UNESCO HIGHER EDUCATION ACTIVITIES 2017-2018

UNESCO has been undertaking a number of activities in 2017 and 2018 with relevance for members of the Higher Education in the European Higher Education Area, especially with respect to recognition of higher education qualifications and quality assurance:

A. UNESCO Conventions on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications

The Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon Recognition Convention)

UNESCO and the Council of Europe, as co-secretariats to the LRC Committee, are currently supporting LRC Parties to implement the Recommendation on the Recognition of Qualifications Held by Refugees, Displaced Persons and Persons in a Refugee-like Situation, adopted in November 2017. The Recommendation establishes common procedures for the States Parties to the LRC that take into account the recognition of qualifications where refugees' qualifications cannot be adequately documented. The importance of the new recommendation was recently highlighted in UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay's message to the International Conference on Higher Education in Emergencies, which took place in Lisbon on 5 April. The Director-General emphasized that also the Global Convention on Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications, expected to be adopted in 2019, will take into account issues relating the recognition of refugees' qualifications across regions.

Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications

A Drafting Committee established in March 2016 met four times between in 2016 and 2017. At its last meeting in June 2017, the Drafting Committee considered comments and amendments received from 40 Member States in an initial consultation round, and finalized a Preliminary Draft of the convention text. Between July and September 2017, UNESCO organized a series of information meetings with Permanent Delegations at Headquarters in Paris. The 39th session of the General Conference in November 2017 examined a progress report and the Preliminary Draft, approving the way forward towards adoption at the 40th session of the General Conference in November 2019.

In March 2018, UNESCO launched consultations with Member States and relevant stakeholders on the Preliminary Draft. All Member States and relevant stakeholders, including intergovernmental organizations (such as regional economic communities), non-governmental organizations and other entities in the field of higher education (such as networks for quality assurance and recognition) will then be invited to participate in a first intergovernmental meeting of technical and legal experts to discuss the preliminary draft in December 2018. A second intergovernmental meeting is foreseen in spring 2019 to finalize the draft that will be submitted for adoption at the 40th Session of the General Conference in November 2019.

Other Recognition Conventions

- The *Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education*, adopted in 2011, came into force on 1 February 2018, after five Member States had ratified the Convention: China and Australia in 2014, New Zealand in 2016, and recently Japan and the Republic of Korea in December 2017. Since 2014, UNESCO has hosted has co-hosted seven national-level capacity building workshops in Cambodia, Fiji, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Republic of Korea, and Viet Nam. As a result, additional ratifications are expected soon. The first meeting of the Tokyo Convention Committee will take place in the Republic of Korea in October 2018. The Asia-Pacific Network of National Information Centers is intended to be launched in 2018 in close collaboration with European ENIC-NARICs.

- The *Revised Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Certificates, Diplomas, Degrees and Other Academic Qualifications in Higher Education in African States* was adopted in 2014 in Addis Ababa. The Addis Convention received its first ratification in February 2018 from Togo, and a number of Member States in all parts of the region have initiated the ratification process or are preparing the deposit of their ratification instrument with UNESCO.

- Following the October 2015 ministerial meeting in Brasilia, a working group has finalized a draft for a revised *Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean,* which was examined at an intergovernmental consultation meeting in Buenos Aires on 5-6 April 2018. A second intergovernmental consultation meeting will take place in Córdoba, Argentina on 14-15 June, and the revised convention is foreseen to be adopted at an International Conference of States in 2019.
- In November 2017, the 39th Session of the General Conference approved the launch of a revision process of the 1978 *Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in the Arab States*, and a working group of experts endorsed a draft convention at a meeting in Rabat in March 2018. The revised convention is foreseen to be adopted at an International Conference of States in 2019.

B. Quality Assurance in Higher Education

International Conference of Quality Assurance

Within the framework of Education 2030, UNESCO is organizing an International Conference on Quality Assurance in cooperation with the International Consortium of Distance Education (ICDE), the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), the Council for Higher Education Accreditation/International Quality Group (CHEA), the World Bank, the international Association of universities (IAU), and DAAD. The overarching objective of the conference is to establish a platform of discussion for educationalists, government representatives, quality assurance agencies as well as international organizations dealing with sustainable development and higher education to explore the ways in which higher education and its quality assurance mechanisms could better contribute to the SDGs. The outcomes of the QA in Higher Education initiative will feed into the proposed 3rd World Conference on Higher Education in 2020.

In preparation to the International Conference, eight regional consultation meetings are being organized to identify the key regional concerns and priorities for QA in HED with a focus on the quality enhancement of private, and on-line/distance HE learning. For Europe, two consultation meetings were organized during the first half of 2018: for Western Europe in Geneva on 15-16 February 2018 under the title "The role of Quality Assurance in Higher Education: challenges, developments and trends", co-organized with the Swiss Agency of Accreditation and Quality Assurance (AAQ), and for Eastern Europe in Moscow on 23-24 April, co-organized with the Russian Federation (NAA) and the Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Career Development (AKKORK).

