



**Short Profile**  
**October 2025**

## **Armenia**

### **Short Cultural Policy Profile**

***Author: Yulia Antonyan & Haykuhi Muradyan***

Antonyan, Yulia and Muradyan, Haykuhi (2025): Short Cultural Policy Profile Armenia. Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends (ed.), Bonn, 30.10.2025, DOI: 10.69813/DTHS4332

## Executive Summary of cultural policy trends for 2020-2025

The period from 2021 to 2025 in the development of culture and cultural policy in Armenia can be characterized as a time of profound political fluctuations, driven by domestic and foreign political factors, in particular, a significant shift in geopolitical orientation and a general drift toward the EU. This stage has been marked by accelerating reforms and legislative changes in education and culture, aimed at fostering participation, accessibility, human-centered approaches, heritage preservation, resource identification, infrastructural development, and the search to find a more effective governmental model of culture. Cultural production and consumption have gradually lost their centralized character: shifting away from traditional, capital-centered, and state-controlled platforms (such as television and public institutions) toward regional, local, private, and alternative venues and spaces. Funding for culture and education has also become increasingly diversified and multifaceted. At the same time, longstanding challenges remain, including corruption, a shortage of qualified professionals, and political instability.

### 1. Facts and figures

#### *Political system*

Since its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, Armenia has implemented several political governance systems (1991, 1995, 2005, and 2015, respectively). Until 2015, Armenia had been a presidential republic; however, since the new constitution was accepted in 2015, it became a parliamentary democracy with a single-chamber parliament (National Assembly), elected through a proportional representation system. The formal head of the country is still the president, elected by the National Assembly for seven years. Still, practically the country is governed by a prime minister with enlarged functions and power.

#### *Official language(s)*

The official national language is Armenian. Russian and English are widely used in tourism, science, and international relationships. The main minorities are Russian-Molokans, Yezidis, and Assyrians, who speak Russian, Kurmanji, and Assyrian. The law on language was accepted in 1993, with some amendments made in 2011. It states that “the Republic of Armenia on its territory shall guarantee the free usage of languages of national minorities” and “In communities of national minorities in the Republic of Armenia, the general education may be organised in their native language”.

	2024	2020
<i>Population on 1 January</i>	3 075 800	2 963 251
<i>GDP in million USD</i>	25 800	12 645
<i>GDP per capita in PPS Index (EU27_2020 = 100)</i>	102	102
<i>General government expenditure (in % of GDP)</i>	10.73%	14.15
<i>Public cultural expenditure in million EUR</i>	42.77	41.39
<i>Public cultural expenditure as % of GDP</i>	0.5	0.5
<i>Public cultural expenditure per Capita</i>	N/A	N/A
<i>Share of cultural employment of total employment</i>	N/A	N/A

Sources:

<https://armstat.am/>

Population: [Demographics of Armenia – Wikipedia](#)

GDP and GDP per capita (PPS): [World Bank – Armenia Overview](#) | [World Bank Data – GDP per capita, PPP](#)

General government expenditure (% of GDP): [The Global Economy – Armenia: Government Size](#)

Public cultural expenditure: [CEIC Data – Armenia: State Budget Expenditure on Culture](#)

## 2. Cultural policy system

### 2.1 Objectives

Cultural policy in Armenia has undergone a significant transformation following the “Velvet” Revolution of 2018. The emergence of new political elites reshaped public perceptions of culture and prompted the development of a modern cultural policy and management system. In 2019, the government reorganized the former ministries of Education and Science, Culture, Sports, and Youth into a single Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports, tasked with elaborating and implementing integrated policies across education, science, culture, and sports. While this reform aimed to strengthen institutional coherence, critics noted potential centralization risks and questioned its effectiveness in addressing accumulated sectoral challenges. Building on these reforms, the Cultural Strategy of Armenia for 2023–2027 sets the sectoral roadmap for the next five years. It provides a comprehensive framework for preserving cultural heritage, modernizing creative industries, enhancing cultural access, and positioning Armenian culture internationally<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.arlis.am/hy/acts/185185>

The 2023–2027 Strategy positions culture as both a national value and a driver of sustainable development, emphasizing:

1. The preservation and transmission of cultural heritage as a foundation of national identity.
2. Modernization and innovation in creative sectors, integrating contemporary art, design, and digital technologies.
3. Inclusivity and accessibility, ensuring equal opportunities for participation in cultural life for all social groups.
4. Strengthening international cultural cooperation, promoting Armenia’s cultural presence globally.
5. Integration of culture with economic, educational, and social development, supporting human capital, creativity, and innovation.

The Strategy defines specific objectives for 2023–2027 cultural policy which are:

- Cultural Heritage Preservation: Safeguard tangible and intangible heritage, including monuments, traditional practices, and folk arts.
- Promote heritage awareness and education for new generations.
- Development of Creative Industries: Support innovation in arts, media, design, and performing arts. Facilitate public-private partnerships to enhance the economic potential of creative sectors.
- Access and Participation: Expand opportunities for all citizens, including youth, marginalized communities, and people with disabilities, to engage in cultural and creative activities.
- Improve infrastructure and digital platforms for cultural participation. International Collaboration: Strengthen Armenia’s cultural diplomacy and participation in international networks.
- Encourage cross-border cultural projects, exchanges, and co-productions. Policy Integration and Governance: Enhance institutional capacity of the Ministry and subordinate bodies. Implement transparent monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for cultural programs. Align national policies with international conventions, standards, and sustainable development goals (SDGs).

