

International Council for Science

Strengthening international science for the benefit of society

Founded in 1931, the [International Council for Science \(ICSU\)](#) is a non-governmental organization with a global membership of national scientific bodies (114 Members, representing 134 countries) and International Scientific Unions (29 Members). ICSU's activities focus on three areas: [planning and coordinating research](#); [science for policy](#); and strengthening the [Universality of Science](#).

ICSU's mission is to strengthen international science for the benefit of society.

To do this, ICSU mobilizes the knowledge and resources of the international science community to:

Identify and address major issues of importance to science and society

Facilitate interaction amongst scientists across all disciplines and from all countries

Promote the participation of all scientists—regardless of race, citizenship, language, political stance, or gender—in the international scientific endeavour

Provide independent, authoritative advice to stimulate constructive dialogue between the scientific community and governments, civil society and the private sector.

Through its international network of [Members](#), ICSU plans and coordinates interdisciplinary research to address major issues of relevance to both science and society. To this end, a number of specialized [Interdisciplinary Bodies](#) have been created. In addition, the Council actively advocates for freedom in the conduct of science, promotes equitable access to scientific data and information, and facilitates science education and capacity building.

ICSU helps create international and regional networks of scientists with similar interests and maintains close working relationships with a number of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. The Council acts as a focus for the exchange of ideas, the communication of scientific information and the development of scientific standards. It is frequently called upon to speak on behalf of the global scientific community and to act as an advisor in matters ranging from the environment to scientific ethics. The ICSU community organizes scientific conferences, congresses and symposia all around the world and also produces a wide range of newsletters, handbooks, learned journals and proceedings.

One of the strengths of ICSU is its governance structure, which has developed over time to ensure transparency and accountability, with a minimum of bureaucracy. The central [ICSU Secretariat](#) is based in Paris, where a small professional team (16 people in 2008), ensures its day to day planning and operations, under the guidance of an [Executive Board](#). The Board is made up of 14 scientists, representing different countries and disciplines, elected by the [General Assembly](#) of all Members, which is convened every three years. A small number of [Policy Committees](#) assist the Executive Board in its work. ICSU's activities depend to a large extent on the voluntary contributions of scientists from around the world who are brought together in these Policy Committees or in various *ad hoc* expert groups.

In addition to the central Secretariat, ICSU has three [Regional Offices](#): Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean. Each Office has its own dedicated staff and Regional Committee—a scientific advisory committee made up of leading scientists from the region. The aim of these Offices is to help ICSU strengthen science for society in developing countries and bring the science of developing countries closer to ICSU. This is done in the context of regional priorities that have been identified by each Regional Committee in alignment with the [ICSU Strategic Plan 2006–2011](#). The Offices support the work of ICSU and its Scientific Unions, National Members in the region, Interdisciplinary Bodies and Joint Initiatives as well as its partners such as UNESCO and the Academy of Sciences for the Developing World (TWAS).

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