

**Intergovernmental Council for the Information for All Programme
(Sixth Session)**

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Item 6(a) of the provisional agenda

**CONSIDERATION OF THE FUTURE MODALITIES OF THE OPERATION
OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL COUNCIL**

Analysis of the IFAP Statutes and Rules of Procedure

During its 5th Session (April 2-4, 2008), the Intergovernmental Council of the Information for All Programme adopted a Decision which included the following paragraph: "Resolves to consider the future modalities of its operation at the 6th Session in Paris in 2010".

The present analysis is meant to assist Council members in considering the future modalities of its operation and in determining the goals and role of the Programme. It was conducted on the basis of the following documents:

1. The Decision of the Executive Board (160 EX/Decision 3.6.1) from 2000 on "Replacement of the General Information Programme (PGI) and of the Intergovernmental Informatics Programme (IIP) by a new intergovernmental programme (160 EX/17 Rev. and 160 EX/52)";
2. Statutes of the Intergovernmental Council for the Information for All Programme as approved by the Executive Board at its 160th session (160 EX/Decision 3.6.1) and modified by the Executive Board at its 162nd session (162 EX/Decision 3.7.2);
3. Functioning of the Council, a document presented by the Director-General during its first session in 2002 to assist the Intergovernmental Council for the Information for All Programme in the discussion on its responsibilities and procedures;
4. IFAP Rules of Procedure.

1. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF IFAP

Documents

The fullest definition of the goals and objectives of IFAP can be found in the Executive Board decision establishing the Programme. It defines the mandate of the Programme as follows:

1. *The Information for All Programme shall be 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".*
2. *The programme shall contribute to narrowing the gap between the information rich and the information poor.*

3. *The programme shall take direct initiatives, commission studies, facilitate cooperation, analyse and report on all aspects of access to and management of information.*
4. *Because of its transdisciplinary nature, the programme shall give priority to working with all UNESCO sectors in the adaptation of ICT to their activities.*
5. *The programme shall cooperate closely with other bodies of the United Nations system, other intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations, and with the private sector in order to fulfil this mandate.*

As for the objectives of IFAP, the Decision reads:

1. *The Information for All Programme shall 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.*
2. *As a transverse UNESCO programme, the Information for All Programme shall provide a framework for international cooperation and international and regional partnerships. In order to implement the above-mentioned policies, the programme shall support the development of common strategies, methods and tools for building a just and free information society.*
3. *In particular, the Information for All Programme shall aim to:*
 - (a) *promote and widen access through the organization, digitization and preservation of information;*
 - (b) *support the production of local content and foster the availability of indigenous knowledge through basic literacy and ICT literacy training;*
 - (c) *promote international reflection and debate on the ethical, legal and societal challenges of the information society;*
 - (d) *support training, continuing education and lifelong learning in the fields of communication, information and informatics;*
 - (e) *promote the use of international standards and best practices in communication, information and informatics in UNESCO's fields of competence;*
 - (f) *promote information and knowledge networking at local, national, regional and international levels.*

The document Functioning of the Council points to another possible goal of IFAP:

7. *Both Member States and the Secretariat should be entitled to originate extra budgetary projects (...)*
9. *The Council may wish to entrust the Bureau, assisted by the Secretariat, to establish criteria for the design and the implementation of extrabudgetary projects.*

Comment

The Executive Board's clear and very ambitious intention in 2000 was to position IFAP as the main international platform for policy debates and development in the Information/Knowledge Society field, covering all the issues involved. IFAP was also meant to be a framework for cooperation with

and between all UNESCO sectors, as well as with other bodies of the United Nations system, other intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations, and with the private sector.

In addition, IFAP can provide a framework for the implementation of extra-budgetary projects.

2. METHODS OF IMPLEMENTING IFAP GOALS: IFAP – A PROGRAMME OF THE COUNCIL OR OF UNESCO?

Documents

IFAP Statutes state in Article 1

An Intergovernmental Council for the Information for All Programme, hereafter called the Council, is hereby established within the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

IFAP Statutes add in Article 5

Within the framework of the decisions of the General Conference concerning the Information for All Programme, the Council shall guide its planning and implementation.

