



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

United Kingdom
National Commission for UNESCO

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Strategy 2009-2012

Towards “the building of peace, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information”

in UNESCO's current mission statement

“since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed”

in preamble to UNESCO's Constitution

*United Kingdom National Commission for UNESCO
Coimisean Náiseanta na Rioghachd Aonaichte dha UNESCO
Comisiwn Cenedlaethol UNESCO y Deyrnas Unedig*

THE CONTEXT

UNESCO

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) is a UN Specialised Agency dedicated to intellectual cooperation and practical action in education, the sciences, culture, communication and information. UNESCO promotes the inseparable goals of peace, mutual understanding and equitable and sustainable human development.

UNESCO's current Medium Term Strategy (2008-2013) has the following overarching objectives for its programmes and activities:

- Attaining quality education for all and life long learning
- Mobilising science knowledge and policy for sustainable development
- Addressing emerging social and ethical challenges
- Fostering cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and a culture of peace
- Building inclusive knowledge societies through information and communication

All work is carried out within the overriding priorities of Africa and gender equality.

THE UK AND UNESCO

The UK was a founding member of UNESCO after the Second World War. The Department for International Development (DFID) is now the lead government department for UK relations with UNESCO and pays the annual subscription of about £12 million (the UK is the fourth largest contributor). DFID maintains a small Permanent Delegation attached to UNESCO Headquarters in Paris.

The Government's objectives in its relationship with UNESCO are:

- to develop UK input to UNESCO policy-making and debate, from all parts of the UK and all sections of society;
- to build a more effective UNESCO which achieves positive outcomes, especially in poorer countries, in areas over which it has competence;
- to encourage support in the UK for UNESCO's ideals and work.

UK NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR UNESCO

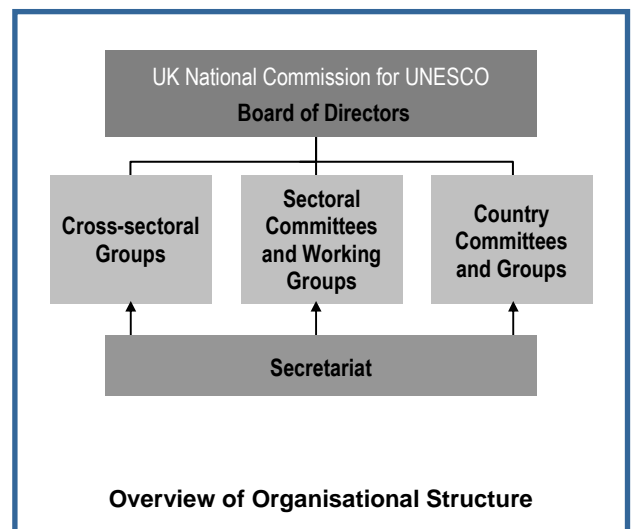
The UK National Commission for UNESCO is an independent civil society organisation set up by Government, in partnership with civil society, as the focal point in the UK for policy advice and programme work relating to UNESCO. It became a company in 2006 and charitable status is now being sought.

It consists of a Board of Directors, sectoral committees and country committees. The sectoral committees are the Education Committee, Sciences Committee, Culture Committee, and Communication and Information Committee. The country committees, the Wales Committee and Scotland Committee (the aim is to establish a similar committee soon in Northern Ireland), reflect the devolved nature of the UK and ensure that the organisation reaches all parts of the UK in its activities. The Board of Directors provides governance, strategic leadership and oversight for the UK National Commission. The operation and related activities of this structure are supported by a small Secretariat of salaried staff members.

There is now a body of about 250 expert members from UK civil society engaged in the UK National Commission, working in a voluntary capacity, with access to wide civil society networks reaching out both nationally and internationally.

Relationship with UNESCO

The UK National Commission is part of the global community of UNESCO National Commissions, an arrangement through which UNESCO enlists the support and involvement of civil society in its member states.



Unique to UNESCO in the UN system, National Commissions function as essential partners both of governments and of UNESCO, acting as catalysts to involve key national actors in UNESCO's fields of competence. In the context of UNESCO's current efforts to decentralise, National Commissions can be expected to assume a still greater role in the future.

Relationship with Government

The UK National Commission was re-established in March 2004 by DFID's Secretary of State. The Education Committee, Sciences Committee, Culture Committee, and Communication and Information Committee oversee work and activities of an international dimension, some work across the whole UK, and work in England where

the UNESCO-related aspects of policy have been devolved to the other home countries. The Wales and Scotland Committees, established in 2004 and 2006, run programmes of activities in their own countries, as well as contributing to the UK-wide and international work of the National Commission as a whole.

