



MOST National Committee Guidelines

**United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
Division of Social Science, Research and Policy**

MOST National Committee Guidelines

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Foreword

This brochure provides recommendations related to the establishment and functioning of National Committees for UNESCO's intergovernmental scientific programme Management of Social Transformations (MOST).

This brochure aims to guide key groups at the national level, notably the National Commissions for UNESCO, policy-makers, members of the academic community and representatives of civil society, in the process of setting up and running a MOST National Committee. It could also guide present MOST National Committees as they bring their structure and activities in line, to the extent possible, with the current directions and ambitions of the MOST Programme.

These guidelines are the result of an extensive process of evaluation, reflection and consultation. The first step in this process was an external evaluation of the MOST National Liaison Committees, undertaken in 2005–2006, which stressed the need for a new approach to the national MOST structures.

Following the recommendations of this evaluation, and in light of further developments in the MOST Programme, UNESCO's Social and Human Science Sector (SHS) and the Bureau of the Intergovernmental Council (IGC) of MOST launched a reflection on the approach MOST could adopt at the national level.

Ideas were exchanged with the MOST Scientific Advisory Committee and with participants in MOST related meetings between 2008 and 2010. Permanent Delegations to UNESCO, National Commissions for UNESCO, existing MOST national structures and selected experts were consulted on the guidelines. The proposed guidelines and feedback were subsequently discussed at the 9th MOST IGC in September 2009. While this version was elaborated by the MOST Secretariat, MOST IGC will examine these guidelines, and their content may evolve.

The IGC called upon National Commissions for UNESCO to provide support for the establishment, strengthening and sustainability of the MOST National Committees. The first step will be to acquire and share the experiences and emerging best practices of MOST National Committees. I hope and trust that the recommendations outlined in this brochure will support Member States in the process of establishing National Committees for strengthening the Management of Social Transformations Programme.

Pilar Alvarez-Laso
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Introduction

Setting up a MOST National Committee is a step in a journey to strengthen in-country social science research systems. Today, according to the World Social Sciences Report 2010, there are reasons to worry about the health of global and local social science research, in many parts of the world. The concern is acute in some countries. Given the potential of the social sciences to tackle complex development issues or to promote growth and innovation, there needs to be more emphasis on building capacities in the social sciences. And given the potential for social sciences to contribute to decision-making and governance, a better relationship to governance is called for. It may also be the case that local research is simply lacking.

This brochure provides information, recommendations and suggestions related to MOST National Committees. The first section of the brochure outlines the MOST Programme and then proposes objectives, functions and activities that are useful for all MOST National Committees. Later, the brochure focuses on difficulties of setting up a new National Committee, so as to cover these concerns in more detail: composition, partners, and administration.

This brochure recommends guidelines to assist and guide UNESCO Member States. They should not be taken as fixed rules to be applied in all situations. Flexibility is crucial. Each Member State will have to develop and adopt its own approach regarding a MOST Committee, taking specific national conditions and needs into account and, ideally, building on existing networks or institutions.

For example, a new MOST National Committee could be established on the basis of an existing active network of researchers. Alternatively, an existing social science council could become the hub of a new MOST National Committee. In some cases, an ad hoc committee structure may work best to address needs in a flexible manner.

Based on experience, talented and committed individuals are the key to achieving a country's goals via a MOST National Committee. Therefore, Member States will need to consider how to attract and sustain the enthusiasm of appropriate participants, as champions for strengthening the social sciences.

The MOST Programme

The Management of Social Transformations Programme (MOST) was launched by UNESCO Member States in 1994. It is one of six intergovernmental scientific programmes of UNESCO, and the only one for the social sciences.

Mission and Aims

MOST encourages the development and use of social science knowledge to better understand and respond to social transformations, consistent with the universal values of justice, freedom, human dignity and sustainable development. To this end, the MOST aims at building efficient bridges between research, policy and practice by promoting the relevance of social science in addressing critical social issues, by strengthening social science research capacities (in particular in developing countries), and through networking and regional and international cooperation.

International, regional and national approach

UNESCO's MOST Programme addresses the international, regional and national levels. At the international level, the programme is directed by the MOST Intergovernmental Council and guided by the Scientific Advisory Committee. The MOST Secretariat is responsible for the execution of the Programme. MOST promotes scientific cooperation and regional networking. Forums of Ministers of Social Development organised within the framework of MOST contribute to enhancing research-policy linkages.

At the national level, MOST National Committees pursue the aims of the MOST Programme. They are the face of the MOST programme at national level, and as such they promote the same aims as the MOST Programme as a whole. But they also feed into to the MOST programme local concerns and thus vary in their emphasis. Two-way exchange is explicitly encouraged by the design of MOST, and there has been considerable investment in building up online resources and virtual international networks for the purpose of improving exchange.

MOST National Committees are tasked not only with strengthening local social science research capacities, but also playing a role in ongoing dialogue among policy-makers, the scientific community and civil society. The National Committees should create opportunities to demonstrate the relevance of social science research for public policy in addressing critical social issues. While continually seeking to develop local social science research capacities, the National Committee should also seek to improve the quality of policy outcomes.

