



Towards the Second ICSU Strategic Plan 2012–2017

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1. Background

1.1 General comments

The ICSU Strategic Plan, 2006–2011 marked a very significant milestone in the life of the organisation. Whereas ICSU had previously developed activities in a largely opportunistic fashion, the strategic plan laid down priorities and actions for the longer term. The plan was the product of an intensive consultation and planning process, which in itself resulted in the publication of a number of influential reports that raised awareness of ICSU.

Now, as ICSU looks ahead to the period beyond 2011, it is important to once again take stock of the changes that are taking place within science and society and how these relate to ICSU's mission to strengthen international science for the benefit of society. As a Membership organisation, ICSU must also, of course, consider the needs and priorities of its National and Union Members. And it has a major ongoing responsibility for the Interdisciplinary bodies that it has established over time at the request of Members.

The preliminary thoughts presented here are based on a strategic brainstorming session of the Committee on Scientific Planning and Review (CSPR) in April 2008 and subsequent discussions at the 97th Executive Board (EB) in May 2008. At this early pre-planning stage of the process the aim is establish the basic starting assumptions and parameters that will shape and limit the planning process, whilst at the same time being as open and flexible as possible with regards to new thoughts and ideas. The issues listed below reflect the initial inputs of the two ICSU organs – CSPR and the EB – that will be responsible for developing the next ICSU strategic plan.

1.2 Development and Implementation of the first ICSU Strategic Plan 2005–2011

As the process for developing the second Strategic Plan for ICSU is contemplated, there are a number of issues related to the development and implementation of the current strategy that should be taken into account. These include:

- The lessons learnt and experiences gained from the processes that went into developing the first ICSU Strategic Plan;
- the rich data and information gathered in preparing the first Strategic Plan, some of which has significant relevance for the development of the second Strategic Plan (see Table 1);
- the lead time needed to develop some of the major elements of the first Strategic Plan means that some of the resultant programmes will only be launched during the second half of the Strategic Plan period (i.e. 2009–2011). This inevitably means that these programmes and activities will only gain full traction during the period of the second Strategic Plan. Table 2 summarises the timetable for the implementation of the first Strategic Plan;
- the CSPR will only commence work on the implementation of the Science Education component of the first Strategic Plan during the period 2009–2011. Likewise a review of potential ICSU-private sector interactions is scheduled for this period. Any

programme or initiative that results from these processes will be implemented during the period of the second Strategic Plan;

- the changing context in which ICSU operates, results both from external changes in the global arena, which ICSU has no control over, as well as from activities internal to ICSU. A good example of the latter is the fact that ICSU now has three functional Regional Offices (in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia and the Pacific) that did not exist when the process to develop the first strategic Plan was launched. The second Strategic Plan needs to strike an appropriate balance between global activities and regional activities;
- successive strategic planning initiatives cannot keep on adding new programmes and activities without terminating those that have passed their period of usefulness, regardless of how successful they may have been at some point in the past. An appropriate balance needs to be struck between nurturing new programmes and initiatives and terminating matured activities;
- a Strategic Plan not only guides ICSU's activities but has also has an important communication function, increasing ICSU's visibility and credibility.

2. Overarching considerations and guidelines for the second Strategic Plan

The following considerations and guidelines arise out of the recognition of the strengths of the first Strategic Plan, while acknowledging the requisite openness of thought for successful strategic planning:

- there is a need to clearly define at the outset the audiences and customers for the Plan itself and its various components. These audiences and customers must be understood as including the Membership of ICSU, its inter-disciplinary bodies, its traditional partners and potential new strategic partners;
- early career scientists, who are not normally solicited during the planning of ICSU initiatives, are critical for the full implementation of the ICSU strategy and should have a stronger voice in its design;
- continuity is important. The new Plan should represent an evolution of the current Plan, with many of the current themes and activities continuing and some new activities being added;
- the ICSU vision, mission and major goals as outlined in the current Plan continue to be appropriate;
- the present Strategic Plan is very rich and there is a need to drill down deeper into its meaning in specific areas. Some of these 'hidden' aims need to be revisited and highlighted more in the new Plan;
- ways must be found to overcome the challenges of getting quality inputs from ICSU Members into the planning process. Success in this regard is paramount to ensuring proper buy-in by ICSU Members into the second Strategic Plan.
- the consultation and planning exercise will be qualitatively different and likely be more modest as compared to that undertaken for the first Plan;

3. Planning and coordinating science programmes [Major theme 1]

Progress 2006–2011

In 2011 there will be a number of new interdisciplinary science programmes starting up (Hazards, Ecosystem Services, Urban Health).

Other Interdisciplinary bodies, e.g. in data and information or global environmental change, will have undergone considerable re-structuring and/or changes in focus.

