

The Geneva Action Plan

Strengthening the contribution of the UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks in the Natural Sciences to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)



Based on the Geneva Milestone, as endorsed by the UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks in the Natural Sciences during the Conference 'Mobilizing UNESCO Chairs in Natural Sciences for policy action towards the 2030 Agenda', held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 5 to 7 July 2017.

The Geneva Action Plan

The Geneva Action Plan is based on the **Geneva Milestone** (see **Annex 1**), as endorsed by the UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks in the Natural Sciences during the Conference 'Mobilizing UNESCO Chairs in the Natural Sciences for Policy Action Towards the 2030 Agenda' (Geneva, 5-7 July 2017).

The Geneva Action Plan proposes five main areas of intervention, built upon the main actions adopted in the Geneva Milestone:

- 1) *Prioritizing*
- 2) *Networking*
- 3) *Expertise & Information Sharing*
- 4) *Advocating & Communicating*
- 5) *Monitoring & Reporting*

For each area of intervention, specific actions or means of implementation are listed in the following pages, for UNESCO as well as for the UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks in the Natural Sciences.

The current version of the Action Plan articulates its means of implementation into two phases, corresponding to the parts of the current document.

In the first part, one main priority action is identified for each area of intervention. The priority actions listed here are the result of a consultation and collaboration process that took place in Lausanne, Switzerland, in the framework of the **Geneva Lake Workshop** (EPFL, 7-9 March 2018). This was the occasion for UNESCO to meet and discuss with selected representatives of the UNESCO Chairs, UNITWIN Networks and Category 2 Centres in the Natural Sciences, in order to identify one priority action for each area of intervention of the document, to be considered as a first step for the implementation of the Geneva Action Plan.

One of the main means of implementation foreseen is the development of a Communication and Outreach Platform, whose objective would be to support UNESCO scientific networks, including UNESCO Chairs, UNITWIN Networks and Category 2 Centres (C2Cs) related to the Natural Sciences Sector, to better communicate their academic and scientific expertise for the implementation of the SDGs.

In the second part of the document, complementary means of implementation are listed for each area of intervention of the Action Plan. These must be considered as medium-term proposals to be implemented in the following three years. These proposals have been shared under the form of a draft Action Plan with all UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks in the Natural Sciences, in order to ensure their ownership on the document and to collect their inputs, suggestions and remarks. Such complementary means of implementation have to be considered as potential activities and proposals to orientate SDGs-activities and contributions in the next three years. However, the actions proposed are not exhaustive and can be modified or complemented at a later stage through further consultations.

Beyond the UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks in the Natural Sciences to which the Geneva Action Plan is mostly referring, it is important to highlight that the overall UNESCO scientific networks, including all C2Cs in the Natural Sciences, also play an important role in promoting science for the SDGs and could therefore be inspired by some of the actions proposed hereafter.

First-steps implementation phase

The Geneva Lake Workshop (Lausanne, 7-9 March 2018) was the occasion for UNESCO, in collaboration with selected representatives of the UNESCO Chairs, UNITWIN Networks and C2Cs in the Natural Sciences, to engage a reflection aimed at identifying one priority action for each of the areas of intervention of the Geneva Action Plan. For each priority action, a specific timeframe by which it is supposed to be implemented is proposed. All priority actions discussed and identified in Lausanne are listed below, and must be considered as first steps for the implementation of the Geneva Action Plan. As mentioned above, other UNESCO scientific networks, including C2Cs, also play an important role in promoting science for the SDGs and could therefore be inspired by some of the actions proposed hereafter.

Overarching mean of implementation

Establishment and development of a Communication and Outreach Platform for the implementation of the Geneva Milestone and the Geneva Action Plan, aimed at supporting UNESCO scientific networks, including UNESCO Chairs, UNITWIN Networks and Category 2 Centres (C2Cs) related to the Natural Sciences Sector, to better communicate their academic and scientific expertise for the implementation of the SDGs.

