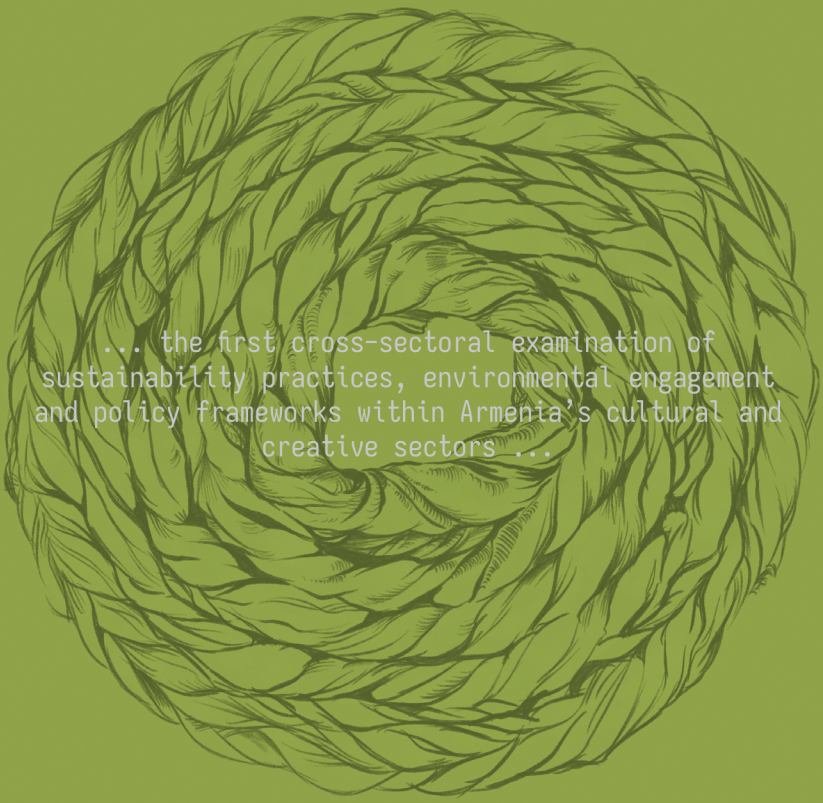
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GREEN ARMENIA



... the first cross-sectoral examination of sustainability practices, environmental engagement and policy frameworks within Armenia's cultural and creative sectors ...

Towards Sustainability in Culture

EUNIC
EU National Institutes for Culture

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CULTURAL & SOCIAL NARRATIVES LABORATORY

Green Armenia



Green Armenia: Towards Sustainability in Culture

Research report
for EUNIC Armenia

Arsen Abrahamyan
Tigran Amiryan

Yerevan
CSN Lab | EUNIC Armenia
2027

UDC 316.7:502/504

Abrahamyan, A., Amiryan, T.
Green Armenia: Towards Sustainability in Culture. Research report for EUNIC Armenia / A. Abrahamyan, T. Amiryan; ed. and trans. by D. Sisakyan. — Yerevan: CSN Lab, EUNIC Armenia, 2027. — 80 p.

ISBN 978-9939-1-2379-0

Green Armenia: Towards Sustainability in Culture is a cross-sectoral study examining sustainability practices and environmental engagement across Armenia's cultural and creative sector. It maps existing approaches, identifies key challenges and opportunities, and proposes recommendations for more sustainable cultural development.

Focusing on independent initiatives alongside state cultural institutions, the research analyses how environmental themes and operational sustainability measures are currently embedded in cultural work, and how these efforts are supported (or limited) by policy and decision-making structures. Drawing on desk research, policy and legislative analysis, and expert views from cultural and environmental initiatives and institutions, the study offers actionable steps to strengthen coordination, capacity, and long-term sustainability within Armenia's cultural sector.

Authors:
Arsen Abrahamyan
Tigran Amiryan

Research Team:
Arsen Abrahamyan
Nanor Hovhannisyan

Editor and Translator:
Diana Sisakyan

Illustrator:
Harutyun Tumaghyan

Layout designer:
Klim Gretchka

Co-funded by the European Union

EUNIC EU National Institutes for Culture

GOETHE INSTITUT

CULTURAL & SOCIAL NARRATIVES LABORATORY

This publication was co-funded by the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the Cultural and Social Narratives Laboratory | CSN Lab and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

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Perspectives

Greetings

H.E. Mr Vassilis Maragos,
Ambassador of the European Union to Armenia

Our planet is our common home, and the green transition is key to our shared future.

The European Union is pleased to present the research **Green Armenia. Towards Sustainability in Culture**. The research offers an important and timely contribution to ongoing discussions on sustainability, demonstrating how the cultural and creative sectors can play a key role in Armenia's green transition.

Across the world, the transition towards more sustainable societies is not only a technological or economic challenge; it is also a cultural and societal transformation. Culture shapes how we understand our environment, how communities engage with change, and how societies imagine more sustainable futures. Culture is also central to our identity. In this sense, the cultural sector holds significant potential to support environmental awareness and foster public dialogue. Culture can also lead by example.

This research highlights the growing engagement of Armenian artists, cultural organisations, and institutions in adopting sustainable practices. Through exhibitions, performances, festivals, and community initiatives, cultural actors

are contributing to greater public awareness of environmental challenges, helping to translate complex issues into accessible and meaningful experiences.

At the same time, there remains significant potential for further progress. Strengthening the connection between culture and environmental policy, enhancing institutional coordination, and increasing the visibility and continuity of sustainability-oriented cultural initiatives will be essential to fully realise this potential.

The European Union remains committed to supporting Armenia's green transition and sustainable development. Fostering cross-sectoral dialogue and recognising the role of culture as an active partner in sustainability efforts are key steps towards building more inclusive, resilient, and forward-looking societies.

I am confident that the findings and recommendations presented in this research will help shape future efforts to place culture at the heart of Armenia's sustainable future. As we work together to strengthen EU-Armenia relations in all their dimensions, enhance connectivity, and deepen people-to-people contacts, our joint focus on sustainability in culture will bring tangible benefits to both the cultural sector and Armenia's sustainable future.

Foreword

Dr. Jan-Tage Kühling,
President EUNIC Armenia

We live in challenging times - across the globe, the consequences of climate change and ecological catastrophes are becoming increasingly visible and urgent. From extreme weather events and biodiversity loss to pressures on natural resources and communities, the climate and ecological crises are no longer distant concerns. They are realities that affect our societies, our economies, and our everyday lives. At the same time, these crises remind us of a fundamental truth: those problems do not stop at national borders. Climate change is a global challenge that requires global cooperation. We cannot address it alone and all the sectors of society are affected.

This belief in cooperation across borders is at the heart of EUNIC, the network of the European National Institutes for Culture. By bringing together European cultural institutes and connecting with partners on-site, EUNIC creates opportunities for dialogue, learning, and collaboration around the globe. It is founded on the idea that culture itself transcends borders and that international cultural cooperation enables us to better understand both our common challenges and our diverse perspectives.

Since its establishment in 2024, EUNIC Armenia has contributed to this exchange, connecting Armenian and European cultural actors while engaging with issues that are shaping our shared future. Sustainability has been one of the priorities of this effort. As a network, we believe that culture has an important role to play in addressing the environmental challenges of our time. Culture and the arts provide unique forms of communication. They help translate complex issues into experiences, narratives, and perspectives that engage audiences in ways that policy papers or technical reports often cannot. In discussions about the green transition, biodiversity loss, or environmental sustainability, artistic and cultural expression can create spaces for reflection, dialogue, imagination and in doing so connect to people in a different way.

At the same time, artists and cultural workers are often among those who are most attentive to emerging social challenges and transformations. Through their work, they explore the relationship between people, places, and environments, often raising critical questions about the ways we inhabit and shape the world around us. Their perspectives can help us understand not only environmental problems but also foreshadow the cultural and social changes that these challenges demand.

Yet culture is not merely an observer of these developments. Like all sectors of society, it is directly affected by the climate and ecological crises. Cultural heritage, cultural institutions, artistic production, and the broader cultural ecosystem face their own sustainability challenges and responsibilities. Understanding these realities is therefore an important step toward building a more resilient and sustainable cultural sector.

Those challenges are particularly relevant in Armenia. The country is experiencing a period of remarkable cultural dynamic growth. Contemporary artistic practices, cultural initiatives, and international partnerships have contributed to a vibrant and diverse cultural landscape. Armenian cultural actors are increasingly engaged in international exchange

and cooperation, including with a growing number of European partners. While addressing questions of local relevance, Armenian art resonates with issues of global importance. With international attention that forums such as COP17 will bring to issues of biodiversity and sustainability, this is also a timely moment to strengthen our understanding of the intersections between culture and ecology and to address the gap that we often perceive between those fields.

Before we can develop effective strategies, we must first understand existing practices, identify challenges, and map opportunities. Across Europe, this approach has already informed important initiatives and programmes. Creative Europe, Culture Moves Europe, and the New European Bauhaus place sustainability at the heart of cultural cooperation and development, while pioneering initiatives such as Julie's Bicycle in the United Kingdom and Fonds Zero of the German Federal Cultural Foundation have demonstrated how evidence-based approaches can support the sustainable transformation of the cultural sector.

It is in this context that **Green Armenia. Towards Sustainability in Culture** was conceived. Funded through the EUNIC Cluster Fund 2025 and implemented by EUNIC Armenia, this project represents the first dedicated study of its kind in Armenia. It offers an initial mapping of sustainability practices, challenges, and opportunities across the Armenian cultural field and contributes valuable knowledge to an emerging area of research and policy. Following an open call, we were happy to choose Cultural and Social Narratives Laboratory (CSN Lab) as the implementing research partner from a great number of very qualified applications. With their extensive experience in cross-sectoral cultural research, CSN Lab was uniquely positioned to undertake this study. The result is an important contribution that not only documents existing practices but also shares new perspectives for discussion, cooperation, and policy development.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed to this project. My thanks go to the Delega-

tion of the European Union to Armenia for believing in the importance of this initiative and for co-funding its implementation; to Socioscope NGO for their expertise and support throughout the process; to the EUNIC Global Office in Brussels for its encouragement and interest; and to all participating institutions, experts, artists, cultural practitioners, and researchers who generously shared their knowledge and experience.

Most importantly, I would like to thank my colleagues from EUNIC Armenia. As a young network, EUNIC Armenia has been built on mutual trust, partnership, and a common belief that cultural cooperation matters. The willingness of our members to invest in this network, to support its ongoing work, and to explore new areas of collaboration together has been fundamental to the success of this project. This publication is also a reflection of the confidence and shared commitment to our work as a cluster.

I hope that this publication will serve as a starting point for further research, dialogue and action. If ecological transition is to succeed, it must also be a cultural transition. Understanding where we stand today is the first step towards shaping a more sustainable future for culture in Armenia and beyond.