A number of UK government departments, as well as DFID, have an interest in the UK National Commission's work and include the FCO, DCMS, DIUS, DCSF and Defra. The Welsh Assembly Government and the Scottish Government have specific interest in the work of the Wales and Scotland Committees. Unlike some National Commissions, the UK National Commission is entirely made up of civil society members, and is independent from Government.

THE STRATEGY

OVERALL AIMS

The primary purposes of the UK National Commission are to mobilise civil society in the UK in order to achieve policies and international standards which will contribute to peace and improve people's lives in the developing world as well as in the UK, and to champion UNESCO's vision in the UK.

We will seek to play our part in implementing UNESCO's vision to make a better world by upholding human rights and contributing to the building of peace, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information.

VISION

By 2012, we expect to have:

- established the UK National Commission as a principal source of advice to Government in UNESCO's areas of responsibility and through our contribution have enhanced UK policy-making;
- contributed significantly to making UNESCO more effective and to UNESCO playing a full part in UN reform efforts;
- raised the profile of UNESCO and of UNESCO's ideals in the UK and improved the UK's performance in UNESCO policy areas;
- built a strong, visible, well-managed UK National Commission.

OBJECTIVES FROM THE UK NATIONAL COMMISSION'S CONSTITUTION

Working in partnership with Government and maintaining close collaboration with the UK Permanent Delegation to UNESCO, and drawing on the resource that civil society represents, the UK National Commission's main objectives are:

- to provide expert analysis, comment and advice to the UK's policymaking on UNESCO programmes and issues;
- to bring to the attention of Government those aspects of UK policy towards UNESCO or matters in which UNESCO has legitimate interest, which the UK National Commission believes should be reviewed or promoted by Government;
- to participate in UNESCO's programmes, their preparation, delivery and evaluation, and in debates and in decision-making activities;
- to develop a capacity to reach out to UK civil society, through a wide variety of channels, so as to enable people and organisations to understand more about UNESCO and to participate fully in its programmes and debates;
- to facilitate the delivery and management of UNESCO activities in the UK;
- to share knowledge and cooperate both with the UNESCO Secretariat and with other National Commissions, and to deliver appropriate programmes.

VALUES AND WAYS OF WORKING

Within the above objectives, the UK National Commission will:

- emphasise improvement to people's lives throughout the world as the core aim of our work;
- follow tenets of democracy, equality (including gender), diversity, clarity, openness and transparency, and accountability, and generally be guided by Nolan principles of transparency and good governance;
- promote activities in our programmes with the aim of maximum impact and replication;
- make strategic choices based on our comparative advantage and relevant emerging challenges;
- make our far reaching volunteer network and our resources work to maximum effect;
- encourage cooperation across our committees and the exchange of experiences and lessons;
- regularly evaluate our activities internally and through external evaluation, and respond flexibly to recommendations.

KEY THEMES 2009-2012

Themes are based on UNESCO's programme and the current reforming efforts in the UN system.

Between 2009 and 2012, we will do the following in the areas of our key themes.

1. In support of theme one *"to be a principal adviser to Government on policies in UNESCO's areas of competence"* we will:

- provide advice regularly to DFID and the UK Permanent Delegation on UNESCO's programmes and general effectiveness, and briefings for relevant UNESCO meetings;
- ensure committees, both sectoral and country, interact regularly with respective government departments on aspects of policy in areas of UNESCO's competence, including through policy briefings, seminars and other events;
- in our expert analysis and advice to Government lay emphasis on:
 - strengthening education in developing countries;
 - improving links and lesson-learning between UK educational bodies and those in poorer countries;
 - improving the international system's and the UK's response to challenges in science and engineering;
 - helping build science and engineering capacity in poorer countries;

- protecting cultural heritage worldwide by making the UK response to UNESCO's cultural conventions more effective;
- highlighting the link between culture and development;
- raising the profile of diversity of expression and media aspects of governance and human rights;
- exchanging lessons with poorer countries on the digital revolution and assisting them to take part in it.