Area of intervention 1 - Prioritizing

UNESCO Chairs, UNITWIN Networks:

For the next reporting period:

- Engage in providing information on SDGs / keywords / categorizations, either on reports or on other tools

UNESCO/SC:

By the end of the year 2018:

- Engage in providing information on categorizations of the UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks, by SDGs / keywords / themes, either for their reports or for other tools

Area of intervention 2 - Networking

UNESCO Chairs, UNITWIN Networks:

By the end of the year 2018:

- Through the active participation in the Platform and other ways, promote exchanges and collaborations among UNESCO Chairs, UNITWIN Networks and other UNESCO bodies, such as C2Cs

UNESCO/HQ, UNESCO/FOs, UNESCO NatCom:

By the end of the year 2018:

- Support and foster exchanges & match-making between UNESCO Chairs, UNITWIN Networks, as well as other stakeholders, to promote the implementation of the 2030 Agenda

Area of intervention 3 - Expertise & Information Sharing

UNESCO Chairs, UNITWIN Networks:

As of now:

- Promote the exchanges and sharing of scientific knowledge and expertise in the spirit of Open Science practices

UNESCO/SC:

As of now:

- Put efforts to leverage the expertise of the UNESCO Chairs, UNITWIN Networks, as well as other UNESCO bodies, such as C2Cs, related to the SDGs and to science-policy interface and practice

Area of intervention 4 - Advocating / Communicating

UNESCO Chairs, UNITWIN Networks:

As of now:

- Advocate, through effective communication, the use of scientific knowledge and expertise to implement the SDGs for the benefit of society

UNESCO/SC:

By the end of the year 2018:

- Establish, in collaboration with partners from the network, a communication and outreach platform with a strong focus on the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda

Area of intervention 5 – Monitoring & Reporting

UNESCO Chairs, UNITWIN Networks:

For the next reporting period:

- Explicitly include in the reporting reference to how the activities contribute to the implementation of the SDGs, and determine main fields of research and actions to facilitate networking and match-making

UNESCO/SC:

For the next reporting period:

- Explicitly include in the reporting mechanism reference to how the activities contribute to the implementation of the SDGs

Medium-term implementation phase

Beyond the abovementioned first-step actions, complementary means of implementation are also listed below for each area of intervention of the Action Plan. These must be considered as medium-term strategical proposals to be implemented in the following three years. The proposals below have been shared with all UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks in the Natural Sciences in order to ensure their ownership and to collect their inputs, suggestions and remarks. The actions proposed are not exhaustive and can be modified or complemented at a later stage through further consultations. Therefore, these have to be considered as potential activities and proposals to orientate SDGs-activities and contributions in the next three years.

Area of intervention 1 - Prioritizing

UNESCO Chairs, UNITWIN Networks:

- Identify the main SDGs and fields of action to which each UNESCO Chair and UNITWIN Network could provide the most substantial contributions & share such information on the Platform

UNESCO:

- *UNESCO/SC*: Engage a reflection to identify specific entry points for collaborations with the UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks, and further involve them in priority setting

Area of intervention 2 - Networking

UNESCO Chairs, UNITWIN Networks:

- Invite other UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks to participate in activities linked to relevant SDGs
- Promote the creation of regional or thematic networks of UNESCO Chairs / UNITWIN Networks
- Suggest potential collaborations and search for possible match-making with other UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks
- Foster interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity & search for potential collaborations with UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks from other disciplines
- Promote regional and inter-regional dimensions, as well as South-South and South-South-North cooperation, in all pertinent activities

UNESCO:

- *UNESCO/SC*: Promote an internal workspace, dedicated to forums, chats and Q&As only accessible to internal users
- *UNESCO/FOs*: Encourage the creation and development of regional or thematic networks / meetings
- *UNESCO/ED*: Foster interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary collaborations by facilitating match-making among UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks related to different disciplines or UNESCO Sectors
- *All UNESCO bodies*: Reinforce the collaboration with UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks having a strong knowledge or expertise linked to specific regional contexts, local communities or specific fields of intervention for the development of projects, or for the formulation of scientific policies
- *All UNESCO bodies & particularly UNESCO NatCom & UNESCO FOs*: Facilitate the match-making between UNESCO Chairs, UNITWIN Networks and other stakeholders working on pertinent SDGs/fields

