



Memory of the World Programme
Discussed by National Commissions for UNESCO
in Riga, Latvia

From December 7 to 9 2011, an International Meeting of National Commissions for UNESCO will be held in Riga, Latvia with the participation of 15 UNESCO Member States. The main objective is the contribution of National Commissions for UNESCO to the Organization's work and implementation of its programmes in Member States. Priorities and goals of mutual cooperation will be discussed within the framework of European National Commissions and also National Commissions outside Europe.

In this meeting, Secretaries General of National Commissions for UNESCO and experts will discuss UNESCO programmes and instruments, including education programmes, 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and its implementation in national cultural policies. Particular attention will be paid to the UNESCO Memory of the World Programme. Latvia has actively raised the discussion on the role of National Memory of the World Registers and different experiences and best practices of their functioning. In 2009 a National Register was established in Latvia, and it has proven to be a fruitful and welcome initiative helping to reconsider documentary treasures that reflect national history. Latvia is taking an active position in promotion of this programme, and National Commissions for UNESCO have a crucial role therein.

"Latvian National Commission for UNESCO has taken the initiative to reconsider and strengthen the role of National Commissions and their work within UNESCO and in its member states. This initiative has been widely appreciated and Latvia has taken one of the leading roles in the process of explaining the role of National Commissions for UNESCO, first of all in the framework of the organization itself. In this context, it is especially important to understand and highlight that UNESCO has the task to defend the development of its member states. The main tools of UNESCO are programmes of education, science, culture, communication and information, development of international normative instruments and promotion of their implementation, and also the underlining of values to be strengthened interdisciplinary at national level. National Commissions are able to make important contribution to adjust these tools responsibly for dealing with the problematic issues of every member state," says Dagnija Baltiņa, Secretary General of Latvian National Commission for UNESCO.

Dagnija Baltiņa was appointed the president of the interregional meeting of National Commissions for UNESCO, held on October 24, within the 36th session of General Conference. The international meeting of National Commissions for UNESCO is a further contribution to Latvia's work on strengthening the role of National Commissions for UNESCO.

In 2011 with financial support provided under UNESCO's Participation Programme, the Latvian National Commission conducted a survey on the implementation of the Memory of the World Programme (MoW) by studying the experience of countries in implementing the Programme at national level and



managing National Memory of the World Registers. A questionnaire was elaborated by the Latvian National Commission for UNESCO in cooperation with the UNESCO Knowledge Society Division. To date, replies from more than 60 countries from different regions have been received and the analysis of countries' experience is underway. This initiative has already raised the interest of UNESCO and its member states.

During the 36th session of UNESCO General Conference a resolution proposed by Poland and actively supported by Latvia was adopted concerning the future work of the Memory of the World, emphasizing preservation and accessibility of documentary heritage, and also paying attention to the importance of establishing and managing regional and national registers. One of important aspects at this regard is the growing role of National Commissions in the implementation of MoW.

In Latvia, MoW was started with the establishment of the National Committee in 2001 and was transformed in 2008 into the Council of Communication and Information Programmes of the Latvian National Commission for UNESCO. Latvia has a special interest in the implementation of the Programme at national level and the development worldwide of National Memory of the World Registers.

In 2012, MoW will be celebrating its twentieth anniversary. This is an opportune moment for appreciating the world's documentary heritage and its significance. Latvia is strongly convinced about the nature of the Programme and its growing importance in the future.

Information prepared by
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