



Intersectoral Platform on Strengthening National Research Systems

Questions and Answers

1 What are the goals of the Platform?

The Platform aims at strengthening the contribution that research and science can make to social and economic development. It will promote research and knowledge management as a driver of economic and social development in Member States and for the pursuit of internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs concerned with poverty eradication and sustainable development.

The main goal of the Platform is to provide Member States with support for improving their national research systems and to develop strategic policy recommendations to strengthen their development outlook on the basis of stronger research and science capacities.

The objectives of the first years of the Platform are

- to achieve a common methodology on the basis of an integrated approach of the Organization to review national research systems in developing countries
- to implement several country reviews that cover higher education and research in the natural sciences as well as in the social and human sciences, taking into account the increased need for research-policy linkages, ethics of science and the impact of science and research on development.

2 Why is UNESCO working on this issue? What is UNESCO's mandate in this respect?

UNESCO is the UN agency that contributes to peace, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, science, culture and communication. UNESCO functions as a laboratory of ideas and standard setter to forge universal agreements on emerging ethical issues. UNESCO also serves as a clearinghouse for the dissemination and sharing of information and knowledge, while helping member states to build their human and institutional capacities.

The Programme and Budget of UNESCO sets out guiding language for the joint and collaborative activities of the Major Programmes to work towards strengthening national research capacities in its Member States. (34C/5 paragraph 08011, see annex)

The Review of UNESCO's Science Programmes (2007) has determined that the Organization should further strengthen policy advice to support the sciences.

The Review also emphasizes the need for joint and collaborative programming across UNESCO's two sciences programmes and beyond, ensuring an interdisciplinary approach to its activities.

Finally, the Platform seeks to build upon the research policy activities from both the Sciences Programmes, promoting greater intersectorality and furthering coherence in the approach of the Organization.

3 What is the approach of the Platform, what is the methodology?

The Platform will further develop the methodology of country reviews and strategic planning for research on the basis of existing models that have proven their value. These models include the template that was elaborated by the Forum on Higher Education, Research and Knowledge (ED Sector), the model of the Country Reviews in Science (SC Sector) and the model that was used by the OECD in recent reviews in western countries.

In the country reviews SC will take the lead with SHS to initiate a stock-taking exercise upon request and with full cooperation of the national government concerned and in collaboration with UNESCO Institute for Statistics. The initial comparison and evaluation may benefit from the materials collected in the framework of the Forum on Higher Education, Research and Knowledge.

Outside partners will be invited to contribute their expertise in the review and during the strategic recommendations phase of the national projects.

4 What is the added value of the Platform?

The Platform facilitates a coherent approach to support Member States in strengthening their research capacities because it brings together all relevant expertise from the different Programme Sectors of UNESCO, including the Natural Sciences, the Social and Human Sciences, Communication and Information and Education.

The Platform offers an opportunity for Programme Sectors to pool existing resources in capacity building and policy support.

Different existing programmes at UNESCO contribute to the Platform's goals, such as the National Science Review programme, the UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN programme, the Intergovernmental Science Programmes: MOST, MAB, IHP, IOC and IGCP and the Ethics of Science programme.

5 Which countries will be targeted? Who are the intended beneficiaries?

The approach of the Platform will be to work primarily with countries proposing themselves for review, and whose governments are committed to improving their research capacities for development. The activities for strengthening of national research capacities can be in the context of addressing the MDGs or other government priorities. Priority will be given to developing countries.

Requests or expressions of interest from member states have been received from several countries in Africa, including Madagascar, Benin, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Senegal, United Republic of Tanzania, Togo and the Republic of the Congo, as well as several countries from other regions.

6 At UNESCO, which Sectors will cooperate? Which Divisions, Field Offices and Institutes are involved? What is the composition of the task force/steering group?

The Platform brings together the Major Programmes of Education, the Natural Sciences, Social and Human Sciences and Communication and Information.

The initial joint activities will be implemented by the Division of Science Policy and Sustainable Development (SC) and the Division of Social Science Research and Policy (SHS). The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) will be invited to participate in all country reviews, especially concerning capacity building for collection of relevant statistics. The Information Society Division (CI) will share its expertise on the role of ICTs in research and on the need for access to scientific information. The Division of Ethics of Science and Technology (SHS) will offer expertise on ethics of science and technology.

