

## ENCATC Working Group

Strengthening cultural observatories and rethinking cultural measurement for future policy making



Dr. Elena Raevskikh (Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi / ENCATC Member)  
Dr. Cristina Ortega (3Walks / ENCATC Member)

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## 2 interrelated challenges:

### 1. Strengthening cultural observatories

- Key infrastructures/methodologies for data collection, interpretation, and dissemination
- Support policy-making at all levels

### 2. Rethinking cultural measurement

- Modernize methods, frameworks, and indicators
- Better assess culture's impact, value, and relevance

## Responding to a dual need:

- **Revitalize the network** of observatories originally supported by ENCATC and connect them with emerging ones
- **Engage in global debates:**
  - Data-driven cultural policies
  - Impact of digitization
  - Culture in global agendas (e.g., SDGs, New European Bauhaus, UNESCO Culture|2030)

## Key themes – line of work 1: cultural observatories

- **Map** existing and emerging cultural observatories
- **Share** good practices, methodologies, governance and sustainability models
- **Foster dialogue** between established and new observatories
- **Enhance data usability** for cultural managers and policymakers
- **Explore the role of AI** in observatory enablement strategies
- **Strengthen links** between observatories and cultural networks
- **Create international spaces** for collaboration, transformation, and growth

At the 33rd ENCATC Congress in Barcelona (15-18 September 2025), the Working Group “Strengthening Cultural Observatories and Rethinking Cultural Measurement for Future Policy-Making,” brought together around seventy participants to collectively reflect on both lines of work



Photo 5: Vasif Eyvazzade

**Photo 5 above: The ENCATC Working Group “Strengthening Cultural Observatories and Rethinking Cultural Measurement for Future Policy-Making” co-led by Cristina Ortega (3Walks / ENCATC Member) and Elena Raevskikh (DCT Abu Dhabi / ENCATC Member) (Barcelona, 17 September 2025).**

## Line of Work 2: Rethinking Cultural Measurement

- *First results and areas of further reflection*

During the session, participants formed small groups of two to three people and imagined new ways to rethink cultural measurement while linking their ideas to specific UN SDGs. This exercise was not about existing methods or currently measurable indicators; rather, it aimed to go beyond traditional frameworks and use creativity and experience to explore how we can better assess and understand culture for future policymaking.

- The results of these reflections were discussed during the workshop, and participants also shared their written notes. The next slides bring together the outcomes of those discussions.



## 1. Limitations in Current Cultural Measurement

- Weak recognition of the role of cultural observatories in educating specialists and informing policy.
- A lack of multi-scalar and transversal data (for example, across sectors such as culture and healthcare, culture and urbanism, etc., but also between the local and the global levels).
- Underrepresentation of analyses focused on non-participants, with limited understanding of why people disengage or attend cultural events only once.
- Insufficient indicators for social capital development, community engagement, and heritage transmission, as well as the social impact of training programs.
- Difficulties in assessing the impact of culture on health and well-being, or on cultural tourism, cities branding, and cultural diplomacy at both city and national levels.
- A lack of shared methodologies for measuring qualitative impact, combined with low capacity of decision-makers to read and interpret complex indicators.
- Structural problems, including data ownership concentrated in large corporations and lack of partnerships across sectors.
- Indicators that only capture what is visible, ignoring emotions, empathy, and the connectiveness of cultural and creative ecosystems.

*In short, participants underlined that current indicators often misalign with the purposes of measurement, are overly focused on economic outcomes, and fail to capture culture's transformative and intangible contributions.*

## 2. Ways to Overcome Limitations Beyond Numbers

- Moving beyond these limitations requires both methodological innovation and a shift in mindset. Participants proposed a wide array of approaches:
- Qualitative methods such as interviews, ethnography, focus groups, and participatory observation to capture experiences, emotions, and well-being.
- Co-creation of indicators with communities, ensuring those being studied are involved in the process.
- New kinds of indicators focusing on connectivity, networking, cross-sector collaboration, and local empowerment (e.g., percentage of cultural spending retained locally, or number of citizens donating to cultural activities).
- Use of technological tools to analyze audience reactions, alongside retention analysis and social network mapping.
- Building evaluation frameworks rather than rigid indicators, placing emphasis on care, empathy, engagement, and transformative cultural practices.
- Encouraging interdisciplinary approaches, linking culture to health, environment, and urban studies.
- Promoting city-level stakeholder collaboration, using cultural measurement as a lever for strategic, result-oriented actions.
- Reinforcing capacity-building in culture-focused research (both qualitative and culture statistics) and strengthening the educational role of cultural observatories.

Together, these proposals represent a shift from measuring attendance to understanding participation, from counting outputs to valuing processes, and from focusing on accountability to fostering cultural rights and inclusion.

### 3. Linking Reflections to the UN Sustainable Development Goals

The group mapped their reflections onto the SDGs, illustrating that culture cuts across the entire 2030 Agenda. Observations highlighted the need to identify **affordances within all SDGs** to enable discussion from a cultural perspective, recognizing that culture can contribute to the core focus of each goal. Participants also stressed the importance of **adopting a dedicated SDG for culture** to acknowledge its transversal and enabling role throughout the Agenda.

Several goals emerged as particularly relevant:



# Calendar and working plan

## 2025

**September:** In-person meeting in **Barcelona** (ENCATC Congress)

- Focus: Community building & knowledge sharing

**Fall:** Online meeting

## 2026

Online thematic meeting

In-person session at **ENCATC Congress**

**International Conference** –  
Basque Country (October 2026)

➤ **ENCATC Publications**

THANK YOU !