



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Internal Oversight Service

IOS/EVS/PI/169



EVALUATION OF THE REVISED ANNIVERSARIES PROGRAMME

IOS Evaluation Office

August 2018

ABSTRACT

Following Decision 195EX/Dec.25 by UNESCO's Executive Board, the present document presents the findings and recommendations from the evaluation of the Revised Anniversaries Programme.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The evaluation was managed by Ms. Ekaterina Sediakina-Rivière, Evaluation Specialist, with the assistance of Ms. Mathilde Myard, Evaluation Intern, and was conducted by Dr. Achim Engelhardt, independent external evaluation consultant.

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Cover photo: UNESCO

INTRODUCTION

1. Since 1956, UNESCO has been associated with the commemoration of historical events and anniversaries of eminent personalities that are celebrated by Member States and Associate Members, with the aim of giving them worldwide significance under the overall mandate of the Organization. The programme grew exponentially, resulting in the celebration of nearly 800 anniversaries over sixty years.

2. In 2013, the Executive Board requested the Director-General to undertake an evaluation of UNESCO's action in this area, focusing on results achieved during the 2012-2013 biennium and the costs borne under the regular budget for this programme. The resulting Evaluation of UNESCO's Association with the Celebration of Anniversaries was presented to the Executive Board in document 194EX/15 in the spring of 2014. It found that the programme was widely perceived as an important and valuable asset, as well as a tool to provide visibility for Member States by attributing prestige to the celebration of an anniversary through the recognition by UNESCO. It was also found to give visibility to the values of UNESCO and its programmes within Member States.

3. Challenges were identified concerning the cost of the selection process, an imbalance in the regional distribution and a lack of commemorations of women. In addition, the evaluation found adverse effects of rising numbers of anniversaries on the prestige and value of the programme and stressed the absence of a well-articulated results framework.

4. After examining the evaluation, the Executive Board decided to suspend the gathering of proposals for the celebration of new anniversaries and requested the Director-General to present a revised anniversaries programme with a view to improving impact, as well as efficiency in the selection process including methodology, funding, geographical and gender balance, monitoring and evaluation, periodicity, and other relevant criteria. The Revised Programme for UNESCO's Association with the Celebration of Anniversaries (hereafter the Revised Programme) was presented to the Executive Board in autumn 2014 in document 195EX/25 with new criteria and procedures that aimed at limiting the overall number of anniversaries, at achieving a more balanced regional distribution and selecting a higher percentage of anniversaries celebrating women personalities. The Executive Board approved the Revised Programme, authorized the Director-General to re-launch a new round of applications from Member States, and decided that it shall be evaluated after the 2016-2017 biennium with a focus on its results and financial implications.

5. The present document presents the findings and recommendations from the evaluation of the Revised Anniversaries Programme. This evaluation was conducted jointly by the IOS Evaluation Office and an independent evaluation consultant during June and July 2018.

6. An annex to this paper contains proposed revisions of the criteria and provisions for implementing the Revised Programme, based on the findings from the present evaluation.

