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**INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES TO THE
GLOBAL CONVENTION ON THE RECOGNITION OF QUALIFICATIONS CONCERNING
HIGHER EDUCATION**

Second session
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24-25 June 2023

Item 3 of the provisional agenda:
Report on the Global and regional recognition conventions

SUMMARY

This document presents the report on the implementation of the interim work programme for the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education as pursuant to the Resolution 1.XIC/2, adopted by the Intergovernmental Conference at its first extraordinary session. The implementation of the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education builds on and is closely interlinked with the achievements of the regional recognition conventions on the recognition of qualifications concerning higher education. This report also presents the latest developments of the regional recognition conventions (for the 2023-2025 period) as a basis for strengthening cooperation between the global and regional level.

Decision required: paragraph 29

Introduction

1. During the first extraordinary session of the Intergovernmental Conference of the States Parties of the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education (hereinafter referred to as the “Intergovernmental Conference”), held in March 2024, the States Parties adopted the [interim work programme](#) for the 2024-2025 period. This Report presents updates on the implementation of the interim work programme for the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education (hereinafter referred to as the “Global Convention”) and the progress of the regional conventions on the recognition of qualifications concerning higher education (hereinafter referred to as “regional recognition conventions”).
2. According to the latest data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, there were 264 million students enrolled in tertiary education in 2023 globally, an average gross enrolment rate of 43%, compared to 19% in 2000. Just over 6.8 million were international students, a number that has more than doubled in the past 20 years, and is likely to double again in the next two decades. About half of these students study outside their home region, and almost 60% study in Northern America and Europe. As the number of internationally mobile students and teachers grow, so does the importance of cross-border recognition of qualifications, which is critical to removing barriers to academic mobility.¹

Progress regarding the Global Convention

3. Between June 2023 and March 2025, 14 additional States Parties deposited their instruments to the Global Convention, increasing the total number of ratifying countries to 36.² The 2024-2025 [interim work programme](#) for the Global Convention, adopted in March 2024, focused on four main areas, namely: i) the elaboration of draft operational guidelines, to be adopted at the second ordinary session of the Intergovernmental Conference; ii) the elaboration of a draft recommendation on the relationship of the Convention to the regional recognition conventions, to be consulted with the committees of these regional recognition conventions and adopted at the latest by the third ordinary session of the Intergovernmental Conference; iii) research and capacity-development activities; and iv) advocacy and communication activities.
4. The draft operational guidelines were developed with the support of the open-ended working group mandated with the review and finalization of the document. They are now submitted to the Intergovernmental Conference for adoption (Item 5 on the provisional agenda). More details on the drafting process are outlined in document GHE/25/2.IC/5.
5. The Secretariat also began work on the elaboration of a draft subsidiary text on the relationship of the Global Convention to the regional conventions (cf. Item 6 of the provisional agenda and document GHE/25/2.IC/6). Following an initial brainstorm by members of the Bureau of the Intergovernmental Conference, an outline for key issues to be covered as well as the process to be followed is submitted to this Conference for adoption.
6. On research, two papers were commissioned by external experts on quality assurance – including that of transnational education – and the recognition of refugees’ and displaced persons’ qualifications, with due consideration of gender equality, and the development of complementary pathways. Both these research papers are submitted to the Intergovernmental Conference (cf. Items 7 and 8 of the provisional agenda and documents GHE/25/2.IC/7 and GHE/25/2.IC/8). This is the first step towards the process which will lead to the submission of subsidiary texts to the third ordinary session of the Intergovernmental Conference in June 2027.

¹ Mills, D., 2022, *Academic Mobility in Higher Education*. Paper commissioned for the World Higher Education Conference 18-20 May 2022, © UNESCO 2022

² By date of deposit: Finland, Yemen, Guinea, Hungary, Republic of Moldova, Senegal, Georgia, Luxembourg, Ecuador, New Zealand, South Africa, Mongolia, San Marino and Djibouti.

