

UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC  
AND  
SOCIAL COUNCIL



GENERAL

E/CN.2/83  
29 March 1950

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

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TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

Fourth session

27 March 1950

Item 10 (a)

FACILITATION OF THE FREE MOVEMENT BETWEEN  
NATIONS OF PERSONS AND OF EDUCATIONAL,  
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL MATERIALS

Note by the Secretariat

The following statement is circulated to the members of the Transport and Communications Commission at the request of the representative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization at the fourth session of the Commission.

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STATEMENT BY THE UNESCO REPRESENTATIVE AT THE  
FOURTH SESSION OF THE TRANSPORT  
AND COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

On behalf of the Director-General of UNESCO I wish to thank the Transport and Communications Commission for this opportunity of participating in its discussions of certain obstacles which impede the free movement of persons from country to country. Efforts to remove such obstacles constitute one of UNESCO's primary tasks and it is for this reason that UNESCO welcomes this opportunity of submitting to this Commission some suggestions for possible remedial action in this field.

The interchange of persons and ideas is essential to UNESCO's over-all objective of contributing to mutual understanding and peace by promoting collaboration in the fields of education, science and culture. Article X of UNESCO's Constitution clearly commits the Organization to "maintain, increase and diffuse knowledge" by all possible means, in particular, by "encouraging co-operation among the nations in all branches of intellectual activity, including the international exchange of persons active in the field of education, science and culture". Consequently, the General Conference of UNESCO has devoted special attention to this problem at its annual sessions and formulated a programme of action to deal with it, taking into account existing difficulties and possibilities. Thus, the second session of UNESCO's General Conference, meeting at Mexico City in 1947, instructed the Director-General:

"To study, in collaboration with the relevant agencies of the United Nations, the barriers which impede the interchange of persons between and among nations ....."

In this, special attention was to be given to barriers arising out of the lack or shortage of transport facilities, currency exchange difficulties and restrictive laws and regulations. One year later, following the completion of the first studies, the Director-General was instructed to submit proposals to the General Conference so that it, in turn, might recommend measures to member States to eliminate these obstacles.

The Transport and Communications Commission may be interested in having before it a brief summary of that part of the Exchange of Persons Service of

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UNESCO which concerns the above-mentioned problems, many of which fall within the competence also of this Commission.

It will be recalled from the report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the third session of your Commission concerning passport and frontier formalities that most Governments indicated that their practices conformed to the recommendations of the Meeting of Experts (Geneva 1947), "as far as was compatible with existing conditions" and that they would not be prepared to go beyond these recommendations. It was evident that the matter required being kept under review for a longer period and your Commission recognized this in an appropriate resolution.

Systematic study of the problems involved, which UNESCO has undertaken since then, led to the conclusion that certain efforts were nevertheless possible to facilitate travel for educational, scientific and cultural purposes.

UNESCO is, of course, specifically concerned with activities in education, science and culture and, therefore, anxious to promote and support plans aimed at facilitating the movement of persons for specific educational and study purposes. At the same time, UNESCO considers that this approach might make certain alleviations possible despite existing difficulties. Suggestions which UNESCO has to offer in this respect are based upon the consideration that agreement might be relatively easy, to afford a minimum of special treatment to certain categories of persons travelling for educational, scientific and cultural purposes. These suggestions are the result of study by the secretariat and constitute a tentative approach to the problem.

These categories are:

- (1) Fellowship holders and persons attending international meetings, certified by the United Nations and its specialized agencies;
- (2) Fellowship holders, or individuals such as teachers, technicians, research personnel, students and workers on study tours and visits sponsored by government or official cultural bodies;
- (3) Individual scholars and other persons, such as students, trainees, teachers, guest instructors, supervisors and leaders in fields of specialized knowledge or skill, sponsored by recognized institutions of learning or similar bodies.

Barriers to the movement of such persons were the subject of a detailed survey made by UNESCO early in 1948, supplemented later by further studies

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by the Secretariat and by a UNESCO Committee of Experts on International Fellowships which was convened in Paris in September 1949.

