Intergovernmental Council for the Information for All Programme

GUIDELINES FOR THE CREATION AND OPERATION OF NATIONAL COMMITTEES OF THE INFORMATION FOR ALL PROGRAMME

IFAP Goals and Mandate

The Intergovernmental Council for the Information for All Programme was established in 2000 as – in the words of the Executive Board – 'a key participant in the fulfillment of UNESCO's mandate to contribute to "education for all", to the "free exchange of ideas and knowledge" and to "increase the means of communication between peoples"'. The Programme is to contribute to narrowing the gap between the information rich and the information poor and to provide a platform for international policy discussions and guidelines for action on the preservation of information and universal access to it, on the participation of all in the emerging global information society and on the ethical, legal and societal consequences of ICT developments.

As a transverse UNESCO programme, the Information for All Programme is to provide a framework for international cooperation and international and regional partnerships and support the development of common strategies, methods and tools for building a just and free information society.

In order to achieve its objectives, the Information for All Programme requires effective collaboration and liaison with a diverse and increasing number of interested parties. Therefore, the Programme should emphasize and enhance the role of external collaboration and partnering in its work within UNESCO and in its support of external programmes. Collaboration with stakeholder NGOs and the private sector should be established in order to create a multiplier effect from improved communication and collaboration to contribute to achieving the objectives of the programme.

At its origin, the Programme was composed of five areas: development of international, regional and national information policies; development of human resources and capabilities for the information age; strengthening institutions as gateways for information access; development of information processing and management tools and systems; information technology for education, science, culture and communication.

The IFAP Strategic Plan for 2008-2013, endorsed by the UNESCO Executive Board, defines the main focus of the Programme activities as execution of UNESCO General Conference resolution 34 C/Res.48 for Major Programme V, contained in the Approved Programme and Budget 2008–2009 (34 C/5) that authorizes the Director General to "assist in the formulation of national information policy frameworks, in particular within the framework of the Information for All Programme (IFAP)". Resulting from IFAP's work so far, and that envisaged for the entire planning period, these frameworks will be complemented by more detailed policy orientations in five priority areas – information for development, information literacy, information preservation, information ethics and information accessibility. This standard-setting policy-oriented approach and these foci of interest are the distinguishing features of IFAP.

National IFAP Committees should be established in all UNESCO Member States, and especially in those that are elected to the Intergovernmental Council of IFAP.

The following Guidelines were developed, based on the results of discussions during the First Consultation Meeting of National Committees for the Information for All Programme (Moscow, 7-8 December 2009).

Role and Tasks of National IFAP Committees

The role of National IFAP Committees is to pursue the goals of IFAP as a whole at the national level. Given the fact that many government, private sector, academic and civil society bodies are already involved in developing, implementing and analysing information society policies, or their particular elements, a National IFAP Committee can provide added value by:

- Serving as a meeting point for these diverse stake-holders and thus creating a pool of expertise for the purpose of consolidating existing knowledge as a basis for formulating advice on policy and its implementation;

- Serving as an avenue for the transfer of knowledge and expertise from the international to the national level, and across borders, by drawing on the work of National IFAP Committees in other countries (e.g. in the form of expert missions);

- Consolidating existing sectoral plans and programmes of action in the Information/Knowledge Society field into a comprehensive, future-oriented vision, promoting public understanding of the unfolding process of change and its ramifications for society and individuals;

- Developing an action plan, including short- and long-term goals, as well as benchmarks of success, focussing on the needs of the country in the area of core IFAP priorities, as well as on forms of regional and international cooperation within the Programme;

- Developing the capacity of undertaking projects in areas of interest for the administration and other stake-holders;

- Spreading information and knowledge about Information Society issues, and publicising its own activities, as well as those of IFAP in general, to ensure visibility for the Programme and for the National Committee in order to generate interest in, and support for, the Committee's work.

