational and training collaboration, which may take place in the following ways:

- Collaboration in scientific studies and research.
- Cooperation and/or joint participation in national and/or international research programs.
- Collaboration in carrying out research and/or consultancy activities entrusted by public or private institutions.
- Joint organisation of conferences, seminars, and study meetings of national and international relevance.
- Sharing of instrumental and/or complementary resources for scientific research and teaching.
- Organisation of training courses and other educational activities.
- Other integrated forms of collaboration, as may be agreed upon by the Members.

This Agreement does not entail any obligation or financial burden for the Members.

Membership and Commitments

Membership is exclusively open to universities and university research centres actively engaged with cultural rights in research, teaching, and public engagement.

Joining is voluntary; each institution participates only in activities aligned with its mission and capacity.

Nothing in this Cooperation Agreement restricts Members from initiating or participating in bilateral, multilateral, or other external activities outside the Alliance; Members are encouraged to share any relevant results with the Alliance.

Annually, all Alliance Members convene online to share research findings and set future priorities, contributing meaningfully to the worldwide debate on cultural rights.

Ethics and FPIC

The Alliance strongly believes in the importance of safeguarding community rights, ensuring voluntary and informed participation, and preventing extractive or inequitable practices. For this reason, all Alliance activities must comply with the Code of Ethics.

This includes:

- Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) for any engagement with communities or with their cultural expressions.
- Respectful representation and non-misappropriation.
- Fair and culturally appropriate benefit-sharing.
- Safeguards for data and knowledge, including traditional and sensitive materials.
- Inclusive participation and accessibility.



Communication

Members may use the Alliance name and official logo only to promote the Alliance and its approved joint projects or activities, and only in ways that impose no cost or obligation on other Members. Use for non-Alliance or individual initiatives is not permitted.

Use of the name and logo is non-exclusive, non-transferable, non-modifiable, and not for endorsement or paid promotion.



Annex A

Logo

