



EVALUATION PLAN OF THE MOST NATIONAL LIAISON COMMITTEES (NLCs)

12 May 2005

*The evaluation will follow the mandate, purpose and scope presented in the Terms of Reference (TORs) elaborated by the MOST Secretariat. The Evaluation Plan presents the way it will be operationalized and the implementation arrangements for its execution. The Plan proceeds with a few preliminary observations on the present situation of the NLCs - based on information that exists in official documents and in previous analyses of MOST. It then outlines in detail the Methodology of the Evaluation i.e. **what** items will be evaluated (Section A), focusing on the issues to be addressed in keeping with the basic purpose of the evaluation, namely “to adjust the structure and operations of the NLCs in order to implement the new mission of MOST” and **how** the evaluation will be carried out (Section B), with special attention to data collection and analysis. Finally, the Evaluation Plan presents the **work schedule**, which takes into account the very heavy time constraints under which it is to be carried out.*

I. Preliminary observations on the present situation of the National Liaison Committees (NLCs) or other structures/institutions responsible for the MOST Programme at the national level.

The National Liaison Committees (NLCs) are established with the mandate to create and enhance the links between the MOST Programme and national social science and policy communities and thus serve national programme development and implementation (cf. Recommendation 7 of the First Session of the Intergovernmental Council (IGC) of MOST of 7-10 March 1994 and Recommendation 2 of the IGC’s Second Session of 3-7 July 1995. Member States are free to establish the structure and composition of a MOST National Liaison Committee according to their own priorities. They are constituted with the support of UNESCO National Commissions, in conformity with Resolution 13.1 of the 28th General Conference. Alternatively, an institution with responsibility for science policy, such as a national research council, may function as a liaison committee.

The NLCs include, on the one hand social science researchers based in universities or other research institutions and, on the other hand, representatives of bodies co-ordinating research funding and of research-user groups such as governments, the private sector, trade unions, professional associations, NGOs or community based organisations. Their roles and functions were defined as follows:

- identify and motivate national institutions concerned with social science research related to the principle thematic interests of the MOST Programme, with particular emphasis on involving younger generations of researchers and university teachers;

- regularly disseminate information about MOST Programme activities sent by the MOST Secretariat to National Commissions;
- constitute a permanent forum to facilitate the flow of information between UNESCO-MOST and interested national institutions;
- assist the constitution of national research networks; and
- Assist in obtaining funding for groups participating in MOST projects from national bodies such as national research councils, or appropriate government Ministries (Research, Education, Science and Technology, Social Development, Foreign Affairs etc.).

Previous Analyses of the National Liaison Committees (NLCs). The Intergovernmental Council of MOST examined the work of the NLCs at its statutory meetings and adopted appropriate recommendations to improve their activity. More extensive analyses of how Member States have set up structures to handle MOST issues at the national level were made in the *MOST Evaluation Report (1994-2001)* and in the *Proposals for MOST Phase II*, elaborated by Professor Elvi Whittaker. Taking note of the fact that “the countries are free to set up their structure, functioning, and funding as they wish”, the Evaluation Report concluded that Member States have adopted widely varying solutions for the proper functioning of MOST at the national and local levels. Proper NLCs have been set up only in 61 countries and, according to the Report, “their level of activity varies, depending on available funding and the enthusiasm of their members...”.

The Evaluation Report identified a series of issues facing the NLCs, which are related to their ability to (i) reach the scientific community, and especially the younger researchers, (ii) to secure supportive links with funding agencies and (iii) to reach out to the national policy-making bodies and to the society, a function, which, in the opinion of the evaluators, was “...only partially fulfilled.” It further stressed that “counting upon a variety of active scholars and policy makers who would have different skills and experience could really advance the goals of MOST within NLCs and constitute a partial solution to the problem of inactivity of NLCs.”

The observations concerning NLCs made by Professor Elvi Whittaker in the document mentioned above corroborate the conclusions of the Evaluation Report: the NLCs do not perform as originally envisaged and expected, because they (i) lack funds, (ii) are, often, not fully informed about MOST and its work, (iii) do not make use of MOST results in planning and implementing their own activities, and (iv) meet only occasionally - usually upon request of their National Commissions – simply to fulfil a cursory provision on the role of NLCs as part of MOST.

Professor Whittaker made several proposals to improve the work of the NLCs:

- to look at liaison committees of other UNESCO scientific Programmes (e.g. MAB, IOC for which Guidelines have been or are to be elaborated) in order to find more efficient structures and links;
- to initiate a reporting system (biannual);

- to consider the setting up of looser, thematic structures, working as research networks, which are kept alive by shared academic interests. Her advice is “to use them for MOST, but not as appendages of MOST”.