As education is an integral part of the country’s cultural development, the government has elaborated the following three main strategic objectives for the period 2022–2030:

- Creation of an inclusive educational environment
- Enhancement of the effectiveness of education
- Internationalization and export of educational services and products

These strategic objectives are grounded in a set of declared values, including a culture of democratic participation, a human-centered approach, autonomy and academic freedom, environmental inclusiveness, social accessibility, balanced territorial development, accountability, “green” education, engagement with the Diaspora, and

the fostering of excellence. In short, the 2023–2027 Cultural Strategy translates the post-2018 institutional reforms and policy shifts into a concrete, actionable framework, balancing heritage preservation, creative innovation, accessibility, and international engagement. It reflects a holistic understanding of culture as a cornerstone of national development, societal cohesion, and human capital formation.

## **2.2 Main features**

### **Main concepts**

*Article 6 of the Law on the Principles of Cultural Legislation (2002)* defined culture as "a set of modes of activities, perceptions, and thinking in the material and spiritual fields of society and their expression representing a stated value". Since 2009, another broader definition of culture included in the *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* has been introduced. It states that culture "should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of a society or social groups, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs". No other official definition or concept of culture has appeared since.

However, post-revolutionary authorities (the "Civil agreement" party) have presented several concepts of cultural development, which are reflected in their political program of June 2021, for the next 5 years<sup>2</sup>. These concepts include optimization, technical, technological, and substantial modernization, community involvement, infrastructural development, diversity and creativity support, and heritage protection/preservation. The main idea is that better access to culture, education, creativity, and technological advancement lead to better economic, social, and physical development and a more secure environment.

The main concepts of cultural policy have undergone several significant changes, especially following the Velvet Revolution. These changes range from developing new approaches to culture-education and cultural learning to integrating culture and the economy, including the economic dimension of culture. Over the past five years, it has become particularly noticeable how a new understanding of culture and a modern model of cultural governance are being developed, actively involving various state institutions and infrastructures.

### **Main actors and financing models**

The main actors, i.e. policy makers and implementers in the sphere of culture and education, may be divided into several groups. Their influence on the development and implementation of cultural policies is very different but, in some cases, almost

---

<sup>2</sup> See the full program at: <https://www.civilcontract.am/hy/culture>

equally important. It should be noticed that in recent years, collaboration between different public and private actors has been significantly enhanced.

1. Governmental actors  
Ministry, Government, National Assembly – definition of public concepts, development, financing, and implementation of policies and programs.
2. Non-governmental organizations (local NGOs, cultural and youth centres, etc.) usually play the role of consultants and local implementers of cultural and educational programs (such as recent professional re-training of teachers). They are usually grant recipients, but in exceptional cases, they can source crowd-funding for some projects through social media.
3. Cultural and educational institutions (schools, universities, theatres, museums, libraries, cinemas, etc.) – their influence is expressed through: 1) defining the main scope of creative activities, trends and topics; 2) critical discourse and opposition to governmental initiatives (there are numerous cases of sending back drafts of law for additional discussion and development and serious public confrontation between cultural institutions and ministry officials); 3) Professional consulting. They are partly financed by the state or public/private foundations and partly or fully self-financed (theatres, private schools, universities, etc.).
4. International cultural organizations like UNESCO, the Open Society Foundation, EU Delegation, British Council, Swedish ArtNexus, foreign political entities (embassies), etc., help regulate national policies per international conventions/law and provide funding for cultural and educational initiatives.
5. Private and public foundations, international and pan-Armenian (Gulbenkian Foundation, Alex Manoogian Foundation, Jinishian Foundation, etc.), develop concepts/programs for cultural and educational development and provide funding for their implementation. They usually collaborate with the government directly or through public educational/cultural institutions.
6. The mass media exert influence through coverage of events, initiatives, and concepts, public criticism, and corresponding cultural/educational content in Armenian and other languages.
7. Private enterprises (like editing/printing houses, art and cultural shops and cafés, like Loft, etc.) publish cultural/educational content and provide independent (including financial) support for the development of critical discourses on cultural/educational policies.
8. Different social and virtual platforms provide creative, discursive, or critical content and occasionally source crowdfunding for specific cultural or educational initiatives and events (e.g., “Boon TV”, Civilnet, Re-pat Armenia, etc.).

***Recent changes in the cultural policy system, their main reasons and motivations***

Pre-revolutionary<sup>3</sup> cultural development policy<sup>4</sup> mainly focused on preserving tangible and intangible cultural heritage, developing cultural infrastructures, and developing international collaboration. Public television was regarded as a primary tool for cultural promotion. Systemic corruption, favoritism, and lack of strategic thinking meant allocating funds for various fund-consuming construction and reconstruction projects and targeted funding for selected cultural actors. The Velvet Revolution of 2018, aimed at eradicating corruption and advancing the democratic/economic transformations of the country, became a major driver of change in cultural and educational spheres. The COVID-19 pandemic, the Azerbaijani-Armenian war of 2020, which is also known as the 44-day Second Nagorno-Karabakh war, and the subsequent displacement of the Armenian population from Nagorno-Karabakh (2023) were other serious factors affecting the policy shifts. Thus, the problem of protection and physical preservation of the Armenian cultural heritage in the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, protection of cultural rights and the conservation of the non-material cultural heritage of refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh have become essential strategical challenges in the process of development of new approaches and policies. The beginning of active reforms in the education system and rethinking of role and aims of educational infrastructures also had a considerable impact on cultural policy-making. In addition, global political and economic developments—such as the diminishing role of Russia, the growing influence of the European Union<sup>5</sup> and the United States, the accelerated peace process between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and emerging regional perspectives—must be regarded as key factors influencing strategic planning and the formation of a new value framework across all areas of public policy, including culture. The pandemic further compelled the government to reconsider its strategies, placing stronger emphasis on creativity, infrastructure development, and modern technologies. In light of these circumstances, a new strategic vision, development plan, and activity framework for culture have been formulated as part of the ruling party's overall political strategy. Their objectives are outlined in Paragraph 2.1.

