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Agenda item 9

The UNESCO Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers (2017)

This document is submitted for information to the MOST Intergovernmental Council (IGC).

It presents summary information about the Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers (2017), specifying how this UNESCO instrument relates to the MOST Programme.

The MOST Intergovernmental Council (IGC) is expected to examine and may discuss this matter.

Introduction

1. From 2019, MOST is taking responsibility both for the statutory processes associated with the Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers (2017) and for related advocacy and capacity-building, which synergize with the MOST programme's existing strategy and action plan.

I. The Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers

2. The Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers was adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO on 13 November 2017 (39 C/Resolution 85). This text supersedes the Recommendation on the Status of Scientific Researchers of 20 November 1974 by the General Conference of UNESCO at its 18th session (18 C/Resolution 40), while championing the same fundamental principles.

3. This Recommendation has a particular value today, including for developing countries in building up their scientific skills and institutions, in light of the importance of science to achieving Sustainable Development Goals and addressing Climate Change. For developing countries, the Recommendation provides a useful checklist of political and institutional requirements.

4. The Recommendation promotes a fair and appropriate status of scientific researchers and informs adequate national science, technology and innovation policies, which "encourage and assist the capacity of scientific researchers to perform research" and which ensure that societies use knowledge from all scientific fields in a responsible manner.

5. The Recommendation also indicates how, in principle, this can be achieved. For example, it stresses the importance of two issues:

    a. the need to ensure the free circulation of scientific data, and

    b. the need to provide scientists with adequate financial and institutional support.

6. So as to support Member States' implementation, a brochure version of the Recommendation is available online. A short explanatory brochure created by the National Commissions of Canada and the Netherlands is also available to help spread awareness of the uses of the Recommendation. The General Conference also summarized the Recommendation in ten "key areas" (see Annex). More information and the full text of the Recommendation in six languages is available online on the website of UNESCO's legal instruments.

II. The Member States' implementation

7. Implementation of the Recommendation in Member States is monitored by the Committee on Conventions and Recommendations (CR Committee) of the Executive Board of UNESCO. The monitoring process is determined in line with the Specific multi-stage procedure for the monitoring of the implementation of UNESCO conventions and recommendations for which no specific institutional mechanism is provided (177 EX/Decision 35.I and 196 EX/Decision 20).

8. Every four years, the Secretariat of UNESCO collects reports by Member States, and, in consultation with other partners of the Organization, collects information on their implementation of the Recommendation. With this the Secretariat prepares and submits to the Executive Board a consolidated report for consideration by its CR Committee and further transmission to the General Conference.

9. This exercise for examination of the Member States' reports on implementation of the 1974 Recommendation on the Status of Scientific Researchers took place from 22 December 2016 to 22 May 2017 (39 C/26 REV.).

10. The Member States will submit reports in 2021 on their implementation of the new Recommendation. In preparation of this new reporting exercise, the CR Committee and Secretariat are developing new guidance instructions for the Member State reports over the course of 2019. The instructions will be developed in consultation with UNESCO National Commissions and UNESCO Chairs.

11. The Recommendation itself asks Member States to periodically review the conditions of their scientific researchers (paragraph 46). It may therefore be interesting to see what new mechanisms for monitoring implementation are devised in Member States.

IV. Conclusion

12. Member States' implementation of the Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers links to both

    a. the research pillar of the MOST strategy (supporting the production and sharing of knowledge in the social sciences and the humanities), and

    b. the policy support and capacity-building pillar (offering positive mechanisms for transferring research evidence into public policy and practice).

13. The MOST Programme and its UNESCO Secretariat therefore will in future be taking a supporting role for the implementation by Member States of the agreed norms insofar as social and human sciences are concerned. The MOST Secretariat is also tasked with enhanced cooperation with the Natural Science Sector on cross-cutting science policy issues.