Key Observations

The portfolio is expanding and ICSU cannot continue to start new activities without ensuring evaluation and turnover of current activities

It is imperative that adequate time, effort and resources are invested in consolidating the new programmes and providing connectivity between regional to global contexts as well as between ICSU programmes and Members.

Some ‘re-badging’ and changed emphasis may be necessary with regards to current overall priorities, whilst space also needs to be made for inclusion of new priorities.

Implications for the planning process

Need to consider which Interdisciplinary Bodies should be reviewed in 2012–2017 and assess performance relative to previous reviews, including PAA exercises. (It is already proposed by CSPR that CODATA should be reviewed.)

Planning process itself should help to raise awareness of new structures, directions and programmes and promote connectivity.

An appropriately designed Foresight exercise is a potentially important vehicle for engaging Members and other stakeholders to define new programmatic priorities and actions. However, many organisations are doing foresight and need to be clear on what might make an ICSU exercise unique and who would be the audience.

4. Science for policy, including engagement with society [Major theme 2]

Context

Public perception of, and engagement with, science is poor in many areas. This is having a negative impact on the conduct of science and on realising the full potential of science to benefit society. The second Strategic Plan of ICSU needs to find creative ways of succeeding in the very important space of Science and Society, which includes both Science and Policy (a major pillar of the first ICSU Strategic Plan) and public engagement, understanding and appreciation of science. The latter is critically important within the context of the ongoing transition towards a global knowledge society.

The connection of Developing Countries to the global science agenda remains very tenuous. The second Strategic Plan of ICSU needs to utilize the ICSU Regional Offices much more effectively to bridge Developing Countries into the centre of the global science agenda.

Progress, 2006–2011

New programmes in hazards, ecosystem change and possibly in urban health specifically targeted at policy makers.

In various UN fora, such as the Commission on Sustainable Development, ICSU representing the global science community.

‘Competitors’ such as IAP and IAC and the G8 group of Science Academies also providing an international voice for science. Is there really a unique niche for ICSU?

Successful establishment of two ICSU Regional Offices in Latin America and Asia, in addition to the Regional Office for Africa established in 2005, provides a unique tool to effect Science for Policy in Developing Countries.

[ICSU’s role in relation to IPCC is a good example of how it can provide scientific leadership at the global level, influence policy and engage civil society.]

Key Observations and questions

Can ICSU really speak for the whole of science? Do we need a new, more inclusive definition of what ICSU means by science? How can we make ICSU a more representative Council of the whole of science?

How can ICSU effectively engage with key actors in civil society? How can ICSU promote science to positively influence and improve society?

How can ICSU build network capacity to effectively provide independent authoritative scientific advice at the national and local level, where it is most needed?

Should ICSU have a rapid response capability and if so how does it prepare for this?

Implications for the planning process

Other areas of science – social sciences, engineering, medical science – need to be fully involved in the planning process.

The views of policy-makers and relevant sectors of civil society should be incorporated into ICSU’s priorities and activities.

5. Universality of Science [Major theme 3]

Progress 2006– 2011

The Committee on Freedom and Responsibility in the conduct of Science (CFRS) is actively promoting the Principle of Universality, including responsibilities of scientists.

New ICSU World Data System in place.

ICSU Regional Offices fully functioning and running their own priority programmes.

Science education review should be completed.

Key observations and questions

Need to make additional efforts to ensure that Developing Countries are more fully incorporated into the global science agenda.

The relationship and interactions among Regional Offices, regional activities and ICSU global need careful consideration (both in general and specifically in relation to formulation of the next Strategic Plan).

Science education is critically important and need to define ICSU's role in this area *vis-à-vis* that of international unions and national scientific societies.

Implications for the planning process

The roles of the Regional Committees and Offices in the planning process need to be carefully defined.

As a key ICSU policy committee, CFRS should have substantial input to the next strategic plan.

The review of science education should focus on defining ICSU's role for 2012–2017.

6. Structure-function issues

Progress and changes 2006–2011

National Membership will have increased with more Members from Developing Countries in particular.

Some Unions perhaps struggling to identify with the new strategic ICSU and its interdisciplinary initiatives.

Reviews of long-established Interdisciplinary Bodies, such as SCOPE, ESSP, FAGS and WDC, reveal structures and processes that are not necessarily adapted to current and future needs.

Key observations and questions

Regions, Unions and National Members all have different perspectives and expectations of ICSU. How can these be effectively reconciled and integrated?

Potential mismatch between ICSU's mission and recent strategic changes and the historical disciplinary role of Unions. How can tensions be addressed? Do Unions need to consider their own role and focus in relation to science for society and interactions with ICSU? Can ICSU help the Unions to redefine their role, e.g. in education?

What is the 'mental model' for ICSU interdisciplinary bodies and initiatives? Do these groups solve things and then move on or are they expected to otherwise sustain themselves in the long-term and, if so, how?

