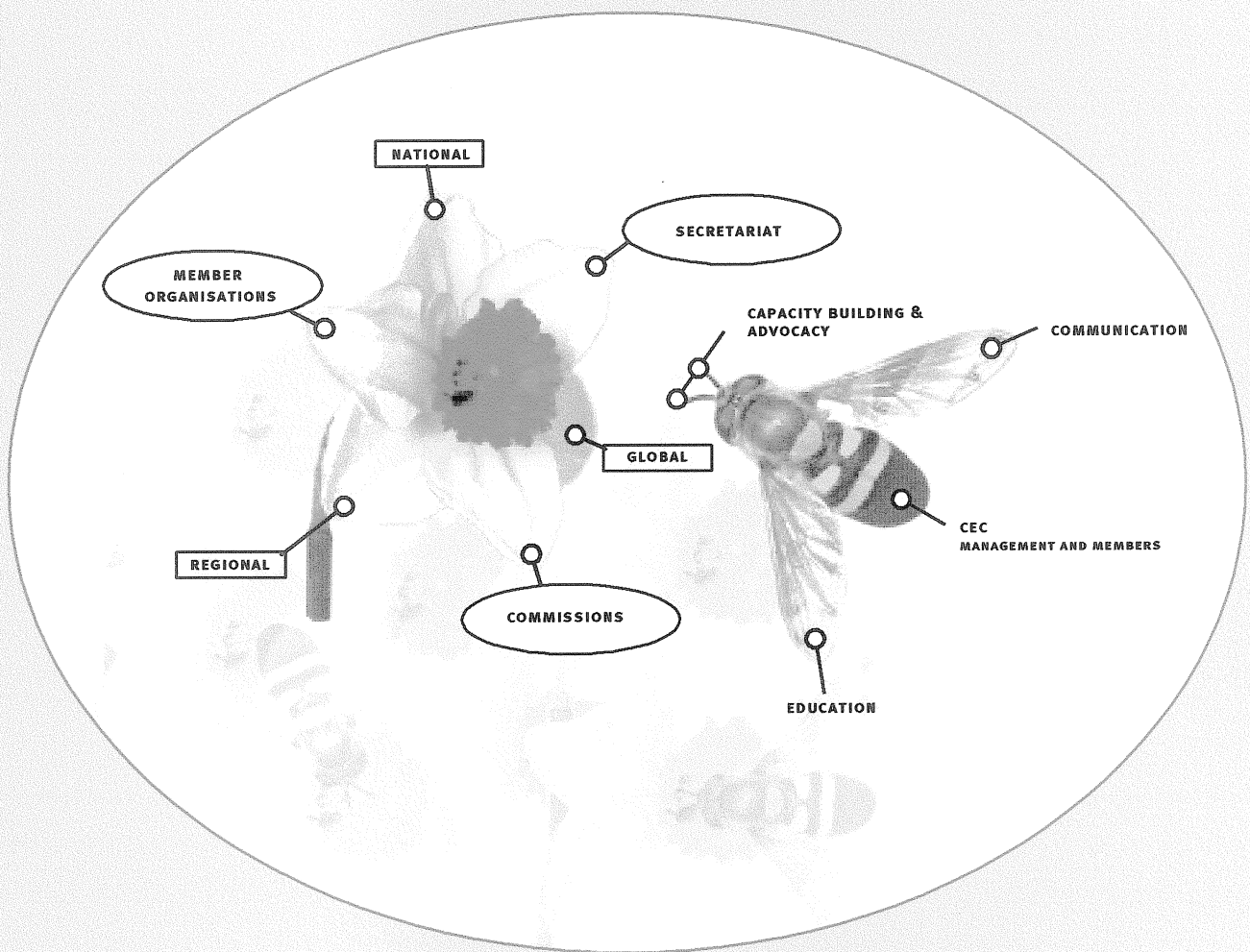


Breaking barriers and bridging gaps

Review of the Commission on Education
and Communication of IUCN



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Summary

Context

This review of the Commission on Education and Communication, CEC, covers the period 1994 -1999, with emphasis on the last triennium. The beginning of 1994 marked a period of great uncertainty for CEC. The World Conservation Congress directed CEC to re-organise itself. Since then, the IUCN climate for CEC has been improving, mainly with regard to communication. There has been growing acknowledgement within the Union that internal and external communication is fundamental in the pursuit of its mission and that CEC is a key actor in this respect.