In its Decision, the Executive Board Decision defines implementation methods in the following way:

15. 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 shall emphasize and enhance the role of external collaboration and partnering in its work within UNESCO and in its support of external programmes. It shall actively seek cooperation with other international programmes within and outside the United Nations family in order to harmonize positions and policies. Collaboration with stakeholder NGOs and the private sector shall be established in order to create a multiplier effect from improved communication and collaboration to contribute to achieving the objectives of the programme. Internal cooperation shall be enhanced so that the programme becomes a close partner of UNESCO sectors. The programme shall use ICT in implementing its activities and to establish permanent dialogue with interested communities.

The document Functioning of the Council expands on this in the following way:

1. The role of the Intergovernmental Council for the Information for All Programme is to guide the planning and implementation of the Programme. This includes, in particular, considering proposals on the development and adaptation of the Information for All Programme and recommending the broad lines of action that the Programme could take. The Council shall also review and assess the achievements and define the basic areas requiring increased international co-operation. In addition, the Council shall promote participation of Member States in the Information for All Programme.

The document also adds:

4. The Council will be consulted on the content of the draft biennial programmes (C/5) and medium term strategies (C/4) of the Organization. This consultation may be before or after the formal consultation of Member States organized by UNESCO, depending on the dates fixed by the Council for its meetings.

5. The Council will be briefed on the ongoing regular programme and its evaluation, and will be invited to advise on its implementation including suggestions and offers of assistance concerning the implementation of specific activities.

Comment

On the basis of these documents, there seems to be little doubt that “Information for All” is the programme of all of UNESCO (the Statutes make that clear by referring in Article 8.4 to “UNESCO’s Information for All Programme”) and the role of the Council is to serve as a specialized policy, standard-setting and advisory body, assisting the Director-General, the Executive Board and the General Conference in the definition of UNESCO strategies and activities in the Information/Knowledge Society field and in guiding their implementation. These documents do not position IFAP as a separate entity, expected to develop and implement its own programme of activity.

3. TASKS OF IFAP BODIES

COUNCIL

Documents

Article 5 of IFAP Statutes on the Council’s functions reads:

Within the framework of the decisions of the General Conference concerning the Information for All Programme, the Council shall guide its planning and implementation. This shall, in particular, include:

- (a) considering proposals on the development and adaptation of the Information for All Programme;*
- (b) recommending the broad lines of action that the Information for All Programme could take;*
- (c) reviewing and assessing achievements and defining the basic areas requiring increased international co-operation;*
- (d) promoting participation of Member States in the Information for All Programme;*
- (e) supporting all fund raising efforts for the implementation of the Information for All Programme.*

The document Functioning of the Council (already cited above) adds the following:

1. The role of the Intergovernmental Council for the Information for All Programme is to guide the planning and implementation of the Programme. This includes, in particular, considering proposals on the development and adaptation of the Information for All Programme and recommending the broad lines of action that the Programme could take. The Council shall also review and assess the achievements and define the basic areas requiring increased international co-operation. In addition, the Council shall promote participation of Member States in the Information for All Programme.

The document Functioning of the Council also describes the Council’s tasks in the following way:

The Council may wish to entrust the Bureau, assisted by the Secretariat, to establish criteria for the design and the implementation of extrabudgetary projects (...)

The Council may wish to establish guidelines for the creation of national co-ordination frameworks or mechanisms for the Information for All Programme, for example national IFAP focal points and/or committees.

Comment

IFAP documents do not assign to the Council any practical tasks or activities. Rather, its tasks are strategic and administrative.

BUREAU**Documents**

According to the Statutes:

The Bureau “[is] considered as a subsidiary body of the Council” (Statutes, Art. 4.2) and “shall discharge such duties as the Council may confer upon it” (Statutes, Art. 6.3).

