How can UNESCO successfully map the capacity and impact of its Category 2 Centres network?

February 2015

Policy Brief

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1/ Executive Summary

Category 2 Centres represent a valuable worldwide network of resources, the full potential of which should be realised to help deliver UNESCO's strategic priorities. The efficacy and impact of UNESCO's Category 2 Centre Network could be significantly improved through information dissemination, greater transparency and enhanced interaction between Centres. Effective mapping can provide the key to improving the Category 2 Centre network, delivering benefits for UNESCO, Member States and the Centres themselves. This Policy Brief defines how a more successful Category 2 Centre mapping could be implemented within the network, outlines key areas the mapping should cover and highlights how UNESCO could best undertake such mapping, setting out recommendations and a series of challenge questions to help achieve these objectives.

Improving the regular Category 2 network mapping would allow UNESCO to further its on-going drive to improve effectiveness and transparency; raise the visibility and profile of the Category 2 Centres, showcasing their important contributions to UNESCO's work and goals in the organisations strategic planning; and establish a clear picture of the network, its agreed activities, specialist capabilities, recent impacts and future outputs.

The 37th General Conference in 2013 provided an opportunity to revisit how best to map the network, when it approved revisions to the Integrated Comprehensive Strategy for Category 2 Centres (37 C/Res 93) aimed at further strengthening the management of this fast-growing global network of institutes committed to furthering UNESCO's strategic priorities. Efficient, timely and transparent monitoring of this key UNESCO partnership must now be implemented to ensure the network realizes its full potential.

The UK National Commission for UNESCO offers the following recommendations:

For the UNESCO Secretariat:

1. Commit to undertaking a full mapping of UNESCO Category 2 Centres in autumn 2015, presenting the results to the 197th Executive Board (October 2015) and 38th General Conference (November 2015).

2. Design and implement a mapping process and central information hub which is fully integrated with existing Category 2 Centre reporting, monitoring and governance – minimising duplication and enabling Centres to easily provide information.

3. Consider adjusting resources this biennium, within the bounds of the existing Strategic Planning component of the Programme-related Services budget, to enable design and implementation of an effective and efficient mapping process and supporting information system. Initial reprioritisation and front-loaded investment would facilitate repeated future mapping at minimal cost.

4. Present the information collected during the mapping, and the related synthesis of results, in an open and accessible fashion alongside all other Category 2 Centre information in a single part of the UNESCO website.

5. When considering what information to collect from Centres, ensure that the specific mapping needs of individual programmes and sectors are taken into account as well as improving cross-UNESCO consistency.

6. Use the mapping to identify, for all Category 2 Centres, their compliance with the Integrated Comprehensive Strategy for Category 2 Centres and their contribution to UNESCO's medium-term strategy and global priorities of Africa and Gender – reporting findings to the Governing Bodies in strategic planning documents.

For Member States:

1. Support UNESCO in its work to undertake a full and thorough mapping of existing Category 2 Centres.

2. Utilise the results of the mapping when assessing the use and resourcing of the Category 2 Centre network in future Medium Term Strategies.

3. Support and nurture existing Category 2 Centres that they host to ensure they comply with UNESCO reporting requirements and that their work contributes to the Organisation's programme of work.

4. Ensure the results of the network mapping process are considered when assessing or planning proposals for new Category 2 Centres.

For Category 2 Centres:

1. Actively contribute to the design and implementation of the network mapping process.

2. Ensure they fully comply with all reporting requirements under the Integrated Comprehensive Strategy for Category 2 Centres and proactively provide up-to-date and timely information to the network mapping process.

3. Maintain a clear focus on how their activities and outputs are contributing to the work of UNESCO in the areas agreed in relation to their Category 2 status.

2/ Introduction

UNESCO's partnership networks provide a key tool for delivering the organisations strategic priorities. At a time of increased budgetary demands, UNESCO must ensure that the frameworks for establishing, supporting, managing and promoting activity within these core networks are fit for purpose. In the last 5 years, UNESCO has taken positive steps towards better management and coordination of its Category 2 Centre network. Effective monitoring and evaluation using regular mapping of the network's capacity, achievements and shortcomings is an essential next step.

Category 2 Centres are a growing and potentially high profile part of UNESCO's network. The General Conference has to date approved 98 Centres, with further proposals pending review and recommendation by the Executive Board. The Comprehensive Partnership Strategy[1] notes that, "while the network is providing specific expertise contributing to the implementation of strategic objectives of UNESCO, the rapidly rising number of Category 2 Institutes and Centres places increased pressure on core resources of the Organisation."