V. Annex: Excerpt from UNESCO General Conference 39 C/Resolution 85

KEY AREAS RELATING TO THE RECOMMENDATION ON SCIENCE AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCHERS

1. The Recommendation underlines the responsibility of science towards the United Nations' ideals of human dignity, progress, justice, peace, welfare of humankind and respect for the environment.

Science is part of Member States' efforts to develop more humane, just and inclusive societies and serves to further the United Nations ideals of peace and welfare of humankind.

(paragraphs 4, 5e,f, 13d).

2. The Recommendation emphasizes the need for science to meaningfully interact with society and vice versa.

Member States' governments and the general public alike recognize the value and use of science and technology for tackling global challenges. Society is engaged in science and research through the identification of knowledge needs, the conduct of scientific research, and the use of results.

(paragraphs 4, 5c, 13d, 19, 20, 22).

3. The Recommendation recognizes the role of science in national policy and decision making, international cooperation and development.

Member States should use scientific knowledge in an inclusive and accountable manner to inform national policy and decision making, and to advance international cooperation and development.

(paragraphs 5g, 7, 8, 9).

4. The Recommendation promotes science as a common good.

Member States are urged to treat public funding of research and development as a form of public investment, the returns on which are long term and serve public interest. Open science, including the sharing of data, methods, results and the knowledge derived from it, intensifies the public role of science and should be facilitated and encouraged.

(paragraphs 6, 13e, 16a-v, 18b,c,d, 21, 34e, 35, 36, 38).

5. The Recommendation calls for inclusive and non-discriminatory work conditions and access to education and employment in science.

All citizens enjoy equal opportunities for the initial education and training needed for, and equal access to employment in scientific research. Scientific researchers enjoy equitable conditions of work. The participation of women and other underrepresented groups should be actively encouraged in order to remediate inequalities.

(paragraphs 13a,b,c, 24b,c, 33, 34d).

6. The Recommendation emphasises that any scientific conduct is subject to universal human rights standards.

Research should be conducted in a responsible manner that respects the human rights of scientific researchers and human research subjects alike. Open access to research results and the knowledge derived from it promotes the human right to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

(paragraphs 18a,e, 20a,b,c, 21, 22, 42).

7. The Recommendation balances the freedoms, rights and responsibilities of researchers.

Scientific researchers respect public accountability and carry out their work in a humanely, scientifically, socially and ecologically responsible manner, while at the same time they enjoy the degree of autonomy and intellectual and academic freedom appropriate to their task and indispensable to the advancement of science and technology.

(paragraphs 10, 11, 16a,b, 40).

8. The Recommendation calls for scientific integrity and ethical codes of conduct for science and research and their technical applications.

Member States should establish suitable means to address the ethics of science and research integrity, through developing education and training regarding the ethical dimensions of science, establishing and supporting science ethics policies and committees, and stimulating the professional ethics of researchers including their intellectual integrity, sensitivity to conflict of interest and vigilance as to the potential consequences of their research and development activities, including their technical applications.

(paragraphs 5d, 14c,d, 16a, 18b,d,e, 20a, 25, 39a,b).

9. The Recommendation recognises the vital importance of human capital for a sound and responsible science system.

Human capital is the principal pillar of a sound science system. Member States should develop policies with respect to the training, employment, career prospects, and work conditions of scientific researchers. These policies should address, inter alia, adequate career development prospects; lifelong learning opportunities; the facilitation of mobility and international travel; the protection of health and social security; and inclusive and transparent performance appraisal systems for scientific researchers.

(paragraphs 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 41).

10. The Recommendation stresses the role of Member States in creating an enabling environment for science and research.

Member States – government and non-government stakeholders alike - should create a stimulating environment for a sound science system with adequate human and institutional capacities, by facilitating satisfactory work conditions, moral support, and public recognition of successful performance of scientific researchers; by supporting education in science and technology; by promoting publishing and sharing data and results that meet adequate quality standards; and by monitoring the implementation and impact of such efforts.

(paragraphs 5, 11, 14a, 17, 24a, 26, 37, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47).