Executive Summary

The research project **Green Armenia: Towards Sustainability in Culture** initiated by EUNIC Armenia is the first cross-sectoral examination of sustainability practices, environmental engagement, and policy frameworks within Armenia's cultural and creative sectors. This approach was developed by the authors from Cultural and Social Narratives Laboratory | CSN Lab, drawing on many years of work in the cultural field in Armenia and the South Caucasus. It connects diverse cultural spheres and disciplines in a search for the democratisation and strengthening of culture, while also considering culture as an open sector that can engage with and support adjacent fields.[1]

Positioned at the intersection of culture and ecology, the study investigates how cultural actors, ranging from independent artists and cultural organisations to state cultural

1 This research by CSN Lab has been preceded by a number of cross-sectoral studies conducted by the organisation since 2018, focusing on cultural rights and migration, culture and gender dynamics, culture and memory politics, culture and conflict transformation, culture and water heritage, and related topics.

institutions, engage with environmental issues in their work and institutional practices, and how these engagements are reflected and supported within national policy and decision-making structures.

Grounded in desk research, policy analysis, and qualitative interviews with experts from cultural and environmental fields, representatives of state and non-state institutions, activists, consultants, and policy specialists, the study situates Armenia's cultural sector within the broader context of the global green transition and the European Union's sustainability agenda.

The research identifies a growing body of sustainability-oriented cultural practice in Armenia. Artists, cultural workers, and grassroots organisations actively engage with ecological themes through exhibitions, film, performance, residencies, festivals, and community-based initiatives. These practices contribute to environmental awareness, education, and public dialogue, often translating complex ecological issues into accessible and experiential forms. In parallel, some cultural institutions have begun adopting environmentally responsible operational practices, including energy-saving measures, renewable energy installations, material reuse, and digitisation initiatives that may reduce certain forms of physical resource use and material handling.

However, these initiatives remain largely isolated and dependent on individual leadership, external funding, or personal commitment rather than systemic support. The research identifies three interconnected gaps that limit the potential impact and scalability of sustainability in the cultural sector.

CONCEPTUAL GAP: ABSENCE OF A SHARED FRAMEWORK

Long-term observations underscore that, at the conceptual level, there is no shared vocabulary or analytical framework through which culture and environmental sustainability are

understood as interconnected domains across Armenia's cultural landscape. While international sustainability frameworks are increasingly well-articulated and institutionalised, their interpretation and translation within Armenia vary significantly across state institutions, cultural organisations, civil society actors, and funding mechanisms. In many cases, sustainability terminology is adopted without consistent contextual grounding or is not translated into operational concepts at all.

Culture continues to be predominantly framed through heritage preservation or artistic production, while environmental policy is largely defined in technical and ecological management terms. This conceptual separation extends beyond state policy and is reflected in institutional mandates, funding structures, and programme design. As a result, cultural knowledge, practices, and relational understandings of ecology remain insufficiently integrated into sustainability discourse. Without a shared and locally grounded conceptual framework and vocabulary, sustainability risks becoming either an abstract global agenda or a fragmented set of initiatives and not a coherent approach aligned with Armenia's specific social realities, institutional structures, and cultural processes.

INSTITUTIONAL GAP: FRAGMENTATION AND LACK OF COORDINATION

At the institutional level, fragmentation prevents effective cross-sectoral collaboration. Key ministries working around sustainability issues, particularly the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport and the Ministry of Environment, operate largely in isolation, with weak or non-existent mechanisms for cooperation. As a result, opportunities for integrated cultural-environmental policies, joint programmes, and shared implementation strategies are frequently missed. State cultural institutions, including libraries, archives, and

museums, operate without an overarching national sustainability framework, leaving sustainability efforts localised, inconsistent, and difficult to scale.

VISIBILITY AND CONTINUITY GAP: UNDER-RECOGNITION AND FRAGILE INSTITUTIONALISATION

Third, at the level of visibility and continuity, sustainability-oriented cultural practices, particularly those emerging from independent artists, grassroots initiatives, and cultural civil society organisations, remain under-documented, under-recognised, and largely absent from national development strategies. While environmental movements in Armenia have at times collaborated productively with cultural actors, such intersections remain episodic rather than structurally supported.

More broadly, many cultural organisations and CSOs working at the intersection of culture and sustainability operate without stable institutional frameworks, long-term funding mechanisms, or dedicated platforms that would enable sustained engagement. As a result, initiatives often remain project-based and fragmented, with limited capacity for knowledge accumulation, documentation, and long-term policy visibility. The absence of institutionalised platforms for cross-sectoral exchange weakens continuity and prevents sustainability-oriented cultural work from becoming embedded within broader development processes.

Green Armenia research also examines digitisation as one of the key components within sustainability strategies of cultural institutions. While digitisation supports heritage preservation and access and may reduce certain material pressures, it also introduces environmental challenges related to energy consumption, data infrastructure, hardware lifecycles, and the growing use of artificial intelligence. Without clear policy guidance, digitisation risks being framed as inherently "green," while obscuring environmental and ethical

costs, including resource use, e-waste, and questions related to cultural and intellectual rights.

Ultimately, the study concludes that Armenia's green transition cannot be achieved through technological and economic measures alone. It must also be understood as a cultural and democratic process that reshapes values, behaviours, and modes of collaboration. Culture holds significant potential to act as an enabling force in this transition by fostering public engagement, critical reflection, and locally grounded visions of sustainability. Realising this potential, however, requires a deliberate repositioning of culture within environmental governance and policy design.

The research therefore calls for: formal recognition of culture as an active partner in Armenia's green transition; contextual translation and adaptation of international sustainability frameworks; the development of local conceptual frameworks and definitions; the establishment of cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms; targeted support for sustainable institutional practices in the cultural sector; and clear environmental and ethical policies for digitisation and use of artificial intelligence. Addressing these gaps would strengthen policy coherence, enhance democratic participation, and support a more inclusive, resilient, and culturally grounded approach to sustainability in Armenia.

Introduction

Cultural Sustainability as Practice and Policy

1.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAME

1.1.1 Aim of the Research

Climate change and environmental transformations are reshaping the responsibilities and practices of cultural actors worldwide, prompting a reassessment of the role of cultural and artistic production in times of ecological crisis.[2] Cultural practices are no longer understood solely as reflections on social and political processes; they are increasingly recognised as spaces in which alternative futures can be imagined, debated, and articulated.[3]

As environmental crises intensify globally, culture and the arts are gaining recognition as important contributors to ecological transformation. As both platforms for public engagement and systems of institutional infrastructure, cultural in-

2 UNESCO, *Culture and Climate Change*. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://www.unesco.org/en/climate-change/culture

3 Julie's Bicycle. *Counting on Culture: How to Stop Financing the Environmental Crises*, London, 2025. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://juliesbicycle.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Counting-on-Culture-1.pdf

stitutions and creative practices have the capacity to foster ecological awareness, influence social norms, and support broader systemic change. At the same time, sustainability within culture cannot be reduced to thematic programming or short-term projects. It requires sustained structural transformation in cultural production, education, governance, and institutional management.

This engagement must be situated within the broader societal shift commonly referred to as the green transition: the transformation of economic and social systems toward environmental sustainability, aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, protecting ecosystems, and improving resource efficiency. Within the European Union, this transition is framed by the objective of achieving climate neutrality by 2050 and is embedded across policy sectors through frameworks such as the European Green Deal.[4]

Building on these international developments, **Green Armenia** represents a dedicated effort to examine how sustainability intersects with culture and the arts in the Armenian context. The study investigates both cultural practices and policy frameworks to assess where sustainability is already embedded in institutional and artistic work, where policy enables or constrains such efforts, and whether meaningful intersections between culture and environmental governance currently exist.

By analysing institutional governance structures, material and digital sustainability practices, artistic approaches, and policy gaps within the broader reference framework of EU sustainability agendas, this research positions culture both as a site of ecological practice and as an under-recognised potential partner in Armenia's green transition. The aim is not to replicate international models, but to identify context-sensitive lessons and develop recommendations

4 European Commission, *The European Green Deal*. Accessed September 2026, See: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

grounded in Armenia's cultural, institutional, and socio-political realities.

1.1.2 Culture as an Agent of Ecological Change

While the green transition is often framed through economic restructuring and technological innovation, its implementation ultimately depends on social acceptance, public legitimacy, and shifts in everyday practice.[5] In this sense, ecological transformation is inseparable from cultural processes that shape how environmental challenges are perceived, interpreted, and acted upon.

The cultural and creative sector (CCS) constitutes a diverse ecosystem of artistic production, institutional practice, and public engagement. Although the cultural sector and heritage also are affected by climate change,[6] as well as the sector itself has an environmental footprint,[7] its broader relevance lies in its capacity to influence public discourse and social imagination.[8] Through storytelling, visual representation, performance, and collective experience, cultural actors participate in constructing meanings around climate change, responsibility, and the relationship between society and the

5 Culture2030Goal Campaign. (2024, February 2). No future without culture: #Culture2030Goal statement. Accessed September 2026, **See:** https://culture2030goal.net/sites/default/files/2024-02/EN_culture2030goal_Feb2024_Statement.pdf

6 Homer-Dixon, Thomas. "The Great Transformation: Climate Change as Cultural Change." Accessed September 2026, **See:** https://homerdixon.com/resource/the-great-transformation-climate-change-as-cultural-change/

7 Moore, Suzanne, and Adam Tickell. *The Arts and Environmental Sustainability: An International Overview*. D'Art Topics in Arts Policy, no. 34b. Sydney: International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA) and Julie's Bicycle, 2014. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://ifacca.org/media/filer_public/ae/39/ae3972ff-4e7c-43a5-a02d-33c08df8dd43/ifacca_dart_report_34b_final.pdf

8 Faizullah Ahmad, "The Role of Environmental Art in Society," in *Media and Environmental Ethics: A Sustainable Approach* (SSDN Publishers and Distributors, 2025), 165–176.

natural environment. These processes contribute to shaping behavioural norms and influencing how sustainability is understood at the societal level.

Cultural identity also plays a central role in determining how environmental issues are framed within a given context.[9] The ways communities relate to land, water, heritage, and development are mediated by historical narratives, collective memory, and social values. As such, ecological transition cannot rely solely on regulatory measures or technical interventions; it must engage with cultural frameworks that inform public attitudes and practices.