The Current Situation

A previous mapping exercise conducted in 2011 collated information from fact sheets sent to all Programme Sector Focal Points. Information was provided, in liaison with the directors and staff of the Centres, on a number of areas including: the thematic specialization and geographic coverage of the Centre and information on their contribution to UNESCO's programme results at the MLA level.[2] While this exercise provided a degree of basic information about the network, the level of detail and synthesis provided were below that required to realise the benefits outlined in this Policy Brief. The mapping

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1   192 EX/5 INF Comprehensive Partnership Strategy http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002229/222986e.pdf
2   189 EX/INF. 5 http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002153/215381e.pdf

exercise appeared to be poorly connected to other Centre reporting and assessment against strategic priorities was limited.

UNESCO has taken significant steps towards improved strategic oversight and more effective governing structures for Category 2 Centres including introducing a revised Integrated Comprehensive Strategy[3] for the network in 2013. The non-operational elements of the network have been identified as a key problem and the Executive Board has agreed to a planned evaluation of six such centres each year during the current biennium.[4] Within the Secretariat, under the central coordination of the Bureau for Strategic Planning, each Programme Sector is expected to have a designated Global Focal Point and its own strategy for engagement with Category 2 Centres – although at present these vary in detail.

The Future

The UK National Commission for UNESCO acknowledge that progress towards a more effective Category 2 Centre network is ongoing within the Organisation and that implementation of the new Comprehensive Strategy takes time. However, there remains significant scope to improve the strategic direction and use of the overall Category 2 Centre network and to ease monitoring and evaluation of its contribution to UNESCO's programme of work.

Under the revised Comprehensive Strategy, Category 2 Centres are due to undergo a mapping exercise, conducted by the Director-General every two years. This brief recommends that UNESCO must take steps now to implement an effective mapping process. It examines what UNESCO should aim to achieve from mapping Category 2 Centres; what form the mapping could take and makes recommendations for taking the mapping forward. It poses a number of questions for UNESCO which require answers if the mapping is to be an effective tool for enhancing the future of this UNESCO partnership.

3   http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/BSP/pdf/en-37-C-18-PART_I.pdf
4   194 EX/17 Part 1 http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002265/226516e.pdf

Timeline of Category 2 decisions and documentation:

December 2011	February 2012	July 2012	November 2013	April 2014	November 2014	November 2015
IOS Review of Category 2 Centres	Mapping of Category 2 Centres. (Reviewed by Exec Board)	UKNC policy brief with recommendations to improve Category 2 Centre network	New Category 2 Centre Strategy approved by General Conference	194th Exec Board agrees to evaluate 6 non-operational Category 2 Centres per year for next biennium	195th Exec Board to receive reports on aligning centres with agreements prior to 2005	Results of next mapping exercise to be reported to Exec Board and General Conference
IOS/AUD/ EVS/2011/14 Rev	189 EX/INF 5	Improving UNESCO's Category 2 Centre Network	New Comprehensive Strategy 37 C/18 Part 1	194 EX/17 Part 1	195 EX/12 Parts 1 and 2	

3/ Why effective mapping matters

Mapping of the UNESCO Category 2 Centres should provide an accessible, informative and efficient method to determine the current status and activities of the network.

Benefits to the UNESCO Secretariat

The Comprehensive Partnership Strategy identifies the role of Category 2 Centres as potential resource hubs and mechanisms to help the organisation achieve programme objectives.[5] The key to unlocking this resource lies in effective coordination by the Secretariat. A comprehensive and up to date understanding of the network's collective and complementary capabilities and limitations is vital. This should be the core aim of any mapping process. Tangible benefits of effective mapping include:

- Maintaining and communicating a clear overview of the network to inform planning, budgeting, networking, communication and coordination.

- Enabling evidence-based decisions to be made by the Governing Bodies when assessing which proposals for new Centres and agreeing Centre remits, thus avoiding duplication and ensuring thematic relevance.

- Enabling results-based management decisions when the Governing Bodies discuss renewal or recasting of a Centre's agreement. Results-based management is a current priority for UNESCO as defined in the medium-term strategy and recently evaluated by the Internal Oversight Service (IOS).[6]

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5   192 EX/5 INF http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002229/222986e.pdf
6   IOS/EVS/PI/136 REV http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002270/227010e.pdf

- Reducing the administrative resource burden involved in monitoring the network by integrating existing reporting and evaluation processes. For example, easing assessment of whether Centres are fulfilling the KPI's identified in the Partnership Strategy.