---

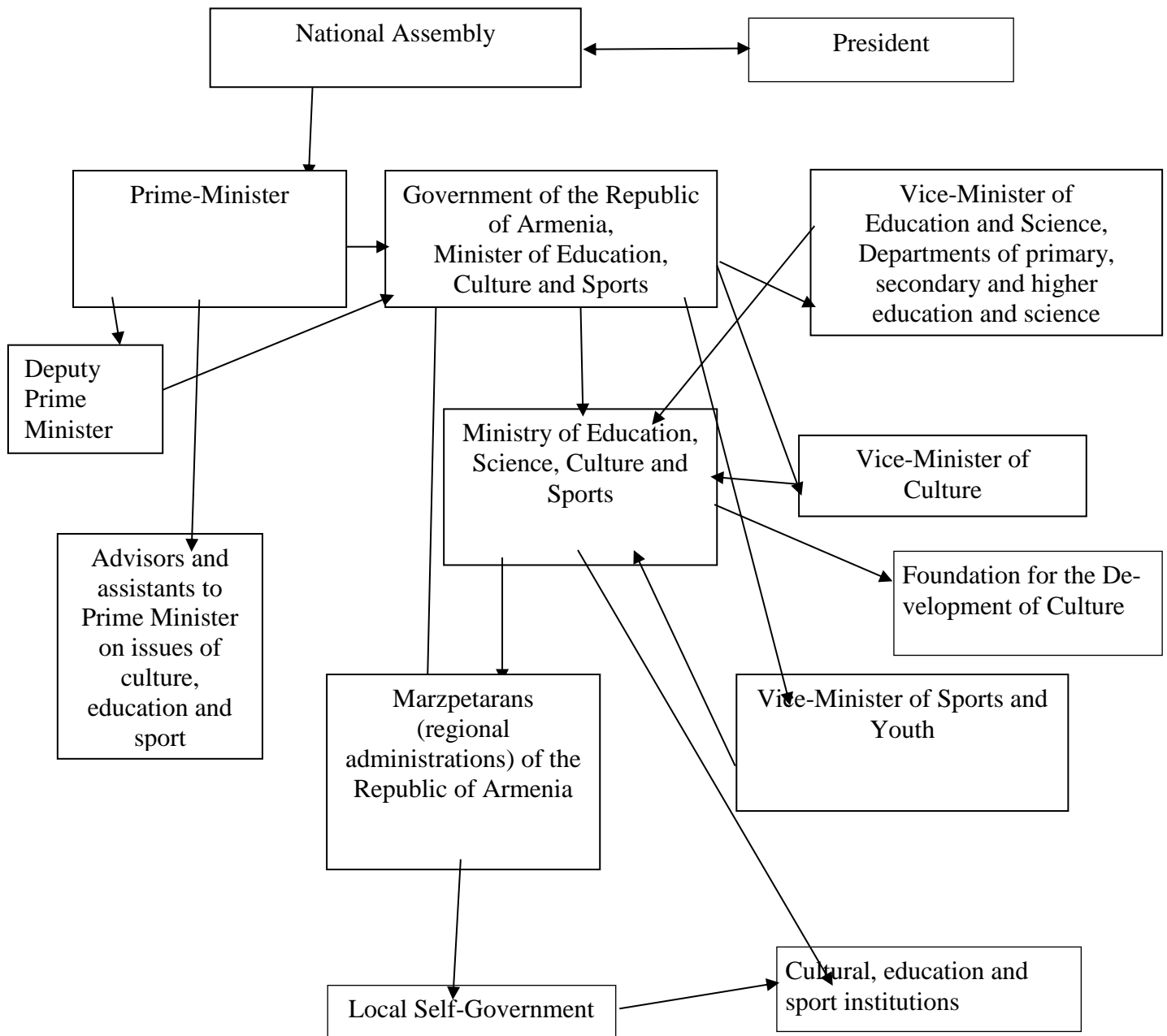
<sup>3</sup> The Velvet Revolution of 2018 is a democratic public movement that led to serious structural, ideological and political changes in internal and external politics of Armenia. See for details: Gevorgyan V., Antonyan Yu. (eds) Armenia after 2018. Social and Political transformations, Peter Lang: Lausanne, 2024.

<sup>4</sup> <https://escs.am/files/files/2019-07-04/e3c0b7f3ce6e00f5a386a824e84f02d9.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> In 2025, the Armenian Parliament formally codified the country's aspiration to join the European Union, in response to a public initiative by non-governmental organizations and the submission of the required number of citizens' signatures.



### 2.3 Governance system: Organizational Organigram





## 2.4 Background

During the last 70 years, Armenia has experienced several political regimes, each imposing its own system of perception, management, implementation, and control over culture.

### 1950-1991 – The Soviet regime

The Soviet system of cultural policies and management was highly politicised and ideologised. Education and culture were tightly controlled and orchestrated by party and government officials through a pyramidal system of power. According to Abraham Moles' definition, it can be characterised as a strongly "paternalistic" model<sup>6</sup>. All art, literature, and music professionals were registered as members of the so-called "creative unions" managed and controlled by party officials. On the other hand, "bringing culture and education to the masses" was the main concept of the soviet cultural policy. Culture and education were perceived as the primary and most potent tools of soviet propaganda since the first days of Soviet power. Armenia, as an integrative part of the Soviet Union, underwent all of the stages of cultural transformation with some local specifics.

Firstly, infrastructural development was prioritised: thousands of schools, houses of culture, institutions of technical and higher education, art and music schools, theatres, cinema theatres, music halls, libraries, and museums were built throughout the country. Most educational institutions were free, and the charge for cultural events (concerts, performances, cinema, etc.) was minimal and accessible even to low-income people. Secondly, creative arts, literature, and science were funded by the state only, in a centralized way, and the state officials (through membership in different committees and the censorship system) used to decide who/what deserved funding. Thirdly, special attention was paid to mass media and mass literature: thousands of books, newspapers, and magazines in millions of printed copies were issued daily and disseminated through official (in some cases obligatory) subscription networks.<sup>7</sup>. All this ensured the active everyday consumption of highly regulated and controlled mass culture. At the same time, culture as a concept was minimal; it was understood as a scope of selected cultural heritage and creative activities, such as arts, literature, music, etc., implemented within the communist, socialist, and atheist ideological frameworks. Cultural diversity was understood only as a variety of ethnographic cultures: the population of all Soviet Republics was divided into the privileged "title" nations and the unprivileged "minorities". Religion was excluded from the definition of culture.

