



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Organisation  
des Nations Unies  
pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture

# Director-General's Consultation with Member States and National Commissions for UNESCO of the Europe and North America Region on the Preparation of the Medium-Term Strategy for 2014-2021 (37 C/4) and the Programme and Budget for 2014-2017 (37 C/5)

## Recommendations concerning the new Medium-Term strategy of UNESCO (C/4)

ZERO DRAFT  
as of 29 August 2012

In order to make the best possible use of the time of the gathering in Bratislava, the organizers proposed, with regard to the **Recommendations concerning the new Medium-Term Strategy of UNESCO (C/4)**, to collect **input** from the participants **in advance** and to **prepare a zero draft**, based on this input, before the meeting starts. The Secretary-Generals of the National Commissions of Germany and Latvia declared their readiness to assume the charge of organizing this **informal preparatory process**.

### I. UNESCO's new Medium-Term Strategy 2014-2021 (37 C/4)

1. The next C/4 sets out the strategic framework for UNESCO for the years 2014 to 2021<sup>1</sup>.
2. The C/4 should coherently position UNESCO and its priorities in the UN-system as a whole. As a global Think Tank, UNESCO will have to improve coordination with other key players in the UN system who are involved in defining the United Nations development agenda especially with respect to the post-2015 MDG/SDG (Millennium Development Goals/Sustainable Development Goals) period and UNESCO needs to be prepared to step up its efforts for that period. As a document, the C/4 should be succinct, precise, focusing on main strategic lines and on core messages. While not being destined to the general public at large, its terminology as well as its structure should make it accessible to a wider readership, namely members of the civil society who regularly interact with the Organization and contribute to the progress of its work. It should be of use as a document of reference in decision making processes and understandable and interesting at administrative and governmental level in all Member States.

### II. A new UNESCO in an evolving global context

3. The complex and changing context for UNESCO's work is marked by intensifying globalisation, an increasing interdependence of the world's economies, new dynamics in international relations. Modern means of mobility and communication create a virtual global neighbourhood giving highest relevance to the issue of constructively dealing with cultural diversity among and within our societies. Inequalities and exclusion continue to exist or even increase. Unsustainable use of natural resources, climate change, persisting poverty, the food crisis, continuous violations of human rights, infringement on the freedom of expression and barriers to independent and pluralistic media are only some of the challenges humanity is facing.

<sup>1</sup> Based on the decision of the 36 General Conference



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4. Global financial and economic problems affect especially the young and put at risk social equity. Worldwide youth unemployment is rising to excessive levels. The demographic development will create new pressure to find viable solutions in order to offer a life in dignity for all of the world's citizens: according to recent statistics, world population will further grow from 7 to 9 billion in the next decades; in 2050, it is likely that 90% of the world's school-aged population will live in developing countries. In today's world we count as many young people as never before in human history – a generation that strives for a life in dignity, that has a right to benefit from the wealth of the world's resources and that has to learn to contribute to building sustainable and inclusive societies in a new spirit of a responsible global citizenship.
5. Multilateral cooperation must step up its efforts to give coordinated responses to the challenges we are facing. A new balance between decision making at the level of Nation States and the need of global governance, the involvement of new partners, a more substantial association of civil societies, the definition of a new global development agenda are among the issues to be taken up by the agencies of the United Nations. In this framework, the multilateral system is undergoing a redefinition of its functioning. UNESCO will have to clearly define its contribution to foreseeable future developments. Therefore, it will need to sharpen its profile and build on its comparative advantages. Programmes and activities which are not compatible with the new role UNESCO is defining for itself need to be reconsidered or terminated.

### III. Issues of strategic relevance for UNESCO in the next Decade

6. The overall issue for the period 2013 to 2021 will be UNESCO's contribution to **building sustainable (green) and inclusive societies and to creating better conditions for the young, especially through a quality education that gives them the values and the competences to become global citizens able to responsibly contribute to the future of their societies**. The outcome document of Rio+20 ("The Future we want") is an important reference to build upon. UNESCO with its undeniable intellectual competence in the fields of education, sciences, culture and communication/information will have to make a distinguishable contribution to the definition of Sustainable Development Goals for the UN system and to effectively work to achieve these goals.
7. **Education** will be the key to ensuring better prospects for the youth and to promote the knowledge and the values that are needed to ensure sustainable development. UNESCO will have to be the agency steadfastly committed to promote Quality Education for all as an education that provides the values, knowledge, skills and competencies for sustainable living and participation in society and decent work, an education that brings new relevance, quality, meaning and purpose to education and training systems.
8. **Quality education** is relevant and evidence-based education, concretely enabling the young to contribute to the development of their societies. Education should be closer linked to the acquisition of practical skills and labour-market experience. Excessively high rates of youth unemployment have to be addressed by a much stronger support for and new approaches in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), through an enhanced engineering initiative and through the development of entrepreneurial competences. Learning in a more and more complex world is not limited to school: Life-long learning is an increasingly important concept that has to be promoted and implemented in all societies in order to enhance inclusion and quality of life. There is a double challenge: to promote education relevant to life after school but also to provide an education which promotes values such as critical thinking, intercultural awareness and global citizenship.



