

## **ISC Science Action Plan 2019-2021 (draft of 11 February 2019)**

### **Feedback of the European ISC Members' Management Group\***

#### **Preliminaries**

We thank you for the consultation on the first draft of the ISC Science Action Plan and welcome this initiative to foster the engagement and ownership of the Council's collective membership. While it was challenging to respond so quickly on a rather long document, we trust that our 'high level feedback' in a timely fashion will serve the purpose.

At the outset, we would like to raise an issue that is of considerable concern to us: The competition between ISC and InterAcademy Partnership (IAP) to be the global voice of science. This is the ambition of both organisations, as expressed in their High-Level Strategy (endorsed at the joint ICSU-ISSC Meeting in October 2017) and Strategic Plan for 2016-18 (endorsed at the IAP General Assembly in March 2016) respectively. This ambition underpins the draft ISC Science Action Plan and the IAP Strategic Plan, both for 2019-21, on which the two organisations concurrently consult their memberships. Apart from the fact that the national memberships of ISC and IAP are overlapping to a large degree, this is an unhealthy situation that undermines the cause of establishing science as a compact and robust interlocutor at the international policy level. We therefore urge both the ISC and IAP leadership to address and resolve this situation as soon as possible through collaborative planning at least or joining forces at best.

#### **Comments on the Science Action Plan**

We wish to commend the Science Planning Working Group for its work. The framework that Chapter 2 provides is a helpful point of orientation, as is the overview on how the domains and priority projects relate to the ISC strategic objectives. On that basis, we are happy to provide generic feedback on the draft document and selected feedback concerning the proposed priority projects.

#### ***Generic***

- Public good: Adapt or remove the sentence "The purpose of science is to serve the public good", because science clearly also has an intrinsic role to advance science itself.
- Inclusive science: Ensure inclusivity in framing and planning the priority projects by integrating all relevant areas of research, notably the social sciences and humanities.
- Membership engagement: Set out more clearly the unique potential that the ISC has to offer to its membership, and clarify that a possible engagement is for a member to take the lead on a specific activity, because such a contribution would be much easier to deliver in terms of human resources and funding (p. 26-7).
- Embedding: Indicate whether and to what extent the ISC activities mentioned in the Appendix, but not specifically referenced in the Science Action Plan, will be continued or considered for discontinuation.
- Length: Tighten the final text to enhance accessibility to the internal, and external, readership.

#### ***Domain 1: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development***

- Project 1 'Science for Sustainability': In principle agreement with the need for an SDG-related project, but: 1) Break down the results from the stocktaking workshop on activities in the ISC community, which we support, to doable activities in terms of resources and visibility towards the ISC membership; 2) Clarify and delineate the specificity of ISC's contribution versus that of several other science organisations that are working in this area; 3) Base any activities on work already done in the ISC community.

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\* The Management Group with representatives from 7 ISC Member Organisations in Europe supports the work of the 47 European ISC Members.

## ***Domain 2: The Digital Revolution***

- Projects 1 'Tackling complexity' and 2 'Global Data Governance': We welcome both proposals. Use the focus on data as an opportunity to bundle ISC's data work "by consolidating and strengthening its own organizational structure, ultimately leading to a single Interdisciplinary Body for data and information" (CODATA review, 2014, p. 10). We suggest to combine both projects to reflect the need for consolidating FAIR data management to showcase its advantages, ranging from health sciences to transdisciplinary challenges in Agenda 2030.
- Project 3 'Machine Learning Society': Posteriorise at this point in time, also in view of available resources, but an interesting topic for a provoking foresight in the course of the strategic timeframe.

## ***Domain 3: Science in Policy and Public Discourse***

- Prioritise Project 1 'Science-Policy-Interfaces' and consider integrating Project 2 'Policy and Public Action' and 3 'Public Value of Science'.
- Focus on producing specific science advice for the multilateral policy arena, rather than on analysing the meta level. In so doing, seize opportunities to address issues in the international limelight, such as the genome editing case in China at the end of 2018, in a timely fashion, and exploit activities already ongoing in the ISC community to lend their work global visibility.

## ***Domain 4: The Evolution of Science and Science Systems***

- Project 1 'What Works for Women in Science': Support for this proposal as first priority, because gender equality is still lacking and the sharing of good practice is valuable to ISC members.
- Projects 3 'Open Science', 4 'Future of Scientific Publishing' and 5 'Industrialisation of Science': Consider integrating the interrelated topics in the context of where the publication and dissemination of research results will and/or should be going in 10-15 years from here. Two comments of detail on Plan S: i) It was jointly developed by Science Europe, a group of national research funding organisations in Europe, and the European Commission, not by the latter alone; ii) It does not apply to all publicly funded research, but only that funded by those members of Science Europe that endorsed Plan S.
- Project 2 'Refugee Scientists': Address this issues similar to Project 4.1 by collecting good practice examples and providing links to specialised organisations that are active in this field, but given both the limited resources at ISC and the complexity of the matter, this should have lower priority.

*Agreed on by the Management Group on 28 February 2019*