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UNESCO's Network of National Commissions

Delivering for the People



Table of Contents

Foreword	3
Sharing a common understanding of our mission	5
Charter of National Commissions	7
Working together as a powerful network	9
Strengthening roles and functions	12
Optimizing working methods and structure	17
Ensuring budget and resources	21
UNESCO80 Roadmap and National Commissions	24
Working with partners	25
Enhancing communication and coordination across the National Commissions network	28
Unit of National Commissions and Fellowships (NAC)	33
Useful Links for National Commissions	34



Foreword

UNESCO is an organization
for the people.

It exists to safeguard and transmit the finest expressions of people's identities, histories and heritage, while nurturing their drive for innovation, research and knowledge.

Through international cooperation in education, the sciences, culture and information, UNESCO works to build mutual understanding among cultures and peoples – powerful foundations for peace. This mission is more vital than ever.

At the heart of this endeavour lies the unique network of National Commissions for UNESCO. Established under the UNESCO Constitution and guided by their Charter, the 'NatComs' are an integral part of the Organization's structure, enabling UNESCO to remain closely connected to the societies it serves.

Present in every region, NatComs engage with a wide range of stakeholders dedicated to advancing UNESCO's mandate, including ministries, public institutions, non-governmental organizations and individuals. They play a vital role in mobilizing intellectual and scientific communities and in fostering the active participation at the national level.

More than a coordination mechanism, NatComs embody UNESCO's founding conviction that intergovernmental dialogue must be grounded in sustained engagement with civil society. By connecting educators, researchers, artists, journalists and other key actors, they bring UNESCO's mission closer to people's daily lives and give concrete expression to our mandate in every community.

During my campaign, I visited many countries and saw first-hand the diversity of NatComs' structures and capacities. The disparities are real, and they can limit the ability of some of them to fully play their role within UNESCO's ecosystem.

These Guidelines are intended to address this reality. They reaffirm the essential role of NatComs, strengthen a shared understanding of their functions, and set out the core principles that underpin their effective operation – while paying tribute to the dedication of their teams across the world.

At a time when the multilateral system is undergoing profound transformation, and as UNESCO itself advances an ambitious reform agenda, it has never been more essential to build a more coherent and impactful organization – one that responds directly to needs and delivers for people everywhere. Our NatComs stand at the heart of this vision for UNESCO80.

Khaled El-Enany

Director-General of UNESCO

Sharing a common understanding of our mission

A Unique Asset of UNESCO



National Commissions (NatComs) are established under Article VII of the UNESCO Constitution¹. This gives them a unique position within the United Nations system and a formally recognized mandate in national and international cooperation.

NatComs are a key mechanism for associating national bodies – including civil society – concerned with education, the sciences, culture and communication and information, with the work of UNESCO. They play an advisory and liaison role between UNESCO, national authorities, and relevant institutions. In practice, this function enables NatComs to engage with a broad range of stakeholders and ensure that UNESCO's strategy and programme are informed by national realities and translated into action at country level.

¹ Article VII - National cooperating bodies
<https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/constitution>





Article VII of the UNESCO Constitution

1. Each Member State shall make such arrangements as suit its particular conditions for the purpose of associating its principal bodies interested in educational, scientific and cultural matters with the work of the Organization, preferably by the formation of a National Commission broadly representative of the government and such bodies.
2. National Commissions or National Cooperating Bodies, where they exist, shall act in an advisory capacity to their respective delegations to the General Conference, to the representatives and alternates of their countries on the Executive Board and to their Governments in matters relating to the Organization and shall function as agencies of liaison in all matters of interest to it.
3. The Organization may, on the request of a Member State, delegate, either temporarily or permanently, a member of its Secretariat to serve on the National Commission of that state, in order to assist in the development of its work.

Article VII establishes the legal framework for the creation and functioning of NatComs for UNESCO.

Charter of NatComs



PURPOSE AND PRINCIPLES

The Charter of National Commissions for UNESCO², adopted at the 20th session of the UNESCO General Conference in 1978;³ complements Article VII by providing a framework for the purpose, functions, responsibilities and operational principles of NatComs.



RELATIONS WITH MEMBER STATES

As agreed, it is incumbent upon each Member State to provide its NatCom with the status, structure and resources necessary to enable it effectively to discharge its responsibilities.



SERVICES RENDERED TO UNESCO

In each Member State, the NatCom is seen to anchor UNESCO's mission and priorities within national contexts⁴ For UNESCO, NatComs constitute important sources of information and research, on national requirements and priorities and mobilize the intellectual, scientific and cultural communities in support of UNESCO's programme.



RESPONSIBILITIES OF UNESCO

UNESCO provides advice, documentation, training and assistance to NatComs and facilitates their involvement in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of the Organization's programme. It facilitates cooperation across the NatCom network and encourages active participation in programme development, by consulting NatComs and sharing timely information on initiatives relevant to their Member State or specific projects and programmes.