In each country activity the relevant UNESCO Chairs, Field Offices and National Commissions will be involved, as well as other local partners.

The Steering Committee/Task Force of the Platform:

Lead ADG: Pierre Sané (ADG/SHS)

Platform Manager: Paul de Guchteneire (SHS/SRP/MIG)

SC Division of Science Policy and Sustainable Development: Mustafa El Tayeb

SHS Division of Social Science Research and Policy: Wataru Iwamoto, Christina Von Furstenberg, April Tash

SHS Division of Ethics of Science and Technology: Henk ten Have, John Crowley

SHS Poverty Eradication: Chifa Tekaya.

CI Information Society Division: Myriam Nisbet, René Cluzel

ED Division of Higher Education: Georges Haddad

ED Section for International Cooperation in Higher Education: Sonia Bahri

AFR: Michel Toto

BSP: Russ Russell-Rivoallan

UIS: Simon Ellis, Ernesto Fernandez

CLT Division of Cultural Expressions and Creative Industries: Guiomar Alonso Cano

7 What outside partners will cooperate?

The Platform will seek cooperation with international organizations interested in strengthening scientific research in developing countries and in support of economic and social development, including OECD, UNU, UNIDO and several national cooperation organizations such as Swedish SIDA, Canadian IDRC and French IRD.

The International Social Science Council and the ICSU will be invited to contribute advice and contacts.

8 What parts of national government are to be involved?

Primarily Ministries of economy, education, science, research and development. Institutions include universities, the Academy of Sciences, public and private research institutions, science councils, associations of scientists, etc.

9 What concrete activities are planned for 2008/2009?

A first *joint activity* is run by the Natural Sciences and Social and Human Sciences Sectors within UNESCO, in close cooperation with the Higher Education Division and the UNESCO Institute of Statistics. It involves country-level review and assessment of the research system in a Member State, with comprehensive coverage (including any research of the natural and social and human sciences, higher education and research conducted in both public and private institutions). The reviews will offer recommendations for action by mobilizing local knowledge, comparing policy experience with other countries, introducing external expertise and establishing consultation and decision mechanisms necessary to support country-level efforts to guide research toward national goals.

Furthermore, in the Work plans 2008/2009 some 60 *separate activities* from all Major Programmes have been planned to contribute to the objectives of the platform on strengthening national research systems. These activities include a wide diversity of projects on ethics of science, projects related to strengthening national capacities in the framework of the intergovernmental scientific programmes of UNESCO, the elaboration of regional science policies, the promotion of policy dialogue and research and the strengthening of research institutes, libraries and archives.

The total budget of all of these activities together is about \$3,900,000.

Finally, a link with the Forum of Higher Education, Research and Knowledge will involve possible applications of its previously collected knowledge. The Forum's template that resulted from a meta-study of existing studies of National Research Systems is to be used as the basis for a standard assessment framework for the joint SC-SHS country reviews.

10 What is the budget of the planned activities? Who contributes to the budget?

Regular budget 34 C/5 for all activities related to the platform:

		Planned 34 C/5	Actual 34 C/5 Work plans 1/09/2008
MP I	Education	\$100 000	\$708 838
MP II	Natural Sciences	\$100 000	\$1 954 843
MP III	Social and Human Sciences	\$350 000	\$1 122 300
MP V	Communication and Information	\$50 000	\$145 168
Total		\$600 000	\$3 931 148

Extra-budgetary resources:

A commitment to strengthen national research systems has been made by the Government of Italy in the form of support for projects to strengthen research capacity in African countries, especially to contribute to the fight against poverty.

A number of other contributions are in negotiation, each for a specific country review.

11 What is meant by National Research Systems?

The term "National Research System" denotes the entirety of institutions, networks, persons and resources that potentially could contribute to in-country scientific research production.

12 Why is it important to strengthen national research systems in developing countries?

Governments are currently engaged in a coordinated effort to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, the first of which is to eradicate poverty and hunger. Well-functioning research systems are extremely important to drive social and economic development, and to make the Millennium Development Goals attainable. To achieve Goals such as universal education, the eradicating of poverty and hunger and the improvement of maternal and child health, scientific research is required – both research that is directly applied to solve problems, and research which helps policies achieve better measurable outcomes.

