

The Assistant Director-General for Education

To all Secretaries General of
National Commissions for
UNESCO

Ref: ED/FLI/2025/740

10 February 2026

Subject: UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme 2026 application cycle

Dear Secretaries General,

As per usual practice, National Commissions for UNESCO are invited to support the establishment of UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks in priority areas across all Programme Sectors.

The online portal for the 2026 cycle will be available between 1 March and 30 April 2026 for the direct submission of applications by host institutions and for their validation by National Commissions. The application deadline is 30 April 2026, 23:59 (CET/Paris time). Please note that only complete applications with the requisite letters of support will be considered. The [Programme guidelines](#) and [webpage](#) can be consulted for further information.

The temporary measures introduced to limit the number of applications for the establishment of new UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks to a maximum of two per country will remain in effect for the 2026 cycle. In addition, a third application may be considered, either for the establishment of a UNITWIN Network or as a resubmission of a proposal from a previous cycle.

As a reminder, the application for a proposed Chair or Network must meet all the required criteria outlined in the programme guidelines. Most importantly, the activities must demonstrate clear links with UNESCO programmes and priorities. National Commissions are encouraged to prioritize proposals that are interdisciplinary, include forward-looking approaches, and give sufficient consideration to gender issues. In addition, applications should demonstrate efforts in making research and educational materials available openly and freely, in line with UNESCO's [Open Access Policy](#), the [2019 Recommendation on Open Educational Resources](#) and the [2021 Recommendation on Open Science](#). Applications from countries and/or institutions that do not host UNESCO Chairs or UNITWIN Networks are also encouraged. As applications are being elaborated, National Commissions should consider facilitating discussions between the applying institutions and UNESCO teams well in advance of the deadline to ensure closer synergies with current activities.

An information session on the 2026 application cycle will be organized with National Commissions on 24 February 2026 from 14:00 – 15:30 (CET/Paris time). The link for the session is included in the message accompanying this letter.

In this regard, we thank you for your invaluable cooperation, in particular with the pre-selection process as well as for the continuous coordination and monitoring of the activities of UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks. Please do not hesitate to contact my colleagues in the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme for any additional information you may need at unitwin@unesco.org.

We look forward to our continued cooperation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stefania Giannini', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Stefania Giannini