UNESCO's cooperation with NatComs is based on close collaboration between the Secretariat (Headquarters and Field Offices), and NatComs, grounded in mutual understanding. NatComs are recognized as key partners in the coordination, implementation, and evaluation of UNESCO's programmes at the country level.⁵

2 Charter of National Commissions for UNESCO
<https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/charter-natl-coms>

3 Records of the General Conference, 20th session, Paris, 1978 <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000223868>

4 Strategic Transformation of UNESCO: National Commissions for renewed multilateralism https://www.unesco.ch/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/National-Commissions-for-renewed-multilateralism_Draft-2020-07-17_en.pdf

5 171 EX/58: Greater cooperation between National Commissions and UNESCO field offices
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000139055>

Examples of Practices Related to the Constitution and Charter

- NatComs have conducted national reviews to update their legal frameworks in line with Article VII of the UNESCO Constitution and the Charter of NatComs, aligning their structures more closely with UNESCO's mandate.
- NatComs have used the Charter to clarify their advisory role to government authorities, leading to more structured and coordinated contributions to national positions for UNESCO governing bodies.

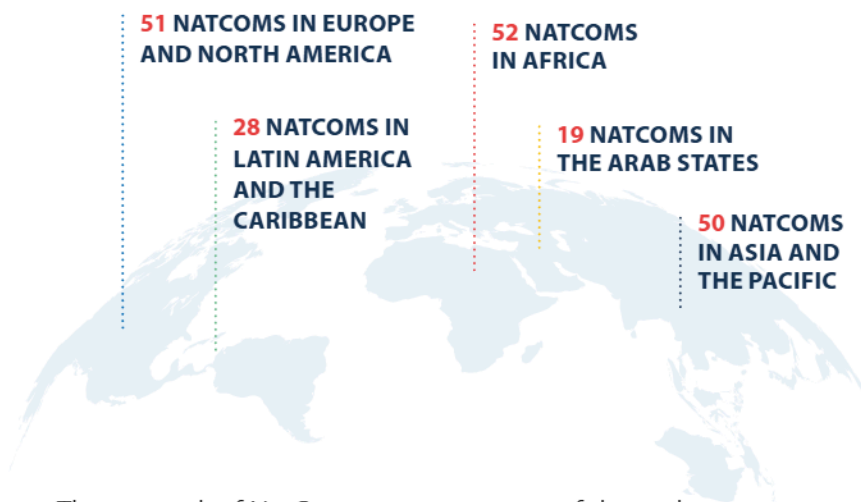
QUICK TIPS



- Be familiar with the provisions of Article VII and the Charter
- Use the Charter's principles to help define mandates and responsibilities
- Refer to the Charter when advocating for adequate legal, human, and financial resources
- Promote a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities among all members of the NatCom

Working together as a powerful network

A Global Network of 200 NatComs Serving
People Everywhere



The network of NatComs represents one of the widest cooperation systems in the United Nations. NatComs are active in diverse national contexts yet share common objectives.

The UNESCO Secretariat endeavors to share clear and timely information with NatComs on initiatives that may require their engagement, with a view to supporting planning and alignment with national capacities and priorities.

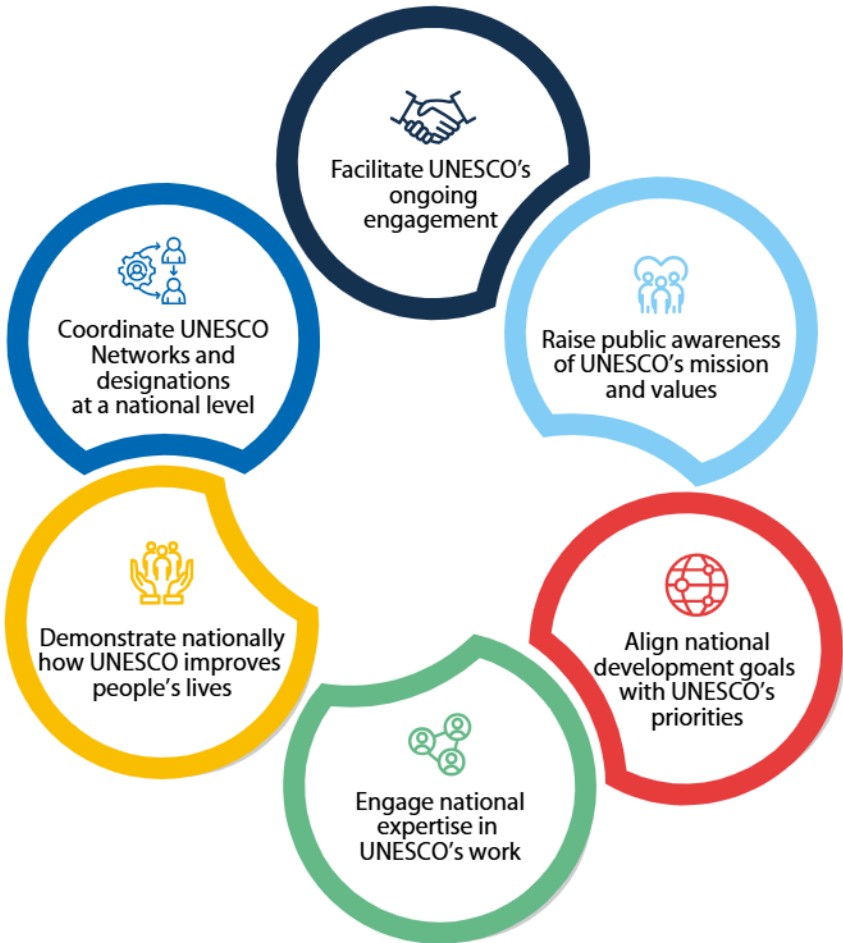
CORE CONTRIBUTION TO UNESCO'S MISSION

As a key partner at country level, depending on the arrangements made by each Member State, NatComs have a double role to play: on the one side, they help to translate UNESCO's global vision into national action, by contributing to bringing global decisions into local realities; on the other side, they ensure that the voices and priorities of their country are heard within UNESCO's decision-making processes, notably through close coordination with government representatives, including Permanent Delegations.