---

<sup>6</sup> Moles, A. *Sotsiodinamika kultury* [Sociodynamics of culture]: Translated from French. B.V. Biryukov. 3rd edition. M.: LKI Publishing house, 2008.

<sup>7</sup> Khudaverdyan K. *Kul'turnaya revolyutsiya v Sovetskoy Armenii (1920-1940)*, Yerevan, 1969.

Regarding language, national history, and cultural heritage, the Soviet authorities conducted the politics of standardization, unification, and Russification. However, these trends were less effective in some republics, including Armenia.

### **1991-2024 The post-Soviet developments**

After independence in 1991, Armenia's cultural sector retained some Soviet-era patterns, including centralized management, predominantly state funding, and the use of culture and education for ideological purposes. The transition to a market economy and the emergence of an oligarchic political system disrupted these structures, particularly in rural areas. Many schools, houses of culture, museums, and theaters were privatized, repurposed, or closed. While private and international funding helped revive performing and creative arts, it could not restore the previous cultural education and mass culture scale. Government programs during this period focused on stabilization rather than fully rebuilding widespread cultural access.

Over the five years following the Velvet Revolution (2018–2024), guided by new values and systemic approaches, the government launched a reform process aimed at modernizing institutions, promoting participatory governance, ensuring accessibility, and integrating culture with economic and social development. Initially, these reforms were largely intuitive and lacked well-developed strategies, drawing considerable criticism. However, the recently elaborated strategies—including the 2023–2027 Cultural Strategy, the 2022–2030 Education Strategy, as well as a series of new laws and amendments in the fields of cultural policy, sports, and education—suggest that the reform process has now become a more systemic and better substantiated program.

### 3. Current cultural affairs

#### 3.1 Key developments

During the five to six post-revolutionary years (2018-2024), which were aggravated by the pandemic, war, and the sudden and massive displacement of Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh, the government and policy makers were busy with the following immediate tasks:

- Reorganization and optimization of the government structure, reconsideration of the main approaches to the management of education and culture, and development of draft laws for education and museums are currently under discussion.
- The anti-corruption struggle and the development of anti-corruption strategies.
- Reconsideration of funding concepts of infrastructures and activities.
- Amending cultural legislation, aligning the cultural policy with the EU strategies and main objectives, creating a new platform for developing cultural relations with Western countries, etc.

The corrupt and monopolized economic and political system of the first three decades of independence used education and culture not only as an instrument of influence and political manipulation, but also as a means of personal enrichment of its representatives through illegal alienation, privatization and sale of cultural objects, infrastructures (buildings, spaces) and other properties (for example, the case of some historical buildings, illegally privatized, etc.), the targeted annihilation of architectural heritage to free the space for private investments, etc. All this resulted in the decline of infrastructure and the loss of a significant part of the cultural heritage.

In general, projects implemented by the government since 2018 fall into several conceptual clusters: availability and financial accessibility of education and culture; stronger state control over financial management; modernization and optimization of educational and cultural infrastructures. Thus, a number of projects in implementation are aimed at closer cooperation and symbiosis of education and culture: better access for school children to theatres, concert halls and museums through special projects of state financial coverage of a certain number of tickets per person each year for everyone<sup>8</sup>; state supported access for schoolchildren to selected art objects, artists, musicians, and writers<sup>9</sup>; etc. The main problem with those projects is a lack of access to cultural institutions and activities for children from provinces, which must be resolved locally. Another project on modernization and restructuring of culture houses in the regions, funded by a state foundation "My step," aims to reanimate cultural life in villages and small towns<sup>10</sup>. All those projects are supposed to change the situation on

<sup>8</sup> See: <https://escs.am/am/news/5819> and <https://escs.am/am/news/5821>

<sup>9</sup> See: <https://escs.am/am/news/5820>

<sup>10</sup> See: <https://mystep.foundation/hy/our-work/188/>

a short-term basis, until a new, well-grounded, and long-term concept of development of education and culture is developed.

Starting from 2023 with the new strategy and amending the legislation, the cultural policy of Armenia introduces a transformative approach to the relationship between culture and the economy, emphasizing the integration of cultural sectors into the broader economic framework. This strategic shift positions culture as a state responsibility and a dynamic sector with economic potential. A key objective is to diversify the financing model of culture, reducing reliance on state budgets and encouraging the involvement of the business sector and financial patronage as essential tools for financing and developing the cultural sphere. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and other officials often highlight the importance of effective management and development of the cultural sector, noting that it is one of the target directions of the Armenian government<sup>11</sup>. This approach aligns with broader international trends recognizing the economic value of culture. For instance, the European Union supports a vibrant cultural sector in Armenia, which engages citizens, state actors, and cultural organizations to stimulate economic growth through cultural and creative industries<sup>12</sup>. Similarly, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has emphasized the role of culture in sustainable socio-economic development, advocating for policies that integrate cultural sectors into economic planning<sup>13</sup>.