In this connexion, it might also be mentioned that a working paper was prepared by UNESCO in August 1949 which analyses "The Secretariat's Activities to Facilitate the Free Movement Between Nations of Persons and of Educational, Scientific and Cultural Materials" (UNESCO document 4C/PRG/5). Here, I wish to emphasize that the comprehensive work undertaken by the Economic and Social Council and by your Commission has greatly assisted UNESCO's studies in this field.

On the basis of these and further studies, UNESCO is considering the preparation of a detailed manual on regulations concerning the international movement of persons, which would also include relevant up-to-date information on such matters as passport and visa requirements, foreign exchange regulations, special travel facilities etc. The main purpose of such a manual would be to assist agencies concerned with the administration of international educational interchange programmes. In the light of these studies the Director-General of UNESCO will also submit to the fifth session of the General Conference which opens in Florence on 22 May 1950, certain proposals for recommendations to member States to facilitate travel and personnel exchanges for educational, scientific and cultural purposes.

Generally, in studying methods of facilitating the movement of the previously mentioned categories of persons or groups of persons, UNESCO considered the following:

- (1) The provision of special facilities with regard to passports and visas;
- (2) The issue of a special identification document;
- (3) The provision of special transport facilities and concessions;
- (4) The allocation of adequate foreign currency allowances;
- (5) The safeguarding of employment opportunities for travelling scholars and students, during their travel or residence abroad and upon their return home.

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As regards the employment of persons travelling for educational, scientific and cultural purposes, UNESCO has studied the problem in collaboration with the ILO. Thus it has been found that in certain countries legal restrictions prevent visiting scholars and students, whose funds are inadequate, from obtaining part-time employment in certain "host" countries and that such persons frequently encounter difficulties in retaining their professional status, employment and pension rights in their home country while studying abroad. Appropriate recommendations will be made by UNESCO, whenever possible, and also form part of the proposals which the Director-General is to submit to UNESCO's next General Conference.

Whilst it is realized that some of the above-mentioned problems do not fall within the competence of the Transport and Communications Commission, some of them do seem to be of direct interest to it, and it is in this connexion that I wish to submit the following specific suggestions for consideration and possible action by the Commission, with a view to facilitating the movement of persons engaged in educational, scientific and cultural activities.

1. Special passport and visa facilities for persons or groups of persons travelling for education, scientific and cultural purposes.

Existing machinery in various parts of the world could be extensively utilized. In implementing existing or future bilateral or multilateral agreements, Member States might make provisions by which individuals or groups of individuals travelling for educational, scientific and cultural purposes might be accorded special facilities with regard to visas and frontier formalities.

Here, it may be recalled that there are at present sixty-three bilateral reciprocal visa agreements in force, mainly between countries in Western Europe. Out of ten passport agreements concluded in the post-war period up to January 1950, seven are effective for States in the Americas. Additional agreements exempt certain categories of travellers from visa formalities, and more agreements of this type are being negotiated. It may also be noted that the United States Congress has recently enacted legislation modifying existing

immigration regulations so as to facilitate the entry of persons visiting the United States for educational, scientific or cultural purposes.

Moreover, provided the bona fide status of persons travelling for educational, scientific and cultural purposes is established and pending the waiving of passport and visa requirements, governments may accept

- (a) to simplify the procedures for obtaining passports and visas where these are necessary;
- (b) to issue these at fees which would not exceed the cost of their preparation and issuance;
- (c) to extend the validity of passports, visas and other travel documents for use for single and repeated journeys to as many countries as possible;
- (d) to abolish exit and transit visas whenever possible.

2. The issue of a special identification document

A valuable experiment has been initiated in this respect by the Brussels Treaty Powers which have put into effect, as of 1 March 1950, a Cultural Identity Card according to its holders **special** reception and residence facilities when they undertake travel for study purposes in any one of the five signatory countries. Any special treatment which governments may agree to accord to persons belonging to the previously mentioned categories, of particular interest to UNESCO, would be facilitated by, and may, in fact, be said to presuppose a method of establishing the special status of such persons. Again, bilateral and multilateral agreements offer a ready framework within which agreement would most easily be reached as regards mutually recognized travel and identification documents, without prejudicing an even wider application of measures designed to facilitate the travel of persons for education, scientific and cultural purposes.