MOST Phase II and the Role of NLCs. Based on the external evaluation of MOST undertaken in 2002, and following broad consultations at various levels, MOST has been redirected both thematically and logistically. Following the recommendations of the 6th session of the Intergovernmental Council of the MOST Programme (February 2003) and the debates held at the 166th Session of the Executive Board of UNESCO (April 2003) MOST has been reoriented in line with the overall concentration effort specified in UNESCO’s Medium Term Strategy for 2002-2007 (31 C/4).

In light of this renewal and reorientation, while continuing “to promote the development and use of social science knowledge that contributes to better understanding and management of social transformations consistent with the universal values of justice, freedom, human dignity and sustainable development”, the Programme’s thrust will be centred around *bridging efficiently research, policy and practice* by focusing on how to *broker policy-relevant knowledge* to a range of established and emerging *policy-actors* and to support multi-actor approaches conducive to the *generation of evidence-based policy*.

Through Phase II of the MOST Programme it is expected to arrive at an:

- Improved image of the usefulness of research results for policy design and implementation with policy-makers, media and communities;
- Improved information and learning processes with a view to integrating research results in strategic/policy-frames;
- Improved quality of decision-making and policy implementation; and
- Enhanced public acceptance of social policies.

It is obvious that, in order to reach these objectives, the role, functions and activities of the NLCs need to be reinforced considerably. In the last analysis, the success (or failure) of the Programme depends on the concrete action taken at the local, national and – increasingly- regional and international levels, upon the initiative and with the full support of NLCs. The decisions and recommendations of the governing bodies of MOST provide guidelines and directions of action and the MOST Secretariat tries to coordinate, encourage and support action through the services and means it can offer. But it is the action taken by NLCs that ultimately counts.

This is the first comprehensive evaluation of the NLCs undertaken within the framework of MOST. The TORs identify the “fundamental issue” of the evaluation in terms of adjusting “...the structure and operations of the NLCs in order to implement the new mission of the Programme”. It is undertaken with the strong conviction that the NLCs have a great responsibility –but also a great potential - to render MOST more *credible* and *visible* and *to increase its impact*.

An attempt will be made through the evaluation to define - by taking stock of best on-going practices and experiences and by developing new initiatives – the characteristics of what could be called a “*model NLC*” (or equivalent MOST responsible body). Features of such a model NLC could include the ability to:

- identify, liaise and cooperate closely with the community of researchers engaged in policy-oriented research;
- identify, formulate and propose priority research *themes* and *projects* that respond to real needs (or to specific demands) of decision makers and other stakeholders and actors;
- rally research *teams* and *networks* of well known and fully committed scientists and potential supporters for their implementation;
- establish credibility and legitimacy through the *quality of research* and by persevering knowledge dissemination and advocacy;
- be ready to share knowledge and cooperate with partners at the local, national, regional and international levels.

II. Methodology for the evaluation of the MOST NLCs

The evaluation will follow the methodology outlined in the TORs, adapting it whenever necessary in order to better fit the situation in various countries and to meet the time constraints imposed by the deadline.

A. What will be evaluated?

1. The Structure and the legal and institutional status of the NLCs or of the bodies responsible for MOST issues

Past analyses indicate a great variety of solutions adopted by Member States with regard to the structures, bodies or institutions that handle MOST at the national level. As an outcome of the evaluation, it is expected to arrive – based on the information available, but more especially on information to be collected through a specially designed Questionnaire – at an overall picture of the kind of structures/ bodies and institutions that handle MOST-related issues are dealt with in various countries i.e.:

- an established National Liaison Committee;
- a social science institution (research institute, university department, association, council, NGO) which has already contact with policy makers;
- similar as above, but having less or no contact with policy makers.
- the National UNESCO Commission or one of its subcommittees;

On this basis, the evaluation will attempt to bring to the fore existing practices and experiences that could encourage Member States which have not done so yet, to set up NLCs, or, alternatively, to consider appointing structures/institutions at the national level that could best serve the purposes of MOST at the national level.

With regard to the **legal status** of the NLCs, the evaluation will focus on their links to governmental and policy making bodies in their respective countries.