By analysing public discourse on governmental strategies, one may conclude the following main challenges in the related spheres:

- Lack of professionals in the spheres of management of education and culture. Four ministers and even more vice-ministers have already replaced each other, and each one became an object of severe public criticism. Many employees in the spheres of culture and education demonstrate poor professionalism and motivation, are steeped in corruption and conflicts of interest, and show no readiness to improve their performance.
- There is a very complicated and unhealthy legal, structural, and infrastructural heritage in terms of corrupt networks, contradictory legislation, numerous serious violations and risks to be faced, losses to be restored, and investigations to be conducted. However, the changes are significant, especially in the cultural legislation and amendments of laws, which are presented in Chapter 6 in more detail.
- The problematic political situation in Armenia, aggravated by the defeat in the war, the occupation of 200 000 sq. km of Armenian territories, the threat of a new war,

---

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.primeminister.am/en/press-release/item/2023/11/03/Nikol-Pashinyan-meeting/?utm>

<sup>12</sup> [https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/badba43a-28bc-451e-894f-70bce8d90b7d\\_en?filename=factsheet\\_eu\\_support\\_to\\_culture\\_armenia.pdf&utm](https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/badba43a-28bc-451e-894f-70bce8d90b7d_en?filename=factsheet_eu_support_to_culture_armenia.pdf&utm)

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2025-07/icpe-armenia-report-final.pdf?utm>

and 120 000 refugees as a result of the sudden and massive displacement of Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh. Due to serious political challenges currently experienced by the country, the local discourse in any field or sphere becomes highly politicised and immediately used for political manipulation.

The government has been criticized for insufficient effort, inadequate measures, and limited competence in addressing corruption, improving governance and the environment, and establishing foundational frameworks for cultural and educational development. The slow pace of legislative reform, coupled with inefficient and poorly substantiated managerial decisions in the cultural sector, has frequently attracted public criticism and, in some cases, provoked public scandals. At the same time, specific changes in leadership, personnel, and strategic approaches within cultural and educational institutions have positively impacted the sector.

### **3.2 Key themes**

While the re-elected government is busy with the development of concepts and programs, many other local and diaspora players are sounding and formulating the main themes and discourses on education, science, and culture:

- The definition, historical legitimization, monitoring, and preservation/protection of the Armenian cultural heritage in Armenia and Armenian-populated territories. The improvement of local legislation and public control over possible violations in this sphere, and the creation of international monitoring mechanisms (such as the already established joint Monument Watch Initiative<sup>14</sup>). One of the most critical topics is the local and global representation of Armenian culture, its historical and geographic diversity, and the state-supported fight against the academic falsifications of history and cultural memory.
- Modernization and digitalization of cultural and educational infrastructures, digitalization of cultural processes and heritage, and the creation of local and pan-Armenian digital platforms for culture and education have become very timely and acute problems in the period of the pandemic; thus, such platforms were created to provide virtual access to museums.<sup>15</sup>
- The relevance of organizational structures and methods of management, financing, and control in the spheres of education and culture to modern trends and the market economy. Digital management of education and culture (e.g., different electronic registration methodologies, accountability, and data-gathering are currently being introduced into the state management system). One of the most discussed issues is whether the Ministry of Culture as a separate entity is needed. Opponents think the organizational fusion of education, science, culture, and

---

<sup>14</sup> Monument Watch, <https://monumentwatch.org/en/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://escs.am/am/static/museumfromhome?s=culture>

sports has not been justified. Sustainability of culture is another serious topic. The challenge is finding a good balance between state and private funding, a problematic issue in the case of such a small and scarcely populated country as Armenia, and cultural tourism development may be a good solution.

- Measurability, accountability, and efficiency of governmental reforms and programs. Particular attention is paid to the development of different kinds of assessment and evaluation tools for programs in culture and education. In 2021, a methodology for assessing and evaluating the effectiveness of the new education program was experimentally introduced in one of the remotest regions of Armenia. Its results will affect the general implementation of the methodology.
- Regional balance and availability of culture in provinces and border villages/towns. A lot of new programs and strategies are aimed at bringing culture to regions: renovation and re-activation of regional cultural infrastructures (theaters, concert halls), the intensification of internal dynamics in the exchange of artistic projects (theater and concert tours, movable exhibitions, etc.), the decentralization of national cultural projects (e.g., “Festivar”, or Book festival), and a sharp increase in the number of locally anchored events (festivals, exhibitions, competitions, etc.)
- Physical accessibility of cultural infrastructures and activities for people with disabilities. The problem is being exacerbated by the physical and psychological consequences of the Armenian-Azerbaijani war (2020). The government stated that post-war cultural politics should be aimed at the psychological recovery of Armenian society<sup>16</sup>. The post-war period included a lot of special education and cultural programs, both state and private, provided to disabled soldiers and victims of the armed conflict.
- Creative industries are developed in the context of the development of small business enterprises and tourism. Some state programs developed to alleviate the consequences of the pandemic are particularly aimed at encouraging small creative industries.
- Integration and infrastructural fusion of education and culture. The main issue raised is how to motivate the younger generation to increase their active consumption of culture and how to make culture more available and accessible for the older generations. Life-long education has recently been introduced to the public discourse.
- More effective and competitive redistribution of the state finances into education and culture, development methods of active public monitoring and control, and elimination of corruption risks. One of the themes that is not very often publicly discussed, but gets more and more audible, is the creation of possibilities in cultural development and identification for ethnic and religious minorities. This issue is fully represented on the legislative level, but there is a lack of financial opportunities to make long-term and larger-scale projects in this sphere. Partly, the issue is handled

---

<sup>16</sup> <https://escs.am/am/news/8196>



by the diaspora organizations of ethnic minorities (Assyrian, Molokan, and Yezidi ones), or ecumenical organizations in the case of different religious minorities, or affluent individuals who want to contribute to some facilities or activities. The main ethnic minorities have representatives in the National Assembly and can promote discussion of their problems. In fact, favorable legislation, enough facilities for cultural self-expression and development, and a welcoming environment are the only factors that could attract minorities back from migration to other countries.

