**Mandate of the Special Rapporteur** **in the field of cultural rights**

**Call for submissions on**

**THE RIGHT TO ACCESS AND TAKE PART IN SCIENTIFIC PROGRESS**

For her upcoming report to the Human Rights Council to be presented in March 2024, the United Nations Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, Ms. Alexandra Xanthaki, will consider the right to access and take part in scientific progress.

The forthcoming report builds on the previous work of the mandate (Report on the right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications, [A/HRC/20/26](https://daccess-ods.un.org/tmp/7347178.45916748.html), 2012), and of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ([General Comment 25](https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/general-comments-and-recommendations/general-comment-no-25-2020-article-15-science-and) on Science and Economic, Social and Cultural rights, 2020).

Today, many ongoing conversations focus on the important contribution of science to the realization of human rights and the sustainable development goals. The Special Rapporteur believes that this discussion must be placed in a human rights framework. It is important to reiterate the human rights dimension of science, and to understand access to and participation in science as crucial human rights issues.

The Special Rapporteur intends to take stock of setbacks and progress both under international human rights law and in practice regarding access to scientific knowledge and its applications. She plans to focus more on the rather unexplored issue of participation in scientific life, as part of cultural life. Central questions include what participation means, what are possible limits to it, and how to ensure it in ways that complements scientific expertise, in the context of societies that are challenged by misinformation and disinformation. She would also like to reflect more broadly on the definition of science, scientific expertise and exclusionary processes such definitions may entail; on the notion of scientific diversity; on challenges and obstacles to participation; on conditions and best ways to ensure it; as well as on the intrinsic relationship between access and participation.

Cultural rights protect the rights for each person, individually and in community with others as well as groups of people, to develop and express their humanity, their world view and the meanings they give to their existence and their development through, inter alia, values, beliefs, convictions, languages, knowledge and the arts, institutions and ways of life. They are also considered as protecting access to cultural heritage and resources that allow such identification and development processes to take place.

**Questions**

General definitions

* + 1. How is science defined in your country, taking into consideration the definition of science adopted at UNESCO?[[1]](#footnote-2) In this context, how is the notion of scientific diversity understood?
    2. Is science considered as a public and/or as a common good, and what does this imply or should imply, particularly in terms of setting priorities for scientific research, access to scientific benefits, and protection of the scientific enterprise from harm and encroachments from political, religious and private interests?
    3. Does the right to benefit from scientific progress include the right to be protected against anticipated harm? How is harm anticipated and what kind of reparation is offered in case of harm?

Main obstacles to access and participation in scientific knowledge and its applications

* + 1. What are the main obstacles to ensuring the right of all persons to access scientific knowledge and its applications, within and between countries? Please provide an example.

Adoption of specific measures

* + 1. Please describe how scientific freedom is respected, protected and promoted in your country. In particular, what kind of protection from interferences and threats from political, religious or commercial entities is offered? What are the main challenges? Please provide examples.
    2. Please provide information on measures adopted to:
* Ensure and develop scientific education for all, including adult education;
* Develop and disseminate accurate scientific information in formats available to all;
* Protect and promote science journalists in sufficient number to ensure democratic and genuine debates on scientific issues.

Connecting science and policy-making

* + 1. As recommended by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, “States should endeavour to align their policies with the best scientific evidence available”, (General Comment 25, para. 54). How is this principle implemented, following which kind of procedure? How is this implemented in case of scientific dissensus?
    2. In particular, what kind of science policy interface platforms, understood as channels connecting science with policymaking, have been put in place, to ensure input of scientific information in decision-making processes? What are the challenges and the elements necessary for the efficiency of such interfaces? How is the agenda set and who participates in these institutions?

Participation in science

* + 1. How is the right of every person to participate in scientific progress and in decisions concerning its direction understood and implemented? What are the challenges? How are lack of representativeness of marginalized groups and inequalities in participation addressed?
    2. How is ‘citizen science’ (ordinary people doing science) understood in your country? Is it considered important, and what measures have been put in place to support it, particularly in terms of access to information and data, and participation in decision-making? What are the challenges? Please provide an example.
    3. To what extent are indigenous sciences and alternative sciences acknowledged, supported and included in policy decision-making? How is the conversation ensured between science and other kinds of knowledge?
    4. What are the limits to the right of every person to take part in scientific progress and in decisions concerning its direction and for which purposes? Please provide examples if any.

1. [Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers](https://en.unesco.org/themes/ethics-science-and-technology/recommendation_science), article I.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)