Scientific research constitutes the basis for development, as was reasserted in October 2007's UNESCO Ministerial Meeting on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development. This involves a wide variety of themes and disciplines which are relevant for all countries in development, such as natural resource management and geological sciences, monitoring of potential natural disasters, environmental sciences, engineering, health, transport, education, population statistics and social-economic monitoring and planning.

13 What will be the actual results in terms of change and improvement of national research systems? What will be the visible outcomes?

- Participating member states will get a realistic review of their national scientific research capacities, covering natural as well as social and human sciences
- Through the output of the Platform, policy makers from participating member states will benefit from experiences in other countries on the basis of well-documented best practices
- As a result of each country review, participating member states will be able to better build their capacity on the basis of a well-structured strategy.

14 How long will the platform run?

The Platform will be operational for an initial period of six years, depending upon renewal of the activity at each biennial General Conference.

15 Will this replace other activities?

The Platform is not intended to replace other activities, but it will stimulate closer cooperation between existing activities now working separately.

16 What activities are proposed for extra-budgetary funding?

- For each National Research System Review, extra funding will be sought for financing the country component of the Review and for financing of the immediate follow up of the strategic recommendations. Funding of national reviews can be directly to country partners or indirectly through UNESCO.

- Separate proposals are being prepared for funding new activities to contribute to specific concerns in strengthening national research systems in developing countries, such as the impact of 'brain drain' on national research capacities and on the potential for regional cooperation.

17 How to get more information on the Platform and its activities?

A website for the Platform in English, French and Spanish is available at www.unesco.org/en/research

To contact the intersectoral platform on strengthening national research systems, please write to Mr. Paul de Guchteneire (p.deguchteneire@unesco.org) or Mrs. April Tash (a.tash@unesco.org).

Intersectoral Platform: official programming 34 C/5

08011 Strengthening national research systems

This intersectoral platform involves four Major Programmes (I, II, III and V) and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and builds on the results of the 2004 and 2006 editions of the UNESCO Forum on Higher Education, Research and Knowledge. The Forum was established in 2000 following the 1998 World Conference on Higher Education and the 1999 World Conference on Science in order to strengthen research and knowledge management as a driver of economic and social development in Member States and for the pursuit of the MDGs, especially poverty eradication and sustainable development. The platform shall also draw on the contribution of the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs programme, the results of the UNESCO-supported policy dialogue and capacity-building for the formulation of national science, technology and innovation policies, the strengthening of research-policy linkages in the field of the social and human science policy elaboration, efforts to build knowledge societies and the implementation of relevant recommendations of the 2005 and UNESCO World Report on Towards Knowledge Societies.

The platform will aim at strengthening UNESCO's contribution to integrated approaches facilitating the creation and strengthening of national research systems, linked with the development and implementation of holistic science and innovation policies and a strengthening of higher education institutions, particularly in the least developed countries. It will also seek to identify and respond to national priority needs of developing and in particular least developed countries, with emphasis on the integration of national research systems and science policies into an overall national strategy for sustainable development.

Furthermore, the platform will promote enhanced cooperation and networking with other United Nations entities, regional organizations, in particular the African Union, committed to a strengthening of science, technology and innovation strategies and the development of requisite national capacities.

Action will also seek to integrate the ethics of science and technology into the institutional framework of national research systems, in cooperation with national ethics and research committees, to monitor the contribution of national research systems to sustainable development, particularly of social development and to support research-policy linkages regarding social transformations and social development. Top priority will be given to Africa and action will be undertaken in collaboration with the MOST regional networks, relevant UNESCO Chairs, National Commissions, ISSC and regional social and human sciences consortia as well as entities such as CODESRIA in Africa and FLACSO and CLACSO in Latin America.

Expected results at the end of the biennium

- Research capacities in developing countries enhanced with a focus on the contribution of research to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including MDGs and EFA goals;
- National research and knowledge management in science, technology and innovation strengthened and related capacities created and supported;
- Links between policy-making bodies, higher education and research institutions, and educational and developmental practices strengthened;

- Research capacities of UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs in selected least developed countries enhanced, including through triangular North-South-South cooperation;
- Scientific research enhanced through integration of ICTs.

Indicative allocations from the following MPs: MP I \$100,000; MP II \$100,000; MP III \$350,000; and MP V \$50,000.