More detailed information on the core contributions of NatComs to UNESCO's mission is available in the "National Commissions for UNESCO: Annual Reports," prepared by the NAC Unit and published in the [UNESCO Digital Library](#).

Shared Objectives of the NatCom Network

Despite differing capacities, and depending on the arrangements made by each Member State, all NatComs aim to:



Examples of Practices Across the Global Network

- NatComs have coordinated national preparations/initiatives for UNESCO flagship international days, such as International Literacy Day or World Heritage Day, to strengthen public engagement and visibility.
- NatComs have contributed national data, expertise and perspectives to global UNESCO reports in fields such as education, science, culture, and communication and information, ensuring that global analyses reflect diverse national contexts.
- NatComs have participated actively in regional peer-learning initiatives, strengthening governance practices and sharing innovations in programme delivery.
- NatComs have developed multilingual public awareness campaigns that highlight the value of UNESCO designations, networks and programmes.
- NatComs have organized expert consultations that help shape regional inputs to UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy and other strategic frameworks.
- NatComs have reinforced regional and sub-regional professional networks aligned with UNESCO's areas of competence, thereby amplifying the visibility, outreach, and impact of UNESCO's mandate and values.
- NatComs have facilitated youth engagement with UNESCO's mandate, nationally, regionally and internationally.

QUICK TIPS



- Engage with NatComs within the same region
- Build cross-regional partnerships to strengthen collaboration
- Share insights and good practices openly
- Explore twinning opportunities and joint initiatives

Strengthening roles and functions



ADVISE AND COORDINATE NATIONALLY

NatComs can connect government ministries, institutions, experts and national UNESCO Designations to ensure coherent national engagement with UNESCO's mandate. NatComs can also support UN coordination in the field by helping UNESCO connect with national institutions and priorities within wider UN planning and joint programming processes. This role is especially important where UNESCO has limited presence, as NatComs can help ensure UNESCO's mandate is reflected in national UN frameworks and implementation,¹¹ by aligning UNESCO priorities with the relevant UN system Cooperation Frameworks, joint programming and SDG coordination.



SUPPORT SHAPING AND IMPLEMENTING UNESCO PROGRAMMES

NatComs can support the UNESCO Secretariat in designing and implementing UNESCO programmes and initiatives in the areas of its mandate.



MOBILIZE NATIONAL EXPERTISE

NatComs can engage educators, scientists, cultural professionals, communication specialists, youth leaders, national UNESCO designations, NGOs and other stakeholders to reinforce UNESCO's work, including cross-sectorally.

Where institutional capacity or resources are limited, NatComs may prioritize core functions that ensure the greatest strategic impact. These typically include facilitating coordination among UNESCO-related actors, providing advice to government authorities, and supporting communication efforts that help translate UNESCO's priorities into national contexts.

6 Role and missions of National Commissions for UNESCO
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374460>



COMMUNICATE UNESCO'S MISSION AND VALUES AT NATIONAL LEVEL

NatComs can promote UNESCO's objectives, activities and results to the public, media and national partners, 'translating' the Organization's objectives in ways that are meaningful for people, communities and societies, including through information activities, publications and national observances.

NatComs may grant their own patronage to national activities or support requests for UNESCO patronage, which requires careful oversight of how UNESCO's name is associated with events. They also have a key responsibility to manage and monitor the use of UNESCO logos (including mixed and derived logos), ensuring they are used correctly and only for activities consistent with UNESCO's rules and values.¹²

Before associating UNESCO's name or logos with an activity or partner, it is important to ensure due diligence, transparency and alignment with UNESCO's values, rules and procedures, and to carefully assess any potential reputational or accountability risks.



PROVIDE NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES TO UNESCO

NatComs can share national needs, priorities, research and insights to help UNESCO design relevant and impactful programmes.

NatComs can contribute to national needs, priorities, research, and expertise to inform the design of relevant and impactful UNESCO programmes. In doing so, they operate within their respective governmental frameworks and coordinate closely with Permanent Delegations, in accordance with national practices.

¹² UNESCO's logo and patronage <https://www.unesco.org/en/logo-patronage>



STRENGTHEN COOPERATION AND NETWORKING

NatComs can collaborate with other NatComs, UNESCO Field Offices and regional partners to foster joint international initiatives, peer learning and exchanges.

NatComs and UNESCO Field Offices work together through regular information-sharing, bilateral consultations, and joint participation in activities and events. They also cooperate to support national and sub-regional consultations on UNESCO's key planning documents (mid-term strategy, programme and budget). Overall, this coordination helps align UNESCO action with national priorities and improves impact on the ground.

In some instances, NatComs provide logistical support to UNESCO Field Offices, including office space, facilities, or administrative assistance, helping to strengthen operational collaboration at country level.

At the national level, depending on the arrangements made by each Member State, NatComs play a central coordinating and facilitating role across the UNESCO "family," ensuring coherence between UNESCO's global priorities and national implementation. NatComs serve as the primary liaison between UNESCO and national stakeholders, supporting the development, coordination, and visibility of UNESCO-related initiatives within the country.

