

International Council for Science (ICSU)

Activities' Report - Year 2017

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1. Introduction

The International Council for Science (ICSU) is a non-governmental organization with global membership of national scientific organizations (there are 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 solve global problems and provides high-level scientific advice to governments also to foster dialogue between science, policy, society and the private sector. ICSU is currently the main advisor of the United Nations for scientific issues and global policy.

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.

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

2. Main activities carried on by ICSU during 2017 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 types of intervention are of great relevance for Italy and CNR. Especially, in the context of the Interdisciplinary Bodies, Italy is actively participating in programmes 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 2017 and impact on the Italian scientific community

During 2017 I participated as CNR and Italian representative to the general Assembly of ICSU and to the preliminary processes in preparation of the merger of ICSU and ISSC. In addition, I have been appointed by ICSU President and Governing Board, as member of the Committee for Scientific Planning and Review (CSPR) of ICSU, since 2015.

During 2017, as a CNR representative, the activities concentrated mainly in the contribution to the *a priori* assessment process for the possible merger of ICSU and ISSC and the preparation of the strategic documents for the assessment of the merger, including the preliminary vote in the General Assembly of Oslo, until the the General Assembly of Taipei in October 2017, when the very large majority of members of both councils voted overwhelmingly the merger of ICSU and ISSC. The founding assembly of the new International Science Council (ISC) will be held at the beginning of July 2018 in Paris.

The draft strategy of the new organization emphasizes that the importance of scientific understanding to society has never been greater, as humanity has to face the problems of living sustainably and equitably as

planet Earth. It stakes out a space for the Council to defend the inherent value of all science at a time when it has become harder for the scientific voice to be heard. ISC will strengthen international, interdisciplinary collaboration and support scientists to contribute solutions to complex and pressing matters of global public concern. It will advise decision makers and practitioners on the use of science in achieving ambitious agendas such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement adopted by world leaders in 2015, for the mitigation of global warming. And it will encourage open public engagement with science (citizen science). In addition, scientific knowledge, data and expertise must be universally accessible and its benefits universally shared. The practice of science must be inclusive and equitable, also in opportunities for scientific education and capacity development.

According to its mission statement, the new Council will act as the global voice of science, to promote the advancement of science, based on rigor, excellence and creativity in all parts of the world; ISC will support and stimulate multidisciplinary and international scientific programmes on global issues and will defend the freedom, universality and responsible practice of science.

As a member of CSPR I continued my participation in that important body attending all the meetings of that organism in Paris and to discussion about future strategies. Especial attention was given by CSPR to the discussion of implications of the merger of the two councils on future strategic planning, on existing and future Commissions. Furthermore, most of the activity during 2017 was devoted to revision of existing ICSU bodies and programmes.

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

There is no doubt about the fact that participation of CNR (and Italy) to ICSU is of paramount importance. ICSU has been and still 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, and many Countries.

Its Interdisciplinary Bodies, Research Programs and Thematic Organizations are of the utmost importance for 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, and in the future to ISC. In fact, this membership serves to maintain Italy in the international scientific context and programmes and among the most developed countries. In return, there are projects that fund Italian activities and this is a direct return in terms of financial support.

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

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 disciplines including social sciences, such possible merger might have positive implications for CNR and for Italy.

Our National interest in ICSU and to ISC from now on, is quite high, as confirmed by the wide participation of Italian scientists to various ICSU bodies and programmes. It is now relevant to play an active role in the new council ISC, especially in the initial institutive phase to best represent National and CNR scientific interests.

In order to improve the Italian participation and interest it may be convenient to establish a National Commission nominated by CNR. The commission functioning would have no 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 CNR and Italian presence within ICSU has so far produced very positive results for the national scientific community. Following the merger of ICSU and ISSC, the interest in participating to the International Science Council remain high, in order to maintain relevant international relationships and to follow policies on strategic issues for science and society in an inter- and multi-disciplinary approach, following the inclusion of the human and social sciences communities, after the merger. Hence, CNR, should play an active role during these initial phases of the foundation of the new council in order to include the priorities of CNR and Italy in the agenda of ISC.

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Porano, May 4, 2018