7. On capacity development, a programme aims to train higher education stakeholders from all regions directly and through a cascading train-the-trainers approach on the provisions of the Global Convention and regional recognition conventions, including the establishment of national information centres and quality assurance mechanisms. The rollout is foreseen to begin in May 2025. At the same time, the Secretariat has provided bilateral support to about 20 countries to guide them in ratifying the Global Convention.
8. On advocacy and communications, the development of a refurbished website is underway, including country profiles of States Parties and an inventory of national qualifications frameworks, in addition to information and resources on the Global Convention. At the same time, the Secretariat has promoted the Global Convention at high-level and technical meetings throughout the past year, both self-organized and upon invitation, ranging from the 2024 Global Education Meeting in Fortaleza (Brazil) and European Higher Education Area Ministerial Meeting in Tirana (Albania) to technical webinars for BRICS countries or student and academic associations. The Secretariat has also reached out to countries whose ratification process is underway for monitoring and feedback.

Regional recognition conventions

9. The implementation of the Global Convention is carried out in synergy with the regional recognition conventions. Starting in 1997 with the adoption of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, the process to update the regional recognition conventions was finalized in 2022 with the adoption of the Revised Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in the Arab States. Four out of five of the “second generation” regional recognition conventions have now entered into force and have convention committees in place where all States Parties participate³. The Revised Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in the Arab States still requires an additional two States Parties to enter into force. Regional networks of information centres and implementation structures have been established in all other regions. The secretariats of the regional recognition conventions are decentralized, with the exception of the Lisbon Convention whose secretariat is ensured by UNESCO at its Headquarters with the Council of Europe as co-secretariat.
10. In December 2024 the presidents of the Addis, Buenos Aires, Lisbon and Tokyo Conventions signed a joint position paper on artificial intelligence and recognition of qualifications, which was presented during an ENIC-NARIC webinar on artificial intelligence and recognition on 19 March 2025. The paper highlights five core elements to support the discussion on AI and recognition at the interregional and global levels. This initiative illustrates the positive potential of joint collaboration between the regions to tackle topical issues in relation to recognition.
11. Considering the above, it is appropriate to present to each session of the Conference the latest developments of the regional recognition conventions as a basis for strengthening cooperation between the global and regional levels.

Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (1997 Lisbon Convention)

12. The joint Council of Europe and UNESCO [Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region](#), adopted on 11 April 1997 in Lisbon, currently has 57 States Parties in the Europe Region, as well as beyond the region.⁴ Greece

³ The 1997 Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon Convention), the 2011 Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education (Tokyo Convention), the 2014 Revised Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Certificates, Diplomas, Degrees and Other Academic Qualifications in Higher Education in African States (Addis Convention), and the 2019 Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (Buenos Aires Convention).

⁴ Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Holy See, Hungary,

was the most recent State Party to ratify the Convention in 2024. The Convention Committee will meet for its 10th ordinary session in October 2025 at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. The agenda will include the implementation of the newly adopted ENIC-NARIC Charter as well as an update on the 2007 Revision of the Code of Good Practice on Translational Education.

13. The European Network of Information Centres and the National Academic Recognition Information Centres ([ENIC-NARIC networks](#)) continue to work collaboratively to promote the LRC and fair recognition of academic qualifications across borders. The ENIC Network operates under the leadership of the Council of Europe and UNESCO and the NARIC under the European Union. The ENIC-NARIC networks meet annually, with the 2025 meeting being held on 25-27 May in Tirana, Albania. The Network supports the work of the ENIC-NARIC centres through webinars, expert meetings, information and knowledge sharing, and the organization of peer reviews among the centres. The ENIC-NARIC Network has fostered cooperation also with the other networks at interregional level by facilitating information exchange, extending invitations to the Networks' events, collecting information on mobility flows and international strategic cooperation through the survey on the Global Dimension of the ENIC-NARIC Networks.
14. UNESCO continues to work with different partners to foster closer cooperation between the different structures of the LRC and European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the other regional recognition conventions. In 2024 the EHEA Working Group on Automatic Recognition widened its membership to include UNESCO and the European Commission. In addition, UNESCO has joined the [Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue](#) as co-Chair with Italy and Moldova. The Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue aims to develop a continuous dialogue with other regions and international organizations on matters of common concern and relevance for higher education for which cooperation and sharing of ideas and policies can mutually benefit. UNESCO is also a member of the [Working Group on Internationalization and Mobility](#) and the [Thematic Peer Group B](#) on Key Commitment 2: National legislation and procedures compliant with the LRC.

The Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education (2011 Tokyo Convention)

15. The [Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education](#), adopted on 26 November 2011 in Tokyo, currently has 12 States Parties.⁵ The Tokyo Convention Committee held its 5th session from 22-24 November 2023 in Bangkok and elected New Zealand as President, Japan and Australia as Vice Presidents, and the Holy See as Rapporteur. The Secretariat is ensured by the [UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok](#). In the closing discussion, Parties endorsed a call to action and launched a Tokyo Convention Roadmap (2024-2030). The work plan identified strategic issues, challenges, and priorities around qualifications recognition to be monitored during future Committee sessions. In conjunction with the Committee Session, the Secretariat co-organized the 3rd Plenary of the [Asia-Pacific Network of National Information Centres](#) (APNNIC) to support capacity development and implementation of the Tokyo Convention.
16. In December 2024, the Secretariat co-organized the 4th APNNIC plenary virtually. The online plenary explored micro-credentials recognition, a human-centred approach to the use of AI tools, fraud in academic qualifications recognition, and how national information centers (NICs) can support quality information provision throughout Asia and the Pacific. The next Committee session and APNNIC plenary will be hosted by New Zealand and take place in 2025.

Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

⁵ Afghanistan, Armenia, Australia, China, Fiji, Holy See, Japan, Mongolia, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation and Türkiye.

17. The Asia and the Pacific region is home to 60 per cent of the world's population and more than 40 per cent of the world's migrants. Central to inclusive and sustainable growth, migrants contribute their skills, labour, and cultural diversity, driving innovation and strengthening economies across the region. A 2024 UN flagship publication – the [Asia-Pacific Migration Report](#) – explained the Tokyo Convention's role in enhancing fair qualifications recognition for learners across the region. The report encouraged Asia-Pacific countries to expedite the Tokyo Convention's ratification and to implement its provision to effectively facilitate the recognition of diverse learning pathways, including through online learning.
18. To build national capacity and help countries to accelerate ratifications of the Tokyo Convention, UNESCO Bangkok launched a new four-year project on strengthening university networks in the Asia-Pacific region (January 2025 – November 2028). With support from the Republic of Korea, the Secretariat, together with interested countries and university networks, will improve action plans for student mobility, fair recognition of qualifications, and efforts will be strengthened to ratify both the 2011 Tokyo Convention and Global Convention.
19. To further support policy advocacy in the region, UNESCO co-hosted with Lao People's Democratic Republic an important ASEAN Policy Dialogue on Higher Education held in Vientiane from 11-12 November 2024. Building on the 2024 ASEAN Declaration on the Common Space in Southeast Asian Higher Education, the policy dialogue led to a call for countries to ratify the Tokyo Convention and activate NICs in ASEAN.

The Revised Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Certificates, Diplomas, Degrees and Other Academic Qualifications in Higher Education in African States (2014 Addis Convention)

20. The [Revised Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Certificates, Diplomas, Degrees and Other Academic Qualifications in Higher Education in African States](#), adopted on 12 December 2014 in Addis-Ababa, currently has 14 States Parties.⁶ The Secretariat is ensured by the [UNESCO Multisectoral Regional Office for West Africa](#) in Abuja.
21. The second ordinary session of the Convention Committee was hosted by Senegal held on 4-5 October 2023. The Convention Committee elected Senegal as Chairperson, the Mauritius and Mauritania as vice-Chairpersons, and South Africa as Rapporteur, and provided an opportunity to develop a roadmap for the 2024-2025 period. The next ordinary session is scheduled for late 2025.
22. During this period, work continued for the strengthening of the African Network of National Implementation Structures. The network was launched on 15 September 2022 to facilitate exchange of information among the Parties in relation to recognition and mobility, as well as counter-fraud measures. Two further meetings were held in 2024 (both on-line and in-person, respectively) at which representatives of other regional networks of information centres presented the state of play. During these meetings, draft terms of reference and a work plan for the African Network of National Implementation Structures were presented. The second meeting was held in conjunction with the [2024 UNESCO Forum on higher education in Africa: A driver for sustainable development](#), in Nairobi, and also marked the 10th Anniversary of the Addis Convention.

The Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (2019 Buenos Aires Convention)

23. The [Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean](#), was adopted in July 2019 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and entered into force in October 2022. It currently counts six States Parties⁷, Ecuador as the last country which ratified the Convention, and with others reporting to be at advanced stages of the process.