This includes working closely with, and actively involving UNESCO Associated Schools (ASPnet), UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN networks in universities, Category 2 Centers operating under UNESCO's auspices, UNESCO-designated sites and cities (such as World Heritage Sites, Biosphere Reserves, Global Geoparks, Creative Cities, Learning Cities, Inclusive and Sustainable Cities, Media and Information Literacy Cities and World Book Capitals), as well as Associations and Clubs for UNESCO and other civil society partners.

NatComs promote collaboration among these actors by disseminating information on UNESCO calls, programmes, and opportunities, and by providing guidance and technical support during the preparation of applications and nomination dossiers. This includes assisting institutions with the preparation of UNESCO designation files such as nominations, proposals, and applications, ensuring that submissions meet UNESCO's criteria and technical requirements.

Depending on the arrangements made by each Member State, NatComs often coordinate national-level consultations, bring together relevant experts and authorities, and review draft dossiers before their official submission. They also support the development of partnerships among institutions and encourage participation in UNESCO programmes and networks, helping align national initiatives with UNESCO's strategic priorities.



SUPPORT NATIONAL PARTICIPATION IN UNESCO PROCESSES - DEPENDING ON THE ARRANGEMENTS MADE BY EACH MEMBER STATE

Assist government delegations, coordinate consultations, and contribute to the implementation and follow-up of UNESCO conventions, programmes and governing body decisions.

With numerous roles and responsibilities, the workload of NatComs has significantly increased and become more operational. Beyond the traditional advisory role, NatComs are expected, where relevant, to coordinate and support multiple UNESCO networks and designations nationally, including assisting with candidatures and helping ensure compliance with UNESCO rules.

In parallel, NatComs are increasingly involved in partnership-building, resource mobilization and communication, ensuring UNESCO's visibility and impact at country level.⁸

8 Role and missions of National Commissions for UNESCO
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374460>

Examples of Practices Related to NatCom Functions

- NatComs have coordinated national inputs for UNESCO's [medium term \(C/4\)](#) and [quadrennial \(C/5\) strategic orientation](#) documents by consulting ministries, academics and civil society partners.
- NatComs have mapped national experts in areas such as World Heritage, culture, biosphere reserves and science programmes, with a view to strengthening their cooperation with UNESCO.
- NatComs have launched public information campaigns on heritage protection, media and information literacy and education reforms aligned with UNESCO priorities.
- NatComs have managed Participation Programme projects that support youth engagement, teacher training and cultural safeguarding.
- NatComs have facilitated national discussions on emerging issues such as the ethics of artificial intelligence, open science and digital transformation.
- NatComs have facilitated engagement in UNESCO Decades such as the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, through the establishment of National Decade Committees.

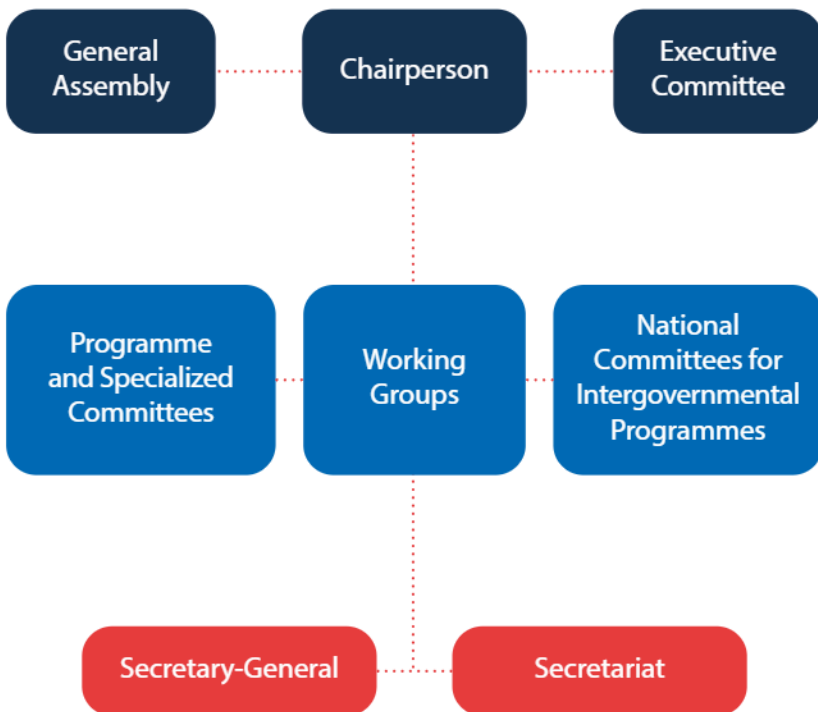
QUICK TIPS



- Ensure mandates are clear and widely understood
- Prioritize core functions when capacity is limited
- Strengthen planning and reporting processes
- Champion networking, exchange of information and experience in cooperation with the UNESCO networks ([UNESCO Chairs](#), [Associated Schools Network](#), [Category 2 Centers](#), national committees, etc.)
- Maintain consistent communication with partners and the public

Optimizing working methods and structure

Depending on the arrangements made by each Member State, NatCom structures vary greatly and reflect national systems, priorities and resources. Most NatComs include several standard components that support effective governance and programme delivery.⁹ In almost all NatComs, there is a 'body' of 'members' constituting the NatCom and there is a 'Secretariat' led by a 'Secretary-General'.



⁹ Architecture of National Commissions for UNESCO, 2022
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000384012>

General Assembly

- The highest decision-making body of a NatCom is typically referred to as a 'General Assembly'. It brings together all members to review programme orientations, discuss priorities, and approve reports.