- Limiting the financial cost of governing and coordinating the network – encouraging self-coordination by providing centres with the information needed to network and develop joint activities with other centres.

Benefits to Member States

The benefit of effective mapping to Member States will depend on their current interactions with the network, but can be broadly categorised into three areas:

- *Network Oversight:* Effective mapping would provide the robust information on the costs and impacts of the network needed to implement effective results based management and budgeting. It would underpin evidenced decisions on future Centre agreements to ensure complementarity and avoid duplication.

- *Network Engagement and Growth:* Member States who do not currently host a Category 2 Centre would be in a stronger position to engage with existing Centre working in their priority area. It would also help identify requirements for new Centres, allowing more informed network expansion.

- *Network Support and Compliance:* For the 60-plus Member States who currently host Category 2 Centres, effective mapping would ensure they are better placed to understand the contribution existing Centres are making to UNESCO, monitor compliance with Centre agreements and provide support to Centres where needs.

Benefits to Category 2 Centres

Effective mapping would help to highlight the current work of Centres and significantly improve their association with UNESCO and interaction with other Centres through opportunities for sharing information, ideas and the initiation

of joint programmes with UNESCO and other Centres. Effective mapping would allow Centres to:

- Clearly demonstrate how their activities align with UNESCO strategic programme objectives.

- Identify areas where the Centre can contribute and provide added value to existing and potential future UNESCO activities, e.g. sector initiatives, workshops, conferences, and networks.

- Better understand the activities undertaken by other Centres in order to gauge the types and extent of activities that are expected from each Centre, and to exchange 'best practice' in supporting the implementation of UNESCO strategic programme objectives.

- Better understand where the Centre might work with other UNESCO Centres by identifying members of the network who are working on complementary activities, promoting synergies and avoiding overlap. This might include developing consortia for submission of funding requests for multi-disciplinary, multi-country projects – for example, identification of case studies in different countries where Centres are active.

Identify opportunities for collaboration related to training and capacity building activities (such as running workshops, conferences) that bring together the expertise and interests from a number of Centres.

- Promote the work and outputs of individual Centres and of the network as a whole, building awareness and impact for activities and investments.

Mapping does not need to be a drain on the resources and time of Category 2 Centres but could streamline and make better use of existing reporting requirements.

4/ What an effective mapping would look like

The next mapping of the whole Category 2 network is expected to take place in Autumn 2015. This presents the opportunity for UNESCO to design a thorough and effectual process which can, in future, be repeated and updated at limited cost. This brief provides a number of recommendations for the development of a more effective mapping process and poses a number of 'Challenge Questions' which UNESCO should tackle before embarking on the next thorough mapping.

Challenge Questions (General):

1. How will UNESCO achieve the aims of the mapping exercise in tandem with other monitoring, reporting and planning?

2. How will UNESCO capitalise on improved mapping to benefit Centre, partnerships and the Organisation as a whole?

3. Can UNESCO learn from other mapping exercises within the UN or elsewhere?

4. How will the mapping be used to better inform the approval and renewal of Centres?

What the mapping should cover

In designing and implementing future mapping processes, UNESCO should ensure that the level of information collected is sufficient to allow a full understanding of a Centre's status, governance and activities. It should however, be integrated with other elements of the Category 2 Centre monitoring and reporting requirements. This will to ensure that Centres are not being asked for the same information on multiple occasions and the Secretariat is not duplicating effort in collating such data. It is therefore suggested that the

baseline information requirements of feasibility studies, regular Centre reporting and renewal assessments be considered together as the basis for the mapping. In broad terms, the mapping should include:

