

International Council for Science (ICSU)

Activities' Report - Year 2016

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1. Introduction

The International Council for Science is a non-governmental organization with global membership of national scientific organizations (there are now 122 member institutions representing a total of 142 countries), in addition to the 31 International Scientific Unions.

The main mission of ICSU is to strengthen Science at international level for the benefit of the Society by mobilizing scientific knowledge and financial resources in a coordinated manner, to identify, address and solve the major problems for science and society.

ICSU promotes collaboration and cooperation among scientists from all disciplines and from all countries, regardless of race, nationality, language, religion, political position and gender. It also promotes multidisciplinary approaches to global problems and provides high-level scientific advice to governments also to foster dialogue between science, policy, society and the private sector. In fostering scientific excellence, the strategic plan of ICSU identifies three priorities: i) international scientific collaboration, (ii) Science for Policy, and (iii) universality of science.

The main ICSU secretariat and headquarters is based in Paris. In addition, ICSU has three Regional Offices (Africa, Asia and Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean).

2. Main activities carried on by ICSU during 2016 relevant for Italy and for CNR

The International Council for Science participates in international science initiatives in two ways: by establishing proper science initiatives or programmes, historically called Interdisciplinary Bodies, or by lending its support to Joint Initiatives that have multiple sponsors/partners. Both type of intervention are of great relevance for Italy and CNR. Especially, in the context of the Interdisciplinary Bodies, Italy is actively participating in programs with data and information, monitoring and observation. In fact, Italy participates to World Data System (WDS), Global Climate Observing System (GCOS), the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS). In addition, especially relevant for Italy and for CNR are ICSU activities within the Thematic Organizations such as the Committee on Space Research (COSPAR), Future Earth, Integrated Research on Disaster Risk (IRDR), Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR), Scientific Committee on Oceanic Research (SCOR), Scientific Committee on Solar-Terrestrial Physics (SCOSTEP), Urban Health and Wellbeing and the World Climate Research Program (WCRP), in addition to ICSU activities at the United Nations (UN).

3. Activities carried on by Enrico Brugnoli within ICSU during 2016 and impact on the Italian scientific community

During 2016 I have participated as CNR and Italian representative to the general Assembly of ICSU. Since 2015, I have been appointed by ICSU as member of the Committee for Scientific Planning and Review (CSPR) of ICSU, and, therefore I continued my participation in that important body. During 2016, as representative of CNR, I had an active participation in the *a priori* assessment process for the possible merging between ICSU and the International Social Science Council (ISSC). I also participated in the preparation of the strategic document for the evaluation of the merger.

The urgent need to address global issues with multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches has led both ICSU and ISSC to consider the opportunity of a merger. Taking into account that CNR is a multidisciplinary research performing organisation with the presence of all the discipline including social sciences, such possible merger might have positive implications for CNR and for Italy.

In addition, as a member of the CSPR, I participate in all the meetings of this body (generally two meetings a year) and discuss future ICSU strategies. In this context, the interests of our Country and of CNR were presented and the presence of Italian researchers in various ICSU bodies and panels was improved.

4. Evaluation of the participation in terms of benefits and membership cost

There is no doubt about the fact that the participation of CNR (and Italy) to ICSU is of paramount importance. ICSU is, in fact, one of the largest international organizations promoting science and actively participates in numerous other international initiatives and programs. It is also closely linked with the United Nations, with UNESCO, with the Belmont Forum. Its Interdisciplinary Bodies, Research Programs and Thematic Organizations are of the utmost importance for the CNR and for Italy. For example, it should be considered the importance of Committees such as SCAR for Antarctic research and for the PNRA or GOOS for marine research and oceanography. In all these organizations there are Italian (and often CNR) representatives confirming the importance and the interest of these. It is considered therefore necessary to maintain the membership of CNR within ICSU, even though the cost is fairly significant; it serves to maintain Italy in the international scientific context among the most developed countries. In the case ICSU membership would not be renewed, this would also cause consequent withdrawals from many other linked international organizations, with obvious negative consequences on Italian science and on CNR.

5. Evaluation of Italians' attendance and how to improve interest and involvement

Our National interest in ICSU is already quite high, as confirmed by the wide participation of Italian scientists in various ICSU bodies and programs. However, there is no doubt that to improve National participation and interest it may be convenient to establish a National Commission nominated by CNR. The commission functioning would have no any additional cost and it could be composed of representatives of all the disciplines involved.

6. Italian experts with important roles within the Union or within related Commissions and Programs (if known)

There are several Italian experts present in the various ICSU Programs and Thematic Bodies. To my knowledge, below are reported names of Italian members present in the relative organisation :

GOOS - Rosalia Santoleri (CNR);

SCAR - Antonio Meloni (INGV), Silvano Onofri (UniTuscia) – Delegates;

Anna Maria Fioretti (CNR), Giovanni Macelloni (CNR), Paolo De Bernardis (UniRoma1), Silvio Greco (ISPRA), Carlo Baroni (UNiPI), Stefano Nativi (CNR) - thematic and alternate representatives.

WDS - Riccardo Smareglia (INAF);

COSPAR - R. D'Amicis (INAF).

It is also noteworthy the presence of Dr. Lucilla Spini in the ICSU secretariat, which is very important for Italy.

7. If Union with CNR Commission, short summary about the 2016 CNR Commission activities

As described above, there is no an Italian ICSU Commission, but it may be worth to consider the nomination of such commission to support CNR and Italian interests in ICSU.

8. Notes (if any)

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9. Conclusions

The presence of CNR and Italy in ICSU is of paramount importance to maintain significant international relations and to follow policies on themes of primary relevance for science and society. At this stage, the proposed merger between ICSU and ISSC is extremely important and must be followed with great attention. In the next fall, the General Assembly should vote the decision about the merger. Once the new conditions will be known, then it will be possible to define the future level of national involvement.

Enrico Brugnoli



Porano, May 26, 2017