Research to inform public policy

Phase 2 of the MOST Programme (2004–2013) has seen increased efforts to strengthen dialogues between research and policy communities as a means to contribute to improved policy formulation by government. The International Forum on the Social Science-Policy Nexus (Argentina and Uruguay, 2006), as well as a series of regional Forums of Ministers of Social Development organised over the years by the MOST Programme, focused on building up dialogue, with the aim of promoting the use of social science knowledge in policy-making processes.

MOST National Committees

Since the start of MOST in 1994, activities at the national level have been an integral part of the MOST Programme, although UNESCO does not fund them. These initiatives take the form of research networks, focal points (usually appointees in government), National Liaison Committees, Sub-Commissions of the National Commission for UNESCO, ad hoc Committees and National Committees. In the following, the term *National Committee* is used generically to describe all of the structures that have broad membership and some institutional durability (research networks and focal points are not included).

Over the years, the Intergovernmental Council of MOST has frequently underlined the vital role of National Committees and the value of their collaboration, noting the importance of their being sustainable within the context of each country. UNESCO Member States are encouraged to form National Committees as a way of pursuing the aims of the UNESCO MOST Programme, and in particular, building national social science capacities.

Aim of strengthening in-country social science research capacities

Generally speaking, the overall aim of a MOST National Committee is to strengthen in-country social science research capacities¹ so that they can contribute to attaining national priorities. A Committee may do this by, for example, promoting the relevance of research to address critical social issues, redressing gaps in local research capacities, linking research communities and internationalizing their networks, supporting the demand for and recognition of research, etc.

Examples of activities by MOST National Committees:

- ✓ Advocate the need for government to invest in building social science capacities.
- ✓ Instigate improved monitoring and valuing of social sciences production
- ✓ Champion the strengths of the university faculties, for research and/or for education
- ✓ Advocate for the development of appropriate data, data archives, and access to research infrastructure for social science research

¹ Recalling that these guidelines are suggestions, a different mandated aim from among the overall aims of the MOST Programme may be chosen for a Committee to address local conditions.

... Examples of activities by MOST National Committees, continued:

- ✓ Stimulate opportunities for local social science researchers to publish locally and internationally in timely meaningful ways
- ✓ Actively support the development of researcher communities
- ✓ Contribute to identifying the gaps and the needs for relevant local social research at country and/or at municipal level

Permanent platform

A MOST National Committee is a group of persons that develops and implements a focused set of activities to meet its aim and encourages the participation of a wide range of other persons and institutions in these activities.

The MOST National Committee is in some cases a permanent platform. Permanence enables it to continuously pursue its aim. The Committee implements activities by leveraging the experience, expertise and networking abilities of its members to bring other key people together. The MOST National Committee is not envisaged as a decision-making body or a political advisory board.

Testimonies

Recorded experiences from other countries can be helpful to those who wish to create new MOST structures. They reveal rich variety as well as some shared concerns. For example, here are some excerpts from replies to a 2005-2006 survey:

“Developing broad partnerships within society is the main objective of MOST action at the national level. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach to research and problem solving is the underlying principle of action.” – from Uzbekistan

“It is important to emphasize the setting up of research networks, the organisation of roundtables with broad participation of stakeholders. Regional cooperation should be pursued through exchange of information and encouragement of best practices.” – from Peru

“Successful MOST National Committees should include both people from academia and decision-makers. It all depends on the strength of the National Commission for UNESCO. If the National Commission functions properly, so will the committee it sets up for MOST.” – from Bulgaria

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“Putting stronger emphasis on research-policy linkages is very important, but of the two pillars – policies and research – the research pillar is the essential one.” – from Finland

“A National Committee should work with other agencies and bodies particularly with a Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry for Research, Science and Technology.” –from New Zealand

“To increase visibility of MOST and encourage action at the national level, it is necessary to keep National Committees better informed on MOST activities in various regions and to disseminate best practices.” – from Tanzania

Taking stock of all testimonies, existing National Committees are most commonly engaged in collection, processing, use and dissemination of information. A frequently-raised concern is how to help researchers find funding (reaching out within MOST is a part of improving local capacity to obtain funding. Few are engaged in awareness-raising toward the general public, while a large number target the agencies, ministries and elected officials of government. Among those who have carried out capacity-building activities, summer schools organised with partners of the MOST Programme have proven very successful.²

The present guidelines propose that National Committees enhance their activities, share ideas in order to do so, and position themselves as steadfast advocates for strengthening in-country social science research.

² These and other excerpts are in the annex to the October 2005 evaluation of MOST National Liaison Committees, available online via www.unesco.org/shs/most.