2. The Composition of NLCs or of equivalent bodies/institutions.

Under this subsection, the evaluation is expected to reveal to what extent MOST NLCs are truly representative of the science-policy interface mechanism in the respective countries by including recognized researchers and other personalities from:

- the main scientific research centres, universities and other academic institutions;
- ministries and other policy and decision-making bodies at various levels that are responsible for MOST's fields of interest;
- professional organizations, the business community, NGOs and of the civil society in general

Attention will also be paid to how the composition of the NLCs assures *interdisciplinarity*, so as to cover the concerned fields of interest of MOST, and to how it encourages the participation of *female/young scientists*. It will also insist on the need to renew and diversify the composition of NLCs in order to enhance their research, networking and outreach capacities.

3. Roles and functions of the NLCs or of equivalent bodies/institutions

Based on existing information and on information to be collected through the Questionnaire, the evaluation will attempt to arrive at a *typology* of NLCs in terms of

- the major roles and functions they perform;
- their links to governmental and decision -making bodies on the one hand and to the research community on the other hand.
- the place they occupy in the science-policy process in their countries, through their capacity to promote research, rally recognized researchers into active networks, assist in the production of relevant and solidly documented research and engage themselves in advocacy action in favour of research-based policy making.

The evaluation will address issues related to the links of NLCs with *natural allies* of MOST at the local, national and regional levels. Thus, it will examine how the relevant UNITWIN networks and UNESCO Chairs are used to support MOST and will look into ways to enhance their involvement in MOST activities in the future. It will also examine the existing links with the other scientific programmes of UNESCO (MAB, IHP, IGCP, IOC, etc.). Whenever this applies, the evaluation will examine links established with other related UN ventures in the respective country, especially with action taken within the framework of programmes and projects run by UN agencies/bodies

(UNDP/WHO/ECOSOC/WHO/UNICEF, etc.) as well as by the World Bank and IMF. Depending on the situation existing in various countries, the evaluation will also examine whether links have been built with projects/programmes in MOST related fields that are carried out with the support of IGOs, agencies and foundations outside the UN system.

On that basis, it will make recommendations as to how such links could be further encouraged and strengthened through concerted action taken by the UNESCO Secretariat on the one hand and by the National Commissions for UNESCO on the other hand.

The outreach capacities of the NLCs will be analysed thoroughly, on the basis of existing information and on data to be obtained through the Questionnaire, through visits to NLCs and interviews with experts involved in MOST activities at the national and regional levels. The emphasis will be placed on their capacity to reach out to the main actors of the policy making process (governmental bodies/agencies/structures and institutions) at all levels (local communities, districts, national, regional). It will also examine their capacities and the practices in use to reach the parliament, the media, the trade unions, the business community, NGOs and other actors of civil society.

4. Activities

Arriving at a comprehensive account of the activities of the NLCs or equivalent bodies will be a major concern of the evaluation. The Questionnaire has been drafted with this purpose in mind and it is hoped that sufficient information will be collected in order to allow for valid appraisals and to formulate convincing proposals for future action. Priority will be given to the way the NLCs assist in *the research-policy interlink*. This is felt necessary because previous analyses indicate a continued persistence of reservations from various quarters with regard to the very idea of bridging research and policy making -especially when applied to “social transformation”. Discussions at previous IGC meetings insisted on the differing views and the difficulties encountered in giving commonly accepted goals or directions to the concept of social transformation. They also pointed out that academic research – based on autonomy and academic freedom – is not easily and reconciled with governmental policy requirements.

The analysis of the activities undertaken by MOST at the national level will accordingly insist on the extent to which the Programme brings *added value* and has an *impact* on the adoption and implementation of policies that are conducive to sustainable social transformation processes through bridging social science research and policy making

4.1. Promoting Policy-Oriented Research relevant for MOST; Enhancing the Research-Policy Link

The evaluation will focus on the capacity of NLCs to initiate and assist policy-oriented research through major *themes and projects* that are of direct interest to policy and decision makers in their own countries and thus increase awareness of MOST at the national level.

The evaluation will examine how the NLCs:

- assist in the identification of priority areas in which research-based evidence is needed in order to formulate viable policies leading to sustainable social transformation;
- assist in the formulation and planning of research projects in such priority areas;
- assist in setting up research teams and networks for their execution;
- build up linkages and maintain continued dialogue between national researchers and policy makers;
- contribute to increased awareness of MOST among the research community, the decision and policy makers and the public opinion and civil society, through persevering, pertinent and credible advocacy action;.
- promote and strengthen the role of the social sciences, in line with UNESCO's overall mission in the fields of science and education.

It is hoped, on the basis of this part of the evaluation to be able to assess to what extent decision makers consider the activity of the MOST NLC (or corresponding body) necessary and useful for the research-policy link.