Chairperson

- The Chairperson is generally a highly respected figure with recognized experience in education, science, culture and communication and information or related fields. The Chairperson provides overall direction and supports coherence, continuity and alignment of the NatCom's work with UNESCO's mission. For most NatComs integrated into government structures, the relevant minister ex-officio is the Chairperson, in others, the Chairperson is appointed from academia, civil society, diplomacy or the wider UNESCO community.

Executive Committee/Advisory Board/Council

- The Executive Committee is another typical structure of most NatComs; it is composed of a selected / elected subset of members and meets several times each year. In most cases, it contains both government and civil society representatives. It provides strategic guidance, supervises implementation and supports the NatCom's Secretariat.

Programme and Specialized Committees

- Such committees gather experts and institutions in areas connected to UNESCO's mandate. They contribute to reflection, programme development and national preparation for UNESCO processes.



Working Groups

- Working Groups address specific themes or tasks and operate for a limited duration. They provide flexibility and focus, allowing NatComs to respond quickly to emerging priorities. Established on an ad hoc basis with clearly defined terms of reference and duration, these groups support the Commission in achieving specific objectives.

National Committees for Intergovernmental Programmes

- These committees focus on thematic areas such as [Man and the Biosphere Programme \(MAB\)](#), [Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission \(IOC\)](#), [Management of Social Transformations \(MOST\) Programme](#), [Geoscience and Geoparks \(UGGp\) Programme](#) and [Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme \(IHP\)](#) and bring together national expertise that supports cooperation with UNESCO.

Secretary-General

- The Secretary-General ensures effective day-to-day functioning, continuity and communication with Permanent Delegations, UNESCO entities and national partners. In most cases, the Secretary-General represents the NatCom in national, regional and international network meetings. The Secretary-General is typically a senior professional with strong institutional knowledge and experience in coordination and programme management.

Secretariat

- The Secretariat manages daily operations, ensures continuity of institutional knowledge, organizes meetings, communicates with UNESCO, maintains documentation, and supports all committees and working groups. It may include at least one programme officer per UNESCO mandate area, in addition to support staff, although some NatComs operate with fewer resources.

Financial frameworks

- NatComs operate within diverse financial frameworks. While some benefit from dedicated budgets and actively mobilize additional resources, others leverage ministerial allocations and partnerships to advance UNESCO's priorities, in line with national regulations.

Examples of Structural Models Used by NatComs

- NatComs with a very compact Secretariat have focused on a well-selected, limited number of committees and thus on efficiency and clarity of roles.
- NatComs have adopted decentralized structures with broad membership, reflecting diverse regions and institutional realities within the country.
- NatComs have established youth advisory bodies and other bodies to broaden participation, reflect societal diversity and strengthen expertise.

QUICK TIPS



- Align structures with objectives, national priorities, resource and context
- Clarify responsibilities across committees and working groups
- Hold regular meetings to maintain momentum
- Preserve institutional memory within the Secretariat

Ensuring budget and resources



ENABLING EFFECTIVE FUNCTIONING

Adequate and predictable resources are essential for NatComs to fulfil their mandate and ensure continuity, credibility and impact. While funding models differ across countries, all NatComs require a minimum level of financial and human resources to operate effectively.



RESPONSIBILITY OF MEMBER STATES

In line with the UNESCO Constitution and the Charter of NatComs, Member States have primary responsibility for providing their NatComs with appropriate administrative, human and financial resources. These resources enable NatComs to carry out their core functions and responsibilities.



CORE BUDGET NEEDS

NatCom budgets typically cover the functioning of the Secretariat, meetings, communication, coordination activities and basic programme engagement. Depending on the NatCom model, the budget may also cover staff costs. Stable funding helps preserve institutional memory and ensures consistent communication with partners.



COMPLEMENTARY RESOURCES

As relevant, NatComs may be entitled to mobilize additional resources through partnerships, national project funding, funding from other NatComs or international agencies or NGOs, through domestic private-sector funding and also through UNESCO mechanisms such as the Participation Programme. These sources complement, but do not replace, core national funding.

The Participation Programme of UNESCO is a funding and cooperation mechanism that supports projects proposed by Member States in the fields of education, natural sciences, social and human sciences, culture, and communication and information. It provides financial assistance for national, regional, and interregional projects that align with UNESCO's strategic priorities and programmes. The Programme operates on a biennial funding cycle, and each Member State may submit a limited number of project proposals. The aim is to support capacity-building, knowledge development, and international cooperation, particularly in developing countries. All requests for funding must be submitted through the NatCom.

In the Participation Programme, NatComs are responsible for identifying national priority projects and preparing and submitting official requests for UNESCO funding. They coordinate with ministries, institutions, and experts to develop project proposals that meet UNESCO's criteria and strategic objectives. NatComs also act as the official channel of communication between UNESCO and the country during the application process. After approval, they help oversee the implementation of projects, monitor progress, and submit final reports to UNESCO. Therefore, NatComs manage the Participation Programme process at the national level from proposal submission to project reporting.



VALUE OF SUSTAINABLE RESOURCING

Well-resourced NatComs are better positioned to mobilize expertise, strengthen partnerships, coordinate UNESCO networks and translate UNESCO's priorities into tangible benefits for people at national level and beyond.