Governance Information	The current status of the Centre – for example: where the Centre is in the process of being established; if it has a current agreement and; whether it is operational or is classed as non-operational.
	Key timeline information including the date the Centre was proposed, feasibility study published, last reviewed, approved by the Governing Bodies and when the current agreement was signed.
	Administrative information about the centre – for example: contact details, staff numbers, governing body details.
	Information about a Centre's compliance with reporting requirements.
	Cost incurred by UNESCO in relation to the Centre over the last three biennium, split into a) coordinating costs and b) governance costs – including: feasibility studies, governing board attendance and renewal assessments, where these are not met by the Centre.
	Information regarding the relevant UNESCO Sector and focal point within the Secretariat.
Thematic / Activity Information	Geographical location of the Centre and whether its focus is regional or international.
	What the Centre does – summarised information about its key areas of work as agreed with UNESCO.
	Scope and impact of the Centre's activities – for example: training; education; policy development; research.
	Contributions the Centre makes to the Main Lines of Action and Expected Results within the C5 and which performance indicator in the medium-term strategy the Centre links to.
	Contributions to UNESCO's key programmes and initiatives.
	Examples of impact of South/South and North/South co-operation and contributions to UNESCO's global priorities of Africa and Gender.
	Activities which have been completed (or are proposed) with other centres, field offices, Secretariat or other UNESCO designated sites/ partners as Collaborators.
	Case study examples of impact / top successes.

How to get the best information about Centres:

The engagement of the Centre is likely to be highest where they gain direct benefit from the mapping and have been able to input in to the development of the framework. For example, a Centre may be keen to use the mapping to raise awareness of outputs such as: scientific papers, policy briefs, books, project reports etc, or case studies setting out the impact their work has had in a particular area. Collation and publishing of such information may be both beneficial to the Centre and provide tangible evidence of contributions towards UNESCO's areas of work.

Effective mapping is reliant on up-to-date and accurate information about Centres. While collating and updating of some of this information should remain the responsibility of the Secretariat – for example, governance information about the status of the Centre and agreement details – it would be advantageous for most data to be provided directly by Centres. By providing an integrated, online data collection system for the mapping exercise and the biennial progress reports, the Centres could be given the responsibility of updating this information, thus cutting reporting and monitoring costs for both UNESCO and the Centres.

A lack of engagement with reporting represents a key risk in any mapping process. There are steps UNESCO can take to ensure they get a positive response from the centres. These include:

- **Ensuring Sector Focal Points seek the views of Centres ahead of setting the mapping framework** – particularly in relation to how best to collect the information required and, what information Centres feel it would be beneficial to include.

- **Highlighting the benefits of effective mapping to the Centres themselves** – using examples from other areas of UNESCO to demonstrate where effective communication and information dissemination across partners supports a strong and active network (for example: the Global Geoparks Network).

- **Combining the mapping with other reporting requirements** (for example: biennial progress reports and information requirements for renewal assessments) – thus reducing the resource burden for Centre.

- **Providing clear focus areas for the Centre** to report on and develop a 'good practice' template for Centres to follow.

- **Ensuring that the mapping includes a forward looking element and highlights the Centre's future plans** – to increase opportunities for Centres to develop joint activities.

- **Providing an opportunity for Centres to demonstrate their impact** – clear and accessible information about individual Centres on the UNESCO website and in UNESCO reporting will help raise the profile of the Centre by increasing their visibility.

- **Reminding Centres and their host Member States of their commitments to reporting** under their Agreements and the Integrated Comprehensive Strategy and ensure that this is a key performance indicator in any renewal assessment.

Challenge Questions (Information Gathering):

1. How will UNESCO design a process which meets the needs of a network of Centres which differ greatly in thematic scope and institutional set-up?

2. How will data collection and reporting be best integrated with the System of Information on Strategies, Tasks and the Evaluation of Results (SISTER) in a transparent and accessible fashion?

3. How will existing reporting requirements for Centres be used to deliver the information needed for the mapping?

4. Is a two-year mapping cycle the best option for capturing Centre's contributions to UNESCO or can an ongoing, regularly updated system be developed?

How the mapping could be presented:

Information on Category 2 Centres is currently spread across UNESCO's website. As a result the information can appear disjointed and hard to access. An information storage and delivery system should be designed to allow stakeholders to quickly and easily understand the contributions and make-up of the network. Users should be able to interrogate the mapping at a thematic level (for example: how water-related Category 2 Centres contribute to the International Hydrological Programme as part of the UNESCO 'water family') but also understand the overall shape and output of the network across all Sectors.

While the detailed information collated in the mapping should be published in an open and accessible way, improved synthesis of the data by the Secretariat is also required. Key messages, trends and patterns should be communicated in a way which is easily understandable both within and outside UNESCO.

