



Background Brief/FAQ

Towards a Recommendation on Open Cultural Heritage (TAROCH)

! What is TAROCH?

TAROCH stands for Towards a Recommendation on Open Cultural Heritage. It is a global, community-led initiative launched in 2024 and steered by Creative Commons. Its mission is to encourage UNESCO Member States to adopt an international standard-setting instrument that promotes open access to heritage in the public domain, while respecting diverse governance frameworks.

! Who is part of TAROCH?

TAROCH unites more than 60 members across 32 countries, forming the TAROCH Coalition, a solidarity network that believes real solutions must come from those who face access barriers every day. Each member signs a [Statement of Commitment](#) affirming their belief in the power of open solutions and a shared vision for equitable access to heritage.

! What does TAROCH hope to achieve?

The Coalition's goal is to see its Open Heritage Statement introduced for formal consideration by UNESCO, with the aim of developing an international Recommendation. A UNESCO Recommendation is a powerful (non-binding) tool that sets global norms and provides practical guidance for governments and institutions.

If adopted, it could affirm that access to heritage is a human right in the digital age, help institutions adopt open and ethical sharing practices, promote international cooperation, and reduce global access gaps.

! What is the Open Heritage Statement?

The Open Heritage Statement is the Coalition's core deliverable, a values-based proposal drafted by Coalition members as a starting point for a UNESCO conversation. It sets out shared values that include empowerment, freedom and democracy, diversity, equity and inclusion, fairness, and community. It also highlights the principles of collaboration, balance, transparency, sustainability, and respect. Open Heritage refers to the commitment to make cultural heritage freely accessible, reusable, and shareable for the benefit of all.

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The Statement identifies 17 key barriers to access, each responded to with “We agree...” positions, problem summaries, and solutions. Its goal is to align with UNESCO’s mission and support knowledge-sharing, cultural rights, and sustainable development and guide cultural heritage institutions in adopting open, ethical practices.

! Why does this work matter, and why now?

Access to cultural heritage is a fundamental human right and a cornerstone of inclusive, knowledge-based societies. Yet much of it remains locked away due to erroneous legal claims, improper use of technology, and economic barriers — especially where communities lack resources to push for change.

While UNESCO has Recommendations for education and science, there is none yet for culture and heritage in the digital age. A new Recommendation would close this gap and protect the public’s right to know, share, and build on heritage — strengthening creativity, learning, and connection for generations to come.

! What are the benefits?

Open heritage benefits everyone: communities can tell their own stories; educators and researchers gain richer resources; artists and creators find new inspiration. Open access also fuels cultural tourism, creative industries, and human progress, while strengthening cross-cultural understanding and community resilience.

! Does this align with UN and UNESCO’s goals?

Yes. UNESCO’s mission has always supported knowledge sharing, cultural preservation, and human rights, as established in its Constitution. Article 27(1) of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) affirms everyone’s right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community and enjoy the arts. TAROCH also supports Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to education (SDG 4), innovation (SDG 9), reduced inequalities (SDG 10), strong institutions (SDG 16), and partnerships (SDG 17) as well as a stand-alone goal for culture.

! How can UNESCO member states, institutions, or individuals get involved?

Member States can champion the Open Heritage Statement within the UNESCO standard-setting process and align their national policies. Institutions can review their practices and join the Coalition. Individuals can advocate within their networks and communities. Together, this momentum builds the political will needed for successful policy change.

www.bit.ly/tarochcoalition