⁶ Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Congo, Djibouti, Gambia, Guinea, Holy See, Mauritania, Mauritius, Senegal, Seychelles, South Africa, Togo and Zambia.

⁷ Cuba, Granada, Ecuador, Holy See, Peru and Uruguay.

24. The Committee has convened three sessions over the past two years – in Colonia del Sacramento, Uruguay in April 2023, Havana, Cuba in February 2024 and Montevideo, Uruguay in December 2024. Several milestones have been marked, with the support of the Convention Secretariat at [UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean \(IESALC\)](#), such as the establishment of the regional network of national information centres ([CINALC](#)), the development of a [feasibility study for the implementation of a diploma supplement](#) in the region, and [guidelines on the recognition of Venezuelan academic degrees and diplomas](#). The reporting period also witnessed growing partnerships with other regional convention committees and regional forums beyond Latin America and the Caribbean, such as the European Higher Education Area and its working structures.
25. The Committee's workplan for 2025 focuses on advocacy to accelerate ratifications, policy advice and capacity development, the strengthening of CINALC as the operational arm of the Convention, and increased cooperation with other regional recognition convention committees and the Intergovernmental Conference. The workplan is being implemented in close cooperation with CINALC, in particular with regard to the development of guidance on the implementation of the 2019 Buenos Aires Convention, the recognition of qualifications for refugees and displaced persons, and data on recognition and mobility in the region.
26. CINALC is open to all countries from the region, with 17 currently participating in it. The network is also strengthening its strategic operational role through the development of digital tools for recognition, training workshops for national information centres, and pilot initiatives on cross-border academic mobility in coordination with other regional networks. This inter-cooperation has provided mutual learning exchanges and shared tools for credential evaluation, including on issues such as the use of artificial intelligence in recognition or recognition of qualifications for refugees and displaced persons, among others.

The Revised Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in the Arab States (2022 Arab States Convention)

27. The [Revised Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in the Arab States](#) was adopted at an International Conference of States on 2 February 2022 at UNESCO Headquarters. The Convention currently has three States Parties with Qatar ratifying in 2024, and will enter into force following the deposit of the fifth instrument of ratification.⁸ The Secretariat is ensured by the [UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in Beirut](#).
28. Efforts are still underway to advocate and accelerate ratifications, in parallel with the organization of the secretariat, in preparation for this Revised Convention's entry into force and the convening of the first session of the convention committee, as well as the establishment of the network of national information centres in the region.
29. The Intergovernmental Conference may wish to adopt the following resolution:

DRAFT RESOLUTION 2 IC/3

The Intergovernmental Conference,

1. *Having examined document GHE/25/2.IC/3,*
2. *Recalling that the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education builds on the achievements of the regional recognition conventions, and that the Global Convention stipulates that the Intergovernmental Conference shall cooperate with the regional recognition convention committees,*
3. *Acknowledging the mutually reinforcing role of the global and regional recognition conventions for fostering fair, transparent and non-discriminatory recognition of higher education qualifications,*

⁸ Qatar, State of Palestine, and Yemen.

4. *Commends the progress made in the four key areas of the interim work programme for the Global Convention (2024-2025) including in the areas to be further discussed during the third ordinary session of the Intergovernmental Conference;*
5. *Commends the progress made on the regional recognition conventions, and the efforts made to strengthen cooperation between the regional recognition convention committees, and further commends the Chairpersons for the development of the first Joint position paper on artificial intelligence and the recognition of qualifications;*
6. *Expresses its commitment to work closely with the regional recognition convention committees for mutual benefit and in particular for the development of new subsidiary texts and other guidance materials for States Parties and non-States Parties;*
7. *Encourages all Member States of UNESCO which have not yet done so to ratify the Global Convention along with the relevant regional recognition conventions;*
8. *Invites representatives of the Bureaux of the regional recognition convention committees and other relevant networks to meet with the Bureau of the Global Convention on a regular basis, and encourages the regional recognition convention committees to invite representatives of the Bureaux of the Intergovernmental Conference of the Global Convention as well as representatives of the bureaux of the regional recognition convention committees and other relevant networks as observers to their meetings;*
9. *Requests the Secretariat to regularly report to the Intergovernmental Conference on the developments of the Global Convention and regional recognition conventions, and to propose actions for improved cooperation to the next session of the Intergovernmental Conference.*