4.2. Capacity Building and Training Activities

The evaluation will examine the capacity building and training activities through which NLCs contribute to strengthen the scientific, professional and institutional capacities on the policy-research link - particularly in developing countries – namely:

- Established practices for training such as Summer Schools run by UNESCO Chairs and partner institutions in MOST fields (e.g. ISSC, CODESRIA), etc.
- the target audiences included into training activities: social scientists (especially young scholars); various categories of professionals involved in social work and planning for social development; national and local policy-makers; MOST National Liaison Committees; institutions of higher education in social science disciplines; mass media professionals; NGO activists, etc.
- how training is geared so as to strengthen professional planning directly by introducing research-based concepts and analyses and to meet specific training needs for researchers and social science experts in rural and marginal areas.
- whether training materials have been developed or are being planned;
- how is international co-operation used in capacity building and training.

4.3. Collection, Processing and Dissemination of Information.

Through its very nature, MOST relies on the availability of comprehensive information to be used first for research purposes and as convincing evidence for advocacy action. One of the primary tasks of NLCs is therefore to develop capacities for the *collection, processing, use and dissemination of information* for the purposes of MOST. The evaluation will examine in particular:

- whether there exist *national data bases* on social science research, more particularly whether they include *inventories of research institutes and research networks*, of on-going or past projects; *bibliographies* of available literature on MOST related issues, etc.;
- links to similar data basis abroad, including efforts to build up data bases on a regional scale;
- make use of the *MOST Clearing House facilities*, while also contributing to its up dating.

4.4. Communication strategies and outreach capacities

With regard to *communication* strategies, the evaluation will examine to what extent and in what way the NLCs:

- assist in setting up new forms of communication and collaboration between researchers, policy makers and the wider public.
- strengthen their own and the MOST's visibility in the country;
- have contacts with social organisations, media, the private sector, NGOs;
- identify and mobilise groups interested in MOST research themes;
- help the Secretariat to diffuse MOST information/publications to relevant governmental bodies/members of the National Parliament/social organisations/NGOs/ research institutes;
- organise public events on policy questions dealt with under MOST and assure their broad dissemination by the media.

Proposals will be formulate to improve the outreach capabilities of the NLCs, to enhance the visibility of their activities and achieve accrued awareness and deeper understanding of MOST at the national level.

4.5. The use of ICTs.

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) offer tremendous possibilities to MOST. They are used, in the first place, as important *research tools*; they allow for research to be carried out in large teams through their networking capacities; they can be used widely for training, including the provision of training materials trans-nationally, or for providing training on the virtual mode, etc. Above all else, ICTs are indispensable to NLCs for data collection, processing and dissemination of information and as facilitators of regional and international co-operation. The use of ICTs by MOST is still at an initial

stage- both with regard to action taken at the level of the UNESCO Secretariat and, more especially at the level of the NLCs. That is why the evaluation will pay particular attention to the use of ICTs in the activity of the MOST NLCs.

In particular, it will examine the extent to which NLCs:

- have the necessary equipment to make full use of ICTs in their activity;
- use ICTs regularly for carrying out their functions (research facilitation, networking of researchers, training activities, collection, processing and dissemination of information, communication at the national, regional and international levels, etc.;
- make use and contribute to the updating of the MOST Clearing House established by UNESCO;
- envisage upgrading the use of ICTs in their future work

5. Communication and Co-operation Strategies and Practices of the NLCs.

5.1. Communication and Co-operation between NLCs and the MOST Secretariat

Given the major role of the NLCs in providing a link between UNESCO (the MOST Secretariat in particular) and the Member States for the execution of the Programme, a substantial section of the evaluation will be devoted to this issue. Current practices will be examined in detail, with a view to identify ways and means to improve communication and co-operation in the future; In particular, the feasibility and advisability of introducing a regular *periodic reporting system* will be examined.

5.2. Cooperation and communication with other NLCs

This will refer in the first place to **regional cooperation**. In keeping with the recommendations of the IGC and its bureau, regional cooperation is to be considerably reinforced during MOST Phase II. Indeed, existing realities and acquired experience indicate that a regional approach is indispensable in order to arrive at viable solutions to MOST-related issues. That is why the evaluation will insist on how NLCs help *foster a region-specific approach* to the science-policy link within the framework of social transformations. The purpose is to arrive at a critical mass of regional excellence in the areas covered by MOST, to enhance a regional MOST platform, with closer networking of NLCs.