QA projects in Africa:

- *UNESCO-Shenzhen Municipal Government Cooperation in Higher Education.* In cooperation with the Shenzhen Municipal Government (China), UNESCO launched in 2017 a project in favour of the development of quality assurance in higher education in Africa. This project aims to strengthen the quality assurance of the higher education structures in ten African countries: Niger, Togo, Mali, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Namibia, Malawi, Senegal, Zambia and Egypt.

- *UNESCO-CAMES Cooperation in Higher Education.* On 8 March 2016, UNESCO and the African and Malagasy Council for the Higher Education (CAMES) signed a cooperation agreement in for the development of quality assurance higher education. The general objectives of the cooperation between CAMES and UNESCO include joint efforts for advocacy and capacity building in the quality assurance of higher education with a focus on the development of good practices in the enhancement of quality assurance, as well as fostering a quality culture among national quality assurance bodies in the CAMES region and collaborating with similar bodies in other regions of Africa and around the world.

- *Training Modules in Internal Quality Assurance in Higher Education.* UNESCO in partnership with the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) has developed training modules in Internal Quality Assurance in higher education. Each module identifies major tenets and requirements aimed at implementation of QA policies, procedures and instruments of the IQA systems of higher education institutions.

C. ICTs for Higher Education and Lifelong learning

MOOCs

The publication *Making Senses of MOOCs: A Guide for Policy-Makers in Developing Countries* was published in June 2016 and is now available online in English (http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002451/245122E.pdf). Spanish and French versions will be published online in spring 2018. The Guide is designed to raise general awareness amongst policy makers in developing countries as to how Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) might address their concerns and priorities, particularly in terms of access to affordable quality higher education and preparation of secondary school leavers for academic as well as vocational education and training.

Visionary Leadership for Digital Transformation, May 24, 2017, UNESCO HQ

UNESCO co-organized an international conference with the International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE) to identify, address and call for action on the key opportunities and issues for fostering and implementing good governance and visionary leadership for digital transformation in higher education. The conference was attended by government representatives, rectors/presidents and deans from higher education institutions as well as representatives from the private sector and other organizations.

D. UNESCO Chairs/UNITWIN Network

Since February 2017, 17 UNESCO Chairs and 1 Network have been established in 9 Member States and 17 HEIs in the European region: 7 within social and human sciences, 4 within education, 4 within culture and 3 within natural sciences.

Country	Chair/Network Title	University/Institution	UNESCO Sector
Azerbaijan	UNESCO Chair on Strengthening Teacher Professional Development through ICT-based Approaches	The Innovative Technologies in Education Continuing Education Centre	Education
Denmark	UNESCO Chair on Building Common Ground: Cultural Rights	University of Copenhagen	Social and Human Sciences
France	Chaire UNESCO en Archéologie maritime et littorale	Université d'Aix-Marseille	Culture
France	Chaire UNESCO en technologies pour la formation des enseignants par les ressources éducatives libres	Université de Nantes	Education
France	Chaire UNESCO «L'accroissement des connaissances et des technologies nouvelles dans le monde par la recherche sur les particules élémentaires au Centre Européen de Recherche Nucléaire»	Université Pierre et Marie Curie-Sorbonne Universités	Natural Sciences
France	Chaire UNESCO « Défis partagés du développement : savoir, comprendre, agir »	Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne	Social and Human Sciences
France	Chaire UNESCO « Défis partagés du développement : savoir, comprendre, agir »	Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne	Social and Human Sciences
France	Chaire UNESCO d'études du dopage et analyse des politiques antidopage	Université Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense	Social and Human Sciences
Italy	Network "Green Chemistry Excellence from the Baltic Sea to the Mediterranean and Beyond"	Politecnico di Milano	Natural Sciences; UNESCO Office in Venice
Latvia	UNESCO Chair on Intangible Cultural Heritage Policy and Law	The Latvian Academy of Culture	Culture
Russian Fed.	UNESCO Chair on Comparative Studies in Quality of Higher Education	The National University of Science and Technology	Education
Russian Fed.	UNESCO Chair on Education Quality Management for Sustainable Development	St. Petersburg State Polytechnic University named after Peter the Great	Social and Human Sciences
Spain	UNESCO Chair on Peace, Solidarity and Intercultural Dialogue	Universitat Abat Oliba CEU	Social and Human Sciences
Spain	UNESCO Chair on a Culture of Peace and Human Rights	Universidad Autónoma de Madrid	Social and Human Sciences
Sweden	UNESCO Chair on heritage futures	Linnaeus University	Culture
Sweden	UNESCO Chair on Developing a Model for Large-scale Higher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa	Stockholm University	Education
Sweden	UNESCO Chair on International Water Cooperation	Uppsala University	Natural Sciences
Turkey	UNESCO Chair on Intangible Cultural Heritage in Formal and Informal Education	Gazi University	Culture