A real success for ICSU is the priority-led focus of the first Strategic Plan that has then been translated into appropriate functions and structures. There is considerable potential for transferring this experience to the constituent ICSU organizations that wish to evolve in this way.

ICSU has historically led by establishing longer-term interdisciplinary initiatives. But could one also see ICSU as a 'scientific crossroads' – ICSU cannot tell people what to do but it can host the right conversations to build consensus for action. Providing a 'site for the seminar' is an important strategic role. ICSU can potentially serve as an honest broker in difficult multilateral discussions.

What is/should be the role of ICSU associates (their role was not considered for the current Plan)?

It is becoming increasingly difficult to engage the best scientists in ICSU scoping and planning activities. How can their interest and commitment be maintained?

Implications for the planning process

Must design planning process to fully engage Members (and Interdisciplinary Bodies). Also need to reach out to engage non-ICSU members and key stakeholders.

The planning process itself must lead to better effectiveness and connectivity. One possibility would be to carry out a Foresight exercise on the development of global science in general and how ICSU and its Members might fit into this picture

Clearly defining the relative roles of the Executive Board and CSPR in relation to strategic planning and implementation is critical.

Planning must involve the best scientists if the products are to be attractive to their peers and ICSU needs to work with its Members to identify and persuade these scientists.

7. Resources, evaluation and value-for-money

Progress and changes, 2006–2011

New dues structure to be introduced and calls from Membership for development of key performance indicators (KPIs) and impact assessment, re. value for money.

A review of ICSU - private sector interactions including funding has been proposed by the Executive Board and is also expected to be completed.

Key observations and questions

The Secretariat is over-stretched and without strong secretarial support, new activities are unlikely to succeed.

The last independent external review of ICSU was in 1996. A major review should be implemented once the period of the first Strategic Plan is finished. Such a review might specifically address the roles of ICSU Members.

Evaluation of IPY impacts, jointly by ICSU and WMO, should be part of the next Strategic Plan.

Implications for the planning process

Must be realistic in deciding on the planning process, e.g. Priority Area Assessment exercises, as conducted for the current strategic plan, are resource intensive.

ICSU itself is financially under-resourced and needs a fund-raising strategy. This might be considered as part of the next strategic Plan.

Annex 1

Various planning and review activities conducted during the period 2002–2005 that informed the first ICSU Strategic Plan, 2006–2011

1. Report of the CSPR Panel for Review of the Committee on Science and Technology in Developing Countries (ICSU 2002)
2. Identification of Key Emerging Issues in Science and Society: an International Perspective on National Foresight Studies (ICSU 2002)
3. Foresight Analysis: Report of the CSPR (ICSU 2004)
4. CSPR Priority Area Assessments
 - Environment and its Relation to Sustainable Development (ICSU 2003)
 - Scientific Data and Information (ICSU 2004)
 - Capacity Building (ICSU 2005)
5. Science and Society: Rights and Responsibilities – a Strategic Review (ICSU 2005)
6. Universality of Science in a Changing World (position statement; ICSU 2004)
7. Advisory Group report on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development (ICSU-ISTS-TWAS 2005)
8. Working Group on Energy and Sustainable Societies (ICSU 2004)
9. Scientific Framework for the International Polar Year 2007-2008 (ICSU 2004)
10. Working Group on Basic Research (position statement; ICSU 2004)
11. Review of membership and structure (ICSU, 2005)

Each of these activities resulted in its own published report or position statement. All reports are available at www.icsu.org and include many important and detailed recommendations that are not reproduced *per se* in the overall Strategic Plan, 2006–2011.

Annex 2**Indicative overall timetable for the implementation of the major activities in the first ICSU Strategic Plan, 2006–2011**

Activity	Pre-2006	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Post-2011
CFRS			established					continue
IHDP review	start	complete	implement					
WCRP review			start		complete	implement		
IGBP review			start		complete	implement		
Diversitas review					start		complete	
ESSP review			start	GA decision	implement			Implement all GEC reviews
SCOPE review			start	GA decision	implement			No activity
IPY		planning	start		complete	follow-up		no/minimal activity
Hazards	scoping	Start planning		GA decision	Start new program			Active new program
Health		Start scoping		Start planning		Plan complete		?launch new program
Ecosystems			Start planning	GA decision	implement			Active new program
CSD	WSSD							continue
ISPRES (energy)			Establish ISPRES	GA decision				? no activity
<i>Regional Offices</i>								
Africa	open							active
Asia		open						active
Latin America			open					active
Arab Region					consult			? poss. new Office
SCID (data and info.)			start	GA decision	implement			New structure
IPR	start	suspend						??
Science Education					Start review		GA approve	Poss. new activity
Grants review		start	report					
Dues review		start		GA decision				implement

It can be seen from the final RHS column that, relative to 2006, a significant number of new activities will be underway at the start of the period for the next strategic plan, 2012–2017.