

*Intergovernmental Council of the Management of Social Transformations (MOST) Programme  
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Agenda Item 5*

## **REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

The present document, prepared by the Chair of the Scientific Advisory Committee, is communicated to the Intergovernmental Council to inform its deliberations.

1. Our report on behalf of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) has to point out the improvement of this committee last year by its extension by the Director-General, to new members covering a larger area of countries.
2. SAC contributed earlier to the finalization of the MOST Strategy, of the Action Plan, and of the guidelines for MOST Schools and validated them before their submission to the Bureau. SAC recommended a mapping of MOST Schools, which was reflected later on in the Action Plan, and the extension of MOST Schools in all member states.
3. With the guidelines adopted, SAC is confident that by following them, and especially the four conditions of flexibility, quality, accelerated dissemination and national ownership, member states will develop rapidly a national culture of MOST which will facilitate both bridging between scientific research and policy making and integrating public policies in the frame of the SDG. Since the previous meeting of the Intergovernmental Council (IGC), nine MOST Schools have been successfully implemented in Mongolia, China, Indonesia, Russia, Cuba, El Salvador, South Africa and Lebanon. Ongoing planning includes forthcoming MOST Schools in Cuba, Madagascar, Cameroon, Gabon, Kazakhstan and the Dominican Republic.
4. SAC underlines the fact that MOST is implemented in a main intellectual platform of the United Nations system. It has to develop its activities within the conceptual framework of SDGs. Efforts made in this direction by the Secretariat of MOST are fully satisfying.
5. SAC is accompanying the implementation of the different activities planned in the Action plan, and members of SAC are engaging personally in different fields: collaborating in the organization of MOST Schools and regional intergovernmental forums, by submission of papers or reports, and in the publications of MOST.
6. Two main publications are going on, addressing two hot topics: inclusion and migration.
7. “The politics of inclusion”, suggested by SAC, was adopted and is being produced in collaboration with the Comparative Research on Poverty programme, based at the University of Bergen, Norway. SAC members are contributing to the publication and the President of SAC is member of the editorial committee. We made a call for papers and we received 154 proposals from all over the world. The editorial committee will select around 20 papers and will give methodological advices to their writers, whenever necessary, in order to assure the best quality of this publication which will become a reference in that field. Among proposals, we received 57 proposals from professors in different universities, 65 proposals from researchers not always affiliated to universities and 32 proposals from students. We will try to make room for few students to encourage young researcher, along with papers provided by senior researchers and professors. The preparation of the book includes an International Workshop, to be held at UNESCO Headquarters, 6-7 July 2017.
8. This process of research and publication on “Politics of Inclusion” seems very successful and encourages us to adopt the same mechanism in later publications.
9. The second topic for research and publication is “Migration”. The IGC raised this topic and the Bureau asked the Secretariat and SAC to start the preliminary phases of this publication, which reflects the concern of many states facing many related challenges today. On two successive stages, SAC expressed its comments on drafts prepared by the secretariat of MOST, on the topic of migration. SAC is fully committed to contribute to the finalization of the best publication possible in this field, meant to support member states efforts in addressing this

critical issue. Our first observation was that migration has multiple facets today and that we should address migration in a multifactorial analysis, and within changing dynamics. In this context, SAC encourages researchers to undertake on field researches and case studies and to end their papers by policy recommendations. This will support efforts of member states in confronting specific challenges of migration in different contexts.

10. SAC underlined the necessity of consolidating national institutions and ownership of the mission of MOST. For that purpose, SAC recommended the development of national committees of MOST. As members states could be concerned by adding such a mandate to their institutions, SAC advised to implement National Committees within or with the support of the National Commission for UNESCO in each member state. This scenario will avoid any confusion and will encourage the optimization of all infrastructures and existing institutions in this field.
11. Besides, SAC suggested earlier the implementation of a UNESCO Chair or a Masters programme in Management of Social Transformations, under UNESCO auspices and in collaboration with UNU. This suggestion was neglected because of other priorities.
12. On another hand, SAC highly encouraged addressing young researchers in member states. In this context, it commended the initiative taken by the Secretariat of MOST by launching Most Direct, which is an online Forum, addressed to young researchers. The UNESCO Inclusive Policy Lab is another innovative program that SAC will support and to which members of SAC will contribute. It is based on both real life and virtual mechanism and consists in an intersectoral intervention within UNESCO divisions and between the headquarters and the local levels.
13. SAC encouraged also the implementation of the futures literacy program by the Secretariat of MOST. This programme addresses the multiple perceptions and representations of the future and should develop anticipatory capacities.
14. SAC encouraged also the active implication of MOST in the preparation and organization of the World Humanities Conference, which will be held in Liège, Belgium, from 6 to 12 August 2017. Different preparatory symposiums are organized in 2016-2017. SAC members are coordinating with the team of the Secretariat of Most and many of them joined the process.
15. In the last year, Members of SAC accelerated their implication in the different activities of MOST. They contributed actively to ameliorate the quality of the fundamental documents and they are trying to boost systematization, nationalization and institutionalization of the different activities of MOST.
16. SAC has two main concerns and we want to take this opportunity to draw the attention of your honourable assembly to them:
  - The necessary coordination between the different levels of national institutions engaged in MOST in each country, starting with the Permanent Delegation at the Headquarters of UNESCO, the governmental level, the administrative one and the sector of Universities and research. In the statutes of MOST, it was underlined the necessity of committing academia and researchers to the top of the process. We should add that this has to be made in close coordination with the diplomatic level and the governmental and administrative one in each Member State.

- Time has come to assess MOST activities in the different member states. By assessment we mean external evaluation, in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses and recommend measures to improve efficiency and optimize national benefit.
17. In our next meeting we will examine these issues and advise on ways to achieve them.
  18. However, we should keep in mind the very limited margin of SAC. The terms of members are usually short. When a member starts understanding what is going on, what are the main issues and what are his main missions, time comes for him or her to leave. The rotation on short-term basis of SAC members reduces their efficiency and the potential of their contribution to the improvement of MOST activities. SAC Members were five until 2016. Now they are nine. SAC meets once a year and contributes on a voluntary basis, without resources for any research expenditures. It deals with a Secretariat that has a team of experts working on a permanent basis and having a direct and permanent contact with member states.
  19. Our experience gave us the conviction that there are specific measures to be taken to enhance the position of this Scientific Advisory Committee, beyond the personal commitment of members of SAC in the implementation of national machineries, such as national committees, dissemination of culture of SDGs, MOST Schools, or linkages between evidence-based knowledge and policy-making.
  20. SAC should be and should remain a unit having an overview on what is done both by the Secretariat and by Member States within MOST and to recommend what should be prioritized, commend what is successful, and address critical comments whenever it is necessary.
  21. To facilitate these tasks, maybe we should reshape the position of SAC, its capabilities, attributions and resources.
  22. Addressing this question is under the mandate of the IGC, which can submit suggestions to the Director-General of UNESCO.
  23. Finally yet importantly, I want to take the opportunity, on behalf of the SAC members, to commend the strong efforts made by the Secretariat of MOST in the last years and the innovative and energetic attitude the team of the Secretariat reflected. We especially appreciate and commend the magnanimous and patient attitude of the Director, Mr Dendev Badarch, who could fill all gaps in information and coordination and encouraged all members to provide their best.