- **External cultural influences.** From 2021 to 2022, Armenia has gradually transformed into a migration-receiving country. According to various estimates, there are approximately 20,000–30,000 Indian labor migrants and around 40,000 Russian migrants and political refugees, all of whom are actively shaping the cultural landscape of Armenia. Migrants affected by the Russo-Ukrainian war have established Russian-language cultural centers, private schools, educational institutions, and organized cultural events. These kinds of developments are not legally or publicly addressed yet. More active participation of the Armenian Diaspora in Armenian policymaking and cultural development is a more discussed issue. Recently, the number of diaspora-based or diaspora-related initiatives to develop education, science, and culture in Armenia has increased. (e.g., such initiatives as “I gorts”, “Future Armenian”, “Program of retraining of Diaspora teachers”, “Pan-Armenian education committee”, etc.)

### ***3.3 International Cultural Cooperation***

International cooperation has been a central pillar of Armenia’s cultural policy since its independence in 1991. Over the past thirty years, Armenia has established collaborative relationships with nearly all prominent European, Eurasian, and international actors, including the European Union (EU), UNESCO, ICOM, WMF, BSI, INCP, and the CIS. It has ratified numerous international conventions in the field of culture. These partnerships have traditionally aimed to ensure political and normative integration through legislative compliance with international norms and cultural agreements, and promote professional and institutional integration through active participation in international networks. Armenia has increasingly framed international cultural cooperation as a tool for improving the country’s global image. State support is provided for international cultural events, festivals, conferences, and other platforms that enhance visibility and engagement with global audiences.

The 2023–2027 Cultural Strategy represents a pivotal development in this trajectory. The strategy emphasizes targeted modernization of cultural and creative sectors, increasing accessibility and inclusiveness, and positioning Armenia as a country that preserves and generates world cultural values. Notably, the strategy introduces a new economic dimension, highlighting the integration of culture and economy. Culture is increasingly seen as a state responsibility and a sector with financial potential, with



funding models that combine state budgets, business sector investment, and private financial patronage to ensure sustainable cultural development.

In the post-war context, Armenia has prioritized targeted cooperation with international organizations such as UNESCO, WMF, BSI, the European Association of Archaeologists, and the ALIPH International Alliance to address the urgent challenges of preserving Armenian cultural heritage in territories under Azerbaijani control. These efforts include raising international awareness, securing technical and financial support, and advocating for protecting historical monuments damaged or destroyed in conflict.

Moreover, Armenia actively leverages the Armenian diaspora to strengthen international cultural and educational cooperation. Current programs aim to create pan-Armenian cultural, creative, and academic networks, ensuring diaspora involvement in development processes and enhancing collaboration with foreign educational and cultural institutions where Armenians are active (e.g., the Institute of Ancient manuscripts "Mate-nadaran" periodically organizes huge conferences which aim to bring together professors and researchers on Armenian topics and to create the scientific networks; in 2022 an international network of Ethnic Armenian academics ASOF has been made and holds its meetings every year since).

Key actions under Armenia's international cultural cooperation framework include:

- Partnership with the EU. Since 2021, the Armenia—EU relationships have been enlarged and include a number of initiatives seriously affecting the Armenian political and cultural space within the SEPA (the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement) and beyond. In particular, Armenia has been part of the "EU4Culture" (2021-2024), which aimed to support the cultural and creative sector with a special focus on non-capital cities and towns in the Eastern Partnership countries.
- Partnerships with international organizations and networks, supporting institutional capacity, knowledge exchange, and technical assistance.
- Coordinated international programming through diplomatic missions and the Ministry of Culture to implement intergovernmental initiatives and annual cultural action plans.
- Participation in global cultural markets and media platforms, including prestigious international film festivals (Cannes, Venice, Berlin, etc), art biennales (Venice, Malta, Prague), and music competitions.
- Dissemination of Armenian culture through foreign-language publications and promotion of Armenia's image on platforms like YouTube, Wikipedia, and Wikimedia. Diaspora engagement, ensuring preservation of cultural identity and facilitating Armenia's international outreach. Armenia's international cultural policy is strategically coordinated to address contemporary challenges, including language barriers, pandemic-related travel restrictions, and regional geo-

political constraints. Armenia seeks to enhance its global cultural presence, contribute to sustainable development, and strengthen national identity by integrating heritage preservation, creative innovation, economic potential, diaspora engagement, and cultural diplomacy.

## 4. Cultural Institutions

### 4.1 Overview

Since Soviet times, Armenia has inherited the extensive network of public institutions (schools, universities, houses of culture, art and music schools, libraries, theatres, cinema theatres, museums, and art galleries) and a widely shared perception that education and culture should be orchestrated, managed, and financially covered primarily by the state.

However, since as early as the 1990s, a number of NGOs and private organizations acting in the sphere of education and culture have significantly increased<sup>17</sup>. Their activities, in very rare cases, were compatible with the governmental strategies, only when they were founded by governmental officials or their relatives and received grants from the state to implement programs to be delegated to the public/private sector. Today, more than 50 organizations and private institutions are implementing state programs in culture<sup>18</sup>. However, they have not played any serious role in the policy-making process, with minor exceptions, like the YFA (Youth for Achievement) case (2010-2012), when its members participated in the international “Black Sea Cultural Animation” program and could make some input to the state strategy development.<sup>19</sup>

Some profit-making prospects also stirred up the process of emerging private institutions such as art/dance/music schools, private museums/galleries, and, quite recently, private theatres. Their number increased as the effectiveness and quality of state institutions declined. For instance, currently, there are about 120 private museums/galleries, but only 50 of them are registered in the list of cultural institutions of the Ministry of ESCS.<sup>20</sup> However, their influence on policy-making is becoming increasingly important.

