

CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DE LA PHILOSOPHIE ET DES SCIENCES HUMAINES
INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR PHILOSOPHY AND HUMANISTIC STUDIES

Unesco — 1, rue Miollis 75732 Paris Cedex 15
cipsh@unesco.org + 33.1.45682685
www.unesco.org/cipsh

Présidente : *Madeline H. Caviness*
Secrétaire général : *Maurice Aymard*

Letter addressed to :

Presidents and Secretaries-general of Icphs Member Orgs
Members of Icphs Board
Members of the International Advisory Committee

Paris, May 6, 2002

PARTICIPATION OF ICPHS TO THE CREATION OF THE UNESCO
« VIRTUAL COLLECTION OF REPRESENTATIVE WORKS OF WORLD LITERATURE »

Dear Colleagues and friends,

We have been informed by Unesco of the launching of a programme which seems able to raise a direct participation of Icphs Member Organisations. In fact, a new way to deal with the intercultural dimension of culture has been defined by the Organisation. This approach points to literary translation as a way to increase the mutual knowledge and exchange between cultures: and, in this context, Unesco decided to create a new “Virtual collection of representative works of world literature”. This project is co-ordinated by Mr. Mauro Rosi, who already was amongst the editors of the *Diogenes* anthology prepared for the 50th Anniversary of the Icphs, and will consist of an inventory of highly representative works, which Unesco intends to largely circulate both amid specialists and among a larger public. As huge a translation of these works as possible is among the main goals of the project. This repertory will be established by a special committee chosen by the Director General of Unesco, in consultation with the Member States; but it will be preceded and accompanied by larger lists established on the basis of professional consultations with specialized partners such as our organizations. These lists will represent at once a source of guidance for Unesco recommendations and an ample tool of information for publishers. The information will be freely available on the “Unesco exchange centre for literary translation”, a web site which should also provide up-to-date information and access to several data banks for the professionals of publishing.

In launching this new project, Unesco is thus willing to closely associate the Icphs and its international network of specialized organizations. In fact, the co-operation between Unesco and the Icphs network in this field is supported by a long history. Since its creation in 1949, the Icphs was chosen as a major partner to the Unesco “Collection of representative works”: a large-scale enterprise spread over several years and which aimed to enhance the different literary traditions, as required by the purpose of improving the mutual knowledge between cultures which animates Unesco’s since its foundation. This major project strove at the translation of exceptional literary works, considered as worth been known and read beyond all cultural and linguistic boundaries. More than 1300 publications have been translated hitherto and are circulating in over a hundred countries and languages. Icphs brought a key contribution to this project.

Unesco is now asking for renewing this partnership. To reinvigorate its programme, Unesco is considering ceasing its support to single proposals, proceeding from Member States, publishers or even translators: on the contrary, they are willing to better adapt the project to a situation which the globalisation of the editorial market renders considerably different from the “state of the art” of more than half a century ago, when the first programme was launched and when “foreign” literatures represented just a lesser part within the catalogues of the main Western publishers. Thus, Unesco has chosen to focus on a global identification of the contemporary literary patrimony and to work for orienting the choices of publishers.

We decided to respond to this call without delay. Indeed, we are convinced that we are today in a great need for new ideas, which may help us to better understand the changing reality we are facing: and such clues may eventually be found in those works and authors which, even if they may have produced a turn within their culture or their discipline, until now were not able, for various reasons, to cross the boundaries of their own language. A major theme seems indeed to be at stake in Unesco’s initiative: how could we rethink the concept of “representative” in such a way that we can apply it to other works than the great sagas or foundational myths, which need no further recognition of their own universal value? A possible answer would be to emphasize the capacity of such or such work to provide some new and surprising kind of answer to the intellectual, moral and ethical anxieties which harass our “liquid” modernity, to employ Z. Bauman’s famous expression : liquid, because unsteady and unstable. We consider essential that everyone be able at once to find new cultural marks within faraway cultures from his own and to explore in new ways his own roots, in order to find new keys to interpret and describe a world which is both more and more globalized and more and more scattered.

For these reasons we believe that Icphs shall meet Unesco proposal. But our role should not be limited to engaging the erudite patrimony accumulated and preserved by our Member Organisations: we should rather emphasize our capacity to recognize those forgotten, and sometimes unrecognized works which may reveal precious to enrich our cultural consciousness. We would like to underline this point. According

to the history of this programme, Unesco still attributes some priority to literary works; though, we consider essential to bring to Unesco's attention those achievements which receive from their philosophical depth, their religious inspiration, their historical, spiritual or cultural prominence the aptitude to be considered representative of a particular moment of human mind. On the other hand, if Unesco's goal is to put forward works which are still insufficiently translated, this should not be mainly intended to those writings which are preeminently directed to a specialized or scientific public. It is rather our task to look at those works characterised by a strong theoretical and cultural originality, and which are able to contribute to some of our major human and social concerns.

Thus, Unesco proposed to Icphs to take part in establishing one of these lists. For this, we are first of all approaching our Member Organisations, our Board and the International Advisory Committee we created at our last General Assembly, in Buenos Aires. We would very much appreciate if you could send us your proposals following the attached form. A scientific description (about 10 lines) should be joined, together with the evaluations of two other experts or referees, if possible issued from other cultural and linguistic traditions (eventually specialists of the culture to which the proposed work belongs). On the other hand, we would be very grateful if you could not only contribute directly to this project but forward this request to your member associations, in order to gather as many proposals as you may esteem opportune and ensure as wide a geographic representation as possible. Once a proposal received, we are planning to submit it to two other specialists chosen by Icphs. As Unesco is asking to provide them electronically retrievable material, we would be very grateful if you could send your form **by e-mail** and if possible **by 31st July 2002**.

Finally, we inform you that the catalogue of Unesco "Collection of representative works" is available on-line at the electronic address:

http://www.unesco.org/culture/creativity/literature/html_eng/collection.shtml

With many thanks, and best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Luca M. Scarantino

Deputy Secretary-general, Icphs

(on behalf of Maurice Aymard, Secretary-general)

CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DE LA PHILOSOPHIE ET DES SCIENCES HUMAINES
INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR PHILOSOPHY AND HUMANISTIC STUDIES

Unesco — 1, rue Miollis 75732 Paris Cedex 15
cipsh@unesco.org + 33.1.45682685
www.unesco.org/cipsh

Présidente : *Madeline H. Caviness*
Secrétaire général : *Maurice Aymard*

« Virtual collection of representative works »

PROPOSAL FORM

1. Person introducing the proposal

a. Name, surname

b. Organisation or research center

c. Title

d. Form received by (indicate if this form was received directly from ICPHS or from other sources)

2. Proposed work

a) Full original title

b) English or French translation of the title

c) *First or main edition of the work*

d) *Language*

e) *Nature of the work (literary, philosophic, religious, history of scientific or religious thought, anthropology, etc.)*

f) *Existing translations in other languages*

g) *Short description of the work (max. 100 words)*

3. Scientific advice

(please choose preferably referees from other countries than the person proposing the work)

a) *Person introducing the proposition*

b) *First referee (please mention name and title)*

c) *First referee (please mention name and title)*

4. Other

Please mention any other factor which you might consider helpful.

Annex

DATE

SIGNATURE