This dynamic is particularly relevant in Armenia, where public perception and engagement with environmental initiatives remain limited. A recent study on public readiness and willingness to support a green transition in Armenia, prepared by the Stockholm Environment Institute and ACT Global, highlights the importance of perception in shaping environmental action. The survey, conducted among nearly 1,000 respondents across urban and rural areas and diverse demographic groups, indicates relatively low levels of public support for environmental initiatives. Reported barriers include widespread indifference (84%), lack of awareness (72%), the perception that environmental action is not common practice (33%), and the belief that such actions provide no tangible benefit (17%).[10]

These findings suggest that environmental transition in Armenia is not constrained solely by technical capacity or regulatory gaps, but also by cultural and perceptual factors. In such a context, cultural and creative initiatives can function as mediating platforms that translate environmen-

9 Hoffman, A. J. (2015). *How culture shapes the climate change debate*. Stanford University Press.

10 ACT Global. *Public Readiness and Willingness to Support Initiatives for a Green Transition in Armenia: Country Report*. Stockholm: Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), 2024. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://green-agenda.org/storage/public/EYUz6y6oncwCegeA0xIh0aiK1d7gQI-metaQX-JtZW5pYV9FTkcucGRm-.pdf

tal challenges into locally meaningful narratives, foster collective engagement, and contribute to reshaping public attitudes toward sustainability.

1.1.3 Culture in Sustainability Frameworks and Policy

Within international policy discourse, sustainability in the cultural sector is framed both as an operational responsibility and as a developmental objective. It encompasses two interconnected dimensions: the environmental performance of cultural institutions and production processes, and the contribution of culture to broader social and ecological transformation.

At the operational level, this includes energy consumption, material use, mobility patterns, infrastructure management, and the environmental footprint of cultural production. At the societal level, it concerns the role of culture in shaping collective values, narratives, and forms of participation that influence long-term sustainability outcomes. In the context of this research, both dimensions are considered essential to understanding how sustainability functions within Armenia's cultural field.

International frameworks increasingly formalise this dual positioning of culture. UNESCO's **Culture | 2030 Indicators**, for example, integrate culture into the monitoring architecture of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), positioning it as both a standalone domain and a cross-cutting enabler of sustainable development. The framework introduces measurable indicators across social, environmental, economic, and governance dimensions, reinforcing the view that culture contributes structurally to resilient and inclusive societies.[11]

11 UNESCO. (2019). *UNESCO Culture|2030 Indicators: Thematic indicators for culture in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. UNESCO. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://whc.unesco.org/en/culture2030indicators/#publication

Similarly, within the European Union, sustainability agendas embed culture within broader transformation strategies. The European Green Deal (EGD) establishes climate neutrality by 2050 as a central objective and structures coordinated action across decarbonisation, biodiversity protection, resource efficiency, and zero pollution.[12] While primarily regulatory and economic in nature, the EGD acknowledges that ecological transition requires societal alignment across sectors.[13]

Building on this recognition, the New European Bauhaus (NEB) explicitly integrates cultural, social, and aesthetic dimensions into sustainability policy. By linking climate objectives with design, architecture, and community-based initiatives, the NEB positions culture not only as a sector adapting to environmental targets but as a contributor to shaping the lived experience of green transition.[14]

Taken together, these frameworks establish a policy environment in which culture is increasingly recognised as structurally relevant to sustainability. They provide a reference architecture against which the Armenian context is examined in subsequent sections of this research.

1.1.4 Local Context

While international sustainability frameworks provide reference models, their implementation depends on national conditions. In Armenia, sustainability must be

12 European Commission. *The European Green Deal*. Retrieved January 2026, Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

13 Hosagrahar, J. (2023). *Culture: at the heart of Sustainable Development Goals*. *UNESCO Courier*. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://courier.unesco.org/en/articles/culture-heart-sustainable-development-goalshttps://courier.unesco.org/en/articles/culture-heart-sustainable-development-goals

14 European Commission. *New European Bauhaus: beautiful, sustainable, together*. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/index_en

understood within a context shaped by environmental pressures, institutional transformation, and geopolitical vulnerability.

According to the **Second Environmental Performance Review of Armenia**, the country faces persistent and overlapping environmental challenges, including waste and chemical mismanagement, air pollution, water scarcity, deforestation, biodiversity loss, and soil degradation linked to extractive industries.[15] These structural environmental pressures form the material backdrop against which sustainability policies are debated and implemented.

Armenia's cultural and institutional landscape is shaped by the legacies of the post-Soviet transition. This period has been marked by institutional fragmentation, economic precarity, and uneven distribution of resources across regions and sectors. Traditions of land stewardship and community-based knowledge continue to coexist with weakened public infrastructures, reduced state funding for culture, and growing dependence on external financing. As a result, policy implementation often occurs within constrained institutional capacities and project-based funding structures.

The political transformation initiated by the 2018 Velvet Revolution generated expectations of structural reform, transparency, and participatory governance. However, subsequent crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic and economic instability,[16] the 2022 Russian in-

15 United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). *Second Environmental Performance Review of Armenia*. Environmental Performance Reviews Series No. 37. New York and Geneva: United Nations, 2014. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://unece.org/environment-policy/publications/2nd-environmental-performance-review-armenia

16 UNESCO. *Re|Shaping Policies for Creativity: Addressing Culture as a Global Public Good*. Paris: UNESCO, 2022. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000380479

vasion of Ukraine and following Russian migration,[17] the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war and the 2023 displacement of Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh, and broader economic instability, have significantly affected institutional continuity and reform processes. These disruptions have contributed to uneven policy implementation and have reinforced sectoral fragmentation across governance structures.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative, cross-sectoral methodology to examine the intersection of sustainability and culture in Armenia. The study combines multiple methods to analyse both institutional frameworks and on-the-ground practices.

The research design includes the following components:

Desk Research and Policy Analysis ⇝ Review of international and national policy documents, strategic frameworks, legislative texts, and relevant academic and sectoral literature. This component situates Armenia's cultural sector within broader sustainability agendas and identifies areas of alignment, divergence, and conceptual gaps.

Case-Based Mapping of Cultural Practices ⇝ Examination of cultural initiatives that illustrate different modes of engagement at the intersection of sustainability and culture. Instead of aiming for exhaustive documentation, this

17 Amiryan, T., *"Relocating" the Russian Cultural Scene: The Case of Russian Migrants in the South Caucasus (Armenia and Georgia)*. ifa Edition "Culture and Foreign Policy," no. 7100, Stuttgart: ifa – Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, 2024. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://culturalrelations.ifa.de/en/research/results/relocating-the-russian-cultural-scene/

mapping identifies representative examples across artistic, institutional, and community-based practices to demonstrate how sustainability is interpreted and implemented in practice.

Semi-Structured Interviews ⇝ Interviews were conducted with representatives of state and non-state cultural institutions, cultural organizations, civil society representatives, environmental experts and eco-activists. Participants were selected based on their relevance to sustainability-related policy or practice. Interviews explored conceptual understandings of sustainability, institutional capacities, cross-sectoral collaboration, and perceived structural barriers.

Taken together, these methods allow the study to identify recurring patterns, structural constraints, and emerging practices within Armenia's cultural field.

1.3 LIMITATIONS AND RESEARCH GAP

The cultural sector encompasses a wide range of disciplines and institutional forms. A comprehensive assessment of all cultural domains was beyond the scope of this study. Accordingly, the analysis focuses primarily on creative industries, independent cultural actors, and state institutions directly engaged in cultural policy and practice.

Two areas warrant further research. First, although the role of education in environmental sustainability has been widely analysed and implemented in various international contexts,[18] its function at the intersection of culture and environmental sustainability remains underexamined. While state environ-

18 UNESCO. *Learn for Our Planet: A Global Review of How Environmental Issues Are Integrated in Education*. Paris: UNESCO, 2021. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000377362

mental education strategies[19] and independent initiatives do exist and an increasing number of youth are being involved,[20] the structural relationship between educational institutions, cultural practice, and sustainability policy requires more systematic and integrated analysis.[21]

Second, the architectural sector represents a critical yet distinct field requiring dedicated study. The architecture and construction field operates at the intersection of cultural production while also having a significant environmental impact.[22] Given the environmental implications of construction activity, particularly in dense urban contexts such as Yerevan, further research is needed to assess how sustainability principles are applied in design and development processes, and to distinguish between substantive environmental integration and symbolic positioning.[23]

It is also important to note that existing research and policy engagement at the intersection of culture and environment in Armenia have been concentrated primarily in the

19 Government of the Republic of Armenia, *Strategy for the Development of Eco Education and Upbringing*, Protocol Decision No. 7, February 22, 2018. Accessed September 2026. **See:** http://env.am/naxararutyun/strategy

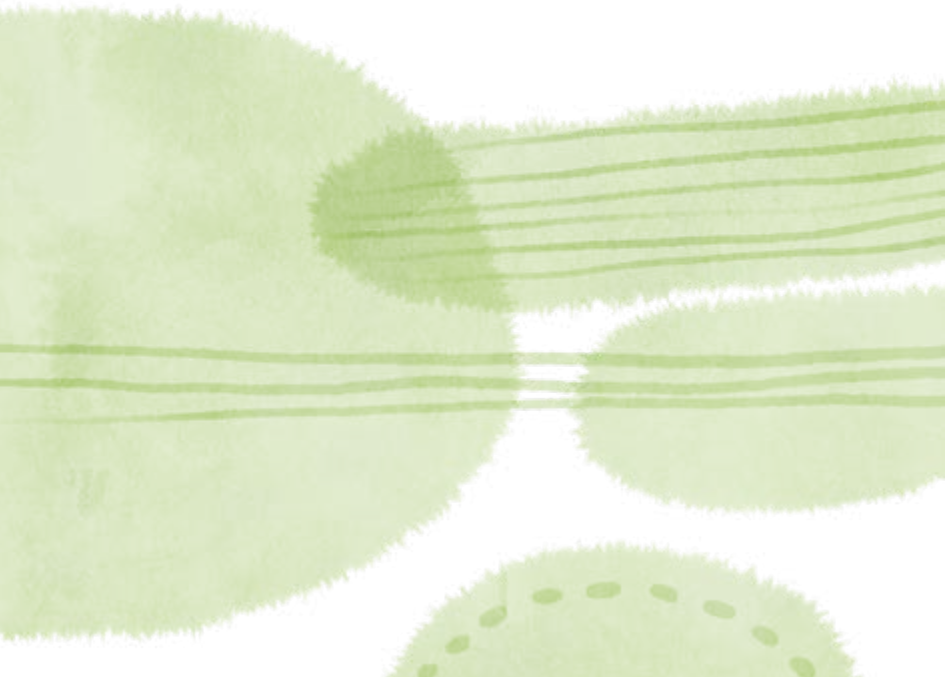
20 UNICEF Armenia. *Climate Change and Adolescent Participation in Armenia*. Yerevan: UNICEF Armenia, 2023. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://www.unicef.org/armenia/en/reports/climate-change-and-adolescent-participation-armenia

21 Martirosyan, Tigran, Armen Tshughuryan, Nonna Khachatryan, and Aram Harutyunyan. "CHALLENGES OF GREEN EDUCATION QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN ARMENIA." *Proceedings on Engineering* 7, no. 4 (2025): 2265-2274.