<sup>17</sup> The current number of registered NGOs in Armenia is 5408, foundations – 1418, and community enterprises 1449, see: <https://www.moj.am/legal/view/article/1420/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.govtravel.am>

<sup>19</sup> <http://kasa.am/hy/>, <https://www.culturepartnership.eu/am/article/creative-industries-study-for-armenia>

<sup>20</sup> <https://escs.am/am/static/museums?s=culture>

## 4.2 Data on selected public and private cultural institutions

**Table 1: Cultural institutions, by sector and domain**

Domain	Cultural institution (sub-domain)	Public sector			Private sector		
		2024	Number (2020)	Number (2016)	2024	Number (2020)	Number (2016)
<b>Cultural heritage</b>	Cultural heritage sites (recognised)	<b>25 000</b>	<b>24 221</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Archaeological sites	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Museums</b>	Museum institutions	<b>100 (incl. branches)</b>	<b>100</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Archives</b>	Archive institutions		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Visual arts</b>	Public art galleries / exhibition halls	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Performing arts</b>	Scenic theatre spaces	N/A	N/A	N/A		N/A	N/A
	Concert houses	N/A	N/A	N/A		N/A	N/A
	Theatre companies	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	N/A		N/A	<b>28</b>
	Dance and ballet companies	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	N/A		N/A	<b>1</b>
	Symphonic orchestras	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	N/A		N/A	<b>3</b>
<b>Libraries</b>	Libraries	<b>602</b>	<b>637</b>	N/A		N/A	<b>798</b>
<b>Audiovisual</b>	Cinemas	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	<b>5</b>
	Broadcasting organisations	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Interdisciplinary</b>	Socio-cultural centres / cultural houses	N/A	N/A	N/A		N/A	<b>854</b>

Sources: [https://armstat.am/file/article/sv\\_03\\_19a\\_570.pdf](https://armstat.am/file/article/sv_03_19a_570.pdf); <https://escs.am/files/files/2019-08-29/09516fb1822e75b13128e1afe5299b7f.pdf>; <https://armstat.am/file/doc/99520898.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1d--c1-MO9oh0zycdfqhIdCEJcOr4EfLzm85-9pJTKDMn141qdP0orP2U>

The statistical data on cultural institutions in Armenia, both public and private, and the overall cultural statistics are currently very underdeveloped. There is now a program to study international experience, particularly in the United Kingdom, and to develop standards for collecting and presenting statistics. We hope that in the next update, we will present new statistical data that accurately reflects the cultural processes taking place in the country.

## 5. Cultural Funding

### 5.1 Overview

The cultural sphere in Armenia is financed predominantly by the state budget. This financing approach provides relative stability and sustainability to the cultural institutions and corresponds to McCaughey and Chartrand's "state as architect" cultural policy model. Public funding is allocated to different branches of culture and education according to priorities developed by the Ministry and approved by the government. Thus, in 2019, the following priorities were identified:

- support for the cinematography sphere;
- preservation, replenishment, and promotion of the cultural heritage;
- creation of necessary conditions for the development of literature, theatre, music, and creative arts;
- development of children's artistic capacities;
- reanimation of the cultural life in provinces;
- program of preservation, replenishment and regular use of state archives.

Despite some decrease in funding in 2020-2021 caused by the pandemic, the war of 2020, and the political crisis of 2021, the public financing of culture is currently increasing. All of the mentioned priority spheres got gradually increasing funding through the years of 2020-2024. For instance, the cinematography sphere was allocated 714.1 million AMD in 2021, 842 million AMD in 2022, and 842 million AMD in 2023. Library renovation and modernization program has been allocated 1,691.1 million AMD in 2021, 1,775.7 million AMD in 2022, and 1,775.7 million AMD in 2023.

However, in the last couple of years, one may notice some changes in the financial policies to increase non-governmental funding sources for culture. More governmental programs tend to be based on collaboration between the public and private sectors. The "Ararat" brandy factory and the "Beeline" mobile connection company sponsor various cultural events (concerts, exhibitions, festivals) and are good examples of such collaboration. Thus, more local and international organizations and foundations explicitly express their interest in providing grants for cultural institutions and programs. The private sector also seems inclined to invest in the cultural sphere, especially with tourism development initiatives (e.g., by sponsoring art, culinary, ethnic culture, wine festivals, etc.) One may observe crowdfunding cases for cultural events and enterprises, which are becoming common (e.g. "301 publishing house" cultural enterprise, which is created by crowdfunding mechanisms). To bring more private funding into the cultural sphere, some profound structural and legislative changes are needed. Cultural business is a sphere that still needs more attention and more development in Armenia. Unfortunately, there are no recent surveys about the

trends of private funding of culture in Armenia, perhaps because of the turbulent political situation and constant structural changes during the last three years.

## 5.2 Public cultural expenditure by level of government

**Table 2: Public cultural expenditure by level of government, in national currency and in EUR, 2020**

<b>Level of government</b>	<b>Total cultural expenditure 2024</b>	<b>Total cultural expenditure 2020</b>		
	<b>In million AMD /EUR</b>	<b>in million AMD</b>	<b>in million EUR</b>	<b>% share of total</b>
<b>State (central, federal)</b>		24 380.0	42.77	2.1

Source: <https://armstat.am>

\* At the date of expenditure  
<https://escs.am/am/category/budget>

### 5.3 Public cultural expenditure per sector

**Table 3: Public cultural expenditure: by sector, in national currency and in EUR, 2020 and 2016**

Field / Domain	2024 in million AMD	2024 in million EUR	2024 % share of total	2020 in million AMD	2020 in million EUR	2020 % share of total
<b>Cultural Heritage</b> (Program 1075)	<b>5,037.84</b>	<b>11.45</b>	<b>1.45%</b>	2,982.53	5.23	1.67%
Museums (within Program 1075, measure 11004)	2,784.02	6.33	0.80%	2,683.86	4.71	1.51%
Archives	N/A	N/A	N/A	590.17	1.03	0.33%
<b>Visual arts / performing arts</b> (Program 1168)	<b>10,749.43</b>	<b>24.43</b>	<b>3.10%</b>	8,738.05	15.33	4.91%
<b>Audiovisual and Multimedia</b> (Program 1056 - Cinema)	<b>849.72</b>	<b>1.93</b>	<b>0.25%</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Libraries</b> (Program 1124)	<b>1,788.03</b>	<b>4.06</b>	<b>0.52%</b>	608.06	1.07	0.34%
<b>Collaboration with Diaspora</b> (Program 1215)	<b>403.12</b>	<b>0.92</b>	<b>0.12%</b>	1,085.04	1.90	0.61%
<b>Total Ministry Budget</b>	<b>346,476.01</b>	<b>787.45</b>	<b>100%</b>	177,648.93	311.66	100%