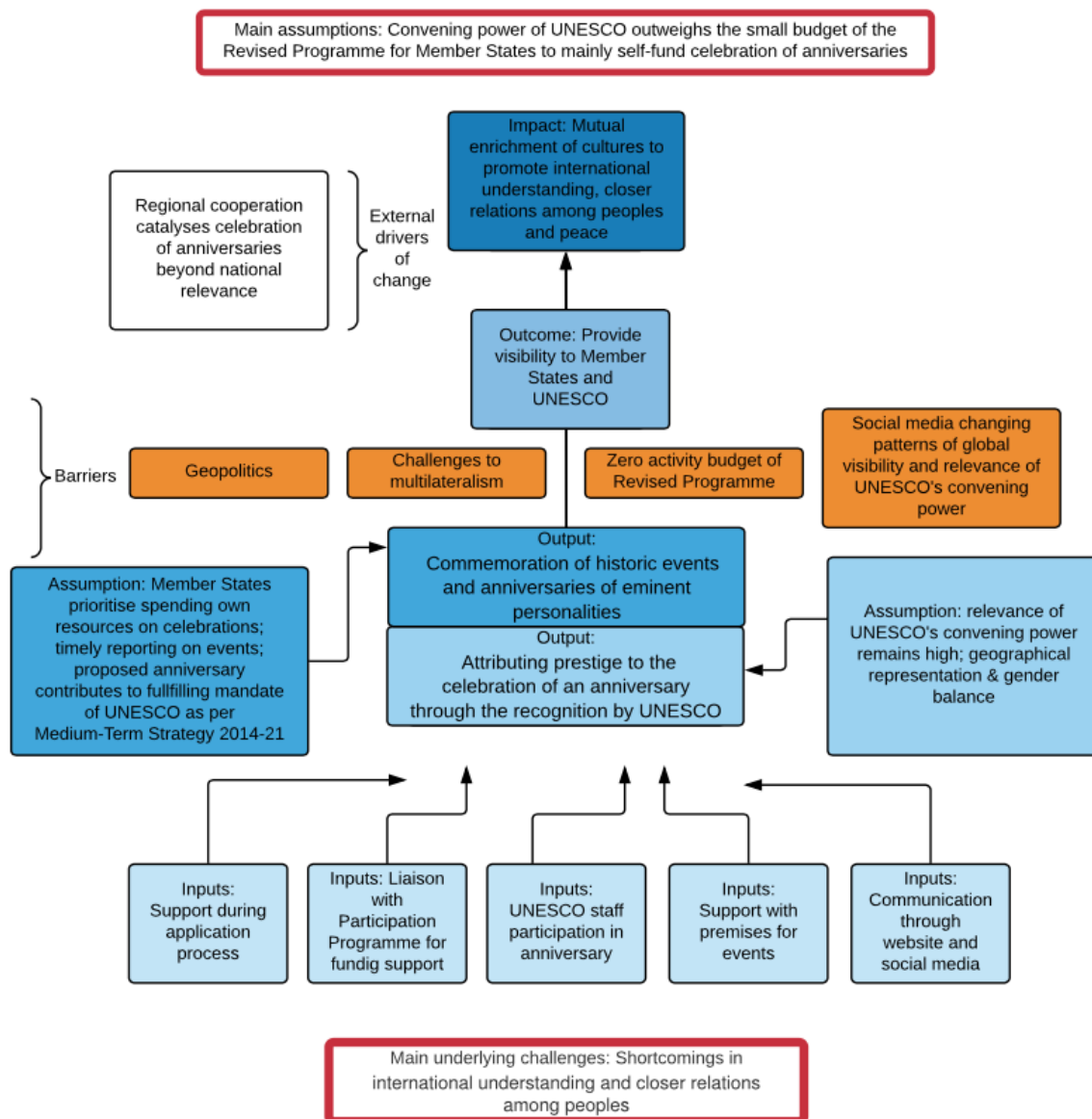
EVALUATION PURPOSE, METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

7. The main purpose of the evaluation was to generate findings and lessons learned on the overall relevance and effectiveness of the Revised Programme with a focus on its implementation during the 2016-2017 biennium. The evaluation also aimed to generate recommendations in view of strengthening the programme's implementation in future biennia.

8. The evaluation scope focused on the following: the programme's relevance and contribution to UNESCO's mandate, results-based management of the programme, selection criteria, selection procedure, visibility and communication.

9. Methodology for this exercise included: a review of programme documents and dedicated websites¹, the construction of a Theory of Change for the programme and its validation with the Secretariat, interviews with representatives of nine Member States that applied to the programme for 2016-2017 and with twelve staff from the UNESCO Secretariat working on the programme, an online survey of all 37 Member States that applied to the programme for 2016-2017 (76% response rate covering all regions), and a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis of the programme with representatives of the UNESCO Secretariat and of Member States. Through the interviews and online survey, the evaluators were able to consult with 29 of the 37 countries that applied to the programme.

10. A programme logic or “Theory of Change” presented in the figure below was reconstructed for this evaluation, based on the programme documentation, and validated by the programme team. The purpose of this model is to depict the inputs and programme results at various levels, but also to specify the barriers and assumptions underlying the implementation modalities. The Theory of Change also allowed the evaluators to assess the validity of the programme logic.



¹ The Revised Programme has a public website: <https://en.unesco.org/celebrations/anniversaries> and a working portal for on-line submissions, assessment and monitoring purposes.

EVALUATION FINDINGS

RELEVANCE

11. The evaluation examined the relevance of the Revised Programme in relation to the needs of Member States and to UNESCO's objectives.

Member States participating in the Revised Programme benefit from the prestige of UNESCO

12. Member States that participated in the Revised Programme during 2016-2017 clearly expressed that the association of UNESCO with the celebration of their anniversaries is of the utmost importance. The Organization's global mandate, history and values bring prestige and visibility to anniversaries celebrated in participating Member States. The online survey indicates that 84% benefitted from the prestige of UNESCO through its recognition of their events. Furthermore, Member States recognize the Organization's convening power.