Area of intervention 3 - Expertise & Information Sharing

UNESCO Chairs, UNITWIN Networks:

- Share success stories on the Platform on specific activities linked to the SDGs
- Share MOOCs and training materials on the Platform on specific SDGs

UNESCO:

- *UNESCO/SC*: Upload reference documents linked to the SDGs or to UNESCO Natural Sciences Sector on the Platform
- *UNESCO/SC & FOs*: Share on the Platform information on UNESCO's strategy linked to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda
- *All UNESCO bodies*: Inform the UNESCO Chairs, UNITWIN Networks and other UNESCO bodies, including C2Cs, about events linked to relevant SDGs, and encourage them to participate

Area of intervention 4 - Advocating / Communicating

UNESCO Chairs, UNITWIN Networks:

- Advocate for Open Science, in its 6 principles: open data, open source, open methodology, open peer review, open access, open educational resources
- Advocate for science popularization practices in order to enhance the global understanding of how science, technology and innovation can contribute to the successful achievement of the SDGs
- Promote the publication of material for the communication of science addressed to policy-makers, Member States and other non-scientific stakeholders
- Further advocate for the outreach of the UNESCO/UNITWIN Chairs Programme

UNESCO:

- *All UNESCO bodies & UNESCO/SC*: Strengthen advocacy for Open Science & its 6 principles: open data, open source, open methodology, open peer review, open access, open educational resources
- *All UNESCO bodies & UNESCO/SC*: Strengthen advocacy for the popularization of science, as a tool to bridge the growing gap between science and society
- *UNESCO FOs & UNESCO NatCom*: Strengthen advocacy for UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks towards potential partners, such as governments, civil society, funding institutions, private sector and international organizations
- *UNESCO NatCom*: Foster the development of projects in collaboration with UNESCO Chairs, UNITWIN Networks and other relevant entities/organizations
- *UNESCO/SC & UNESCO NatCom*: Further advocate for the outreach of the UNESCO/UNITWIN Chairs Programme

Area of intervention 5 – Monitoring & Reporting

UNESCO Chairs, UNITWIN Networks:

- Upload on the Platform relevant information on all implemented activities linked to the SDGs

UNESCO:

- *UNESCO/ED*: Monitor and evaluate the UNESCO Chairs' and UNITWIN Networks' activities linked to relevant SDGs via ad hoc surveys, or via the biannual reports
- *UNESCO FOs*: Monitor and follow-up the organization of meetings / events, or the creation of regional / thematic networks involving the UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks
- *Publishing Officer for UNESCO/SC*: Report UNESCO's activities in contribution to the SDGs on the UNESCO Science Report
- *Publishing Officer for UNESCO/SC*: Select from the Platform relevant information on the UNESCO Chairs' and UNITWIN Networks' activities linked to the SDGs to be eventually included into the UNESCO Science Report

GLOSSARY

C2Cs: Category 2 Centres

MOOCs: Massive Open On-line Courses

NatComs: National Commissions

SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals

UNESCO/ED: UNESCO Education Sector

UNESCO/FOs: UNESCO Field Offices

UNESCO/HQ: UNESCO Headquarters

UNESCO/SC: UNESCO Natural Sciences Sector

UNITWIN Programme: United Twinning and Networking Programme

Annex 1 THE GENEVA MILESTONE

The UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme is celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2017. Today, there are more than 700 UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks around the world, and more than 170 of these specialise in the fields covered by the Natural Sciences Sector of UNESCO. They provide a unique scientific expertise in the United Nations context and significant global, regional and local impacts, in a wide array of relevant fields. The UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks in Natural Sciences have an important role to play in the shared efforts to link science, policy and society through adopting open science practices to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other United Nations development agendas.

The 2030 Agenda, adopted in 2015 by the United Nations, represents a significant step forward in terms of recognising science, technology and innovation (STI) as a driving force for sustainable development in its three pillars, environmental, social and economic. As the only UN agency that includes science in its mandate, UNESCO finds itself at the heart of this initiative. It implements its activities through its global network of field offices, international scientific programmes, centres, institutes, and the UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks.