The document Functioning of the Council explains

The role of the Bureau, that is composed of a Chairperson, three Vice-Chairpersons, three other members and a Rapporteur, all representatives of Member States of UNESCO, is to discharge such duties as the Council may confer upon it . This includes to

- *Instruct the Secretariat of the Council to convene its ordinary sessions;*
- *Cooperate with the Secretariat in the preparation of the provisional agenda of the sessions of the Council;*
- *Designate a replacement of the Chairperson, if she/he ceases to represent a State, member of the Council, or is so incapacitated that he/she can no longer hold office ;*
- *Revise the list of international governmental and non-governmental organizations that may be invited to participate in the proceedings of the Council once the Council has established the conditions on criteria for such invitations ;*
- *Consult the Members by correspondence, should the approval of the Council be required for measures of exceptional urgency and importance while the Council is not in session .*

Comment

The Bureau is not designed to be the executive body of the Council and is not expected to go beyond performing formal functions, though the Council may confer upon it any duties it sees fit, including executive ones.

WORKING GROUPS AND NATIONAL COMMITTEES**Documents**

The Statutes state in Article 4

2. Under its Rules of Procedure, the Council may establish whatever working groups it considers appropriate, provided that the necessary financial resources are available, the Bureau being considered as a subsidiary body of the Council.

The document Functioning of the Council states as concerns National Coordination Mechanisms for the Information for All Programme:

11. The Council may wish to establish guidelines for the creation of national co-ordination frameworks or mechanisms for the Information for All Programme, for example national IFAP focal points and/or committees.

Comment

The roles and tasks of both types of bodies depend on Council decisions which may, as far as working groups are concerned, be taken if the necessary financial resources are available.

4. SECRETARIAT AND FUNDING

Documents

According to Article 8 of the Statutes

1. *The Secretariat of the Council shall be provided by the Director-General of UNESCO, who shall place at the Council's disposal the staff and other means required for its operation.*
2. *The Secretariat shall provide the necessary services for the sessions of the Council and meetings of its subsidiary bodies.*
3. *The Secretariat shall fix the date of the Council's sessions in accordance with the Bureau's instructions, and shall take the steps required to convene such sessions.*
4. *The Secretariat shall assemble all suggestions and comments made by Member States of UNESCO and the international organizations concerned, with regard to UNESCO's Information for All Programme as a whole and the formulation of specific projects, and shall prepare them for examination by the Council.*

The document Functioning of the Council adds:

6. *Projects can be funded by extrabudgetary resources (Voluntary contributions, Funds-in-Trusts, self benefiting Funds-in-Trusts, etc.). A Special Fund for Information for All Programme already exists formally, as the continuation of the Special Fund for the former Intergovernmental Informatics Programme (IIP). The Council may wish to advise how this fund should be built up, promoted, and managed, and on its own role as well as that of its Bureau and of the Secretariat in the administration of this fund.*

Article 5 of IFAP Statutes on the Council's functions lists among them:

- (e) *supporting all fund raising efforts for the implementation of the Information for All Programme.*

Comment

It is clear that as the Council and Bureau have no staff or their own, and meet only infrequently, there is no expectation that they will undertake any executive or secretarial functions, or engage in fund-raising, though they should support such efforts and advise on how extra-budgetary funds may be obtained and how they should be managed.

5. CONCLUSION

The above detailed analysis clearly demonstrates the existing gap between the original functions entrusted to IFAP and the means put at the programme's disposal for their implementation. As long as this gap remains unsuccessfully addressed by UNESCO bodies and the IFAP Council, IFAP will always find difficult to deliver on its full potential and meet the legitimate expectations of Member States.

It also illustrates the need for closer cooperation and synergy between the Secretariat and IFAP Council, as well as for active involvement of all IFAP bodies in achieving its objectives, if IFAP is to play its designated role.

IFAP's evolution in recent years has shown that its original design was originally and now is even more dysfunctional in the present conditions and that a new definition of its role, goals, and implementation schemes for achieving these goals, is required.