Emerging good practice exists within the organisation. For example, in June 2014 at the meeting of the IHP Council, a paper was tabled on Category 2 water-related centres. This included a regional and thematic 'mapping' of existing centres and an update on the status of pending and existing agreements.[7] The graphical representation of the thematic distribution of Centres in each region and their evolution through time given as examples in the draft revised strategy for water-related Centres,[8] provided a concise and understandable picture of the network. Mapping of Centres onto the Themes of the current IHP Phase (IHP-VIII) allowed readers to understand current and potential future contributions at a thematic level and through this against UNESCO's Main Lines of Action and Expected Results.

Future mapping could build on these exercises by collating more detailed information; compiling the data in an accessible format; ensuring the mapping complements other reporting requirements of Category 2 Centres and providing an overview of the individual data gained.

A recommended example of how to present the mapping would be for the Secretariat to provide one central online hub which displays all the relevant Category 2 Centres information including: data collected during mapping exercises and its synthesis; the integrated strategy; individual sector strategies; centre agreements; relevant Executive Board papers. Each individual Centre/Programme/Sector could utilise relevant information from this hub when coordinating or reporting on Centre activities, rather than duplicating collection and storage.

Users could interrogate the Category 2 Centre information according to the geographical or thematic area of interest. For example: an interactive map could highlight which Centres exist and direct interested users to all the relevant information for that Centre including contact details for the Centre and the relevant UNESCO staff person; the centre agreement; and mapping information.

7   IHP/IC-XXI/Inf.4 http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002279/227942E.pdf
8   IHP/Bur-L/Ref. 2 Rev http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/SC/pdf/ihp_bur_50_
     ref2_rev_draft_revised_strategy_water_centres_11062014.pdf

Developing a comprehensive online data portal for Category 2 Centres now would ensure more efficient use of UNESCO's resources in the future. The information contained in the system could be updated by Centres themselves, thereby ensuring they meet their reporting requirements, and reducing the burden on the Secretariat. When a new mapping exercise is due the Secretariat could focus its efforts on ensuring that information is up to date and then presenting a synthesis and gap analysis of the network to the Governing Bodies.

Challenge Questions (Presentation):

1. How will the results of the mapping process be presented to best demonstrate UNESCO's impact?

2. How will the mapping results be integrated with similar information for other UNESCO partnerships to ensure a coherent picture of the capacity and impact of these networks?

Resource implications of mapping

If structures such as the data collection elements of the mapping process are integrated with existing reporting requirement placed on Centres, the regular mapping does not have to be resource-intensive for either the Centres or UNESCO Secretariat.

A clear, focused and concise reporting process and system would minimise the resources required by both UNESCO and the Centre in relation to future mapping exercises but would require Secretariat time and resources to establish the initial mapping framework. Time and money would be required to develop IT data collection systems and the website if such a hub for Category 2 Centres were to be developed.

Overall coordination and guidance for Category 2 institutes and Centres is resourced under Expected Result 1 of the *Strategic Planning, Programme Monitoring and Budget Preparation* component of the Programme-related Services budget (37 C/5). UNESCO should consider allocating sufficient resources this biennium from within this budget to cover the initial mapping, establishing the information system and on-line presence, and promoting the system amongst potential users. By putting these in place now, time and money would be saved when conducting future mapping (along with the other long-term, non-financial rewards).

Challenge Questions (Resourcing):

1. Who is best placed to deliver the mapping exercise, UNESCO or an independent body?

2. How will UNESCO put in place a process which minimises the ongoing costs of regular mapping?

5 / Recommendations

The UK National Commission for UNESCO recommends that UNESCO design and implement a mapping process for Category 2 Centres which delivers a thorough understanding of the capacity, achievements and shortcomings of the network in a transparent, resource efficient and integrated manner. The UKNC's core recommendations are:

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6/ Acknowledgements

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The views contained in this policy brief are those of the UK National Commission for UNESCO and do not necessarily reflect those of the UK Government or the individuals or organisations who have contributed to this report.

Resources

Revised Integrated Comprehensive Strategy for Category 2 Centres (Nov 2013): 37 C/18
http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/BSP/pdf/en-37-C-18-PART_I.pdf
Category 2 Centres web pages
http://www.unesco.org/new/en/bureau-of-strategic-planning/resources/category-2-institutes/
Approved Programme and Budget for 2014/17 (Nov 2013): 37 C/5
http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002266/226695e.pdf
New Comprehensive Partnership Strategy (Sep 2013): 192 EX/5.INF
http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002229/222986e.pdf
IOS evaluation of UNESCO's results-reporting (June 2014): IOS/EVS/PI/136 REV
http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002270/227010e.pdf