22 Yuan, Jihui, Farzaneh Hadafi, Ali Sarrafi Nik, Behnam Ghasemzadeh, and Xiangfei Kong. "Architectural contributions to climate change mitigation in urban residential contexts through a global qualitative approach." *Discover Sustainability* 6, no. 1 (2025): 1002.

23 Papoyan, Atanes, and Changhong Zhan. "Analysis of Armenia's Green Building and Vision Proposal." In *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science*, vol. 812, no. 1, p. 012013. IOP Publishing, 2021.

field of tourism. While sustainable tourism development and heritage protection remain significant areas of intervention, this focus has contributed to the relative marginalisation of other cultural domains within sustainability discourse. Expanding research beyond tourism is therefore necessary to capture the broader structural role of culture in advancing sustainable practices.



Sustainability of the Armenian Cultural Field

Assessing the sustainability of the Armenian cultural field requires examining it across three interrelated dimensions. First, it involves identifying existing sustainable practices that are emerging within independent, institutional, and community-based cultural work. Second, it requires analysing how sustainability is reflected in both state and independent institutional policies and operational approaches. Third, it demands evaluating the extent to which national strategies and governance frameworks are aligned, or misaligned, with SDG's. Taken together, these three directions provide a comprehensive picture of how sustainability currently operates within Armenia's cultural landscape.

2.1 SUSTAINABILITY AND CULTURE IN PRACTICE

Existing sustainability practices within Armenia's cultural field operate across two primary scales: individual and institutional. They emerge through the work of artists, curators, activists, and cultural workers, as well as through initiatives

undertaken by cultural organisations and institutions. These practices unfold along two main trajectories. On the one hand, they are thematic, addressing sustainability through artistic content and raising public awareness of environmental challenges. On the other hand, they are operational, reflected in production methods, material choices, resource management, and institutional procedures that seek to reduce environmental impact within cultural work.

2.1.1 Sustainability Efforts Within Independent Cultural Institutions and Actors

The mapping conducted within the **Green Armenia** study identified a range of cultural actors engaging with environmental and climate-related concerns through exhibitions, film, festivals, residencies, installations, and participatory programming. These initiatives reflect a gradual but noticeable expansion of ecological themes within Armenia's contemporary cultural field. While differing in scale, format, and duration, they collectively demonstrate that sustainability-related concerns are being addressed across artistic, curatorial, and community-based practices.

Cultural and Social Narratives Laboratory (CSN Lab) is one of the few cultural organisations in Armenia for which environmental issues constitute a central thematic and strategic direction of work. CSN Lab has developed and published numerous multidisciplinary research projects addressing environmental and urban transformations,[24] environmental coloniality, eco-migration, and water governance.[25] The laboratory has also initiated exhibitions and public programmes aimed at raising awareness at the intersection of culture and environment.[26] In addition, CSN Lab organises alternative ed-

24 Amiryan, T., Galstyan, H., eds. *Getar: memory of a river*, Cultural & Social Narratives Laboratory, 2023.

25 Amiryan, T., A. Abrahamyan, *Kechut: memory under the water*, Cultural & Social Narratives Laboratory, 2023.

26 *Blue Yerevan* Multidisciplinary research project and art-dock exhibition, Cultural & Social Narratives Laboratory, 2026. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://csnlab.net/article/blueyerevan

ucational initiatives, such as the **School of Complex Past**,[27] within which environmental questions are addressed as key analytical and pedagogical themes.

Beyond analysis of environmental transformations and their cultural and social impact, a significant portion of this engagement centres on conservation. Several multi-artist exhibitions have foregrounded nature protection, reforestation, and biodiversity loss as central themes. For instance, the AHA Collective's **We Stand with Forests** exhibition brought together fifteen artists whose works addressed forest ecosystems and the ecological implications of deforestation across Armenia.[28] Such formats position environmental concerns within public cultural spaces and situate conservation discourse within contemporary artistic practice.

At the intersection of art and environmental education, there are unique examples where cultural production has engaged younger audiences. Harut Tumaghyan's film **Sevanik** addresses the ecological fragility of Lake Sevan and the impact of pollution on biodiversity through storytelling.[29] By combining artistic expression with environmental awareness, the film introduces ecological concerns in an accessible format, particularly for children and youth. Similarly, the **SunChild Environmental Film Festival** has established itself as a recurring platform dedicated to environmental cinema.[30] As the only environmental film festival in the South Caucasus, it convenes filmmakers, artists, and audiences to address biodi-

27 School of Complex Past alternative educational program, Cultural & Social Narratives Laboratory, 2026. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://csnlab.net/article/scop25

28 AHA Collective. (2024, March 21–May 20). *WE STAND WITH FORESTS* [Art exhibition]. Yerevan, Armenia. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://aha.am/westandwithforests/

29 Tumaghyan, H. (Director), & Ohanyan, A. (Writer). (2023). *Sevanik* [Short animation]. OnOff Studio LLC; MoESCS; NCCA; UNICEF Armenia. Accessed September 2026 **See:** https://ncca.am/en/films/920-sevanik

30 SunChild International Environmental Festival. *SunChild*. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://sunchild.am/

versity loss, pollution, and community-based environmental action through film screenings and discussions.

Beyond representational engagement, several initiatives incorporate embodied and participatory approaches to environmental themes. In recent years, residencies and festival programmes have increasingly integrated ecological awareness into interdisciplinary artistic processes. The eco-feminist residency within the **Teg Festival** in Vanadzor,[31] for example, brought together artists from Armenia and abroad to explore ecological concerns through performative and collective research practices. A comparable thematic focus emerged during the third edition of **Gyumri Art Week**, where ecological and environmental issues structured curatorial programming and artistic production.[32]

Interactive installations further demonstrate this embodied dimension. Seda Grigoryan's **Fading Whispers**, composed of collected tree fragments from Yerevan, engages audiences through sound-responsive elements.[33] When touched, the fragments emit layered sounds, directing attention to the consequences of urban tree cutting and the material transformation of public space. Such works shift environmental discourse from abstract representation toward sensory and experiential engagement.

Alongside these artistic initiatives, the research also documents the reverse dynamic: moments when culture becomes a communicative and mobilising medium for environmental activism. In Armenia, environmental movements have frequently relied on artistic and cultural forms, performances,[34]

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31 HE ENCLOSED GARDEN Residency & Festival, 2026. Accessed September 2026& **See:** https://www.instagram.com/teg_festival/

32 CYLAND Media ArtLab, *4th Gyumri Art Week / Ecology & Environment*, 2025. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://www.cyland.org/news/4th-gyumri-art-week-ecology-environment

33 Grigoryan, S.. *Fading Whispers*. Hosq, 2025. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://www.facebook.com/share/r/182aiPc9S5/

34 Harutyunyan, A., "Open Getar River in Yerevan!" *Planet One* 2024. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://planetone.org/blog/open-getar-river-in-yerevan/

visual interventions,[35] festivals[36] and other participatory actions to increase visibility and sustain engagement.

Particularly movements related to Amulsar,[37] Trchkan,[38] Teghut,[39] and urban green spaces in Yerevan have incorporated cultural expression as part of environmental advocacy strategies. The Mashtots Park movement in 2012 remains a prominent example.[40] In response to plans to commercialise the public green space, civic activists organised a prolonged sit-in. Artists and cultural practitioners contributed through musical performances, public readings, and creative interventions that transformed the protest site into a cultural space of collective struggle. In this context, art functioned not merely as representation but as a tactical and communicative instrument within environmental mobilisation.

This interconnection between culture and activism continues in more recent initiatives. Ani Khachatryan, a long-term environmental activist and member of the Armenian Environmental Front, has consistently emphasised the importance of collaboration between environmental movements

35 Arpa Hacopian, "Giving a Voice to the Voiceless: Street Art X Environmental Activist Raffy Ardhaldjian on The Armenian Mouflon Project," *Hetq*, 2020. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://hetq.am/en/article/118231

36 Green Green. "Spring Ecofest 2025." *Green Green*. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://greengreen.am/spring-ecofest-2025

37 Aleksanyan, Narek. "'100 Days with Amulsar': Photo Exhibition and Concert." *Hetq*, 2018. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://hetq.am/hy/article/93520

38 "Rock Concert and Ethno Dances in Defense of Trchkan." *EcoLur*, 2011. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://www.ecolur.org/hy/news/water/3187/

39 "Rock Concert in Defense of Teghut." *EcoLur*, 2009. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://www.ecolur.org/hy/news/nuclear-energy/215/

40 Sargsyan, Zhanna. "A New Series of Concerts in Support of the Protesters Fighting for Mashtots Park." *Hetq*, 2012. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://hetq.am/hy/article/13155

and cultural actors. As the organiser of Yerevan's **Vegan Fest**[41] (2013–2017), she facilitated events that combined ecological awareness, lifestyle transformation, and cultural programming. These initiatives promoted environmentally conscious practices while fostering community participation and creative engagement.

In addition to thematic engagement, the research identified methodological shifts in how sustainability is integrated into artistic and institutional practice. Cultural actors are not only addressing environmental issues as subject matter but also reconsidering production processes, material choices, resource use, and modes of mobility.[42]

Material reuse has emerged as a recurring strategy. Numerous exhibitions at the Armenian Centre for Contemporary Experimental Art (ACCEA) incorporate recycled and discarded materials as both medium and conceptual framework. Lana Line's work **Us**, composed entirely of discarded materials, explores the ecology of relationships between individuals, society, and the environment, through material transformation.[43] The installation reflects on visible and invisible layers of waste embedded in everyday urban life, particularly in Yerevan.

Similarly, Karen Barseghyan's exhibition **Second Hand**, presented within the framework of the SunChild Festival, integrates reused objects and textiles into its artistic production.[44] Through direct engagement with discarded materials,

41 ecokayan.com. (n.d.). *Vegan Fest Yerevan – Choose the Life*: Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://www.ecokayan.com/armenia/travel/explore/vegan-fest-yerevan

42 Chobanyan, K. (2020, April 30). *Armenian recycled art: Imagine there's no garbage. EVN Report*. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://evnreport.com/arts-and-culture/armenian-recycled-art-imagine-theres-no-garbage/

43 Line, L. (2025). *US*. Armenian Center for Contemporary Experimental Art (ACCEA). Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://www.accea.info/us/

44 Barseghyan, K. (2017). *Second Hand*. Armenian Center for Contemporary Experimental Art (ACCEA). Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://www.accea.info/second-hand/

the exhibition addresses consumption, waste, and environmental neglect not only symbolically but materially. In another curatorial approach, **Polyfonia**, curated by Edgar Amroyan, engages waste as aesthetic material, prompting reflection on tension, contradiction, and harmony within the remnants of pollution and excess.[45]

Participatory formats further extend this material engagement. The **Junk Art** initiative, organised by the ARE Cultural Organisation, encourages artists, students, and community members to create sculptures entirely from waste materials.[46] By linking artistic experimentation with public participation, such initiatives combine environmental awareness with collective creative practice.