Activities

MOST suggests four functions³ for a National Committee:

Suggested functions of a MOST National Committee:

- ✓ Spear-heading capacity-building for quality social science research
- ✓ Fostering research demand and use
- ✓ Bridging: thinking globally and locally at once
- ✓ Identifying innovative approaches in the social sciences, to address social challenges

1. Spear-heading capacity-building for quality social science research

Capacity-building is said to have three levels for intervention: systemic, institutional and individual. In order to spear-head capacity-building for high quality social sciences research to flourish, a National Committee could develop activities at all levels or just one. What follows are some examples:

Mobilizing commitment and investment

A National Committee should be an advocate for mobilizing commitment and investment for social sciences education and research. Social science research builds on good social science education (and vice versa) so strengthening capacities in one area demands strengthening the other.

In many countries, social science research and the settings for it (typically, higher education institutions) have been weakened by having endured unreliable and low funding over many years. This is particularly detrimental to the smaller research communities. And, one can also say that Social science knowledge is weakened by concentrated production coming out of a few countries. Knowledge in the social sciences is often context-dependent: studies need to be repeated in many places and at different times.

For example, social science research is needed for a country to plan for achieving its development goals, and the international agreed development agenda, including the Millennium Development Goals. A National Committee can show and explain how the social sciences contribute, as part of advocating for commitment and investment.

³ Conditions will vary, as will existing capacities. A new National Committee's functions will be defined in its mandate.

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A National Committee can be a critical mediator especially for countries that have few institutions to represent the social sciences. Consider the example of research funding. Research is funded by a variety of actors: indirectly, by the public and private universities who hire researchers make research resources available to them (and ask them to also be teachers); directly, by national government hiring or granting project-based contracts (based on specific perceived needs); by private institutions (with specific agendas) such as large non-governmental organisations, large foundations and charities, foreign development aid agencies, and multinational or large local companies; by groupings of governments who fund research via intergovernmental organizations (e.g. UN-system organisations, World Bank, EU). A National Committee can play a role to represent and communicate about the local potential.

For example, via the MOST Programme, a National Committee can directly address foreign development aid and intergovernmental organizations. Or, a National Committee can help monitor research outputs, and by so doing, help identify strengths. Reports of research system monitoring –discussed below—are used by foreign funding institutions to target grants.

Monitoring and contributing to public policies for research

A growing number of developing countries governments are improving monitoring of their research systems, in order to reinforce them with a view to harvesting the benefits of science—and innovation more broadly—for national social and economic development. All developed countries already invest heavily in monitoring. While social science research is explicitly included, there are gaps and difficulties, and this monitoring is generally poor.

A National Committee could focus its activities on improving monitoring of in-country social science production (to obtain basic comparable data about which institutions –foreign domestic private or public -- do which research in the country, their personnel, performance, financing, infrastructure, and the in- or out-of-country knowledge flows, etc.). In countries where data are not systematically collected, are poor, or are incomplete, improving monitoring has the advantage of giving visibility to existing local research. Local social scientists should be called upon to take part in strengthening monitoring.

In individual countries, there are variations on what will be monitored. For example, a National Committee can become a local leader in an “innovation” policy review (an exercise commonly carried out by government), which looks at the possibility of boosting social and economic development by relying on innovation – particularly in enterprises. These policy reviews study education and research as inputs to invention and innovation. They also monitor knowledge dissemination channels and uptake by enterprises.

Alternatively, monitoring could be for a Science, Engineering and Technology (or Research) policy review, which monitors only the inputs to invention and does not concern itself with the processes of adaptation that result in innovation. Or, a National Committee could contribute to an Education policy review, which would look instead at efficient strategies to strengthen (and perhaps also to retain or regain) human capital, to meet future needs. Improving monitoring in Education could help clarify issues of “brain drain” and “mobility,” or identify untapped potential in diaspora networks, for example. In all of these reviews, a National Committee could play a pivotal role, for example by mobilizing people, carrying out studies, suggesting new indicators.

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A National Committee could also take up monitoring research carried out on themes. This observatory function could help draw attention to existing research which could then help address specific national objectives such as the Millennium Development Goals. Another role a National Committee could play is directly advising government as to research gaps (social science research that is relevant to help policies address national goals can be singled out for privileged government investment).

Finally, a MOST National Committee could be the appropriate body to advise government as to new public policy related to conditions of social science research production: research or education policies for example. While a MOST National Committee is not constituted as an advisory body, it could take on such an occasional role as part of its advocacy.

Strengthening researcher communities

A National Committee could foster: new institutions, new networks, especially via ICTs, new or revitalised publishing and sharing opportunities (e.g. electronic conferences), links between professional organizations (across disciplines), collaborations within diaspora networks, skills training where it is needed, new recognition for teaching-by-doing-research, and new means to assess quality in research. All such activities have been used to strengthen researcher communities. The MOST Programme is structured so as to offer a network (other National Committees) who can be consulted for examples and models to help foster researcher communities.

In some circumstances, a National Committee will help build up a small and vulnerable researcher community toward a sustainable “critical mass” by its advocacy. Advocacy could be to secure conditions supportive of research within universities, to link researchers together – electronically or across disciplines, or to help them to attract research funding or audiences. A National Committee can instigate or support activities to attract personnel and raise quality, so as to build up small communities. A National Committee may also communicate to raise awareness and recognition of a specific area of research and its potential meaning for society. By so doing it indirectly advocates for improved funding professional opportunities and resources.