Examples of Practices Related to Budget and Resources

- NatComs have benefited from regular allocations from national budgets, which enable them to maintain a functioning Secretariat and ensure continuity of operations and coordination activities for UNESCO networks, mobilizing expertise and translating UNESCO's priorities into tangible benefits for communities at national and local levels – and thus to optimize impact for the benefit of societies.
- NatComs have complemented core national funding with resources mobilized through UNESCO mechanisms, notably the Participation Programme, to implement targeted activities aligned with national and UNESCO priorities.
- NatComs have strengthened their financial sustainability by mobilizing additional resources through partnerships with public institutions, academic bodies, civil society organizations and other national stakeholders.
- NatComs have successfully sought funding partnerships from other international or regional agencies or international NGOs and/or through partnerships with other NatComs or even private-sector companies.

QUICK TIPS



- Advocate for sufficient and stable core funding
- Align budgets with clearly defined functions
- Ensure continuity of the Secretariat through stable resourcing
- Use external funding to complement—not replace—national support

UNESCO80 Roadmap and National Commissions

The UNESCO80 Roadmap *Shaping UNESCO for the People - Together*¹⁰ has been developed through a wide and inclusive process, in response to the request of the General Conference (43 C/Resolution 85) to submit to the Executive Board at its 224th session a strategic plan aligned with the UN80 Initiative.

The publication of these guidelines coincides with the launch of the UNESCO80 Roadmap, as a structured and forward-looking reform process to strengthen the Organization's effectiveness, coherence and impact. It is built around three interrelated pillars: improving institutional efficiency, reviewing the implementation of UNESCO's mandate to ensure greater strategic focus and prioritization, and introducing targeted structural adjustments to enhance coordination and delivery.

UNESCO80 addresses systemic challenges identified across the Organization, including fragmentation, limited coordination across entities, and the need to better align resources with priorities and results. It places particular emphasis on strengthening synergies across UNESCO's sectors, field network and wider ecosystem, and on improving the coherence of action at country level.

Within this framework, the UNESCO80 Roadmap includes a dedicated effort to strengthen cooperation with NatComs, recognizing their important role. It foresees enhanced support through targeted training, technical assistance and peer-learning mechanisms, as well as the development of practical tools to reinforce their effectiveness and impact at country level. Under UNESCO80, NatComs play a central role in connecting UNESCO's global priorities with national policies and stakeholders, mobilizing expertise, and supporting the translation of programmes into concrete action at country level.

At a time when cooperation is both more necessary and more demanding, strengthening this unique network of NatComs is essential to ensuring that UNESCO remains close to the societies it serves, and capable of delivering meaningful and lasting impact for people.

10 UNESCO80 Roadmap: see documents 224 EX/12 and 224 EX/12 INF <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000397542> and <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000397553/PDF/397553eng.pdf.multi>

Working with partners

NatComs work through wide networks of partners whose engagement strengthens UNESCO's visibility and impact.¹¹

Beyond individual projects or events, NatComs are encouraged to build sustained partnerships with key institutions, universities, civil society organizations and other stakeholders, and to build on their national and regional UNESCO networks (Category 2 Centres, UNESCO Chairs, etc.). Long-term collaboration fosters trust, strengthens programme continuity and maximizes the strategic impact of UNESCO's engagement at the national level.

National Partners Working with NatComs












Ministries and governmental entities overseeing education, culture, science, youth, social inclusion, gender equality, sports, environment, media, digital transformation, foreign affairs and other areas related to UNESCO's mandate



Parliaments

11 International Cooperation between National Commissions for UNESCO
https://www.unesco.de/assets/dokumente/Deutsche_UNESCO-Kommission/02_Publikationen/Publikation_International_Cooperation_between_National_Commissions_for_UNESCO.pdf



-  Universities, research centres, academies and laboratories
-  Municipalities and local authorities (specifically in federally-organized Member States)
-  Civil society / NGOs and communities / grass-roots networks, including Associations and Clubs for UNESCO
-  Youth networks and women's organizations
-  The entities managing UNESCO designations and registers including [World Heritage Sites](#), [Intangible Cultural Heritage](#) elements, [Memory of the World](#) inscriptions, [Biosphere Reserves](#), [Global Geoparks](#), [Creative Cities](#), [Learning Cities](#), [Sustainable and Inclusive Cities](#), [Media and Information Literacy Cities](#), and [World Book Capitals](#), as well as [Associations and Clubs for UNESCO](#) and other civil society partners, [UNESCO Chairs](#) and [UNITWIN networks](#), [Associated Schools Network \(ASPnet\)](#), [Category 2 Centers](#), and [UNEVOC Centers](#)
-  Media outlets and journalists
-  Private sector foundations, companies and philanthropic actors
-  National committees for UNESCO's intergovernmental programmes (if outside of the NatCom)
-  Cultural institutions, including museums, libraries, archives, etc.

IMPORTANCE OF PARTNERSHIPS FOR NATCOM EFFECTIVENESS

Strong partnerships expand the NatCom's reach, diversify expertise, strengthen interdisciplinary cooperation and improve national ownership of UNESCO's mission.

Examples of NatCom Partnership Practices

- NatComs have collaborated with universities and research institutions to integrate UNESCO's priorities into national research and academic activities.
- NatComs have supported local authorities in engaging with UNESCO networks for cities, strengthening local participation in UNESCO initiatives.
- NatComs have partnered with civil society experts to enhance cultural and heritage education and related outreach activities.
- NatComs have coordinated national committees for major UNESCO intergovernmental programmes.
- NatComs have worked with NGOs to promote youth leadership, digital literacy and gender equality in line with UNESCO's priorities.