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9. The right to education should be transformed into the right to quality education. The concept of an **Education for Sustainable Development** (ESD) that has been elaborated in the Decade for ESD needs to be taken fully into account and integrated systematically in the concept of Quality Education. ESD is presently the most substantive response to increase the quality and relevance of education in accordance with and in support of all international efforts to reach more sustainability. Education is a crucial dimension in the view of changing people's mindsets towards a more sustainable future. UNESCO must therefore continue to keep up its coordination of ESD strongly after the Decade for ESD (2005-2014).
10. The concept of a sustainable development can be defined as the overarching issue for UNESCO's contribution in the **Sciences**. Political decision-making will in the future depend even more on relevant scientific expertise. For a sustainable development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century this will be a main issue. The sciences programmes of UNESCO should clearly respond to this need and contribute to create effective linkages between the Sciences and modern governance.
11. A main strategic issue for UNESCO in the next decade will have to be water as an important source of life. The issues of **Freshwater** and the **Oceans** require a global and even stronger commitment of the UN system in the next decade. UNESCO can, through the IHP and the IOC, significantly contribute to advances in these areas. The successful concept of **Man and Biosphere Reserves**, as model regions of sustainable land use, should be further developed as a global network of best practices generating know-how and experiences in the sustainable management of natural resources.
12. The ability to deal with **Cultural Diversity** among and within our societies is a main issue in the new concept of a global citizenship. Learning to experience diversity not as a threat, but as an element of life's riches, as a resource and a basic dimension of human freedom is an important challenge for the next decade. This concept of Diversity is dealt with, in different forms, in all of UNESCO's conventions in the field of culture through which UNESCO is already making an important contribution to setting global standards and shaping people's thinking on a global level. This concept of diversity fosters dialogue and peace, counters violence, strengthens human rights and enables people from different cultures, regions and social groups to take advantage from the development of knowledge and new communication opportunities.
13. **Cultural Heritage** is a very important part of the values and the knowledge previous generations have transmitted to us. To develop a sense for the diversity of the world's cultural heritage is an essential dimension of an education for sustainable development and an education for a global citizenship. In the field of cultural heritage, UNESCO has gained through its work of decades a strong credibility which it needs to maintain and to more closely connect to the overall strategic issues of Quality Education, Sustainability, Inclusiveness and Cultural Diversity.
14. The development of new **Information** and **Communication** technologies is thoroughly transforming the ways in which knowledge is produced and shared. Communication and Information are cross-cutting issues relevant for all of UNESCO's programmes. The World Wide Web creates totally new possibilities for global access to information and interactive exchange. UNESCO will have to more consequently develop ways to use these possibilities for its own strategic objectives, e.g. in the field of Open Educational Resources. In the era of new information and communication technologies the right to **access to information** and **freedom of expression** have an increasingly important role as parts of **human rights** and **fundamental freedoms**, instrumental as well for effectively implementing the right to education.

15. Upholding **human rights**, including **freedom of expression** and **freedom of the press**, and promoting **universally agreed norms and standards** in all its fields of competence, as well as fostering **democracy, inclusiveness** and **sustainability** are fundamental and cross-cutting objectives UNESCO has to firmly commit itself to in the next decade. It has to address exclusion, marginalization, violations of human rights and contribute to strengthening the value of human dignity through all of its programmes and activities. Access to and distribution of **global common goods** will become in the next decade an issue UNESCO could contribute to in its fields of competence. UNESCO has important contributions to make in accompanying the **transformation processes** in young democratic societies.