A National Committee may at times consider that problem-oriented research -- research that explicitly aims to propose methods to address social ills-- is needed to address a national concern. A National Committee could: raise awareness about limits of existing research, advocate for resources, invite researchers to address the issue, and coordinate with universities, Ministries, and foreign institutions who may influence the local research agenda (due to their grant-making to, and employment of, local researchers). A National Committee could itself be a focal point for bringing together scientists from various disciplines, to stimulate inter-disciplinary collaboration and exchange on issues of national or local interest. In so doing, the National Committee helps create and support interdisciplinary communities, as well as showcasing local research.

A National Committee could contribute to an increased impact of UNESCO capacity-building projects – and in particular those of the MOST programme -- at the national level. In particular, the National Committee could convene local expertise and address the knowledge transfer to national and local decision-makers. A National Committee could also feed local and national research to the international level, via the National Commission, government, MOST Secretariat, UNESCO regional office, MOST governing bodies, and UNESCO – and others. For example, a National Committee could seek to channel research to a regional meeting of Ministers of Social Development. This work would necessarily bring a

National Committee into a working relationship with other National Committees across a region, while also giving national prominence to research produced in-country.

A National Committee could focus on improving education systems, which are essential for renewing researcher communities and strengthening skills. In this vein, the MOST Programme in cooperation with National Committees has established summer schools for skills training and exchange among social scientists.

Advocating for better research infrastructures

Social sciences are, in a number of areas, highly empirical. Technical services, data, and research infrastructure (libraries, data bases, statistical services, communication systems, etc.) are all important inputs. And, as in the exact sciences, the social sciences need publication outlets and other opportunities for sharing, such as meetings. Because infrastructures are often lagging, a National Committee could advocate for high-quality research infrastructure. In this area, there are needs in developed and developing countries alike.

The best approach is pragmatic. Where sharing resources makes sense, the National Committee could help advocate and design the necessary legal framework on behalf of the whole of the research community so as to enable sharing of infrastructure and knowledge resources. As in the exact sciences, agreements and legal services also protect inventors and authors. A National Committee could work to ensure local production in social sciences is appropriately valued and protected internationally. And, because well-adapted communications technologies are critical for an efficient use of other infrastructure resources, as well as for collaborations across long-distances, a National Committee could work to ensure that researchers enjoy genuine and priority access.

Via the MOST Programme, a National Committee could promote the participation of local social scientists in the virtual networks, virtual “campuses”, online multilingual publications, open resource platforms, and other information and communication technology-based sharing mechanisms promoted by UNESCO as part of numerous activities that are based on access to communications technologies. In addition, a National Committee could adapt online services. For example, a National Committee could facilitate local language peer review mechanisms via secure internet. In numerous countries peer review is still a weakness in social science publishing. If overcome, there is an increased likelihood that local research will be published, read, cited and recognized internationally.

2. Fostering research demand and use

Because production of social science research provides the foundations for government policy-making, the government, at all levels, is a key audience for research. Government is often a demander and a funder as well.

The existence of high-quality new knowledge does not in itself guarantee its use and impact in policy-making. There are notable lags and uncertainties. To help bring relevant research results to the attention of government and its policy-makers in forms and at times that they can be appreciated and have greatest impact, a MOST National Committee could develop activities such as the following:

Facilitating the relationship between users and producers

The National Committee can strengthen exchanges between the research and policy-making communities. In a long term perspective, each instance of collaboration between these two communities makes the next more likely. Examples of collaboration include commissioned research and co-production exercises. They may be designed for problem-solving.

Exchanges between users and producers can be facilitated by MOST National Committees in different ways depending on the subject matter and context. Events bringing people into contact may be effective: examples include forums (conferences, public discussions, social science days) and technical seminars.

Events could have the purpose of sharing new knowledge, or for validating existing knowledge. The National Committee will need to avoid *a priori* definitions of what counts as expertise for policy purposes: stakeholders should be included in events directly relevant to a public policy, especially where policy-making affects them and expert analysts have diverse viewpoints. Nevertheless, events should allow for deep debate of the underlying social science knowledge: an event should include not only one scientific author but a group of scientists (and bibliographic references), and should include those who seek to draw upon the implications from the research findings. Communicating about and following up these events extends their potential impact to new audiences.

Aside from events, National Committee could use trainings, publications, online “events”, and other communications to bridge users and producers. For example, a National Committee could collect and publish abstracts of research with guidance as to its potential relevance to public issues (this is done in a number of developed countries by excellent services that are directly attached to Parliaments and Ministries). This kind of publication not only showcases strengths of local research, it also reveal gaps. If well targeted, it may influence choices as to new investment.

Communicating key messages about the contribution of research to society

A National Committee is a natural conduit to communicate key messages from social science research to many audiences. As just mentioned, it may suggest and publicize the implications from new research, to raise awareness among policymakers or parliamentarians for example. A National Committee could also play a role in disseminating materials, news and – more generally speaking -- an image for the social sciences.