QUICK TIPS



- Maintain an updated database of national partners and UNESCO designations
- Ensure consistent and transparent communication
- Align partnerships with national needs and UNESCO strategy, programmes and priorities
- Use partnerships to strengthen impact and effectiveness

Enhancing communication and coordination across the NatCom network

Cooperation, Learning and Shared Growth

Networking strengthens the NatCom family and enhances UNESCO's global presence. It supports learning, cooperation and alignment across Member States. The Secretariat plays a key role here in catalyzing such support, working with NatComs across all regions.



Networking Facilitated by UNESCO through the Unit of NatComs

Meetings, Training and Capacity Building

- Regional and subregional meetings of NatComs
- Annual interregional meetings of NatComs
- Monthly thematic and capacity building meetings on topics such as UNESCO's Creative Cities Network (UCCN), Global Network of Learning Cities GNLC, Associated Schools Network (ASPnet), Fellowship Programmes, Associations and Clubs for UNESCO, UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks, UNESCO's Participation Programme, UNESCO's Partnership Strategy, UNESCO's Global Geoparks (UGGp)
- Consultations on the Medium-Term Strategy and the Programme and Budget¹²
- Peer-learning forums and thematic workshops
- Annual induction training for newly-appointed Secretaries-General and NatComs staff:
 - delivered in English and French, offering a comprehensive overview of UNESCO's mandate, programmes and operational modalities,
 - brings together 60 to 100 participants,
 - combines inputs from UNESCO staff at Headquarters and in the field on topics directly related to NatComs' core mandate,
 - leverages peer learning by engaging experienced Secretaries-General to share institutional knowledge, good practices and practical insights, thereby strengthening professional networks and accelerating effective integration into the UNESCO system.

12 Preliminary proposals by the Director-General concerning the draft Programme and Budget for 2026-2029 (43 C/5) <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000391182.locale=en>

- Workshops on programme development and governance
- Online training sessions
- Assistance for operational and institutional development
- Facilitation of NatCom participation in UNESCO's governing bodies and consultative processes

Communication and Information Tools

Strengthening NatComs' visibility and awareness

- Weekly news digest to keep NatComs updated on programme developments
- Monthly newsletter highlighting activities and opportunities
- Online NatCom platform enabling cooperation, exchange and visibility
- Publications, directories and reference materials supporting daily work
- Facilitating the sharing of good practices among NatComs across regions



The Assistant Director-General A.I.
For Priority Africa and External Relations

To Secretaries-General
of National Commissions
for UNESCO

6 March 2026

Ref: PAX/DIR/RMS/INAC/26/12

Dear Secretaries-General,

I am pleased to share with you some information on key developments and activities that marked the month of February 2026, reflecting the continued engagement of National Commissions within the evolving context of our Organization.

First of all, the **Information Session with Member States on UNESCO80**, organized by the Director-General, was held on Friday, January 30, 2026. During his presentation, the Director-General highlighted the important role of National Commissions within the broader UNESCO ecosystem and emphasized the need to further strengthen their contribution to the Organization's work. Particular attention was given to reinforcing the capacities of National Commissions through training opportunities, regional and global networking, and enhanced institutional support.

The Director-General also underscored the development of clearer guidelines and directives for National Commissions, while encouraging them to play a stronger role in identifying national experts, mobilizing expertise and resources, and promoting advocacy and partnerships at the national level. These measures aim to increase the visibility and effectiveness of National Commissions and enhance their contribution to UNESCO's priorities and programmes.

On February 24, 2026, an online information session with National Commissions for UNESCO on the **UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme** was organized, with the participation of approximately 150 representatives. The meeting provided an opportunity to review the key achievements of 2025 and to present the main elements of the upcoming 2026 application cycle.

During the session, the continued efforts undertaken to strengthen the impact and visibility of the Programme was highlighted, in line with the recommendations of the 2021 **Audit of the UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks Programme**. UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks continued to mobilize their expertise across programme sectors and contributed actively to UNESCO events and policy dialogues.

During the "Global Network of UNESCO Chairs and UNESCO 80 Dialogue with the Director-General of UNESCO" held at the end of January 2026, the Director-General also reaffirmed the strategic importance of this global network, which today includes more than 1,100 UNESCO Chairs and 50 UNITWIN Networks hosted by 950 institutions in 132 countries and connected to over 10,000 researchers worldwide. National Commissions play a central role in the establishment, coordination, and visibility of UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks at national level, including through the presentation of applications, the provision of letters of support, and the promotion of collaboration with UNESCO programme sectors and other UNESCO networks.

18/03/2026 News Digest of the National Commissions...

Dear Secretaries-General,
We are pleased to bring to your attention a digest of news published in the [National Commissions Platform](#).

Key news include:

- **MARK THE 80th** Traditional Meeting of Member States on the margins of the 2026 session of the Executive Board of UNESCO in a hybrid format on Thursday and Friday, April 13 to 14, 2026 from 10 AM to 12 PM. This day, from 10 AM to 12 PM, the programme registration form and other details will be shared with you directly.
- The **Global Network Commissions for UNESCO** supports knowledge and expertise in strategic areas, including inter national Day of Observance (March 14) through engaging national institutions in Africa. Members participated in hands-on challenges including education, environment, and justice using priority keywords and keywords. Please visit the [UNESCO 80](#) for details.
- The **African Network Commissions for UNESCO** in collaboration with the Director and Sector Commissions for UNESCO, has produced an exhibition on the occasion of the 80th anniversary and 20th anniversary of the 2005 Convention on the International Protection of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO 2005 Convention). The exhibition highlights the regulatory framework and the role of the 100 members of the Convention.