Taken together, this increasing number of initiatives demonstrates that sustainability within Armenia's cultural field operates in multiple directions: as thematic engagement within artistic production, as methodological experimentation in material and production practices, and as a communicative and organisational tool within environmental activism. However, across these domains, a common structural condition persists. Much of this activity is driven by independent artists, small collectives, grassroots groups, and civil society organisations. Institutional frameworks explicitly supporting long-term ecological cultural production or structured collaboration between culture and environmental sectors remain limited. As a result, initiatives often depend on project-based funding, individual commitment, and informal networks rather than systemic policy integration.

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45 Amroyan, E. (2021). *POLYPHONIA*. Armenian Center for Contemporary Experimental Art (ACCEA). Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://www.accea.info/polyiphonia/

46 ARé Cultural Foundation. (n.d.). *Junk Art*. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://arefoundation.com/en/junk-art

2.1.2 Sustainability Efforts Within State Cultural Institutions

In contrast to the predominantly independent and project-based ecological engagement described above, sustainability efforts within state cultural institutions present a more complex and uneven landscape. Although the Cultural Development Strategy of the Republic of Armenia 2023–2027 does not explicitly prioritise or structurally integrate sustainability within the framework of cultural development,[47] individual state cultural institutions have nonetheless initiated measures that reflect environmental awareness and resource-conscious management. These initiatives, however, tend to emerge in the absence of a coordinated national sustainability agenda for culture and are often fragmented, externally supported, or dependent on individual leadership and not embedded within systematic policy mechanisms.

Some state institutions have undertaken infrastructural improvements that directly address energy efficiency and environmental responsibility. The Aram Khachatryan House-Museum[48] and the Hovhannes Tumanyan Museum,[49] for example, partially shifted to solar energy. Similarly, the Armenian State Philharmonia's Resonance program,[50] imple-

47 Republic of Armenia, *Cultural Development Strategy of the Republic of Armenia 2023–2027*, Government Decision No. 1951-L, 2023. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://www.e-gov.am/gov-decrees/item/38925

48 Armenian Energy Agency, *Aram Khachaturian Museum hosted the official launch ceremony of its photovoltaic power station*, 2024. Accessed September 2026. **See:** *https://energyagency.am/en/category/noroutyounner-ev-mijocaroumner/kayacav---ar-am-khachatryani-toun-tangarani*

49 Armenian Energy Agency, *"Solar Energy for Cultural Heritage" project official launch ceremony*, 2023. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://energyagency.am/en/category/noroutyounner-ev-mijocaroumner/-arevayin-energian-i-shah-mshakoutayin-zhara-am

50 ANM Media, *State Philharmonia of Armenia has been selected as a grant beneficiary of the EU program*, 2025. Accessed September 2026. **See:**https://anmmedia.am/en/news/state-philharmonia-of-armenia-has-been-selected-as-a-grant-beneficiary-of-the-eu-program/1177

mented through the European Union's LIVEMX programme, represents a broader institutional approach to sustainability. The initiative seeks to modernise technical infrastructure in concert halls while embedding ecological considerations into artistic programming, institutional management, and audience engagement. Through exchanges with European partners, residencies, and collaborative performances, the programme introduces sustainability as an operational and cultural concern within musical institutions. Its impact extends beyond a single organisation, as it involves multiple institutions across Armenia and reflects how externally funded programmes can catalyse institutional change.

However, these examples also reveal a structural pattern: sustainability initiatives within state institutions are frequently enabled by external funding or international partnerships. Where such support is absent, institutions must rely on internal capacity, often under conditions of financial constraint. The National Library of Armenia (NLA) provides a detailed illustration of how sustainability is approached within these limitations. As Director Anna Chulyan emphasises:

> *"The library's green strategy can only function if a similar agenda operates across the country. Implementing it with only one or two libraries alone is simply not feasible."*

Within this context of limited national coordination, the NLA has pursued a series of incremental but concrete measures. Over the past several years, the institution reports reductions in water and electricity consumption through infrastructure upgrades, plumbing and sanitation repairs supported by state funds, and systematic encouragement of resource-conscious behaviour among staff and visitors. Measures such as minimising elevator use and turning off light-

ing when unnecessary are treated not as symbolic gestures but as ongoing operational practices requiring continuous attention. As Chulyan explains:

> *"We work to instil habits that conserve resources, even in small ways."*

Despite these achievements, the library's capacity to scale or institutionalise sustainable practices is constrained by structural limitations common to state-affiliated, non-commercial institutions. Chronic underfunding, low staff salaries, and the lack of specialised human resources limit the ability to invest in larger-scale projects such as solar energy installations or building-wide energy management systems. Even where proposals exist for advanced solutions, such as solar panels, high upfront costs and long payback periods present significant barriers.

Within these structural constraints, digitisation has emerged as a key avenue through which state cultural institutions attempt to align with sustainability objectives. Beyond environmental considerations, the process of digitising collections serves multiple interconnected objectives: safeguarding cultural heritage, reducing material use, expanding public access, and optimising spatial use, all while potentially minimising certain aspects of the environmental footprint of library operations.

According to Anna Chulyan, the National Library of Armenia (NLA) has actively pursued digitisation projects not only to preserve rare and fragile collections but also to broaden engagement with Armenian cultural knowledge. Despite limited financial and human resources, the institution has leveraged innovative and open-source digital solutions to advance its programmes.

The NLA's digitisation work also exemplifies how sustainability can be approached methodologically rather than solely

infrastructurally. By creating digital archives, the library reduces the need for frequent physical access to delicate materials, thereby lowering wear and tear, limiting handling-related resource use, and improving long-term preservation. At the same time, digitisation expands access beyond the physical building, allowing broader public engagement without requiring expansion of physical infrastructure.

Moreover, these initiative have positioned Armenia as a notable actor within international digitisation networks. Through participation in global committees, conferences, and collaborative platforms, the NLA has shared expertise in digitising complex manuscript collections, including works in Classical (Grabar) and Middle Armenian. As Chulyan notes, these contributions have been recognised internationally, demonstrating how small institutions operating under constrained conditions can nevertheless contribute to global heritage infrastructures.

The Mesrop Mashtots Research Institute of Ancient Manuscripts (Matenadaran) offers another example of digitisation integrated into institutional sustainability practice. For nearly two decades, Matenadaran has supported research efforts through the creation of electronic platforms and systematic manuscript digitisation. According to Gurgen Gasparyan, Advisor to the Director on New Technologies, since 2007, approximately 8,000 of the 13,000 Armenian manuscripts housed at the institute have been digitised and made publicly accessible.[51] The institute combines government support and private donations to equip its digitisation department with state-of-the-art scanners and software, producing high-quality manuscript images. A new electronic platform, scheduled to launch in early 2026, aims to consolidate nearly all known Armenian manuscripts worldwide – estimated at 35,000 to

51 Nazaryan, H., *Platform presenting all known Armenian manuscripts worldwide to launch in 2026. Armenpress*, 2025. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://armenpress.am/en/article/122514digitisation0

40,000 – into a unified online interface, enabling rapid access for researchers and the public.

Alongside Matenadaran and the National Library, the National Gallery of Armenia has also undertaken extensive digitization of its collections.[52] These developments reflect growing institutional attention to digital preservation, accessibility, and dissemination as core components of contemporary cultural governance.

However, while digitisation presents clear advantages, it also introduces a critical tension within the framework of the green transition. Digitisation offers potential reductions in paper consumption, improved accessibility, and enhanced preservation of knowledge. Yet digital preservation simultaneously increases reliance on energy-intensive infrastructure, including servers, cooling systems, and long-term data storage. These demands grow significantly with the scale of digital collections and with the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) tools into archival management, research interfaces, and cataloguing systems. AI-powered tools, while improving efficiency and searchability, often require continuous resources, adding layers of environmental impact that must be accounted for in project planning.[53]

This tension mirrors ongoing debates within European policy frameworks.[54] The European Green Deal frames digi-

52 Galstyan, V., *Memory Back-Up: The Security of Armenia's Cultural Patrimony in Time of (Perennial) War. EVN Report*, 2022. Retrieved January 2026, Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://evnreport.com/magazine-issues/memory-back-up-the-security-of-armenias-cultural-patrimony-in-time-of-perennial-war/

53 Gailhofer, P., et al. *The role of artificial intelligence in the European Green Deal* (Study for the Special Committee on Artificial Intelligence in a Digital Age [AIDA]). Policy Department for Economic, Scientific and Quality of Life Policies, European Parliament, 2021. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/662906/IPOL_STU(2021)662906_EN.pdf

54 Aloisi, A., *The EU's twin green and digital transitions: a policy revolution, or just Euro-jargon? The Conversation*,

tal innovation and climate neutrality as mutually reinforcing pillars of the ecological transition, often articulated through the concept of the "twin transition." Digital technologies are positioned as tools to enhance energy efficiency, optimise resource use, and accelerate sustainable transformation across sectors. However, critics caution that presenting digital tools as inherently sustainable risks increasing their substantial environmental costs, including energy consumption, e-waste, and resource extraction, rather than incorporating them into comprehensive sustainability planning.[55]

For Armenian cultural institutions, this duality presents a pressing policy challenge. Digital sustainability requires long-term strategic planning that addresses energy efficiency, infrastructure resilience, maintenance capacity, and operational environmental impact. Without systemic coordination and sustained investment, digitisation initiatives, however progressive, may inadvertently increase environmental burdens, particularly where AI adoption accelerates in the absence of corresponding energy management frameworks.

Taken together, these developments underscore the need for a coherent policy framework addressing digital transformation and AI within both the cultural and environmental sectors. Such a framework must account for the environmental costs of digital infrastructure, safeguard cultural and intellectual rights, and ensure that technological innovation aligns with broader sustainability, equity, and public interest objectives.

2025. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://theconversation.com/the-eus-twin-green-and-digital-transitions-a-policy-revolution-or-just-euro-jargon-250459

55 Epress.am, *AI Data Center in Hrazdan proceeds while environmental checks are bypassed*, 2025. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://epress.am/2025/12/15/ai-center-skips-environmental-checks.html

2.2 COLLABORATION, INTERSECTIONS, AND INSTITUTIONAL GAPS

Across policy discussions, institutional practices, and expert views on sustainability a recurring pattern emerges: the limited presence, and in many cases the complete absence, of cross-sectoral collaboration, particularly at the intersection of culture and environment. Interviews with institutional representatives indicate that within Armenian state structures, these domains are treated as operational and conceptually separate, resulting in minimal dialogue, coordination, or shared strategic planning. This separation is not merely procedural; it reflects deeper structural patterns that limit the emergence of integrated approaches. In practice, few formal mechanisms, platforms, or institutional feedback loops enable sustained intersectional work. As a result, opportunities for co-created initiatives, shared programming, and policy development remain largely unrealised.