Strong regional imbalances persist, with the majority of anniversaries approved in two regions

13. An assessment of approved anniversaries during the 2016-2017 biennium shows that regional imbalances are still significant, with 89% of anniversaries approved in two regions: 62% of anniversaries approved for Group I and II North America and Europe and 27% for Group IV Asia and the Pacific. No anniversary was approved for Group Va Africa, despite the receipt of four proposals. Only two of the seven proposals from the Group Vb Arab States were approved. All four proposals from the Group III Latin America and the Caribbean were approved. The evaluation finds that the geographic representation of anniversaries was further weakened when comparing 2014-2015 with 2016-2017, except for Group III Latin America and the Caribbean. The table below summarizes the geographic distribution of changes in the approval of anniversaries for 2014-2015 and 2016-2017.

Table 1: Regional variations in the approvals of anniversaries

Region	2014-2015		2016-2017		Comparison 2014-2015 vs 2016-2017 Changes in the success rate
	Approvals	Approval rate	Approvals	Approval rate	
Gr. I+II North America & Europe	66	74%	34	78%	+4%
Gr. III Latin America and Caribbean	14	64%	4	100%	+36%
Gr. IV Asia and Pacific	17	63%	15	56%	-7%
Gr. Va Africa	3	17%	0	0%	-17%
Gr. Vb Arab States	8	36%	2	29%	-7%
Total	108	61%	56	64%	+3%

Source: ERI, author's calculations

14. Reasons for these disparities vary from region to region, but also share one common element. The evaluation reveals that one selection criterion particularly influences regional participation: criterion iv) "The anniversary must be the fiftieth anniversary, a centenary or a multiple thereof" is not favouring young Member States with recent national histories. Interviews revealed that this concerns Member States in Africa, Small Island Developing States and other developing countries for which it is more difficult to propose anniversaries that meet this criterion.

15. Reasons for the low participation rates of other regions include the lower visibility of the programme, language barriers, limited institutional capacities to formulate proposals, and lack of resources. The evaluation survey shows that the main limitation for 48% of Member States to present proposals for anniversaries concerns the lack of available financial and human resources. Only 33% of survey respondents indicated that their country was willing to self-fund anniversaries without

financial support from UNESCO. Developing countries, comprising disproportionately African Member States are the most affected.

16. The Revised Programme provided an opportunity for Member States whose proposals were rejected the first time to reformulate them and resubmit two months later. In addition, Member States from unrepresented or under-represented regions had the possibility of submitting new requests during this period. For the 2016-2017 biennium, this rule applied to all geographical groups, except Europe and North America. Despite these new provisions, no further anniversaries were proposed by Member States from Africa; however, the Arab States submitted two new proposals, which were approved.

The Revised Programme has not seen an increase in the celebration of women personalities

17. Despite the introduction of an explicit provision for the inclusion of gender equality in one of two requests submitted by Member States for the Revised Programme, the evaluation found that there has not been an increase in the celebration of women personalities. Indeed, women accounted for only 4% of the anniversaries celebrated during 2016-2017 (four requests were submitted and two were approved). This figure is even lower than the 6% average reported for the period 1956-2015 by the previous evaluation of the programme.

18. The evaluation identified several criteria that do not favour the nomination of women: Criterion iv) "The anniversary must be the fiftieth anniversary, a centenary or a multiple thereof" and criterion iii) "...personalities of genuinely universal stature, nominated *posthumously* only...". In many parts of the world, women personalities were excluded from prominent public life until the 19th or 20th century. As a result, it is difficult for Member States to propose the celebration of women personalities that comply with the two criteria above.

The added value of the Revised Programme for UNESCO is mixed

19. The evaluation found that the association of UNESCO with the celebration of anniversaries allows the Organization's mandate and goals to be more visible in Member States where it does not have a field presence. In a few countries, the celebration of anniversaries was connected to UNESCO interventions and events that were already planned.

20. While the submission form of the Revised Programme asks Member States to explicitly link their proposal with UNESCO objectives, the evaluation found that this was not always done. Consequently, this makes it difficult to establish a connection between the celebration of all anniversaries and UNESCO's programme and mandate at the stage of the selection process.

21. Few anniversaries celebrated during the biennium had a truly international or regional reach. The vast majority of anniversaries were celebrated at the country level only and therefore fell short of raising the profile of the programme beyond national borders. This also resulted in a low level of visibility of the celebration of anniversaries at the UNESCO Secretariat.