Information will be collected and analysed with regard to whether projects have been launched or are envisaged to cover the *priority themes* identified by consensus and recommended by the IGC for each region, namely: *Regional Integration Processes* for Africa; *Human Security* for the Asia-Pacific region; *Fighting poverty* for Latin America and the Caribbean; *the Role of the State in Social Development* for the Arab States; *The Social Science Policy Interface* for Europe, including Eastern/Central Europe;; *Sustainable Social Development* for the Small Islands Development States (SIDS).

It will also examine whether steps have been taken, or are envisaged to put into practice the recommendations of the MOST Secretariat to foster regional cooperation, namely setting up regional co-operation platforms and structures (such as the Regional Forums of Social Affairs Ministers) and the development of *Centres of excellence* in different regions or clusters of regions. The evaluation will make proposals for action to be taken by NLCs to promote regional cooperation with the support of the National UNESCO Commissions and for the MOST Secretariat to help such endeavours.

The evaluation will also cover co-operation among NLCs at the **international level**, given the growing role that such co-operation will play in the future. In fact, the international dimension is the major asset of MOST, the level where it can best make proof of the added value it offers.

6. Funding

Lack of sufficient funding is a general complaint of NLCs. This is true of the MOST Programme as a whole as well. The evaluation will attempt to reveal the ways in which NLCs:

- encourage and secure regular national funding channels for projects;
- make use of the modest financial contributions allocated to them by the MOST Secretariat.

At the same time, the evaluation will bring to the fore positive experiences in seeking and securing funding from donors (the World Bank, IMF, the European Union, bilateral donors, etc.). The fact that international organizations, agencies and foundations insist on in-depth analyses before committing themselves to supporting projects provides MOST with a major potential to obtain support for convincing and well documented projects.

B. How will the evaluation be carried out?

The evaluation will be carried out through:

a) Thorough identification and analysis of **available information** on activity of NLCs or other bodies/structures entrusted by the Member States to deal with MOST-related issues at the national level. Such information can be found in: *studies, publications* and *official documents* of MOST, entries and references contained in the MOST data bases, *reports*- including *Reports of the NLCs*- whenever available, etc. Information available on the Internet will be accessed and analysed.

b) Survey based on **Questionnaire** (attached). There has been no systematic evaluation of the NLCs thus far. Information on their performance is rather scanty and extremely diverse and unequal with regard to comprehensiveness and relevance. For this reason, a rather comprehensive Questionnaire has been elaborated, with a view to obtain additional and more systematic information that could allow for comparisons, valid value

judgments and pertinent recommendations. The Questionnaire allows for easy retrieval and processing of the information received.

c) **Interviews** with members of the MOST IGC and of the SSC, as well as with individual researchers involved in MO ST activities at the national, regional and international level. Communication by Internet will also be used to solicit information from researchers or experts with whom it will not be possible to arrange face to face interviews.

d) **Visits** to select NLCs. The short deadline for the completion of the evaluation does not allow arranging for visits to a large number of NLCs. But, as indicated by the evaluation of the Romanian NCL which was undertaken during my stay in Bucharest, they are extremely useful for a through analysis of their work and, more importantly, for putting forward proposal for the future. In addition to the Romanian NLC, the evaluator will make two more visits in May/June 2005, to the NLC of Algeria and of a Western European country (Federal Republic of Germany, Switzerland or the Netherlands).

III. Evaluation Schedule

Activity	Date
Analysis of the TORs, of basic MOST official documents and of available reports and studies in order to elaborate the Evaluation Plan	12 May 2005
Elaboration of the Draft Questionnaire	20 April- 5 May 2005-05
Talks with the Romanian NLC and the Romanian National Commission for UNESCO; preliminary analysis of the activity of the Romanian NLC	20 – 30 April 2005
Analysis of available information at the MOST Secretariat	10 May- 30 June 2005
Interviews with members of the MOST IGC and of the SSC, as well as with individual researchers involved in MO ST activities at the national, regional and international level	20 May- 30 June 2005
Analysis of the information received via the Questionnaire sent to NLCs, National Commissions for UNESCO and individual experts	20-30 June 2005
Detailed analysis of the Romanian NLC, visited in May 2005; Visits to two more NLCs for discussions and for the analysis of their activity	June 2005
Submission of the draft final Report Elaboration of document - based on the Draft Report - to be presented to the 7th Session of the MOST IGC	4 July 2005
Presentation of the document mentioned above to the 7th Session of the IGC	25-27 July 2005
Finalisation of the evaluation Report, taking into account remarks of the MOST Secretariat and the observations and recommendations made by the members of the IGC and of the SSC	1-25 August 2005
Submission of the Final Evaluation Report	31 August 2005