



**The 7<sup>th</sup> Session of the Intergovernmental Committee of MOST**  
(Paris, 25-27 July 2005)

**Preliminary Report on the evaluation of the MOST National Liaison  
Committees**

**Mandate, Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation.** The evaluation was undertaken in keeping with the Recommendations of the Sixth Session of the Intergovernmental Council (IGC) of the MOST Programme (Paris, 19-21 February 2003) which stipulated that “the MOST Secretariat in collaboration with National Commissions should undertake a review of the structure, operations and impact of the NLCs” and to submit, on that basis, appropriate proposals and recommendations to the IGC. In light of the reorientation of the MOST Programme, decided at the last session of the IGC, the evaluation focused on the transition process currently underway, more specifically on “*How to adjust the structure and operations of the NLC’s in order to implement the new mission of the Programme?*”

This is the first comprehensive evaluation of the NLCs undertaken within the framework of MOST. It is based on the firm conviction of the evaluator that, in the last analysis, the success (or failure) of the Programme depends on the concrete action taken at the local, national and –increasingly- (sub) regional levels, which can only be assured by efficient structures set up for that purpose. They play a decisive role in rendering MOST more *credible* and *visible* and in increasing *its impact*. A review of NLCs made by the MOST Secretariat in the 2000 indicated that 61 NLCs had been established by that time. A first task of the evaluation was to clarify the exact situation of how Member States handle MOST issues at the national level and what kind of mechanisms/structures are in place to promote and implement MOST activities.

**Methodology of the evaluation.** The evaluation consisted of the following activities:

- gathering, analyzing and systematizing information from the MOST documents available in the Secretariat files and on the MOST website;
- discussions with staff members of the SHS Sector and with various experts inside and outside the Secretariat, who had been involved in, and had intimate knowledge of MOST activities;
- contacts (via telephone and Internet) with members of the IGC Bureau and of the SAC, as well as with the former external evaluators of MOST ;
- exchanges of views -by telephone or via Internet -with representatives of the National Commissions, the NLCs and social science experts in several countries

- Visit to one NLCs (Romania, for which an extensive evaluation has been prepared. (Two more visits to NLCs had been envisaged, but lack of time and funds did not allow for them to be made). The evaluator attended a meeting devoted to a MOST Project (CODENOBAs) organized by the Social Sciences Sub Commission of the French National Commission for UNESCO.
- A **Questionnaire** (Doc.SHS-05/CONF. 205/08c) was elaborated and sent out to the NLCs and the National Commissions in May 2005. It turned into a very useful tool for the evaluation. There were 41 replies: 33 filled in Questionnaires and 8 replies indicating that there was no NLC in the respective country, but it is planned to set up one for MOST Phase II.
- Presentation of the preliminary results of the evaluation to two meetings of the SHS staff, attended also by directors and social science experts in the UNESCO field (cluster) offices in various regions.

### **Preliminary findings of the evaluation**

This preliminary Report focuses on the most pertinent findings of the evaluation in relation to which proposals are formulated for discussion by the IGC so as to facilitate debates and lead to appropriate recommendations. The Final Report will be presented following the debates, opinions and recommendations of the IGC and following continued efforts to obtain more information from NLCs, especially with the support of the UNESCO field offices in various regions. It is proposed to extend the deadline foreseen for the completion of the final Report, so as to also have the benefit of the debates occasioned by the International Forum on the Social Science Policy Nexus (Buenos Aires, 5-9 September 2005).

The findings of the evaluation carried out thus far are summed up as follows:

- NLCs (or other arrangements, mechanisms and structures to handle MOST at the national level) exist only in a few Member States of UNESCO. Many of the 88 Member States which have been represented in the MOST IGC since it was set up do not have an NLC;
- Even when NLCs do exist, their structure, institutional status and the range of roles and functions they assume are (i) highly diverse, which renders regional and international cooperation rather difficult, and (ii) they are not well tuned to the requirements of the reorientation of MOST Phase II on the research/policy/practice interlink;
- There is a clearly felt need – in addition to improving capacities for action at the national level - to also develop such capacities at the *regional level*, for which corresponding structures have to be built up, especially in connection with the Regional Forums of Ministers of Social Development.
- There is a general complaint about lack of resources and a funding base for MOST. UNESCO and Member States are requested to provide adequate

means for the Programme. At the same time, there are many examples of national MOST Projects for which funding has been secured from governments and donor agencies.

- The MOST Secretariat is understaffed and cannot possible cope with the amount of work required – among other responsibilities - to assure regular contact with MOST structures and networks at the national, regional and international level.