Communications could be adapted for radio, television, internet – all sorts of media -- and be adapted to reach new audiences, including the young. The general public is itself an important audience for social science knowledge – and key messages may include advice on how to interpret social sciences products. Foreign audiences can also be addressed, especially to raise the recognition of local research and institutions.

The MOST Programme offers a number of key messages about the relevance of social science research. For example, one key message promoted by MOST is that investing in social science research helps countries to target and attain national priorities. For example, investing in social science research can help countries to attain the internationally-agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

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Another key message of the MOST Programme is that policy making should be informed by evidence, meaning that it should take into account the best scientific analysis. The MOST programme also offers messages about the research methods, and the relative strengths and weaknesses of the social science research outputs (see for example, the 2010 World Social Science Report, which was supported by the MOST Programme). A MOST National Committee may adapt key messages to address local audiences, as well as contributing to the formulation of key messages at the international level.

Fostering research

While many governments, intergovernmental institutions, think tanks and others recognize the need for research as the basis for public policy-making, and now privilege online access to research for the benefit of audiences in developing countries, there remain tremendous gaps in social science knowledge. Findings from social science research in one country are not immediately replicable in another because social science knowledge is particularly sensitive to context. And, in some countries, there are additional impediments to its use because it is difficult to access and to assess research.

Since its inception, the MOST Programme has supported some initiatives that produce research. While its direct support for research is very modest, MOST advocates (to governments and others) that all countries should produce some social science research, and that governments need this research as part of governing. MOST recommends that governments themselves provide sustained research funding and efficient infrastructure. MOST also encourages governments to ensure other pre-conditions for in-country research to flourish.

A National Committee could contribute to this work. For example, the Committee could help identify priorities for new research, or bring attention to existing research -- by drawing out and emphasizing tacit policy implications. The National Committee is well placed to gear its interventions to the needs of its government: it is a local player familiar with conditions of local life. A National Committee could also itself support, or advocate for others to support, in-country research via funding, creation of infrastructure (e.g. archives, publications, digest services), or by other means.

The MOST Programme's online resources may provide a means to publish more works including those by or supported by MOST National Committees: to make local research simultaneously more visible, more accessible, and comparable internationally. Via the MOST Programme, a National Committee may be able to publish conference and workshop materials, which are not normally published in international journals, subject to Committees providing funding contributions. Publishing facilitates the take up of lessons from research, and facilitates comparison and learning.

Sharing successful practices

The MOST Programme is designed as a network to encourage sharing of experiences so as to promote learning by and among National Committees. In particular, National Committees should identify the practices that they use 1) to strengthen use and create demand for social science research and 2) to communicate key messages about the value of such research in their society, and should assess and communicate these to other National Committees, so that others perhaps put them to use in new ways.

MOST's online resources may be able to provide means to publish and compare such reports by MOST National Committees, to help communicate rich local experiences and derive good practices.

3. Bridging: thinking both globally and locally

The MOST Programme as a whole is designed for cooperation and exchange, among and between local national and international levels. Cooperation and exchange is explicitly encouraged.

A National Committee plays an important mediating role. It can feed local and national social science research concerns and knowledge up to the international level. (This could be done via the National Commission, government, MOST Secretariat, UNESCO regional office, MOST governing bodies, and UNESCO.) Equally important, it can feed down to the local communities the news and views from the international level, encouraging research that is locally-sensitive to confront themes of the international agenda which may soon be affecting the country (e.g. environmental change).

Generally speaking, cooperation and exchange strengthens in-country social science research capacities, by improving recognition and rewards for local research, by building up the local stock of knowledge, and by testing and refining local work by comparison. A MOST National Committee could strengthen international cooperation and exchange through specific activities, for example:

Internationalizing research networks

Efforts to internationalize researcher communities -- especially by building their networks and collaborations -- will strengthen research in-country. In the simplest case, a National Committee may help build up a virtual research network. Once started, a National Committee could internationalize such a network by recruiting members from among MOST partners in the region, such as regional social science associations and institutions, the UNESCO Chair networks, UNITWIN, relevant UNESCO Category II Centres, and other National Committees.

A National Committee could also recruit intellectuals of the diaspora. These efforts could be particularly helpful to create or sustain peer review in local languages, or to seek assistance in building institutional partnerships abroad. New information and communication technologies should allow local researchers to maintain viable research links with people across the globe at modest cost, including via electronic publications and conferences for scientific exchange.

A research network exposed to international perspectives and themes will be better able to address local aspects and concerns related to these themes, which is particularly valuable as part of addressing development objectives.

Initiating collaborations with foreign institutions

By helping to build bridges to foreign institutions, a National Committee can strengthen in-country research. A National Committee will have links to universities; through them, it could develop links with their foreign counterparts. In addition, a National Committee could build relations with professional associations at the international level -- among them are the International Social Science Council (ISSC), Inter-academy Council, Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), or Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO).

