

# United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

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Description The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), an agency of the United Nations (UN), promotes peace by facilitating international collaboration in the fields of education, science, culture, and communication and information. Founded on the belief that "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed" (UNESCO 1945), the agency was created in 1945 to encourage peace through education, primarily focusing on rebuilding war-torn education systems, promoting scientific research, and developing respect for shared values and acceptance of diversity.

UNESCO considers itself to be a laboratory of ideas that works with national governments and non-governmental organizations to achieve three major goals: to develop and promote universal principles and values; to encourage the recognition of diversity; and to empower communities by increasing their participation in global communication and knowledge networks. Major UNESCO projects include the identification of World Heritage sites, important landmarks whose preservation is considered valuable for the world community; leading efforts to ensure universal access to primary education through the Education for All (EFA) program; and developing capacities for scientific research, especially in developing countries.

Despite its commendable goals, UNESCO has been criticized by Western countries for politicization of issues, having an anti-Western bias, and discouraging freedom of the press. Both the United States and the United Kingdom have boycotted the organization. Controversy has also surrounded the aims of the organization and whether UNESCO should simply be a technical aid-giving agency or a policy-making organization. Calls for budgetary and organizational reform have also marked the history of UNESCO.

UNESCO has, however, been lauded for negotiating the complexity of globalizing processes, employing their potential to promote peace through global communication and information systems that can facilitate common understanding between diverse cultures. Initiatives such as helping developing nations to establish digital communication technology facilitate the engagement of all societies in global communications and promote discourse and understanding. Simultaneously, UNESCO seeks to address the leveling consequences of globalization by using these same

communication and information systems to preserve cultural autonomy and achieve peace based on global respect for diversity and difference. Technology is also used to help countries preserve their cultural heritage through strengthening archives and libraries.

Work Cited: **UNESCO**. *Constitution of UNESCO (1945)*, <http://portal.unesco.org> (accessed 1 December 2004).

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