#### IV. How to deliver

16. In many if not all of the above mentioned issues, UNESCO enjoys substantial **expertise and competence**. In future, political decision-making will have to be linked more closely to relevant scientific expertise. This offers new opportunities UNESCO should be prepared to seize.
17. All these issues of strategic relevance are **interconnected** and need to be dealt with in an **intersectoral manner**. The post-2015 MDG/SDG single frame to be agreed upon and the future strategy of UNESCO must take due regard for equity and related environmental, social, cultural and human rights considerations. The interconnectedness of all development goals must be fully recognized. This also requires increased cooperation between the various UN agencies and a clearer division of labour within the UN. There are key inter-linkages between poverty reduction, education, health and gender equality. For example, the relative and narrow MDG success in education does not, and must not, mean that the international agenda is done with education – on the contrary, quality education from early childhood care and education, youth and adult literacy to skills and lifelong learning should be considered in the forward-looking post 2015 thinking and planning. Basic education for all is a must, but not enough. Inter- and intrasectoral work have to be combined. UNESCO needs to adopt an interdisciplinary approach towards addressing key challenges.
18. To understand, tackle and foresee future developments, UNESCO, through its still valid mandate, has an important contribution to make in all its areas of competence, mainly through **policy advice, monitoring** and **capacity building**. Today, nothing is as indispensable as quality education and learning throughout life for an inclusive, equitable and sustainable development.
19. UNESCO is the agency within the United Nations system most open to cooperation with a wide range of agencies and partners worldwide that, with their expertise and resources substantially, contribute to UNESCO's work. While there needs to be clear criteria, clarification of expectations and sunset clauses when UNESCO starts cooperation with partners, UNESCO needs to develop the spirit of a more participatory Organization, open to the global expertise available and open to close cooperation with strong partners. In this context, the unique network of over 195 **National Commissions for UNESCO**, ensuring UNESCO's presence in all Member States and connecting the organization to the civil society, offers a great advantage and has to be used to its full potential.
20. Success in reaching strategic objectives is only possible through modern and professional **Management**. Governance is crucial, as is accountability. By now, there are too many planning instruments, too many priorities and too many small programmes and activities benefiting only sub-sections of societies in a limited number of Member States. Enhancing the effectiveness of UNESCO's field presence is important. Human resources policies and



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strategies need to be modernized and adapted to the strategic objectives of the Organization. Some of the strategic targets of the new Medium-Term Strategy will have long-term implications and need to be taken into account when developing a new management and governance concept of the Organization.

## V. UNESCO in the Europe and North America Region

21. What is the specific role UNESCO should play in the region of **Europe and North America** (ENA)? It should cooperate as closely as possible and seek synergies, not duplicate, with the EU, CoE, OSCE and the OECD. The visibility of the EU Liaison Office should be stepped up and MOU's with relevant organisations be updated. We emphasize that UNESCO is a global, intergovernmental organization, primarily not a development agency. It is important to make the organization relevant also for the donor countries. Human Rights, ESD, inclusive and sustainable societies, youth, development of science and quality education from early childhood education and care, youth and adult literacy to skills and lifelong learning are examples of global concerns. In the ENA region, UNESCO can have a stronger role as a policy advisor, laboratory of ideas, builder of networks and provider of monitoring services. National Commissions from the ENA Region as well as European and North American national civil society and non-governmental organizations are most willing to support UNESCO in the formulation and the achievement of its strategic objectives.

## VI. A new UNESCO in 2021

22. The new strategy should provide a **vision** of how UNESCO will look like in **2021**. UNESCO should, after having upheld its reform efforts and after having repositioned itself in responding to the most important global issues, have become a credible, relevant, well-resourced and well-governed intergovernmental specialized UN-agency focusing on a selected number of key functions in its areas of competence. It will be a much leaner organization with well-defined and modern working methods, a professional and globally oriented Secretariat. This new UNESCO will have developed a clear sense of what it should not and will not do. It will be an organisation with a strong human rights vocation, respecting its mandate in a focused manner. It will, finally, be recognized for its global leadership in the issues pertaining to its mandate and respected and supported for the responses it is giving to these issues.
23. UNESCO will **communicate** its objectives and achievements successfully. It will cooperate successfully with the unique global **network of National Commissions** to create an enhanced **visibility** for its action in all of its Member States.
24. Programme success depends on improved **governance**: to overcome the challenges, there must be continued efforts and commitment to improve governance and the integration of an even stronger accountability culture across the Secretariat. The level of programme ambition must not be lowered, but remain realistic and focused on core priorities, with clear exit strategies and dropping of smaller scale projects and initiatives. As the C/4 mirrors the C/5, the number of expected results should be limited to only a few for each Main Line of Action (also still to be streamlined), the same goes for performance indications and benchmarks.
25. Another challenge is to overcome resource and time consuming working methods and over-administration. UNESCO is still perceived as one of the most bureaucratic organizations. Very little change will happen if UNESCO is not rapidly able to move to sharpened systemic approaches, new policy mixes, improved governance, more and better coherence and concentration. When carried through, these reforms will make a difference for delivery and impact in the Member States, in stronger synergy with other UN agencies. The Organization

will fully benefit from its networks by having developed flexible, light and focused ways of interaction. It will use the best tools available for its work.



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