On the other hand, despite a discernible slowing down of MOST activities during the transition period, the evaluation has shown continued interest in MOST not only by the research community, but also by a large majority of Member States. The evaluation itself has been received with interest and regarded as an opportunity to renew and reactivate MOST. It is significant that practically all 41 replies to the Questionnaire stressed that the evaluation is expected to lead to strengthening MOST activities or to set up appropriate structures to handle MOST Phase II. High expectations are placed on the decisions and recommendations to be adopted by the 7<sup>th</sup> Session of the MOST IGC and on the debates of the International Forum on the Social Science Policy Nexus.

### **Proposals and recommendations**

Based on the preliminary findings of the evaluation and bearing in mind the above mentioned expectations placed in MOST, the following proposals and recommendations are submitted to the Seventh Session of the MOST IGC:

1. Reorganization of the structures that are needed in order to promote the Programme at the national, regional and international level along the lines shown in **Annex 1**;
2. The MOST Secretariat and the UNESCO field offices will be fully involved and will extend full support to Member States in putting into place these new structures, if approved. The UNESCO field offices will also be more closely involved in promoting and coordinating activities of MOST Phase II at the *regional level*, particularly, in activities related to the regional priority research themes.
3. The members of the IGC - especially its Bureau – and of the Scientific Advisory Committee should be more actively involved in setting up the proposed structures. In particular, the IGC Regional Vice Presidents should take initiative and assist in setting up appropriate cooperation structures in the (sub) Regions for which they have responsibilities.
4. A debate on the organizational aspects of the national and regional MOST structures that are best suited to serve the research/policy interlink will be organized at the International Forum on the Social Science Policy Nexus in Buenos Aires, where representatives of the main MOST constituencies - policy makers, researchers and civil society actors- from all over the world will be assembled.
5. The Guidelines for the NLCs will be revised in keeping with the new requirements of the Programme. The revision will be carried out in close consultation and cooperation with the UNESCO Secretariats of the other Science Programmes of UNESCO which

have similar structures at the national level. The MOST Secretariat will take an active part in the preparation of the Round Table of representatives of the National Commissions devoted to this issue which is envisaged to take place during the forthcoming General Conference of UNESCO.

6. Close links with the other Science Programmes of UNESCO, as recommended by the meeting of the Presidents of their IGCs, will be further developed with a view to arrive at joint planning and execution of activities that are of mutual interest. MOST is particularly fit to provide support (knowledge and advice for policy outlines) concerning the social aspects of the issues covered by the Science Programmes. At the same time, links will be established with other major programmes of UNESCO, such as Education for All and action taken by UNESCO within the framework of the World Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.

7. Links and alliances will be secured with a broad range of like minded partners, and synergies will be built with projects and programmes undertaken by UN agencies and organizations, by IGOs and donor agencies that cover areas related to the concerns of MOST. Links with ISSC should be further strengthened within the existing framework agreement.

8. The MOST Secretariat should be strengthened, so that a full time member should be responsible for maintaining regular contacts with the increasing number of structures, networks and partners that are needed for MOST. All the facilities at its disposal – especially the MOST Website – should be used to assure these links. The Website should increasingly serve as an interactive communication tool, allowing MOST focal points and MOST National Committees to be in constant touch with the MOST Secretariat, to have access to the MOST Data Bases and Clearing House facilities, while also contributing to their up-dating. *MOST Electronic Forums* could be arranged whenever large scale research projects are launched or major international MOST events/debates are organized.

9. UNESCO and the Member States should extend increased material and financial support to MOST, particularly at the present moment, when MOST Phase II needs resources to take off successfully. However, aware of the heavy constraints of the Organization and of many Member States, it is strongly recommended to the MOST Secretariat and to all those involved in MOST activities to make systematic efforts in order to secure funding through partnerships and synergies as mentioned under 7 above.

10. The evaluation exercise will be extended until 15 October 2005 with a view to continue to collect further information on the structures set up by Member States via the Questionnaire. The extension is also required in order to take stock of the decisions adopted by the IGC at its 7<sup>th</sup> Session and of the debates of the International Forum on the Social Science Policy Nexus in Buenos Aires. At the same time, the extended evaluation will be used in order to encourage Member States which have national MOST structures to restructure them in keeping with the new requirements of MOST Phase II and those which do not have them, to set up new structures in keeping with these requirements

**Proposals and recommendations for the reorganization of MOST implementation structures at the national, regional and international levels**

**I. MOST implementation arrangements/mechanisms/structures at the *national* level**

- **focal point/ contact person**, who has the time, capacity and resources to carry out a wide range of tasks and responsibilities - spelled out in his/her job description - to promote MOST at the national level. He/she could be placed in the Ministry that has responsibilities for the areas covered by MOST (i.e. the Ministry of Social Development), or in the National Commission for UNESCO. Alternatively, he/she could be placed in a research institution, provided the latter has a well defined status and close links with the national authorities that would allow him/her to perform the duties mentioned above.

