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# 2017 Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers

ICoRSA Annual Researcher Career Summit 2022 -  
EU and Global Perspectives

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# I. General Overview

# 2017 Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers



- Standard-setting instrument for goals and value systems by which science operates
- Adopted by all Member States of UNESCO in 2017
- Replaces the 1974 Recommendation on the Status of Scientific Researchers
- Added a four-yearly monitoring exercise

# UNESCO Standard Setting Instruments: “Recommendations”

- Article IV, paragraph 4, of UNESCO's Constitution provides that “the General Conference shall, in adopting proposals for submission to the Member States, distinguish between recommendations and international conventions submitted for their approval ...”.
- By the terms of the above-mentioned Rules of Procedure, *recommendations* are instruments in which “the General Conference formulates principles and norms for the international regulation of any particular question and **invites Member States to take whatever legislative or other steps may be required in conformity with the constitutional practice of each State and the nature of the question under consideration to apply the principles and norms aforesaid within their respective territories**” (Article 1 (b)). These are therefore norms which are not subject to ratification, but which Member States are invited to apply.
- Emanating from the Organization's supreme governing body and hence possessing great authority, **recommendations are intended to influence the development of national laws and practices.**

# 10 key areas of the 2017 Recommendation

1. Science must be part of human dignity, progress, justice, peace, welfare of humankind and respect for the environment
2. Science must meaningfully interact with society and vice versa
3. Science must be part of national policy and decision making, international cooperation and development
4. Science is a common good
- 5. Inclusion and non-discrimination in science**
6. Scientific conduct is subject to universal human rights standards
7. Freedoms, rights and responsibilities of researchers
8. Scientific integrity and ethical codes of conduct
- 9. Human capital for science**
- 10. The enabling environment for science**

Source: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000369170/PDF/369170eng.pdf.multi>



## II. Monitoring and Implementation

# Monitoring and Reporting on the 2017 Recommendation

- National focal point and Consultation Group are assigned
- Consultation Group discusses the Recommendation and focuses on areas that are important for the country
- Data collection to substantiate and draft a report
- A country report is drafted once the data has been put together under the 10 key areas of the Recommendation
- National focal point to submit the national report to UNESCO



- **Responsible Research Networked Globally (RRING)**
  - First iteration of the reporting process
  - Serbia, Lithuania, South Africa
  
- **Strengthening STI Systems for Sustainable Development in Africa**
  - Baseline report
  - Capacity-building
  - National Action Plan



# Results from the first monitoring cycle 2017-2021

- Member States required to submit a single national report every 4 years
- Guidelines circulated to help Member States with their national reports
- The first monitoring cycle 2017-2021 ended last year
- 35 reports were submitted to UNESCO and a consolidated report was presented to the Executive Board and the General Conference:
  - 2017 Recommendation embodies globally accepted norms and standards
  - Science-based policymaking, **working conditions**, scientific freedom and **gender equality** need greater attention
- New Resolution adopted by the General Conference
- Next cycle 2021-2025 started



# III. Findings on Careers

# Key Area 5 – Inclusive and non-discriminatory work conditions and access to education and employment in science.

*All citizens enjoy equal opportunities for the initial education and training needed for, and **equal access to employment in scientific research. Scientific researchers enjoy equitable conditions of work.** The participation of women and other underrepresented groups should be actively encouraged in order to remediate inequalities.*

## Findings from national reports

- Under-representation of women among higher research positions
- Gender bias at the workplace
- Inequalities in terms of promotions, training and career development
- Differences in salaries between civil service and public service



# Key Area 9 – The vital importance of human capital for a sound and responsible science system.

*Human capital is the principal pillar of a sound science system. **Member States should develop policies with respect to the training, employment, career prospects, and work conditions of scientific researchers.** These policies should address, inter alia, adequate career development prospects; lifelong learning opportunities; the facilitation of mobility and international travel; the protection of health and social security; and inclusive and transparent performance appraisal systems for scientific researchers.*

## Findings from national reports

- Funds provided for career development
- Career development plans for higher education / sabbatical leave
- Evaluated annually to build up skills and provide training
- Improved the status of non-staff researchers
- Encourage and even require international mobility from researchers
- Tools developed to ensure fair and responsible operation of career paths

## Key Area 10 – The role of Member States in creating an enabling environment for science and research.

*Member States – government and non-government stakeholders alike - should create a stimulating environment for a sound science system with adequate human and institutional capacities, by **facilitating satisfactory work conditions**, moral support, and public recognition of successful performance of scientific researchers; by supporting education in science and technology; by promoting publishing and sharing data and results that meet adequate quality standards; and by monitoring the implementation and impact of such efforts*

- Member States reported taking measures to provide researchers with improved work conditions
- Not all Member States were satisfied with the current situation:

*“The salaries in the research system are quite low, especially at entry level, accompanied by low social status and recognition. Despite recent reforms of the public [sector] wages, a large proportion of research staff is still underpaid compared to the equivalent positions in other countries [in the Member State’s world region] or even with other professionals in the national public system.”*

# IV. Challenges and Way Forward

# 41 C/Resolution 71

1. *Notes* that 35 Member States submitted reports as part of the first consultation on the implementation of the 2017 Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers, and strongly encourages the other Member States to submit their reports as soon as possible;
2. *Invites* all **Member States** to redouble their efforts to **ensure the full and comprehensive implementation** of the 2017 Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers;
3. *Also invites* **Member States** to further support the Director-General's efforts to promote and implement the 2017 Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers, notably through the **sharing of data on national policy and practice and the provision of financial assistance** to develop guidance, tools and capacity-building materials and initiatives targeting Member States and other concerned stakeholders;
4. *Requests* the Director-General to take the appropriate follow-up action to the findings of the first consultation on the implementation of the 2017 Recommendation and to **initiate the second consultation of Member States**;
5. *Invites* the Secretariat to explore **potential synergies** in the monitoring of the 2017 Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers' implementation with other UNESCO standard-setting instruments and submit the outcome of this process to the Executive Board at its 214th session;
6. *Recommends* that the Director-General carry out the **updating and management of the GO-SPIN platform** in order to simplify the process of submission of reports by Member States;
7. *Also requests* the Director-General to transmit to it at its 43rd session the next consolidated report on the implementation of the 2017 Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers, and decides to include an item on this matter in the agenda of its 43rd session.

# Challenges and Solutions

- Vast coverage of the 2017 Recommendation
  - National consultations to be more inclusive
- Ambiguity in the survey and lack of indicators
  - Online platform for reporting and data collection
  - Digital survey
  - Qualitative and quantitative indicators
- Lack of visibility / awareness
  - Communications, particularly towards young and women scientists
  - Awareness / advocacy at regional events
- Lack of capacity
  - Trainings of national focal points
  - Provide guidance material



# Online Monitoring Tool

- Global Observatory of Science, Technology and Innovation Policy Instruments (GO-SPIN)
  - Analyse STI evidence-based policies to detect gaps; and
  - Introduce reforms and upgrades to national innovation systems and governance
- Platform update underway
  - Online survey
  - STI policy and legal instruments
- National focal point trainings
- Better reporting in the next cycle (2025)



# Thank you

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for

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