EFFICIENCY

22. The evaluation found that the Revised Programme demonstrated significant improvements in reducing the number of proposals and improving the application and selection procedure.

The introduction of revised criteria led to a reduction of proposals by nearly half

23. A more robust approach in the selection process based on the revised selection criteria led to a reduction of proposals by 49% in 2016-2017 compared to the previous biennium. This reflects a reduction from 178 proposals to 87 proposals. At the same time, the Revised Programme has seen an increase in the approval rate of proposals from Member States with 64% of anniversaries approved during 2016-2017.

24. The evaluation survey shows that 60% of Member States find the revised selection criteria to have gained in clarity. Proposals were rejected most frequently because they did not respond to criterion (iv) ‘The anniversary must be a fiftieth anniversary, a centenary or a multiple thereof.’ The second most frequent reason for rejection is due to Member States not meeting criterion (iii) ‘The anniversary must concern personalities of genuinely universal stature, nominated posthumously only and events of universal scope or at least of regional significance, indisputably known outside the borders of their own country, to reflect the ideals, values, cultural diversity and universality of the Organization.’

25. Member States found criterion (v) ‘Subregional, regional or international events must be already planned for the anniversary and for the organization of which resources must have been allocated to hold them in the Member State or group of Member States directly concerned’ more difficult to apply due to limitations in financial and institutional capacities. UNESCO staff, on the other hand, would like to see a more stringent application of this criterion in order to ensure a truly global reach of the programme.

New tools and procedures have facilitated the application process for Member States

26. The evaluation found that the Revised Programme has instituted many improvements in its application and selection processes. The introduction of a web-based platform for application and monitoring of the programme has not only saved UNESCO staff time, but has also made the application and reporting processes easier for Member States. The only underlying challenge in using the online portal concerns Member States with connectivity issues and those applying close to the deadline due to high web traffic.

27. The evaluation survey found that 71% Member States consider that the Revised Programme facilitates their applications. Over 90% of Member States gave high to very high ratings for the clarity of the role of the UNESCO Secretariat and Member States in the submission of requests, in the role of the UNESCO Secretariat in the selection of requests, and the role of the Governing Bodies (Executive Board and General Conference) in approval of requests.

The Revised Programme still comes at a cost to UNESCO

28. The Revised Programme has a zero activity budget, but still represents an estimated cost of USD 188,299 to the Organization (see table below). The cost can be divided in three categories: staff time, grants from the Participation Programme, and the granting of UNESCO premises free of charge.

Table 2: Estimation of costs incurred – Revised Anniversaries Programme

Item	USD
Human resource cost (estimate) ²	121,051
Exhibition space	31,248
Participation Programme	36,000
Total estimate for 2016-2017	188,299

29. The evaluation identified at least 15 staff, from P 2 to ADG level, that are involved to various extents in the Revised Programme. Staff time is mainly spent on the preparation of the selection process and the assessment, decision-making, and follow-up of proposals. The exact amount of staff time spent on the programme was difficult to calculate. Some anniversaries can be assessed rather quickly, whereas others require significant staff involvement due to the necessity to seek further clarification and resolve any sensitive issues that may arise. The estimated human resource

² These were calculated using the Standard Staff Costs for the 38C/5 and are based on the individual staff members’ estimations on the use of their time towards the Revised Programme.

cost during 2016-2017 is at USD 121,051. The evaluation stresses that this figure may actually be much higher.

30. In addition, a number of Member States were granted exhibition spaces at UNESCO Headquarters free of charge, amounting to a cost of USD 31,248 to the Organization. Two countries received funds from the Participation Programme to celebrate anniversaries, with a total cost of USD 36,000. The evaluation found that Member States are generally aware of the possibility of receiving funding from the Participation Programme if the General Conference approves their anniversary, but prioritize other projects when applying to the Participation Programme.

31. The average cost of the Revised Programme per anniversary proposal is calculated at USD 2,164, based on the 87 proposals received during 2016-2017. This figure is much lower than the reported estimate between USD 9,000 and 12,000 for 2012-2013.

32. Various factors explain this decrease in costs of the Revised Programme, compared to those reported for 2012-2013. First, due to a revision of the criteria, the overall number of proposals received has nearly halved. Second, the introduction of the online application and assessment procedure has reduced the number of staff involved and the time spent, on average, for each application. Finally, the Revised Programme saw fewer requests for both the use of UNESCO exhibition spaces and to the Participation Programme.

