

A Short history of the Committee on Freedom and Responsibility in the Conduct of Science (CFRS) and its Predecessor Committees of the International Council for Science (ICSU)

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In 1965 ICSU initiated a program to help scientists to attend international conferences in countries other than their own. Quite often scientists ran into difficulties obtaining visas for attending such conferences. A committee was established (located at the Royal Swedish Academy) and its Secretary General—and driving force for some 30 years, until 1996—was Olof Tandberg, the Foreign Secretary of the Academy.

The committee worked mostly through the ICSU member national academies in the countries that were refusing visas. These academies nominated contact persons, often the director or secretary general of the academy. These contact persons were asked to intervene with the visa authorities of their country on behalf of scientists who were not granted visas; these interventions were successful in a large number of cases.

In the 1960s up to the early 1990s the difficulties encountered were based mostly on the nationalities of the visa applicants. Nationals of NATO countries were refused visas to Warsaw pact countries and vice versa. Individuals from China:Taipei were refused visas for China:Beijing and vice versa. During the time of apartheid, South African scientists were unwelcome in a large number of countries around the world. Israeli nationals also encountered difficulties obtaining entry to certain countries and these difficulties are still apparent today. A similar ongoing situation exists for Cuban scientists wishing to attend conferences in the USA. In all these instances, the discrimination was not against individuals as scientists but against nationalities irrespective of the specific reason a person wanted to travel. Reference by the local academy to the principle of Universality of Science was often used, and accepted, as a reason to make an exception for scientists.

As a general rule only cases of visa refusals to conferences of Members of the ICSU family were considered by the ICSU committees. Cases of persecution of scientists within a country were usually referred to the local academy or similar organizations. It was only in the early 21st century that typical human rights cases began to be taken up by the committee and acted upon.

The committee was called the Standing Committee on Free Circulation of Scientists until 1996, when it became known as the Standing Committee on Freedom in the Conduct of Science, with the same acronym SCFCS. In 1996, a new Standing Committee on Responsibility and Ethics in Science (SCRES) was established by the ICSU General Assembly; it produced a number of interesting papers, including an analysis of 115 Codes of Conduct of different disciplines and in different nations. Members of SCFCS attended meetings of SCRES and vice

versa, but no substantive cooperation was achieved; the two committees acted to a large extent independently.

SCRES was disbanded by the ICSU General Assembly in 2002, and at the GA in 2005, SCFCS was given new Terms of Reference, a new name—Committee on Freedom and Responsibility in the Conduct of Science (CFRS)—and a majority of new members. The new remit covers not only the special rights of scientists but also the special responsibilities that are concomitant to those rights. The new Terms of Reference also reflect the fact that, on the one hand, visa refusals are less frequent than in the 1980s and 1990s but, on the other hand, problems of scientific misconduct, plagiarism and conflicts of interest are becoming more and more apparent.

A visible result of the change of remit is the entirely new format of the committee's handbook, *Universality of Science*. This publication (always with a blue cover) gave a summary of relevant decisions of ICSU, some elements of international human rights law, a section with advice to organizers of international scientific meetings, as well as a list of the members of ICSU and the names of the contact persons. The ninth and last edition of the traditional blue book was printed in 1998. In 2008 a completely new booklet (with a violet cover) was published by the new committee, with the title *Freedom, Responsibility and Universality of Science*. This highlights not only freedoms of scientists, including freedom of movement, freedom of association, freedom of expression and communication, and access to data, information and research materials, but also scientists' responsibilities for the conduct of science and their responsibilities to society.

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