As another example, a National Committee may become involved in the preparation of a regional Forum of Ministers of Social Development or any of a number of internationally-guided public policy monitoring and review processes (such as those of OECD, EU, UNCTAD and others). A National Committee could channel local research and views to such events and projects. In so doing, it may also collaborate across with structures in neighbouring countries in its region.

In some developing countries, foreign institutions may be strategic partners in strengthening the competitive performance of local researchers. Some foreign NGOs are producers of research about the country or its region; they could be tapped for collaboration. If the National Committee were aiming to improve training of local researchers for international publishing, competitions, and joint work, then other international partners, including regional funding agencies, Academies of Science, or respected journals, could be interested partners.

In addition, a National Committee may wish to work with foreign aid agencies and charities that are financing research in country. In some cases, this funding has a strong impact on local research production, as well as on the sustainability of research careers. To address long term capacity-building at the individual and institutional levels these institutions could be key partners.

Cooperation with respected international think tanks could also be nurtured, for example to expand the activities of the MOST National Committee via collaboration, represent local concerns, or to strengthen the impact of advocacy messages via a discourse with opinion leaders. And, in some countries, large industry, including foreign companies that are important in the local economy, may be a key partner, in developing research and innovation for economic development.

Coordinating capacity-building

Each year in developing countries, United Nations agencies and other intergovernmental organisations and development aid agencies develop with national governments a number of capacity-building projects for the immediate benefit of research communities and government. Their objective is to contribute to longer term goals such as eliminating poverty, strengthening governance, supporting the health, education and empowerment of populations, and promoting sustainable development. Projects devised by governments with the United Nations agencies and other organizations always require a highly-mobilized in-country team to lead and implement the work.

In such situations, in developing countries a National Committee has a special role to play as a focal point for capacity-building. The National Committee should be well-placed to assure the participation of local social science communities.

Composition of the Committee

The quality of its membership is perhaps the most important factor determining the success of a MOST National Committee. This is not simply a matter of the competencies of individual members, because the overall composition of the Committee determines its legitimacy, status and effectiveness.

Competencies

According to the proposed mandate of the MOST National Committee, the Committee would be a group collectively having the capacities to promote the social sciences, spearhead capacity-building, foster research-policy linkages and strengthen international cooperation. The main operational methodology of this group is to convene others in support of each of the activities and to champion the social sciences in-country. It is recommended that the Committee include persons who are recognised opinion-leaders.

Potential members should be carefully considered. These persons may or may not already have an international reputation but they should have knowledge of the needs of research. Specific competencies of individual members could be to facilitate networks, dialogue or general awareness raising. The group collectively should be able to sustain political, academic and public respect. Its members should also be able to attract partners and replacement members.

Size and representation

A National Committee does not have to be large. At the same time, the Committee should preferably include representatives of different backgrounds to contribute various ideas and points of view, and to have access to not only to researchers, but also to institutions of government. The number of members may be a function of expected activities.

Regarding membership of the Committee, UNESCO encourages its Member States to require the participation of women and of young scientists as part of establishing a Committee. The Committee should also be transparent in its procedures for the renewal of membership, and in the application of such procedures, so that qualified candidates from underrepresented groups will be encouraged to present themselves in a later round. Representativeness adds to the natural authority of a distinguished group.

Partners

The MOST National Committee must enlist participation of persons outside the Committee, in order to bring expertise to each activity. Taking into account specific national priorities, each National Committee will identify and nurture many partners. Examples of partners include:

Policy-makers:

- Offices of the president or prime minister
- Ministries responsible for social development
- Parliamentary commissions
- Politicians and civil servants at various levels of the decision-making chain
- Government agencies responsible for follow up on social agendas, in particular on internationally recognised development goals
- Local government

Social scientists:

- Social science institutes
- Universities
- Social science journals
- Professional social science associations
- Associations of young social scientists
- Individual scientists

Civil society representatives:

- National women's, students' and youth organisations
- Non-governmental organisations
- Community leaders
- Trade unions
- Companies and industry leaders
- Media

The UNESCO National Commission should be a natural ally of a National Committee. Other partners might include UNESCO field offices, UNESCO Chairs/UNITWIN Networks, or other scientific programmes of UNESCO that are based in the country or region.

International partners could also include:

- Regional and international professional organisations in the social and human sciences such as: the International Social Science Council, the International Council for Philosophy and Humanities, the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLASCO), etc.
- Agencies and organisations of the United Nations, development banks, development aid agencies, the European Union, OECD or other regional groupings
- Internationally-recognised think tanks charities and businesses that are research producers in the social sciences and policy development
- Foreign research universities

Getting started with a new Committee

A National Committee is established by action of a UNESCO Member State. It is a body that is set up according to decisions by a national government. The UNESCO MOST Programme provides advice, networks and technical support to this national process.

The following paragraphs are recommendations, ideas and suggestions to UNESCO Member States, for the project of setting up a new National Committee. The first are key items to clarify. Following these are suggestions for the sustainability of the new Committee.