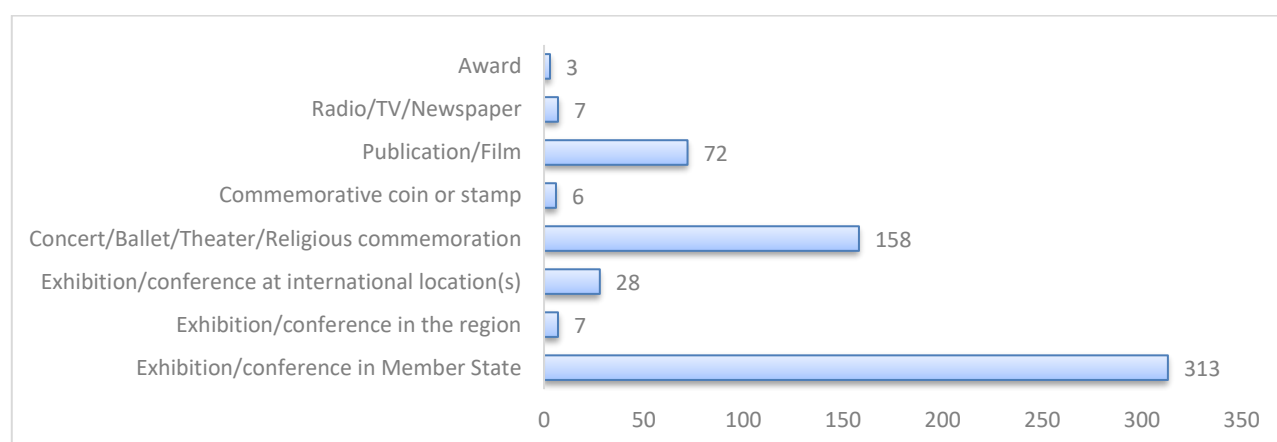
EFFECTIVENESS

33. The evaluation examined the effectiveness of the Revised Programme in terms of the results reported by Member States and the visibility of the programme both for UNESCO and within Member States.

The outreach of the Revised Programme is vast in a small number of participating countries, but the international reach of the anniversaries is rather limited

34. A total of 1218 events were reported to have taken place during 2016-2017 under the Revised Programme. Member States further indicate that over 6 million people³ were reached through exhibitions, concerts, symposia, theatre, and conferences organized by the Revised Programme.

35. According to specific data reported by Member States on 313 events out of 1218, the majority of activities for the celebration of anniversaries concern exhibitions or conferences at the national level in a Member State. Concerts, ballet, theatre or religious commemorations follow. Anniversaries also resulted in 72 publications or films. The types of events are summarized in the figure below.



36. While in some Member States, the celebration of an anniversary consisted of less than five local events, in others, celebrations went on over the entire year, in most parts of the country and in

³ Twelve Member States reported that at least 6,473,394 people were reached by the Revised Programme.

international locations through the country's cultural overseas institutes and cultural partnerships. According to the reports submitted by Member States, the international reach of the anniversaries is, however, rather limited, with seven exhibitions or conferences at regional level and 28 in at the global level.

37. The evaluation found that the Revised Programme's potential of promoting UNESCO's objectives and values at the international level is not fully attained. With the majority of anniversaries being celebrated at the national level only, the international nature of the programme is therefore put into question. Interviews with UNESCO staff also underline the importance of celebrating events and personalities in several countries at a time to further encourage regional and even interregional cooperation.

The Revised Programme is highly visible only in a small number of Member States

38. The evaluation found that the visibility of the Revised Programme for participating Member States is high, as shown in interviews and the online survey, with 72% high to very high ratings. The Revised Programme's revamped website contributes to the visibility of approved anniversaries.

39. During the 2016-2017 biennium only 27 Member States' anniversaries were approved. The outreach of the Revised Programme was therefore limited to a small percentage of UNESCO's Member States.

Results reporting has improved during the Revised Programme, but more remains to be done

40. The Revised Programme shows significant improvements in results reporting. All Member States celebrating anniversaries under the Revised Programme in 2016-17 were required to submit a report on the implementation of their anniversaries, indicating information at the output level, for example about the number of events media outreach of events and the number of participants. The latter two measures serve as proxy indicators for the visibility of commemorated personalities or topics achieved through celebrating anniversaries.

41. This reporting has allowed the Secretariat to track the results of the programme, albeit only at the output level, for the first time. No baselines or targets existed at the start of the Revised Programme, but the data collected during 2016-2017 can serve as a baseline and enable for the setting of targets for future biennia.

