

UNESCO Declaration on CIPSH 75th anniversary

The commemoration of the International Council for Philosophy and Human Sciences' (CIPSH) 75th anniversary is a chance for us to reflect upon UNESCO's pivotal decision to establish an independent scholarly council devoted to the exploration of the humanities. This celebration highlights the collective acknowledgement of the increased necessity for specialized disciplines within the humanities. Humanities promote critical thinking, value-based reflections, intercultural understanding, and openness. It is different from exact science because there are often no single answers to societal problems, but elements for a more nuanced understanding of what does it means to be human, in a context, with a history, and with different artistic and cultural expressions.

Humanities have become more important because the predominant social sciences that have influenced the evolution of the world have fallen short. Disciplines that are perceived to have practical outcomes to get better jobs and economic prosperity have been favored along the neoliberal model of development. In academics, extreme specialization has emptied technical disciplines from any critical thinking that is brought about by humanities. This can be seen in the field of emerging technologies or financial markets, where the best minds can create innovations that, without ethical guardrails, can deliver negative impact for our societies.

Given the multiple, interlinked crises that we are confronting, and the lack of simple answers, we need to revalue the contributions of humanities. We need sciences that bring meaning, critical thinking, openness and understanding of different cultures; that describe human existence in all its complexity. History, literature, philosophy, arts, and inter-disciplinarity will probably provide better answers to address the current challenges we are confronting. So, in the celebration of the 75th anniversary of CIPSH, we should recognize the value of humanities and the work of the Council, under the leadership of Luiz Oosterbeek. Technological progress requires critical and ethical

thinking. Conflict-led environments require history to inform decision making. Arts and culture are not simple tools for entertainment but means of understanding the self, one's condition, and that of others.

UNESCO, and specifically the Social and Human Sciences sector, have worked to construct inclusive and harmonious societies, showcasing the crucial contributions that social sciences such as philosophy and anthropology play in these endeavors. These disciplines push us to think critically and cultivate a diverse culture of peace and understanding – these are topics we should reflect on, as societies, but also as individuals. We need to nurture interdisciplinarity. Engineers would benefit from ethics, and Physics from history. We need a new way to do science and a better appreciation of the values of humanities going forward, particularly the understanding of human behavior.

The founding principle of CIPSH asserts that “a detailed comparative study of civilizations will show the wealth and dignity of each national culture and, in consequence, its right to universal respect” – words which unequivocally remind us of another anniversary we celebrated just a few weeks ago, the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, on the 11th of December 2023. In these times of rising tensions and divisions, these celebrations are stark reminders of our mission to foster profound understanding, equality, unequivocally denounce discrimination, and develop inclusive policies for inclusive societies.

To this end, UNESCO and CIPSH have successfully collaborated for years. More recently, the jointly organized 2021 European Humanities Conference Called on EU member states, the European Commission, all education, research and innovation related institutions and the community of researchers and scholars, to endorse the Lisbon Declaration on Humanities, Open Research and Innovation and promote a stronger interaction of the humanities and sciences at all levels of education, overcoming divides that endanger science and the understanding of phenomena and processes. The “World Humanities Conference” in 2017 and the European Conference on Humanities in 2023

gave the path joint projects including an African Conference on Language, Cultures, History and Territories, the World Humanities Report, and the establishment of UNESCO-CIPSH chairs working on the crucial role of Humanities in addressing global challenges.

A standout example of these joint projects is the BRIDGES Coalition, a humanities-led coalition that was co-founded in 2020 by UNESCO, CIPSH and the Global Humanities for the Environment Network. Today's complex global issues require quasi systemic approaches to tackle them, and the BRIDGES Coalition, which builds upon the 2017 Guidelines for Sustainability Science in Research and Education, brings together experts from different fields and domains to tackle climate change and its implications from all facets.

Our globalized world now faces such intricate issues and crises that we seek the Humanities to help us understand, explain and manage their implications for people. Our most recent World Philosophy Day (2023) showed how much technological progress without humanities delivers negative impacts. Technological revolutions like artificial intelligence and neurotechnology threaten to exacerbate inequalities, while changing our relationship with information, truth, and even each other. It is only by looking at the problem alongside economists, sociologists, philosophers, and other social scientists that UNESCO managed to create the Recommendation on the Ethics of AI, which guides the governments of 193 countries towards ethical, inclusive AI, for all.

Echoing the opening words of the UNESCO Constitution, "That since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed", we call upon all member states, governments, NGOs, and societal structures to fortify investment, education, and research into the Social and Human Sciences. If Science can explain the problems Humanity is facing, Social Sciences explain how we react, address, and contextualize these issues and move forward together.

It is together that we renew our dedication to the humanities, recognizing their indispensable role in constructing peace. These disciplines furnish us with the tools to

comprehend our past, navigate our present, and envision our future, one where dialogue prevails over discord.

Let us all, once more, reflect on 75 years of amazing work, and look forward to continuing a rich legacy of collaboration between UNESCO and CIPSH towards a more equitable, human future for all.