



First Regional meeting of the UNESCO science-related chairs and centers for South East Europe and the Mediterranean

CONCEPT NOTE

(Venice, Italy, 26-28 October 2022)

Background

Launched in 1992, the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme, which involves over 850 institutions in 117 countries, promotes international inter-university cooperation and networking to enhance institutional capacities through knowledge sharing and collaborative work. The programme supports the establishment of UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks in key priority areas related to UNESCO's fields of competence – i.e. in education, the natural and social sciences, culture and communication.

Through this network, higher education and research institutions all over the globe pool their resources, both human and material, to address pressing challenges and contribute to the development of their societies. In many instances, the networks and chairs serve as think tanks and bridge builders between academia, civil society, local communities, research and policy-making. They have proven useful in informing policy decisions, establishing new teaching initiatives, generating innovation through research and contributing to the enrichment of existing university programmes.

The UNITWIN network in the sciences is particularly strong in Europe, with many chairs acting within the purview of the Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe.

Category 2 centres and institutes contribute to the execution of UNESCO's programme through capacity building; the exchange of information in a particular discipline; theoretical and experimental research; and advanced training. They are under the auspices of UNESCO but are not legally part of the Organization; they are associated with it through formal arrangements approved by the General Conference. These centres and institutes form a vast network of associated centres in the fields of water, renewable energy, science policy, biotechnology, geosciences, the basic sciences and remote sensing.

UNESCO's network of category 2 centers is also particularly strong in the sciences (notably in the water field) in Europe. Scientific topics covered by these centers in Europe vary from the basic sciences, to engineering, to renewable energy, to the ecological, earth sciences and the water sciences, thus covering all of UNESCO Science sector's priority areas.

In order to help address the most pressing challenges of our time, such as climate change, UNESCO will need to harness the strengths of these two fantastic networks and ensure that these chairs and centers work together and build on each other's strengths. Indeed many of today's most pressing challenges need more than one approach and one area of expertise in the sciences in order to address them.

The UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe will thus be organizing the first regional UNESCO science-related chairs and centers meeting for South East Europe and the Mediterranean, bringing together these two key constituencies to strengthen UNESCO science networks in the region. The meeting will seek to bring to bear their in-depth expertise and knowledge to confront the most pressing science-related and environmental issues for the region.

Participants

The two-day meeting will bring together all UNESCO science-related chairs and category 2 centers from the region.

Outputs

Key outputs from the meeting will include:

- A strengthened network of UNESCO science-related chairs and category 2 centers in the region
- Agreements between science-related chairs and centers to collaborate across disciplines
- The elaboration of specific activities (and project proposals) involving multiple science-related chairs and centers from the region

Venue

The Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe, Palazzo Zorzi, Venice, Italy