Forms of activity undertaken by National IFAP Committees should include:

1. Contributing to the implementation of IFAP's National Information Society Policy template, adjusted to the needs and circumstances of their countries;

2. Engaging in a constant dialogue with government agencies and other stakeholders on the development and implementation of information and knowledge policies and strategies; facilitating (or engaging in) high level collaboration amongst government agencies to help develop national information policies;

3. Creating multistakeholder forums (with the involvement of government officials, private sector, NGOs and academia) for an ongoing debate on national information and knowledge policies and strategies, their development and implementation; establishing partnerships with civil society and private sector organizations;

4. Convening multistakeholder conferences or thematic discussions on IFAP priority areas, information for development, information literacy, information ethics, information accessibility and information preservation;

5. Involvement in the international debate on Information and Knowledge Society issues, contributing ideas developed at IFAP national and international level; promotion of a public dialogue on these issues, *inter alia* by recognizing or awarding the work of media or journalists specializing in them;

6. Identifying and undertaking national or regional projects that respond to the needs of other stakeholders in their countries or regions;

7. Maintaining contacts and cooperation with other IFAP National Committees on questions of mutual interest, for the purposes of exchanging best practices and creating, and participating in, regular or task-oriented networks of National IFAP Committees;

8. Participating in, and contributing to, the IFAP Working Groups;

9. Raising funds for their own activities and for supporting IFAP projects;

10. Providing information and data for inclusion in the online IFAP Information Society Observatory;

11. Regularly disseminating information about IFAP objectives and activities provided by the UNESCO/IFAP Secretariat, including via a national IFAP webpage, separately and on a common website designated by the IFAP Bureau, so as to create *inter alia* an information bank on work conducted by National IFAP Committees and its results and on national experts who could assist institutions or other countries with their expertise;

12. Organising periodic national IFAP meetings and preparing an annual report on national activities to be addressed to the UNESCO/IFAP Secretariat for publication by UNESCO and consideration by the IFAP Intergovernmental Council;

13. Facilitating appropriate national inputs to, and participation in, as a member or as an observer, the sessions of the IFAP Intergovernmental Council, and IFAP-related international and regional meetings;

14. Maintaining relations and cooperation with UNESCO Field Offices.

Structure and location

1. The IFAP National Committee should include representatives of all major national stakeholder groups in the Information Society, including ministries; parliamentary committees; libraries and archives; informatics, telematics and telecommunication infrastructure entrepreneurs and service providers; education and training institutions in the areas of information science and informatics; users of information and Information and Communication Technology services in education, science, culture and communication; producers of information and digital content; local communities and civil society.

2. Given the transversal and multisectorial nature of Information Society policy and programmes, and the need for the National IFAP Committee to incorporate all stakeholders and operate across administrative and other divisions, it would be best if it could be established and operate under the auspices of a government body of equally comprehensive competences.

3. The secretariat for IFAP National Committee could be established, for example:

   - within a national advisory board or committee on the information society, information resource development, or ICTs;

   - as a specialized committee of the National Commission for UNESCO.

   A working body of the IFAP National Committee can also be established. A legal body of whatever organisational and juridical form can fulfil its functions.

4. Many UNESCO National Commissions already have committees dealing with communication and information. An IFAP National Committee is needed to: i) concentrate on Information Society issues, ii) have a mandate and resources to contribute more substantively to IFAP, and iii) as a platform for regular informal as well as formal consultation with the UNESCO/IFAP Secretariat and with other IFAP National Committees.

5. For a national coordination framework to be effective, specific responsibilities should be agreed in terms of information flow between national coordination entities and UNESCO, the expected contributions of the national coordination entities to IFAP, and the support function of UNESCO vis-à-vis these entities.

6. The IFAP National Committee should have Statutes which clearly define its membership, mandate and procedures.

Funding

1. The IFAP National Committee needs a budget to fund its own functioning and activities. This should, where possible, come from a central government allocation.

2. The Committee also needs funds for national IFAP activities and national participation in regional and international IFAP meetings.

3. The IFAP National Committee should have the right to cooperate with legal entities and individuals within its authority, and authorize them to obtain budgetary and extra-budgetary finance for Committee work.

4. Any of several methods of financing could be used, depending on national circumstances, alone or in combination, for example:

Structural funding:

*   allocations from concerned ministries and public agencies (including, in industrialized countries, the agency responsible for international development assistance); this should be oriented towards the implementation of the Committee's action plan;

*   contributions of institutions represented on the National Committee (though this should not be a condition for their involvement in the work of the Committee for institutions unable to make such contributions);

*   fees, where appropriate (and again not as a barrier to participation), for attendance at national IFAP activities;

Project-related funding:

*   voluntary sponsorship, including of the private sector, especially in relation to joint projects;

*   funding from government and other institutions for sector-specific projects in their areas.