Key items a Member State should clarify:

- ✓ Role of the National Commission for UNESCO
- ✓ Affiliation with the MOST Programme
- ✓ Mandate of the new National Committee

Role of the National Commission for UNESCO

The MOST Programme recommends that the National Commission for UNESCO should be closely involved in the process of creating a National Committee—and indeed should lead its creation. The Intergovernmental Council of the MOST Programme has called upon National Commissions for UNESCO to provide support for establishing, strengthening and rejuvenating National Committees. National Commissions for UNESCO are encouraged to coordinate with the MOST Programme Secretariat for advice and support when establishing a new National Committee, and when creating networks among MOST National Committees.

In countries where a Sub-Commission for Social Sciences exists within the National Commission for UNESCO, the specificities of a new National Committee should be made clear, and possibilities for overlapping membership should be examined.

While a National Committee operates under the responsibility of the National Commission for UNESCO, it does not need to be part of the National Commission. The National Commission for UNESCO could be closely involved in the formulation of the mandate as a basic reference document for National Committee. The National Commission may also have punctual responsibilities in relation to the National Committee for example it may: evaluate the National Committee, propose partners for activities, or manage actions for the protection and promotion of the name and logo of UNESCO and MOST.

Affiliation with the MOST Programme

It is the Intergovernmental Council (IGC) of the MOST Programme that reviews requests and approves a MOST designation for a newly-created National Committee. A National Committee finds its proper place in the overall framework of the MOST Programme through cooperation with the MOST IGC, its Bureau and the Scientific Advisory Committee, as well as with regional MOST structures and MOST Secretariat.

Networking and cooperation at the national and international level within the context of the MOST Programme will be vital for the functioning and effectiveness of any National Committee. In order to exchange information and results within the MOST Programme at the international level, and to share experiences among National Committees, it is recommended to develop close links with other National Committees within a region, as well as the MOST Secretariat (and responsible staff in UNESCO's nearest field office).

The MOST Programme provides opportunities for the affiliated committees to work jointly. For example, the MOST Programme's online resources allow comparisons of work between countries and facilitate publishing to a targeted international public (researchers and policy-makers). Online resources are being developed further to offer novel networking facilities.

Mandate

National conditions and priorities determine the optimum design of the mandate of a National Committee. It is recommended to describe in detail the aim and modalities for action. The aim stated in this guidance may be geared towards specific conditions, priorities and opportunities in the Member State concerned. The mandate – and any subsequent changes to it-- should be communicated to the MOST IGC.

Experience has shown that a new National Committee may be built on existing foundations: an existing research network or advisory institution for example. The distinctive role of a new National Committee should be thoughtfully expressed, so as to keep up the existing ties of cooperation.

The MOST Programme recommends publishing the mandate. Publishing the mandate promotes transparency regarding the role and operations of the new National Committee, both for its members and for potential partners, which encourages good working relationships.

Institutional affiliation

A National Committee can be institutionally anchored in various ways. Examples of institutions which may act as host institution for a National Committee include:

- National Commissions for UNESCO
- Sub-Commissions for social sciences of the National Commissions for UNESCO
- Ministries (e.g. social development, education, research or international cooperation)
- Parliamentary commissions and committees
- Research institutes or research centres
- National research councils
- Academies of science

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- University social science departments– in one or linking/rotating between several universities
- Youth councils or youth associations
- universities

A National Committee should be set up in a way which best addresses the priorities and specific situation in a Member State. There is no obligation to link the National Committee to be an institution. In some Member States a National Committee may exist in its own right, and this may be feasible and sustainable. Alternatively, a permanent but informal networking structure may provide the best model for a National Committee to be efficient at the national level in some Member States.

On the other hand, in many states the only sustainable option will be an arrangement within a carefully-selected institution. Some considerations to take into account include:

- how best to achieve the aims of the Committee,
- the Committee's independence,
- opportunities for funding,
- the status of its members, and
- the Committee's sustainability.

This assessment should consider the technical, scientific, financial and administrative independence of the National Committee. For example, establishing the National Committee within an existing institution could determine the legal provisions guiding financing, and limit opportunities for independent funding (for example, government funding or other external funding).

An institutional affiliation can also attract or dissuade potential members and partners. The accountability of a National Committee or individual members to another entity will also have an impact on achieving that Committee's aim, unless there is a good match to aims of the parent institution.

Where a MOST structure or other structure with similar goals is in place, a new National Committee could be built on the existing structure. A National Committee could also be renewed with a revised mandate (so as to correspond to the current objectives of the MOST Programme).

A local or regional Committee?

In some Member States, notably larger states which have a federal form of government, it might be effective to set up MOST Committees at the sub-national level.

Elsewhere, including in small island developing states for example, the viability of national-level committees might be constrained, because of limitations in research capacity, human resources and budgets. In addition, communication constraints may exist. In these circumstances a regional MOST Committee may be an efficient solution.

Administrative procedures

It is recommended that a National Committee be created with a lean and transparent set of operating rules. Care should be taken to avoid heavy administrative requirements and procedural complexity.