Understanding how cultural and environmental agendas intersect within Armenian governance, therefore, requires examining how key ministries define their mandates and operate in relation to one another. Within the research scope particular attention is given to two institutions the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport (MoESCS) and the Ministry of Environment. Dialogue sessions with representatives from MoESCS, alongside insights from an independent expert frequently collaborating with the Ministry of Environment, reveal a systemic condition of institutional fragmentation that prevents the development of integrated cultural-environmental approaches.

Despite numerous policy areas where cooperation would appear necessary, such as ecological education, environmental heritage protection, or community-based environmental programming, the two ministries largely function within their respective administrative boundaries. Formal collaboration mechanisms are either weak or absent. According to Deputy Minister Alfred Kocharyan of MoESCS, projects often require

positive feedback from multiple ministries to advance. However, it remains unclear to what extent this inter-ministerial exchange produces substantive cross-sectoral integration not only procedural approval.

This fragmentation is reinforced by the way each ministry defines its scope of authority. No policy architecture encourages systematic dialogue between cultural and environmental governance. One of the key findings of this research is the absence of a shared conceptual framework capable of bridging the two sectors. Terms such as "culture," "heritage," "environment," "natural heritage," and "ecological awareness" are operationalised in ways that maintain separation rather than foster integration.

Within MoESCS protocols, culture is primarily defined through tangible and intangible heritage, with strong emphasis on monument preservation. This narrow definition stands in tension with Armenia's international commitments. For instance, Armenia signed the European Landscape Convention in 2004, which explicitly recognises landscapes, including urban and rural, as essential components of local people's life, local cultures, eco-cultural practices and foundations of local identity and well-being.[56] The Convention highlights the cultural dimension of landscapes and calls for their integration into environmental, cultural, and spatial planning and development policies. However, Armenian cultural development strategies have not systematically incorporated landscape-based or environmental dimensions into their governance frameworks. Ecological-cultural practices, lived landscapes, and community-based environmental knowledge remain largely outside from cultural policy priorities.

Under the current legal framework, the Ministry's mandate applies primarily to sites and objects formally designated as monuments. Monument status is determined according to

56 Council of Europe, *European Landscape Convention*, Florence, October 20, 2000, signed by Armenia in 2004. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://rm.coe.int/1680080621

criteria such as age, antiquity, and historical significance. If a structure, site, or landscape is not officially recognised within this classification system, it falls outside the Ministry's direct authority, regardless of its contemporary cultural or environmental relevance. As Alfred Kocharyan has noted,

> *"Institutional intervention begins only once an object has been formally recognised according to established heritage criteria. This legal boundary defines the scope of action: landscapes, natural areas, and eco-cultural practices are addressed only when directly linked to officially recognised cultural heritage elements. Natural environments, even when culturally meaningful or environmentally vulnerable, remain outside the Ministry's jurisdiction."*

This delineation exposes the boundaries of how "culture" is defined in contemporary governance and raises broader questions about whether such definitions are adequate for addressing climate-related challenges and implementing green transition.

Environmental governance, by contrast, is primarily treated as an operational and regulatory domain under the authority of the Ministry of Environment. Although numerous international environmental frameworks increasingly recognise the importance of cultural practices, traditional knowledge, and community-based approaches in environmental protection, these dimensions remain only weakly integrated into national strategies and on-the-ground implementation processes in Armenia. As Mari Chakryan, Legal Advisor at the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Armenia, National Focal Point for the UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) and its

Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs), and Lecturer at the Chair of Plant Diversity and Ecosystem Studies at ISEC, notes:

> *"For example, the Convention on Biological Diversity places particular emphasis on cultural dimensions, including eco-cultural practices and the ways in which communities interact with and use specific ecosystems. In other words, it does not focus solely on species conservation, but also on traditions, practices, histories, and knowledge systems. Moreover, under the new global biodiversity framework, one of its four overarching goals highlights that by 2030, and looking ahead to 2050, it is necessary to document and safeguard not only biodiversity itself, but also the traditions, lifestyles, and knowledge of communities and Indigenous peoples, including their approaches to living in harmony with their environments. However, significant challenges remain in incorporating these cross-sectoral dimensions into national governance structures and in ensuring the expertise and institutional capacity required for effective implementation."*

The question, therefore, is not whether such integrative perspectives exist internationally, but to what extent they are incorporated into national policy and action plans. Within Armenian governance structures, the notion that culture itself contains ecological knowledge, relational practices, and environmental memory is not formally embedded in policy frameworks. Environmental policy rarely incorporates cultural memory or community-based practices as constitutive components of ecological governance.

This conceptual divide has institutional consequences. It limits not only ministerial collaboration but also the ability of affiliated institutions to align their practices with broader sustainability objectives. As NLA Director Anna Chulyan emphasises:

> *"For the sustainable and long-term development of cultural institutions, there must be a state-level strategy, accompanied by action plans and step-by-step guidelines. Individual visions and isolated efforts toward sustainability eventually fail to produce systematic change due to fragmentation and institutional exhaustion."*

Without a coordinated national framework, institutional initiatives remain disconnected from broader cultural, educational, and environmental policy agendas. A state-level strategy could facilitate more systematic integration with both global commitments and domestic environmental priorities. Thus, sustainability within state cultural institutions cannot be fully realised in isolation. Without a cross-sectoral national strategy, institutional initiatives, however innovative, remain fragmented and difficult to scale.

The absence of structured collaboration extends beyond formal ministerial frameworks. Outside state institutions, platforms that systematically bridge arts and environmental activism remain limited. While the potential for creative engagement to strengthen environmental movements is widely acknowledged, sustained mechanisms for collaboration are rare.

Recent research What to Do When the Old-day Activism Does Not Work[57] observes a decline in visible environmental

57 Khalatyan, M., Manusyan, A., & Martirosyan, S., *What to Do When the Old-Day Activism Does Not Work? To Radicalize Democracy*, Socioscope, 2025. Accessed September 2026. **See:**

activism, raising questions about whether activism is diminishing or transforming into less visible forms. As co-founder of Armenian Environmental Front and eco-activist Ani Khachatryan underscores, environmental movements require renewal through creative engagement and long-term collaboration. As she reflects:

> *"After decades of active processes, the environmental activist community in Armenia has grown tired. In many ways, the methods and language we have been using have also become exhausted. After all we've done, there comes a moment when ideas seem to run out. At that point, the activist community hopes that the art and cultural sector will recognise that environmental issues are universal, not solely the responsibility of eco-activists, and will join in with fresh perspectives, creating impactful art projects, interventions, performances, and films that contribute new visions and deepen social engagement and eco-education."*

Khachatryan further highlights the importance of continuity and sustained engagement. While environmental topics may become "trends" within NGO programming, one-off conferences or symbolic events rarely generate long-term impact:

> *"There are NGOs and cultural institutions that organize important initiatives such as conferences on environmental topics, alternative edu-*

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https://socioscope.am/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/What-to-Do-When-the-Old-Day-Activism-Does-Not-Work.pdf

cational programmes, festivals, and exhibitions. However, due to limited resources and financial constraints, these initiatives are often short-term. What is needed is consistent, practical work, activities that engage participants over a longer period. Without continuity, such engagement rarely produces meaningful long-term impact."

This structural fragmentation is further reflected in the cultural dialogue between Armenia and European Union. The absence of clearly articulated national sustainability frameworks, shared vocabulary, and coordinated institutional guidelines not only affects internal governance; it also shapes the country's capacity to engage effectively with European cultural and environmental agendas.

European cultural cooperation instruments, mobility schemes, and grant mechanisms supporting the Armenian cultural field increasingly prioritise sustainability as a core criterion. Programmes such as Creative Europe and other EU-funded cooperation frameworks embed environmental responsibility, green mobility, resource efficiency, and long-term impact within their evaluation logic.[58] However, in the absence of locally developed manuals, national standards, or institutional guidelines for sustainable cultural production,

58 EU cultural programmes, primarily led by Creative Europe (2021-2027) with a €2.44 billion budget, increasingly integrate environmental, social, and economic sustainability into their core objectives. The initiatives focus on greening the cultural sector, supporting climate-friendly practices, and using creativity to drive behavioral change and sustainable development across Europe. European Commission, *Creative Shifts: Empowering Culture for Sustainable Living*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2025. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/043230ba-d250-11f0-8da2-01aa75ed71a1

Armenian cultural actors often face conceptual and practical challenges in interpreting and applying these expectations. The difficulty is not limited to financial or technical constraints; it also concerns vocabulary and conceptual framing. Without a shared national discourse on sustainability in culture, artists and independent cultural practitioners must navigate European sustainability frameworks largely on their own, often translating unfamiliar terminology into local practice without systematic support. As Ani Hovsepyan, Representative and Coordinator of the Creative Europe Desk Armenia, observes:

> *"Sustainability is one of the major challenges for the Armenian cultural sector in terms of understanding and applying it within project design, even at the stage of preparing mobility or cooperation grant applications. Since there are no approved national manuals or guidelines on sustainable cultural work, and no state institution with the capacity to provide structured training on these issues, we often have to go beyond simply organising information sessions on open calls. It becomes necessary to organise dedicated workshops and capacity-building sessions on sustainability, usually in cooperation with independent cultural organisations and NGOs that are more familiar with these topics and their dimensions."*

In this context, the Armenian–EU cultural dialogue reflects both opportunity and asymmetry. European instruments provide incentives, funding, and normative direction toward greener cultural practices. Yet without corresponding national frameworks that translate these principles into locally grounded strategies, the integration of sustainability

remains partial and fragmented. These reflections point to a broader structural issue: sustainability requires continuity, institutional memory, and long-term platforms. Without mechanisms that connect artists, activists, cultural organisations, and policymakers in sustained collaboration, environmental engagement risks remaining episodic.

Ultimately, cross-sectoral cooperation is not an optional enhancement but a structural requirement for embedding sustainability within Armenia's cultural and environmental futures. Without shared conceptual frameworks, coordinated governance, and sustained institutional platforms, sustainability efforts, whether within ministries, cultural institutions, or civil society, remain fragmented and limited in scale.