3. The provision of special transport facilities and concessions

On the basis of the previous remarks and with the same objective in view, governments may agree to make special concessions and to grant special facilities as regards the transportation of persons travelling between countries for clearly defined educational and study purposes. Such concessions which might include reduced fares should not be subject to any regulations discriminating

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between persons of different nationalities and be granted with a minimum of formalities and application fees.

4. The allocation of adequate foreign currency allowances

In this field, no general recommendation can be offered in view of the over-riding economic factors which necessarily determine the financial policy of the countries concerned. Under present conditions, the financial problem is indeed the most serious and the most complex obstacle to persons travelling, not only from so-called "soft" into "hard" currency countries, but also within "soft" currency areas. Whilst these problems affect the whole movement and exchange of persons, irrespective of the purpose of their travel, it would not seem amiss to stress before the members of the Transport and Communications Commission the need for the allocation of sufficient foreign currency to meet the transportation costs and living and professional expenses of persons travelling for specific educational, scientific and cultural purposes. Special clearing arrangements between countries linked by bilateral or multilateral agreements might be suggested. At the same time, where currency control is maintained, governments may nevertheless agree, on a basis of reciprocity, to allocate foreign currency for the above-mentioned persons on a more generous scale than hitherto. Whilst it is realized that this may necessitate that certain countries increase their expenditure of scarce and precious foreign currency, it must be emphasized that the financial outlay involved is insignificant by comparison with the potential benefit which they and other countries would derive from the intensified cultural exchanges and from the resulting mutual enrichment which can only be rendered possible through international interchange and an enlargement of contacts between the living representatives of the educational, scientific and cultural life of the peoples of the world.

There are few more direct or more effective methods of encouraging the free flow of knowledge and ideas than the provision of travel and exchange facilities for groups and individuals. Their value has always been emphasized by UNESCO and is now also increasingly recognized by international agencies, particularly in connexion with the formulation of technical assistance programmes to raise economic, social and cultural standards in under-developed areas. In this connexion, may be cited the recent statement by the United Nations Economic

Survey Mission for the Middle East, and a similar one by the Caribbean Commission.

The United Nations Economic Survey Mission declares that "the latent skill of Middle Eastern peoples could be realized in time, by sending picked men and women to universities and technical colleges in more advanced countries. The cost in money would be small ..... The young people of the Middle East must indeed be given the opportunity to become skilled technicians of all kinds, both by education abroad and by the expansion of opportunity at home". Similarly, the Caribbean Commission, representing the four Governments responsible for Non-Self-Governing Territories in the Caribbean area, states that in its rôle as a co-ordinating agency, it "will place at the disposal of the Caribbean territories as wide a range of technical assistance as possible by sponsoring the exchange of scientific and technical information, developing scholarship arrangements and the direct exchange of technical workers."

It would indeed be paradoxical if the nations, while joining in programmes for mutual aid and advancement, were to retain barriers limiting the movements of persons, and especially of those engaged in educational, scientific and cultural pursuits.

These barriers, wherever they are maintained or erected, diminish opportunities for mutual understanding and peace which derive from the interchange of each country's finest achievements and from mutual aid in the interests of common progress.

The provision of travel and interchange facilities for persons engaged in specific educational, scientific or cultural pursuits is one of the fields in which UNESCO seeks and must rely upon the active collaboration of other competent specialized agencies in order to achieve its objectives. For very often, their achievement is only possible through the amelioration of other competent organizations. It is for this reason that UNESCO deeply appreciates this opportunity of presenting its views and suggestions and sees in this another example of inter-agency co-operation which, by bringing the particular competence of each Organization to bear upon a given problem, facilitates its solution for the benefit of countries and people everywhere.

/The Director-General



The Director-General of UNESCO hopes that the suggestions put forward here will assist the Transport and Communications Commission in the formulation of appropriate recommendations. At the same time, the Director-General would appreciate being kept informed of any new developments which are relevant to UNESCO's efforts to facilitate the exchange of persons between countries.

The Director-General of UNESCO expressly wishes to be associated with and support any efforts and plans which this session of the Transport and Communications Commission may decide upon in order to facilitate the movement of persons engaged in educational, scientific and cultural activities. He would be grateful if the Commission would consider the proposals outlined in this statement, and, on the basis of those proposals formulate such advice and offer such assistance as will translate some or all of them into action.

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