Networking Amongst NatComs

NatComs build additional connections by:

- Hosting regional and interregional consultations
- Organizing joint thematic expert meetings
- Developing joint publications
- Leading joint cooperation projects
- Developing bilateral learning arrangements
- Sharing national results, publications and success stories

Benefits of a Connected Network

A connected network enhances sustainability, innovation and solidarity. It enables NatComs to address global and regional challenges more effectively.

Examples of Practices of Networking

- Many NatComs organize regular regional consultations to gather joint input for UNESCO's agenda-setting, including its Programme and Budget, supporting coordinated and collective regional contributions.
- Numerous NatComs host international thematic workshops that bring together experts from multiple countries to exchange approaches and experiences in education, science, culture, and communication and information.
- Some NatComs contribute regularly to the NatComs online platform, strengthening visibility, communication and knowledge-sharing across the network.
- In a number of cases, NatComs have established bilateral or wider cooperation arrangements with other NatComs to exchange expertise and develop joint activities such as workshops, publications and educational resources.
- Many NatComs coordinate with UNESCO Field Offices to co-host national or regional dialogues on key UNESCO priorities, reinforcing collaboration and alignment at country and regional levels.

QUICK TIPS



- Stay engaged with the NatComs Unit at UNESCO's Headquarters
- Participate actively in meetings and thematic discussions
- Share achievements and good practices
- Build long-term partnerships with NatComs in other regions

Unit of National Commissions and Fellowships (NAC)

Support, Coordination and Guidance

The NAC Unit, located within the Sector for Priority Africa and External Relations at UNESCO's Headquarters, serves as the central coordination hub supporting the global NatComs network. It works closely with NatComs, UNESCO programme Sectors at Headquarters and in the field, UNESCO Field Offices and Member States to strengthen cooperation and ensure coherence across the NatComs' work.

The Unit supports NatComs by facilitating communication, deepening cooperation and strengthening capacities. It also manages UNESCO Fellowships, and coordinates and supports the Associations and Clubs for UNESCO network. It works to ensure that NatComs are fully involved in UNESCO's programmes, governance processes and priority-setting.

QUICK TIPS



- Use the communication channels provided by the NAC Unit
- Share national updates to strengthen visibility and information-sharing
- Participate in training sessions and thematic meetings
- Engage regularly with the Unit to benefit from guidance, support and connection to UNESCO's global network
- Share activities to enable better access to resources, communication tools and visibility opportunities

Useful Links for National Commissions

Directory of National Commissions (including all information related to NatComs, such as addresses, websites, names of Chairpersons and Secretary-Generals) <https://pax.unesco.org/countries/NationalCommissions.html>

UNESCO Digital Library (UNESDOC):
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/>

UNESCO Strategic Objectives
<https://www.unesco.org/en/strategic-objectives>

UNESCO Field Offices
<https://www.unesco.org/en/fieldoffice>

UNESCO Fellowships
<https://www.unesco.org/en/fellowships>

Associations and Clubs for UNESCO
<https://www.unesco.org/en/tags/unesco-clubs>

UNESCO Participation Programme
<https://www.unesco.org/en/member-states-portal/participation-programme>

World Heritage List
<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>

UNESCO Creative Cities Network
<https://www.unesco.org/en/creative-cities/grid?hub=80094>

Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists
<https://ich.unesco.org/en/lists>

Global Network of Learning Cities
<https://www.uil.unesco.org/en/learning-cities/map?hub=38>

International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities (ICCAR)
<https://www.unesco.org/en/no-racism-no-discrimination/iccar>

UNESCO Category 2 Centres

<https://www.unesco.org/creativity/en/partnerships/category-2-centers>

UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Network

<https://www.unesco.org/en/unitwin>

ASPnet Platform

https://community.unesco.org/aspnet-platform/s/?language=en_US

Management of Social Transformations (MOST Programme)

<https://www.unesco.org/en/management-social-transformations-most-programme>

UNESCO with, by and for Youth

<https://www.unesco.org/en/youth>

UNESCO Goodwill Ambassadors

<https://www.unesco.org/en/partnerships/goodwill-ambassadors>

UNESCO Institutes and Centers

<https://www.unesco.org/en/partnerships/institutes?hub=180061>

UNESCO Global Geoparks

<https://www.unesco.org/en/igpp/geoparks>

Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB)

<https://www.unesco.org/en/mab>

Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC)

<https://www.ioc.unesco.org/en>

International Hydrological Programme (IHP)

<https://www.unesco.org/en/ihp>

Memory of the World Programme

<https://www.unesco.org/en/memory-world>

Information for All Programme (IFAP)

<https://www.unesco.org/en/ifap>

International Days, Weeks, Years and Decades

<https://www.unesco.org/en/days>

Commemorations and celebrations

<https://www.unesco.org/en/commemorations-celebrations>



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**Unit of National Commissions and Fellowships
(PAX/NAC Unit)**

Sector for Priority Africa and External Relations

The NAC Unit Team is at your full disposal; please don't hesitate to contact us for any help you may need.

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