- **MOST National Forum (MNF) or MOST National Committee (MNC)** – consisting of a *group* of well informed, committed and resourceful people and representing the national authorities, the research community and civil society actors - who can effectively promote MOST by planning, coordinating and securing implementation of a broad range of activities at the national level. It is through MNFs that research networks are set up and the link between research, policy and practice could be secured. They assure links with the other UNESCO Science Programmes and with relevant programmes/ projects undertaken with the support of UN agencies and organization and of IGOs. Its secretary could be the MOST focal point/contact person. MNFs should submit a Report to the MOST Secretariat every other year.

- **MOST research network(s) (MRN)**, set up by the Most National Forum (MNF) to undertake policy-oriented research on priority themes identified at the national level and to provide advice to policy makers. MRNs should also be in a position to fulfill the think tank, platform for dialogue and advocacy functions foreseen for MOST. MNFs will cooperate closely with the *sub commissions for social sciences* of the National UNESCO Commissions, with *research institutes and university departments with professional organizations and civil society actors*. The *UNITWIN networks and the UNESCO Chairs* will be associated to their activities.

**II. MOST implementation arrangements/mechanisms/structures at the *regional* level**

- **The Regional Forums of Ministers for Social Development** are emerging as the most important initiative to promote MOST activities at the regional level. They should be extended so as to cover other regions than they do at present. (The replies to the Questionnaire indicated agreement by most countries with this approach: there were only two negative, out of 41 replies).

- **Regional Ad-Hoc MOST Committees**, set up to facilitate cooperation among MNFs. They should help implement decisions adopted by the Regional Ministerial Forums. They are not envisaged as rigid, costly structures, consisting of flexible arrangements (periodic meetings when necessary and constant contact by telephone and the Internet) by which the national focal points and the MNFs agree to carry out regional activities. The MNF and focal point of the country which is hosting the Regional Ministerial Forum will take the initiative and serve as coordinator.

- **Regional MOST Research Networks**, established with a view to promote policy-oriented social science research particularly on the six identified regional research priorities. They will be set up through links established with MOST potential partners in the region (regional social science associations and institutions such as CODESRIA, FLACSO, etc) and the networks of UNESCO Chairs, etc. The ultimate objective is to set up Regional Centers of Excellence in Social Sciences.

### III. MOST implementation arrangements/mechanisms/structures at the international level

- The **Intergovernmental Council and the Scientific Advisory Committee** will provide guidance and supervision for overall MOST activities;
- The **MOST Secretariat** will assist and be responsible for the execution of the Programme.
- The **International Forum on the Social Science Policy Nexus** could emerge as the proper structure at the international level where all major actors of MOST – from social scientists to policy makers and civil society actors meet and exchange views on the research/ policy/practice link for positive social transformation. It can contribute significantly to the visibility and credibility of MOST. If the Buenos Aires Forum so decides, all support should be extended to it in order to become a regular, periodic MOST event.
- **Partnerships and alliances** with projects and programmes undertaken by UN agencies and organizations, by IGOs and donor agencies that cover areas related to the concerns of MOST. Cooperation with a broad range of NGOs is also part of the working arrangements at the international level. In particular, cooperation with ISSC should be strengthened on a mutual benefit basis. UNESCO’s contribution to ISSC is higher than the funding provided at present to MOST for its Secretariat activities. It should not be reduced, but it is necessary to arrive at mutually agreed working arrangements by which the contribution of ISSC to MOST is increased.

The attached diagram presents the proposed MOST Organizational Chart outlined above. Two explanations are felt necessary:

(a) The proposed structures may seem rather heavy and over ambitious for a Programme which is facing serious financial constraints. However, particular attention has been paid to keep them as flexible and simple as possible. In fact, all the proposed structures have been set in place in some countries. They are therefore proposed as extensions of what could be called “best practices”.

(b) In principle, the proposed structures should not involve additional costs over and above what many Member States do assure for MOST activities at present. Some seed money is requested from the UNESCO MOST Budget to assist setting up structures in the developing countries with the help of the UNESCO regional offices.

## MOST Organizational Chart