2. In support of theme two *"to help build an effective UNESCO"* we will:

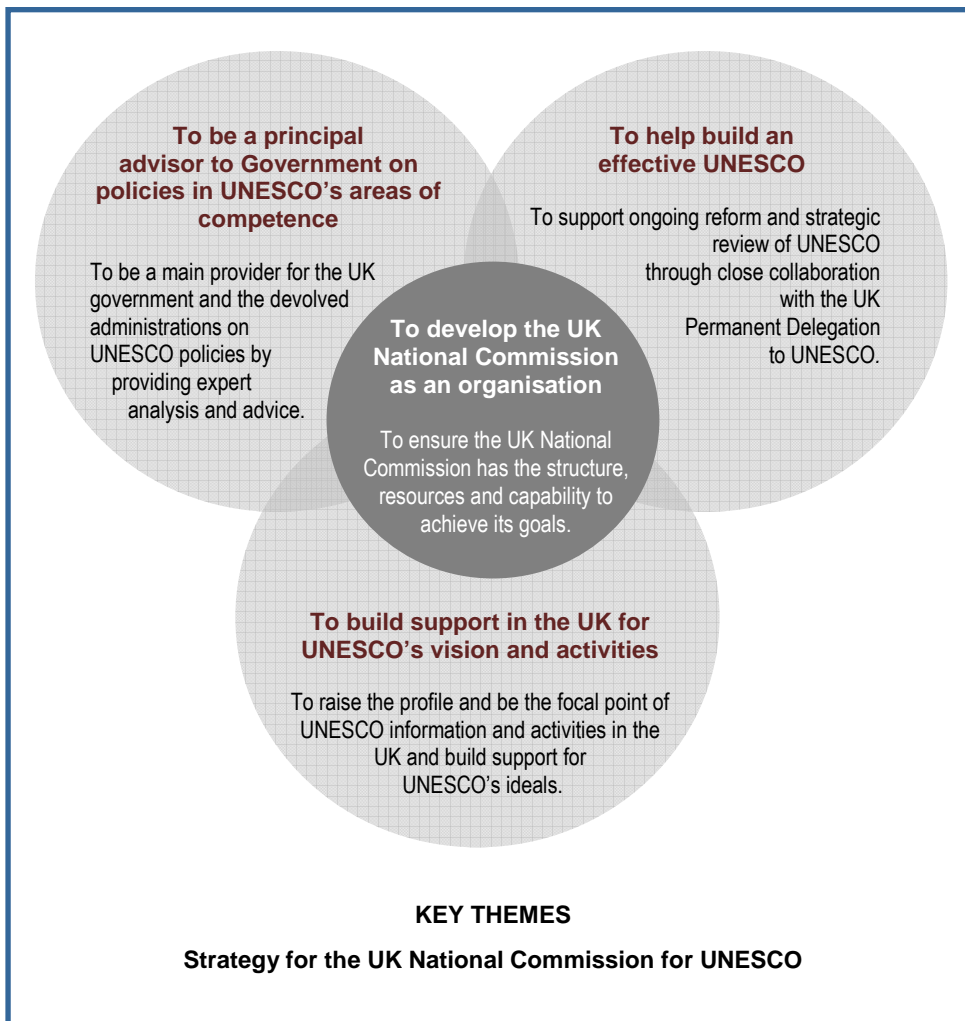
- use every opportunity to urge full participation by UNESCO in the UN reform process, and improvements in its own internal management and use of resources, and provide detailed briefing and take part in relevant UNESCO meetings, including those of the Executive Board, and of the General Conferences in 2009 and 2011;
- in our general and sectoral input encourage UNESCO to reform its sectors to become an organisation which promotes debate and research to bring about good international policies, sets international standards, monitors efforts, and – in developing countries – helps build capacity to improve people's lives;
- encourage UNESCO to continue to emphasise its role in meeting the Millennium Development Goals, with priority for Africa;
- encourage UNESCO to be more active in promoting understanding and reconciliation between divided communities before, during and after conflict;
- increase cooperation with other National Commissions to promote these policies.

3. In support of theme three *"to build support in the UK for UNESCO's vision and activities"* we will:

- organise a well-coordinated annual programme of activities throughout the UK, supported by targeted projects and public events;
- increase the UK's knowledge of and participation in UNESCO's activities, for example, the UNITWIN/Chairs Programme, the Associated Schools Project network (ASPnet), and research and fellowship opportunities;
- ensure improved input by the UK to UNESCO's intergovernmental and international programmes in science, including through University UNESCO centres;
- monitor UK compliance with international norms, standards and conventions in UNESCO's fields of competence.

4. In support of theme four “to develop the UK National Commission as an organisation” we will:

- produce committee business plans which reflect this strategy;
- ensure the Board and committees regularly review their outreach and networks and strive to enhance both;
- develop cross-committee cooperation;
- support the work of the Scotland and Wales Committees by ensuring the work of the UK National Commission reaches out across the whole UK;
- develop our relationships with other external networks, including by organising annual events for networking purposes;
- put into effect a communications and publications strategy which reinforces our key themes, and which includes the production of a regular e-newsletter and an Annual Report;
- produce welcome packs and engage in an internal education campaign;
- ensure good financial and human resource management practice in the operations of the UK National Commission, including a Secretariat business plan;
- develop income streams in support of UK National Commission goals;
- exchange experiences with other National Commissions through a structured programme of contacts;
- establish “theme coordinators” on the Board for each of key themes 1-4 to ensure work is on course.



The United Kingdom National Commission for UNESCO is a
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