2.3 POLICY DIALOGUE: HOW SUSTAINABILITY AGENDAS ENTER ARMENIA

Any meaningful discussion of sustainability within Armenia must begin with the country's own strategic frameworks. Two key policy documents are central in shaping the national agenda: the Cultural Development Strategy of the Republic of Armenia 2023–2027 (Government Decision N1951-L, 10 November 2023)[59] and the Environmental Strategy, particularly the action plan for 2021-2026 of the Government of RA within the field of Environmental protection and Development.[60]

59 Republic of Armenia, *Cultural Development Strategy of the Republic of Armenia 2023–2027*, Government Decision No. 1951-L, 2023. Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://www.e-gov.am/gov-decrees/item/3892professionalisationprioritisesmodeindustrialisationrnisation5

60 Republic of Armenia, Program of Activities of the Government of the Republic of Armenia for 2021–2026, Government Decision No. 1902-L, November 18, 2021, subsection "Ministry of Environment". Accessed September 2026. **See:** https://env.am/storage/files/karavarutyun-voroshum-havelvac1-1902-1.pdf

The Cultural Development Strategy 2023–2027 articulates a vision of modernisation and structural transformation of the cultural sector. It prioritises institutional reform, development of creative industries, professionalisation, digital transformation, international competitiveness, and increased economic contribution of culture to national development. Culture is framed as an economic driver and innovation sector, aligned with broader modernisation objectives. The strategy reflects a clear orientation toward industrialisation of the cultural field, strengthening infrastructure, expanding export potential, and enhancing managerial efficiency.

However, while modernisation and digitisation are emphasised, environmental sustainability is not positioned as a core organising principle of cultural governance. The document does not systematically address the ecological footprint of cultural production, energy use within cultural institutions, environmental standards in event organisation, or climate resilience in heritage preservation. Sustainability is not articulated as an integrated criterion shaping cultural development; rather, economic growth and sectoral competitiveness remain the dominant framing.

In parallel, the Environmental Strategy 2021–2030 conceptualises sustainability primarily through regulatory, technical, and sectoral lenses. Its focus lies on climate adaptation, pollution reduction, waste management, biodiversity conservation, environmental monitoring systems, and compliance mechanisms. The strategy situates environmental governance within institutional and infrastructural reform, emphasising technical modernisation and regulatory enforcement.

While public awareness and stakeholder participation are referenced, cultural institutions, creative actors, and heritage infrastructures are not structurally positioned as strategic partners in advancing environmental transformation. Environmental governance remains largely technocratic, and the role of cultural production in shaping societal attitudes, be-

havioural change, or environmental literacy is not systematically integrated into policy architecture.

Taken together, these two national strategies evolve in parallel. The absence of explicit cross-references or integrated frameworks between these documents signals a limited policy dialogue at the national level.

This structural separation becomes more pronounced when viewed against Armenia's international commitments. Armenia is a signatory to the EU–Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA),[61] which entered into provisional application in 2018 and fully entered into force in 2021. CEPA includes provisions related to environmental protection, climate action, sustainable development, and cultural cooperation. Additionally, Armenia participates in the Creative Europe Programme and Horizon Europe, both of which embed sustainability and green transition principles within funding criteria.

The European Green Deal (2019) frames the ecological transition as a systemic transformation that integrates climate neutrality, digital innovation, industrial reform, and social inclusion. Its concept of the "twin transition" explicitly links green and digital transformation across all sectors of governance. Through Armenia's participation in EU programmes, sustainability principles enter the Armenian institutional landscape via funding requirements, project eligibility criteria, and alignment mechanisms.

Armenia's accession to the EU's Horizon 2020 framework programme in 2016, as noted in the country's Fourth National Communication on Climate Change submitted to the UNFCCC, marked a significant step in integrating Armenian research institutions into European innovation ecosystems, including climate-related research. Similarly, the Creative Europe Desk Armenia provides training and guidance to

61 European Union and the Republic of Armenia. *Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement*. **See:** https://www.mfa.am/filemanager/eu/CEPA_ENG_1.pdf

cultural institutions on integrating environmental considerations into project design and implementation.

These mechanisms create structured pathways through which European sustainability agendas influence Armenian practice. However, such influence tends to remain project-based and externally driven. Sustainability often becomes a compliance requirement within grant-funded initiatives rather than a systemic principle embedded in national governance frameworks.

The resulting policy landscape reveals a layered but asymmetrical dialogue. International frameworks promote integration of environmental and cultural dimensions, and EU instruments encourage alignment with sustainability objectives. Yet at the national level, strategic documents continue to reflect sectoral compartmentalisation. Policy dialogue exists formally, through agreements, conventions, funding instruments, and diplomatic alignment, but remains weak at the level of operational governance. Sustainability terminology circulates across strategic texts, yet it does not consistently translate into shared conceptual frameworks, coordinated planning processes, or joint implementation mechanisms between cultural and environmental institutions.

In this context, the green transition risks being implemented as parallel sectoral reforms rather than as a coherent societal transformation. Without deliberate alignment between the Cultural Development Strategy and the Environmental Strategy, and without embedding sustainability standards within cultural production and institutional management, policy translation remains partial. The dialogue between culture and environment remains largely declarative and rarely structural.

Conclusion

Green Armenia: Towards Sustainability in Culture highlights the growing need for an intersectional and cross-sectoral approach to sustainability within Armenia's cultural field. It identifies a systemic gap at the intersection of culture and environment, structured around three interrelated challenges: conceptual, institutional, and visibility-continuity related.

At the conceptual level, there is no shared analytical framework through which culture and environmental sustainability are understood as interdependent domains. Culture is frequently positioned as symbolic or heritage-focused, while environmental governance remains largely technical and regulatory. This separation obscures the ecological knowledge, social practices, and relational values embedded in cultural production and participation, limiting culture's role to supplementary or educational functions rather than recognising it as an active contributor to sustainability agendas.

At the institutional level, fragmentation restricts coordinated action. The absence of structured cross-sectoral

mechanisms prevents sustained collaboration between cultural institutions, environmental authorities, and educational actors. Where integrative practices do emerge – often through independent initiatives, civil society organisations, or individual practitioners – they tend to remain project-based and short-term, dependent on personal initiative rather than embedded within systemic governance structures.

At the level of visibility and continuity, sustainability-oriented cultural practices remain insufficiently documented and weakly institutionalised. Consequently, they rarely inform national development strategies or long-term environmental planning, despite their demonstrated capacity to mobilise communities and foster ecological awareness.

Despite these structural gaps, the analysis demonstrates that culture holds substantial potential to act as a strategic partner in Armenia's environmental transition. Cultural initiatives already contribute to public engagement, environmental literacy, and community-based sustainability practices. However, without a coherent policy architecture, these contributions cannot be scaled, coordinated, or systematically integrated into environmental governance.

The research, therefore, calls for repositioning culture as an active and strategic actor within Armenia's green transition. This requires the development of shared conceptual vocabularies, integrated policy frameworks, and institutional coordination mechanisms that recognise culture and environment as mutually reinforcing systems. Long-term cross-sectoral platforms must enable sustained collaboration between cultural institutions, environmental bodies, educational actors, and civil society.

Embedding sustainability within cultural governance also reinforces Armenia's democratic development and aligns with its commitments under European partnership frameworks, including the EU–Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA). Integrating sustain-

ability into cultural policy can therefore serve simultaneously as an internal reform strategy and as part of Armenia's broader European integration trajectory.

Recommendations

Position Culture as an Active Partner in Armenia's Environmental Transition

Current Context ⇝ The analysis shows that culture in Armenia is still largely perceived as a secondary or supportive sphere within environmental and sustainability agendas. The conceptual, methodological, and participatory potential of cultural actors and institutions remains insufficiently recognised in policy design and implementation. As a result, the capacity of culture to contribute to environmental awareness, behavioural change, and socially embedded sustainability practices is often overlooked.

Recommendation ⇝ Culture should be formally positioned as an equal and strategic partner in Armenia's environmental transition. Public institutions – and local government in particular – should recognize and integrate cultural institutions, creative industries, and independent practitioners as key contributors to sustainability-oriented policy and practice. This requires embedding cultural perspectives within environmental strategies, fostering cross-sectoral collaboration,

and acknowledging the methodological and social capacities of culture to support inclusive and long-term ecological transformation.

Adoption and Localisation of International Sustainability Frameworks

Current Context ⇝ In Armenia, international sustainability frameworks and policy agendas are not yet actively internalised or operationalised within cultural and environmental governance. Although the country has aligned with a range of international initiatives – including those associated with the European Union and UNESCO – its application often remains at the level of formal reference and rarely than substantive adoption. As a result, international recommendations are insufficiently translated into local policy language, institutional practice, and implementation mechanisms, limiting their relevance and long-term impact within Armenia's cultural and environmental sectors.

Recommendation ⇝ International sustainability frameworks should be systematically translated, contextualised, and institutionally embedded within Armenia's policy and governance landscape. This process must move beyond formal alignment toward the structured adoption and adaptation of international experience, ensuring that global frameworks become operational, accessible, and actionable for national and local institutions. Effective adoption should be grounded in Armenia's specific ecological conditions, cultural practices, and institutional capacities, enabling implementation that is context-sensitive and sustainable. Within this process, civil society organisations should be recognised as key mediating actors capable of facilitating knowledge transfer, supporting institutional learning, and fostering dialogue between state bodies, cultural institutions, environmental actors, and local communities.

Develop Shared Definitions and Conceptual Frameworks

Current Context ⇝ The research identifies the absence of a shared vocabulary and conceptual framework as a key constraint limiting cooperation between cultural and environmental sectors in Armenia. At the level of public governance, cultural and environmental policies continue to be developed and implemented in largely autonomous and non-intersecting ways, with limited conceptual or methodological exchange between relevant state and local government bodies. This fragmentation is reflected in institutional practice, where culture and environmental sustainability are addressed through separate policy logics, preventing the formation of integrated strategies and coordinated action.

Recommendation ⇝ A unified vocabulary and shared conceptual framework linking culture and the environment should be developed and institutionally adopted across relevant public governance bodies in Armenia. Clear and operational definitions of key concepts – such as culture, cultural heritage, natural heritage, environment, biodiversity, landscape, sustainability, resilience, community participation, co-creation, spatial and environmental justice, circular economy, responsible resource management, traditional and local knowledge, public space, territorial development, well-being, and digital transformation – should be articulated and systematically embedded into policy documents, strategic planning processes, funding criteria, and institutional guidelines. Establishing a shared conceptual language will strengthen cross-sectoral understanding, enable more effective coordination, and support coherent, integrated policy design across cultural and environmental domains.

Create Mechanisms for Cross-Sectoral Coordination and Collaboration

Current Context ⇝ Cooperation between cultural, environmental, educational, and technological actors in Armenia remains largely project-based and fragmented, with limited structural coordination across sectors and governance levels. The absence of formalised mechanisms for sustained exchange and joint planning results in parallel initiatives rather than integrated strategies. Collaboration that does emerge is often dependent on individual institutions or short-term donor-driven projects, lacking stable resourcing, institutional anchoring and long therm impact. This limits the development of coherent sustainability-oriented programmes and reduces the visibility and impact of cross-sectoral practices.