A simple set of concerns must be addressed, for example:

- How will the agenda of the Committee be set?
- How will the Committee deliberate?
- How will the Committee decide?
- In what way will record-keeping and reporting be secured?
- What will guide the media contacts of the Committee?
- How will scientific quality and ethics standards be applied?
- How will publication responsibilities be managed?
- What will guide the sharing of information about research in progress?
- How will the Committee report?
- How and when will the Committee be evaluated?

These questions illustrate that the adoption of a minimum of procedures and policies will ensure the functioning of the MOST National Committee.

In the process of setting up a National Committee, it is recommended to consider procedures for the renewal of membership. For example:

- Who decides on membership?
- What expertise is needed of individual members?
- Will members serve limited terms?
- What is required in terms of expertise of the entire Committee?
- How could various constituencies of society be represented?

Experiences of MOST national structures suggest that it is important to create a sustainable structure and management policy for the National Committee. To achieve this, it is recommended that at least one member of a National Committee serves in a central position as a chairperson, secretary, liaison officer or focal point.

Reporting

The sharing of experiences is crucial to the sustainability of a National Committee. The publication and dissemination of reports on activities could contribute to regional and international cooperation initiatives.

A National Committee is encouraged to inform the MOST Secretariat in writing at least biannually of its activities and membership. The Secretariat may include such information in the documents presented to the IGC and IGC Bureau meetings, and may also circulate the reports to other National Committees. The expectation is that the report will provide names and contacts as well as including brief descriptions of activities: theme, participation in events, publications, and outcomes, and any lessons learnt (assessments are welcome).

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To further strengthen the a National Committee and its external image, its activities and general operations could be evaluated periodically by the institution to which it is affiliated (or by the National Commission for UNESCO). Sharing this information with the MOST Secretariat, so that it is communicated to the IGC and other National Committees, is also encouraged for the benefit of strengthening the network among National Committees and across the MOST Programme.

Name and logo of MOST and UNESCO

The use of the UNESCO and MOST names, acronyms and logos is guided by the existing rules of UNESCO. A National Committee should itself assure that it follows the requirements and should continuously promote the appropriate use of the name and logo of UNESCO and MOST. The National Commission for UNESCO has an overarching responsibility to ensure that these rules are respected.

The mandate could be an appropriate instrument to regulate in further detail the use of MOST and UNESCO logos for publications, conferences and other activities by the Committee. The specific situation in a Member State could be discussed in close consultation with the UNESCO National Commission and the MOST Secretariat.

In order to preserve the quality standards of the MOST Programme and its name, the Intergovernmental Council may decide in exceptional cases on the continued recognition of a National Committee as a MOST affiliate. Interventions may for instance be appropriate to avoid negative impacts on the MOST Programme or in case activities are not in line with accepted MOST and UNESCO principles.

Funding

A National Committees should consider carefully how it will acquire funding for its activities and its own functioning, perhaps including a small secretariat or office. A National Committees and the Member State concerned are responsible for the sustainability of the Committee.

Sources of funding could include:

- Contributions (including in kind) from host institutions
- Bilateral and multilateral sources
- Government allocations
- Allocations from ministries and public agencies, national research councils, national grants councils
- Science foundations
- Private sector sources
- UNESCO Participation Programme

Thematic activities, conferences and publications of a National Committee may generate further opportunities for funding. A National Committee could consider fundraising, in which case all its members should be actively involved.

UNESCO does not assume responsibility for direct funding National Committees. UNESCO can to a limited extent provide assistance through the Participation Programme for particular projects, upon

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competitive selection. UNESCO Secretariat can also assist in raising funds from other institutions. Finally, some support will be made available in 2010-2011 for joint activities initiated by new National Committees and selected to participate in the piloting programme.

Pilots

Following the recommendations of the 9th MOST Intergovernmental Council, a piloting programme aimed at supporting the establishment of new MOST National Committees is to be organized by the UNESCO Secretariat during the biennium 2010–2011.

During a Pilot Programme, UNESCO Secretariat will:

- ✓ Provide advice on the establishment of National Committees
- ✓ Consult with National Commissions for UNESCO on mandates and modalities at the national level
- ✓ Facilitate exchange of technical support and best practices, including with existing National Committees
- ✓ Support networks among National Committees: sharing research and publications

The objective of the pilots is to gain practical experiences related to setting up new National Committees in a number of selected Member States (selection takes into account regional distribution). The experiences acquired through this pilot programme will be instrumental in further strengthening National Committees.

ANNEX: Contacts

For further information and to take part in the pilot programme, please contact one of the offices for your country or region. This office may be a MOST national structure (National Committee, National Liaison Committee, Focal Point, or Research Network), the National Commission for UNESCO in your country, the nearest UNESCO field office or the UNESCO MOST Programme Secretariat in Paris. You may also refer to the MOST Programme internet pages: www.unesco.org/shs/most .

National Commissions for UNESCO and/or MOST national structure

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