Source: <https://escs.am/am/news/7693>

\* 1EUR=440 AMD

## 6. Legislation on culture

### 6.1 Overview national cultural legislation

Legislation on Culture in Armenia generally supports fundamental democratic values and freedoms. The most important legal document stating cultural rights, responsibilities, and freedoms of the citizens of Armenia is the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia (first accepted in 1995, then reconsidered, changed, or amended in 2005, 2015, and 2020). In several principal articles, it states the fundamental rights and freedoms related to the sphere of culture, education, and science. In particular, the state promotes the development of culture, education and science and protects the Armenian language (the state language according to Article 20) and cultural heritage (Article 15); the freedom of activities of religious organizations is guaranteed and religion is separated from the state (Article 17); everyone has the right to education and secondary education is free for everyone (Article 38); everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 41), freedom of expression of opinion (Article 42), and freedom of literary, artistic, scientific and technical creation (article 43). Besides the main legislative document of the country, there are a number of laws, legislative and normative acts regulating the sphere of culture and education. One of the most important is the law on the principles of cultural legislation and policies (2002, with amendments of 2011, 2018). It states the basic principles, goals, objectives, fields of application of cultural policies, citizens' fundamental rights and freedoms in the sphere of culture, and forms and mechanisms of financing culture and cultural activities. According to the Law, the main objectives of the cultural policy are: to help society realize that culture is a driver of development; to create opportunities for the development of new ideas and new cultural values/goods; the development of society's creative potential; and to support the formation of a civil society.

There are other essential laws regulating specific spheres of culture and cultural activities such as the Law on Education (1999); on Preservation of Intangible Heritage (2009); on Libraries and Librarian Activities (2012); on Language (year?); on Cultural Monuments and Material Heritage (2003); on NGOs (2016); on Export and Import of Cultural goods/property (2004); on Preservation of Monuments and Historical Heritage (1998); on Creative Activities and Creative Unions (2005); on Television and Radio (2010), etc. In 2019, the development of the new Law on Education and Science began. Many state and non-governmental organizations, education entities, and independent experts were involved mainly in discussing draft statements of the law. After two years of debate and two drafts, the law was recently accepted by the National Assembly (2021). However, after a while, due to political clashes and controversies, it was sent to the Constitutional Court because of a couple of controversial articles relating to the principles of governance of universities and the academic sphere. The Constitutional Court found that some articles contradicted the Constitution and sent the law back for improvements.



In 2023-2025, Armenia enacted several necessary legislative reforms to modernize its cultural sector. The Law on the Basics of Cultural Legislation, initially adopted in 2002, was amended in 2025 to clarify the directions, principles, and key concepts of cultural policy, aligning them with contemporary needs and international practices (<https://www.arlis.am/hy/acts/203225>). In addition, the Law on Museums was introduced in 2024 to provide a unified legal framework for museum operations, enhancing their role in education, cultural dissemination, and heritage preservation<sup>21</sup>. The Law on Cinematography, adopted in 2021, introduced measures to stimulate the national film industry, including financial incentives, co-production opportunities, and requirements for Armenian-language dubbing or subtitles for foreign films, to be enforced starting in 2026 (<https://www.arlis.am/hy/acts/154460>). Specific sectoral developments have also been implemented to strengthen Armenia's cultural infrastructure. The protection and preservation of cultural heritage sites have been prioritized, including agreements with international cultural organizations to prevent illegal trade and support the restitution of stolen cultural assets. Museums now operate under a standardized legal framework, while the film industry benefits from new regulations supporting local production and international collaboration. Additionally, under the recently approved Law on Higher Education and Science (September 2025), museums have been granted the status of research institutions, thereby expanding their functions and opportunities, including financial ones.

Overall, the new legislative regulations were introduced following an extended period of participatory discussions and largely address contemporary challenges and aspirations despite certain imperfections and criticisms.

---

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.arlis.am/hy/acts/191085>

## **6.2 Overview international cultural legislation**

The legislative field of the RA is strongly influenced by cooperation with international structures and organizations. Armenia became a member of the UN in 1992 and thus laid the foundations for international cooperation, particularly in the sphere of legislation. Armenia joined a number of important conventions and declarations with UNESCO, the Council of Europe, CIS Cultural Cooperation Council, the EU, and other organizations. Some laws in the cultural sphere were developed after Armenia joined the corresponding conventions, such as those on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit *Import, Export* and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970); on Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972), on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), etc (more than eight conventions and declarations). Overall, Armenia is very responsive to its international commitments and has no precedents with not ratifying any of the conventions signed.

After the Velvet revolution (2018) and the Azerbaijani-Armenian war (2020) the main trends in international cultural and legal cooperation include the concepts of peace and peaceful coexistence at the regional level, integration with the global cultural processes, reconsideration and renovation of liaisons and collaboration with the Diaspora, and positioning Armenia as a country which is fully compliant with the principles and values of peace, security, tolerance and cooperation.

The alignment of cultural legislation with European Union standards, initiated in 2023 as part of Armenia's EU integration process, is expected further to enhance the country's cultural diplomacy and international standing. Armenia's recent legal reforms underscore a determination to foster a dynamic cultural environment that respects its heritage while embracing innovation, accessibility, and international collaboration.