Recommendation ⇝ Dedicated cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms should be established under the leadership of national and local public authorities to enable sustained collaboration among cultural, environmental, educational, technological, and civil society stakeholders. These mechanisms should be formally mandated, adequately resourced, and embedded within existing governance structures to ensure continuity beyond short-term initiatives. Designed as multi-level platforms, they should facilitate cooperation across municipal, regional, and national levels, with the flexibility to expand as governance frameworks evolve.

Such mechanisms may include inter-ministerial or interdepartmental working groups, multi-stakeholder advisory platforms, and thematic task forces with clear operational responsibilities. Their functions should encompass regular communication, joint strategic planning, data and knowledge sharing, development of shared conceptual frameworks, and coordination of pilot programmes and funding schemes. Civil society organisations and independent cultural actors should be recognised as key partners within these structures, contributing to knowledge

exchange, experimentation, and community-based implementation.

To ensure effectiveness, coordination mechanisms should include monitoring and evaluation components, structured feedback loops, and periodic public reporting. By linking conceptual alignment with practical implementation and resource allocation, these platforms can strengthen policy coherence, support sustainability programmes, and enable long-term collaboration across cultural and environmental domains.

Support Sustainable Institutional Practices in the Cultural Sector

Current Context ⇝ Cultural institutions in Armenia currently receive limited structured support for adopting environmentally sustainable practices. While individual organisations and practitioners increasingly express interest in sustainability, implementation remains uneven and largely dependent on isolated initiatives or external project funding. The absence of clear national guidelines, sector-specific standards, and dedicated funding mechanisms constrains the ability of cultural institutions to undertake long-term ecological transformation or integrate sustainability into their operational and programmatic models.

Recommendation ⇝ Cultural institutions should receive targeted financial, technical, and informational support to enable the systematic adoption of environmentally sustainable practices. This support should include dedicated funding schemes, incentive-based programmes, and clear institutional guidelines to improve energy efficiency, reduce waste, implement responsible resource management, and integrate sustainability principles into both programming and daily operations. Sustainability standards and criteria should also be gradually embedded into public funding frameworks, procurement procedures, and institutional evaluation systems to ensure long-term sectoral transformation.

Develop Green Policies on Artificial Intelligence and Digitalization

Current Context ⇝ While digitisation and AI integration offer significant opportunities for the development of the cultural sector in Armenia, there is currently no coherent policy framework addressing the environmental, cultural, and ethical implications of these technologies. The energy and resource demands of digital infrastructure – including data centres, cloud storage, and AI systems – are not systematically accounted for, and there is limited guidance on minimising ecological impacts, safeguarding cultural and intellectual property, or integrating ethical standards into technology-driven cultural initiatives. As a result, digitalisation can inadvertently contribute to high carbon emissions, electronic waste, and other forms of operational footprint, which will create misalignment with sustainability objectives.

Recommendation ⇝ It is necessary to develop and institutionalise clear policies guiding AI and digitalisation in the cultural sector, with a strong emphasis on environmental sustainability, ethical standards, and cultural rights. Policies should:

- Include mandatory sustainability assessments for digital and AI projects, evaluating energy consumption, lifecycle of hardware, cloud usage, and carbon footprint.

- Prioritise renewable energy solutions and resource-efficient infrastructure for servers, cloud platforms, and digital operations.

- Establish ethical guidelines and transparency requirements to protect intellectual property, cultural rights, and community interests.

- Integrate sustainability and ethical criteria into public funding schemes, procurement processes, and institutional evaluation frameworks.

- Encourage multi-level coordination across culture, technology, environment, and civil society actors to ensure systemic adoption and continuous monitoring of digital sustainability practices.

By embedding these measures into policy and governance structures, Armenia can ensure that AI and digitalisation contribute positively to both the ecological and cultural dimensions of sustainable development, aligning technological innovation with green transition and cultural development goals.

Promote Cross-Sectoral Sustainability in Democratic Transition

Current Context ⇝ Current policy and institutional practice in Armenia reveal that cultural and environmental sectors operate largely in isolation, with limited coordination between relevant ministries and agencies. This fragmentation is not only institutional but also strategic: there is no overarching political framework integrating sustainability, culture, and environmental policy as mutually reinforcing dimensions. As a result, opportunities for using culture and environmental stewardship as levers for social engagement, public accountability, and democratic governance remain underutilised.

Recommendation ⇝ Local and national authorities should explicitly recognise dialogue and collaboration between the cultural and environmental sectors as integral to the country's broader political and democratic development. Cross-sectoral initiatives should be framed as part of Armenia's democratic transition and its alignment with European Union standards and practices. Efforts to strengthen partnerships, enhance institutional capacity, and improve sectoral development should be treated as processes of democratisation, fostering accountable, participatory, and transparent

governance. Embedding sustainability and culture within this political perspective will enable these sectors to contribute actively to democratic consolidation, civic engagement, and inclusive policy-making.



Afterword

Towards Cross-Sectoral and Interdisciplinary Approaches

Since 2018, together with my team at CSN Lab, we have been working across research, artistic and documentary practices under a common motto: **culture for democracy and dialogue for peace**. Over these years, we have addressed very different subjects and developed platforms where researchers, artists, architects, activists and other practitioners can meet, exchange knowledge and work together. What has remained constant throughout this work is our openness to different disciplines, methods and forms of knowledge. Interdisciplinarity and cross-sectoriality is not simply one of our approaches; it has become our main strategy and a way of thinking about culture and society.

This position is particularly important in Armenia, as well as in many other countries of the Eastern Partnership, where the legacy of the Soviet system continues to shape the ways in which knowledge is produced, organised and shared. For decades, education and research were structured through rigid disciplinary boundaries, while culture and knowledge were deeply connected to institutional hierarchies and ideological control. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, many of these structures were dismantled, but they were not immediately

replaced by new and sufficiently developed systems of knowledge and expertise. As a result, we often found ourselves between two forms of knowledge: one inherited from the Soviet period and another coming from Western academic and institutional contexts, which was not always sufficiently adapted to our own social, cultural and political realities.

For us, therefore, the work of civil society cannot be limited to filling the gaps left by these transformations. It also means critically examining the structures and hierarchies that we have inherited and participating in the democratic transformation of the society in which we live. This requires not only new institutions and new policies, but also new ways of producing and sharing knowledge. It requires different disciplines to speak to one another, different forms of expertise to recognise each other, and culture to become a space in which society can question the structures that shape it.

This has been at the centre of our work at CSN Lab. Over the years, we have connected memory studies with the study of nature, architectural research with gender studies, theory of the image with conflict and peace studies, and cultural analysis with questions of spatial and environmental justice. We have been interested in the connections between these focalities and in the new questions that emerge when different perspectives are brought into conversation. In many of our projects, we have also moved beyond purely quantitative approaches in order to understand the narratives, experiences and cultural practices through which people and communities make sense of their surroundings and of their own place within society.

Our engagement with environmental questions follows the same trajectory. For us, nature is not a new subject added to our cultural agenda, but a natural continuation of our work on the democratisation of knowledge, culture and public space. Environmental questions are never only environmental: they are also questions of history, memory, politics, economy, architecture and culture. A river, a forest, a landscape or an urban water system is not only a geographical or

ecological object; it is also a place of memory, a space shaped by political decisions and economic interests, an element of everyday life and, very often, a contested territory.

This is why the study of nature today can no longer remain within the boundaries of environmental science, biology or geography alone. Understanding our relationship with the natural world requires different forms of knowledge to work together, but it also requires us to reconsider one of the fundamental assumptions inherited from modernity: that nature exists primarily as an object of human knowledge, management and use. Contemporary discussions around the rights of nature challenge precisely this hierarchy by asking us to recognise nature not only as something that humans study, manage or protect, but also as a subject with its own value and, increasingly, with legally and politically recognised interests.

Returning once again to the question of our difficult historical legacy and to the need for a democratic transition and Armenia's dialogue with European values, I want to state two things very directly. For decades, in our countries, nature was studied and described primarily in order to control it, exploit it and derive the maximum possible benefit from it. At the same time, culture was not understood primarily as a space for protecting human rights and freedoms, but as a mechanism of propaganda, ideological control and regulation of knowledge and thought. These two histories are connected by a common logic: both nature and culture were treated as objects to be controlled and rarely as spaces in which rights, freedoms and forms of subjectivity could be recognised and protected.

Our approach today deliberately moves away from this legacy. It is grounded in the language of rights and protection, rather than control and extraction; in the recognition of different forms of subjectivity, rather than their subordination; and in the understanding of culture and the environment as spaces in which democratic values can be developed and practised. In this sense, the discussion of the rights of nature

is not an abstract or distant theoretical debate for us. It is directly connected to the broader democratic transformation of our societies and to the need to rethink the relationship between people, culture and the natural world.

This also brings us to the question of democracy itself. Democracy is not limited to political institutions, elections or formal representation; it also concerns who is recognised as a subject, whose knowledge is considered legitimate, whose voice is heard, and who has the right to participate in decisions that affect shared spaces, resources and environments. From this perspective, sustainability cannot be reduced to environmental responsibility or to more efficient management of natural resources. It also concerns the relationships through which societies produce knowledge, organise space, distribute resources and decide what and who deserves recognition and protection.

This is where culture becomes essential. Culture shapes the ways in which we imagine nature, remember landscapes, represent environmental change and understand our responsibilities towards the places and forms of life with which we share the world. Artistic and cultural practices can make visible relationships that remain difficult to capture through conventional research, while creating encounters between forms of knowledge that are usually separated by institutional and disciplinary boundaries. In this sense, culture can become not only a space for reflecting on environmental transformation, but also a space in which new relationships with our surroundings can be imagined and developed.

The here presented research grows out of this understanding and continues the work that CSN Lab has been developing since 2018. This project initiated and commissioned by EUNIC Armenia brings together different perspectives, practices and forms of knowledge around the relationship between culture and the environment in Armenia, without attempting to reduce this relationship to a single definition of sustainability or to establish one disciplinary framework through which it should be understood.

For us, this is not a departure from our previous work, but its continuation. If our earlier projects explored how memory, culture and public space can contribute to more democratic societies, our engagement with the environment takes this question further, asking how we can rethink not only relationships between people, but also the relationship between people and the environments in which they live. It is ultimately a question of how we move from a culture of control towards a culture of care and protection, from fragmented knowledge towards dialogue between different forms of expertise, and from inherited hierarchies towards a more democratic understanding of the world we share.

It is from this point of departure that we turn to **Green Armenia: Towards Sustainability in Culture**.

Dr Tigran Amiryan,
President and Founder of the Cultural
and Social Narratives Laboratory | CSN Lab



ISBN 978-9939-1-2379-0