Within this context, the UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks linked to the Natural Sciences Sector gathered for the first time in Geneva from 5 to 7 July 2017 for the Conference “*Mobilizing UNESCO Chairs in Natural Sciences for Policy Action Towards the 2030 Agenda*”. The results of the deliberations and reflections about how UNESCO Chairs can contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda are expressed in form of the **Geneva Milestone**.

The **Geneva Milestone** contributes to guiding the future endeavours of the UNESCO Chairs in Natural Sciences in close cooperation with the UNESCO family and the UNESCO National Commissions, as a blueprint for potential activities and cooperation avenues, throughout the following concrete areas:

Values:

- Uphold the values of UNESCO, and incorporate those of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, into the operations of UNESCO Chairs, at organisational level and in their research, teaching and outreach.

Focus on the 2030 Agenda:

- Increase and enhance the focus of UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks activities on the 2030 Agenda.
- Identify main SDGs for each Chair where they can make the most substantial contributions, and indicate specific fields of action where they could provide advice to stakeholders and policy-makers.
- Develop programmes aimed at generating new knowledge, as well as innovative tools for Member States to face the challenges raised by the SDGs.

Interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity:

- Foster interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity throughout UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks, crucial for the successful implementation of the SDGs.
- Encourage interactions between Chairs from different but relevant disciplines, particularly to implement joint pilot projects towards achieving the SDGs.
- Adopt Open Science practices to promote collaboration and knowledge co-production

Science-policy-society:

- UNESCO Chairs will endeavour to influence the host academic institutions towards putting societal interests and the 2030 Agenda at the core of their mission.
- UNESCO and UNESCO Chairs, with the support of UNESCO National Commissions, will work together to increase collaboration with policymakers and other stakeholders, including civil society, local communities, mass-media and private sector, and establish multi-stakeholder strategic partnerships, to allow for focusing research and training towards SDGs.
- Further develop and promote the full potential of the capacities and role of the UNESCO Chairs as think tanks for advancing towards SDGs through Science, Technology and Innovation.

Fostering collaboration:

- Engage in concrete impact-driven actions to strengthen Chairs and Networks exchanges, particularly through regional, inter-regional, South-South, and South-South-North cooperation, in order to enhance their capabilities and improve their leading role within their fields.
- Foster collaboration in the development and implementation of programmes, and in capacity building and standards development, between UNESCO Chairs and Networks, and UNESCO Natural Science Programmes at headquarters, regional offices and other field offices, UNESCO sites, National Committees of International Science Programmes, UNESCO Centres, and other UNESCO Sectors, with special focus on UNESCO global priorities, i.e. Gender and Africa.
- Engage with governments at local, regional and national levels, as well as regional bodies, in cooperation with UNESCO field offices, to promote actions of UNESCO and the Chairs.
- Encourage UNESCO National Commissions to strengthen advocacy for Chairs towards stakeholders, such as governments, civil society, funding institutions, private sector, and international organizations.
- Encourage UNESCO and UNESCO Chairs to incorporate the 2030 Agenda in the content of their meetings, conferences and forums, and actively involve relevant UNESCO Chairs in these, in order to increase collaboration.

Increasing visibility and knowledge sharing:

- Promote the establishment of networks and working groups of Chairs, at national, regional or thematic levels, to enhance communication, create linkages and support programme development.
- Establish a knowledge-sharing platform linked to the SDGs, to facilitate information exchange and contacts among UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks in Natural Sciences, and with partners.
- Enhance communication and outreach activities, to highlight the achievements and activities of UNESCO Chairs towards SDGs, including dedicated websites, and to share scientific results in an open access environment.
- Share success stories about Chairs that have effectively collaborated towards the 2030 Agenda, in partnership with governments, private companies, international organizations, NGOs, donors and other non-academic entities.

A working group with the participation of representatives of Chairs and the UNESCO Secretariat will prepare, by the end of 2017, an Action Plan for follow-up of the Geneva Milestone, to be submitted to consultation with the UNESCO Chairs and Networks in Natural Sciences.