42. The evaluation found that only 12 out of 27 countries submitted reports following the suggested results-focused format. It also found that the reporting format suggested by the Revised Programme was not consistently used. Instead, Member States submitted activity-based lists or simple narrative lacking a focus on results. Interviews showed that while some Member States explicitly lauded the results-based nature of the format, others felt overwhelmed by the format given their limited staffing and large numbers of events to report on. As a solution, it was suggested to select the most important events prior to celebrating the anniversary and to agree with the Secretariat of the Revised Programme to report on those events only using the results-based format.

43. The evaluation also found that the current monitoring system does not allow for the tracking of the contribution of the actual celebration of anniversaries to UNESCO's objectives and programmes. The reporting format thereby requires revision and alignment with the latter.

Communication initiatives around the Revised Programme are limited due to resource constraints

44. The Revised Programme uses a number of communication tools to reach out to Member States and the general public. The primary means of communication is through the external Anniversaries website that provides basic information on the programme and includes descriptions of all approved anniversaries. The website contains information on the actual celebration of a select

few anniversaries, such as planned events and their locations etc. Most of the articles are published after the anniversaries have already been celebrated.

45. The UNESCO Secretariat also communicates with Member States through letters from the Director-General to National Commissions. Internal communication within UNESCO is limited to the online portal that was set up for the submission and evaluation of proposals and the two annual meetings of the Selection Committee.

46. Both the external website and internal online portal were found to be document depositories rather than tools for interaction among Member States or for knowledge management. Out of the 55 anniversaries celebrated in 2016-17, only two anniversaries appeared in UNESCO social media, counting two re-tweets in total and no presence on Facebook. This represents a missed opportunity in reaching out to youth, a group that is of strategic importance to UNESCO. Due to the zero activity budget for the programme, the Secretariat does not have the financial or human resources to further develop these communication tools. The necessary data for publication on social media and the UNESCO website is also not systematically provided by Member States. In future biennia they are encouraged to provide precise information on the celebration of anniversaries ahead of time, in order to allow the Secretariat to engage in targeted communication initiatives.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

47. The Revised Programme is highly valued and visible among participating Member States. Its outreach is, however, mainly limited to Group I, II and IV countries, representing a relatively small fraction of UNESCO Member States. The Revised Programme also continues to have a mainly national focus, with limited regional or international reach. Approved anniversaries are furthermore rarely linked to other UNESCO programmes or events.

48. The evaluation therefore found that despite a revision of the selection criteria, the Revised Programme has not led to an improvement in the regional balance of approved anniversaries, nor in the selection of more women personalities. Furthermore, the revised criteria were not sufficient in encouraging the celebration of anniversaries in multiple countries, thereby promoting international cooperation.

49. The Revised Programme has made major efficiency gains and the work of the UNESCO Secretariat remains very much appreciated by Member States. In the context of a zero budget and already stretched human resources, strengthening the Revised Programme's communication initiatives is only possible to a very limited extent.

50. The evaluation recommendations are as follows:

- a. The UNESCO Secretariat should develop a monitoring framework based on the results framework of the Revised Programme, explicitly linking programme activities to UNESCO objectives and adding questions on the contribution of anniversaries to gender equality. Results-based reporting should be made mandatory. Participating Member States shall select the most important events prior to celebrating anniversaries and agree with the Secretariat of the Revised Programme to report on those events, using the results-based format. Efforts shall be made to collect data beyond the output level.
- b. The criteria of the Revised Programme should be further revised in order to allow for more proposals from developing countries, for women candidates and to increase the programme's effectiveness and international reach:
 - i. The Revised Programme should tailor the time-related selection criterion iv) and include a 25-year threshold for proposals from unrepresented and under-represented regions and women candidates.

- ii. The Revised Programme should make the inclusion of gender equality mandatory even for anniversaries not linked to women candidates.
 - iii. The Revised Programme should revise criterion i) and mandatorily link anniversaries to UNESCO's current priorities and to high-level events that are already planned (for example under existing UNESCO programmes).
 - iv. The Revised Programme should modify selection criterion v) and support only events that are celebrated in more than one Member State, to enhance the programme's international reach.
- c. The Revised Programme should require Member States to submit information on planned events for the celebration of anniversaries ahead of time in order to allow for their publication on UNESCO's public website and in social media and for inclusion of thematically relevant communication initiatives.
 - d. The Revised Programme should develop guidance for Member States on the integration of gender equality in the celebration of anniversaries.