Leadership

In many respects, the CEC Chair, together with CEC Secretariat and a core group within the CEC Steering Committee, have provided leadership. CEC has set up a well-organised strategic planning discipline. The CEC Strategy and Work Plan 1997-1999 present an accessible and concise programme. These documents reflect a genuine effort to strengthen the regionalisation and decentralisation process. CEC for itself also has established an efficient communication system and an open, evaluative culture. For reasons of effectiveness and efficiency, stronger interaction with IUCN programmes and further focussing is needed, especially at the regional level.

Performance and achievements

CEC achieved significant results, especially in the field of biodiversity at global, regional and national levels. In its dealings with the Biodiversity Convention, CEC not only demonstrated efficient and effective networking, its network is also used as a conduit to feedback recommendations to national governments and organisations. In addition to the Biodiversity Programme, CEC has contributed to and constructively co-operated with several Commissions (such as the Species Survival Commission and the World Commission on Protected Areas). In several regions and countries, the regional CEC networks become increasingly involved in the IUCN Programme. Several IUCN regions (e.g. South East Asia and Southern Africa) and Programmes on their turn are internalising communication as a discipline.

Funding

Lack of financial resources, loose links between the volunteer members and IUCN, and sometimes the thinning out of activities, form major constraints to CEC's work in the regions and countries. A major weakness in CEC's performance is that so far funding has not received enough attention. A fundraising strategy should be a priority for CEC, together with an incentive system stimulating volunteers to provide for professional services within the context of IUCN's programme.

Lack of synergy at head Quarters

There is hardly any co-ordination between CEC and the Communication Division at Head Quarters. Neither does CEC have a position in the Task Team on Knowledge, Informatics and Outreach. This dysfunctional link between CEC and Secretariat forms a serious constraint for CEC in efficiently serving IUCN. Secretariat does not set a good example here in terms of propagating increased synergy between itself and Commissions and Member Organisations; which after all is the major distinction between the IUCN and other organisations. Underlying factors are different perceptions on IUCN's corporate identity and confusion in terminology (and related disciplines) and subsequently diverging perceptions about functions and tasks to manage and market this identity. Communication and marketing are being dealt with as two separate disciplines, while one would expect an integrative, mutually reinforcing approach. Whatever the corporate identity chosen, there is an important role for an efficient internal and external communication system and capacity enhancement in this respect, and thus also for CEC. Secretariat at Head Quarters urgently needs to solve this matter.

Membership

Membership of CEC has continuously been growing, up to a current number of 600. Both geographical coverage and gender balance have improved significantly, also within the Steering Committee. The volume of activities increased accordingly, but further incentives to activate and focus members within the scope of IUCN's mission are needed.

Learning and new media

New developments in information and communication technologies and in knowledge management provide many opportunities for CEC and IUCN e.g. in terms of mobilising people, organisational learning and remote education. For IUCN, as a world wide union with a very diverse constituency, and for CEC as IUCN's major think tank on education and communication, there is quite some challenge in further exploring these opportunities, in partnership with organisations which are acting at the cutting edge of new media and learning.

Conclusion

The overall conclusion of this review is that CEC has been and still is very relevant to the organisation and work of IUCN. In order to keep this position, it has to further focus and streamline its own programme in support to the overall IUCN Programmes. A major new role for CEC is to help IUCN to master the use of new media (such as for remote learning) and application of new insights in organisational learning. What better challenge could there be for CEC's new chairperson to lead CEC in such an exploration of a new niche while simultaneously strengthening its focus?