



The Memory & Future Club

The Memory & Future Club of the Association of Former UNESCO staff strives to collect and transmit testimonies of former officials and confront them to current issues in international cooperation. Building on their shared memory, members of this group meet informally with colleagues in charge to exchange freely and find through past experience a better path for the future.



National Commissions

UNESCO's Key Asset ?

With 199 National Commissions, of which 192 are in Member States and 7 in Associated Member States, UNESCO has a worldwide network of national bodies of cooperation unique in the United Nations System. Whether governmental, semi-governmental or autonomous, operated by a single Secretary-General or by up to 90 full-time employees, they form a valuable network that contributes to UNESCO's global outreach. As members of the "UNESCO family", they play a special role at the national level, both in liaising with their government and as mobilizers of civil society, the private sector and other partners on all issues of interest to the Organization.

Thursday 18 April 2019

1 – 2 pm

Room IX



The Constitution endorses National Commissions' advisory and liaison role, including with their respective national delegation to the General Conference and with their Member and alternates to the Executive Board. However their range of action has expanded considerably over time, to program development and evaluation, implementation of activities, public information and partnership building at the national level. Since 1991, they have become major actors in the decentralization process. With the introduction of United Nations reform in the field, National Commissions (from Belize, Saint Lucia and the British Virgin Islands) were invited to participate in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) process. Others have contributed to UNESCO's programs by mobilizing large networks of experts and even fund-raisers (the National Commission of the Republic of Korea raised funds for UNESCO's action in Haiti). Notwithstanding the diversity of their structures and capacities, they are now expected to play a facilitating role in national and regional dialogues on the 2030 Agenda and act as advocates at the national level for Sustainable Development Goals relating to UNESCO's fields of competence.

Unfortunately, there are a number of potential roadblocks to such ambitious expectations. The regular program budget allocated to the support of National Commissions decreased by two-thirds between 2012-2017, thus reducing the Secretariat's ability to support and encourage the network in the implementation of innovative initiatives. Internal restructuring and the reduction in training and regional consultations have also contributed to weakening the links to the extent that the resources of the UNESCO network of National Commissions are no longer fully exploited.

Reinforcing the network of National Commissions is therefore a major challenge for UNESCO, which requires reorganizing the modalities of interaction and strengthening the working processes between the Secretariat and the National Commissions, clarifying their respective roles in particular in representation of the interests of the Organization, better aligning the actions of the National Commissions with the priorities approved under the biennial Program and Budget, and developing a targeted strategy of cooperation with partners from civil society, private sector and other entities of the United Nations System. For their part, Member States should provide their National Commissions with the necessary means to ensure their functioning and extension of their influence nationally.





Paola Leoncini Bartoli

began her professional career with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 1989, where she worked on migration policies in particular in Africa and Eastern Europe. In 1992, she joined UNESCO and worked on UNESCO's framework for cultural rights in the Office of Director-General and coordinated UNESCO's leadership of the First World Decade for Indigenous Peoples. In 1995, she contributed to the preparation of the biennial UNESCO World Culture Report, which included mainstreaming the implementation of the Recommendations of the UNESCO Independent Commission on Culture and Development and piloting the organization in 1998 of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development in Stockholm, Sweden. In 2000, she joined the Executive Office of the Culture Sector where she became Chief Executive Officer in 2005. In 2010, she joined the Office of the Director-General as Senior Executive Officer responsible for culture, cooperation with Arab States and the European Commission. In 2014, she was appointed Chief of Staff and was responsible for providing organizational leadership and strategic guidance on political and programmatic issues, including UN reform. Since July 2018, she is Director for Cultural Policies and Development, where she is in charge of mainstreaming the contribution of culture and its related UNESCO cultural conventions into the implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.





Barbara Barry de Longchamp

a graduate of the University of Western Australia with a degree in economics and international relations and a diploma in music, she commenced her career as a television journalist in Australia before joining the Australian Trade Commission in New York as officer in charge of public relations and trade promotion. Appointed, in 1970 as cultural relations and information officer at the Australian Embassy in Paris, she was transferred to the Australian Permanent Delegation to UNESCO in 1972 and subsequently named Deputy Permanent Delegate of Australia to UNESCO. In 1981, she joined the Secretariat of UNESCO as Senior Liaison Officer in the Asia and Oceania Division in the Sector of Cooperation for Development and External Relations (CPX) and oversaw the accession to membership of the Organisation of a number of small island Pacific States, as well as the establishment of the UNESCO Office for the Pacific States in Apia, Western Samoa. Transferred to the Division of National Commissions, NGOs, Foundations and UNESCO Clubs in 1986, she was subsequently appointed Director of the Division of National Commissions and UNESCO Clubs, Centres and Associations in the Bureau of External Relations (BRX). In 1996, she took charge of the newly created Partnerships for the Twenty-first Century Unit (PTC), established to stimulate multi-partnerships in favour of UNESCO's activities, with special emphasis on the business community. She continues to work with civil society and the business community for the promotion of physical education and sport for all, and on environmental issues.



Jean-Pierre Boyer

a graduate of the Ecole Normale Supérieure and a university professor, taught at various higher education institutions in Spain and Morocco. He was also entrusted in the French Ministry of National Education with the task of inspecting and drafting strategic orientation documents for educational policies at the academic level. However, most of his professional life has been devoted to UNESCO, either with the National Commission or in the Secretariat of the Organization. From 1987 to 1993, he served as advisor for culture to the French Commission for UNESCO. From 1993 to 1997, he was a Program Specialist in UNESCO's Education Sector and contributed significantly to the preparation of the report entitled "Learning: the treasure within" of the International Commission on Education for the twenty-first century chaired by Jacques Delors. From 1997 to 2010 he was Secretary-General of the French Commission for UNESCO. In this context, he has developed a number of international cooperation projects with the Organization, as well as with other National Commissions, private partners and various international organizations.