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UNESCO Higher Education Activities 2017

UNESCO has been undertaken a number of activities in 2017 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 (LRC)

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 invites States Parties to the LRC to take into account, in the establishment of their policies for the recognition of qualifications held by refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation, the principles set out in the appendix to this subsidiary text; to draw these principles to the attention of the competent bodies concerned; to ensure their implementation by government agencies, local and regional authorities and by higher education institutions while taking due account of the autonomy of higher education institutions; and to ensure that the Recommendation is distributed as widely as possible among all persons and bodies concerned with the recognition of qualifications concerning higher education.

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. 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 the first half of 2018, UNESCO will launch consultations with Member States and relevant stakeholders on the Preliminary Draft. All Member States will then be invited to participate in a first intergovernmental meeting to discuss the draft in December 2018.

The Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education

adopted in 2011, has been ratified by China and Australia (2014), New Zealand (2016) and recently by the Japan and the Republic of Korea (December 2017). These significant milestones mean that five Member States have now ratified the Tokyo Convention, which will bring it into force on 1 February 2018. Since 2014, UNESCO has hosted three regional events on the relevance and ratification procedures related to the Convention and 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. Regarding the implementation of the Tokyo Convention, the Asia-Pacific Network of National Information Centres is intended to be launched in 2018 in close collaboration with European counterparts.

Other Conventions

- 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. UNESCO has not yet received any instruments of ratification. UNESCO is working to raise awareness among Member States in the Africa region on the ratification and implementation of the Addis Convention. 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 the Director-General.
- Following the October 2015 ministerial meeting in Brasilia the revision of the *Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean*, a revision process has been launched and a working group created for re-drafting the convention main text with a view to this being adopted at an International Conference of States in 2019.
- The 39th Session of the General Conference approved in November 2017 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. Consultations meetings with higher education experts discussing the revision process was held in Sharm-Sheikh (March 2017) and in Cairo (October 2017). Following the General Conference' decision in November 2019, a first working group meeting will be held in Rabat in March 2018, and an International Conference of States for the adoption of the revised Convention is foreseen for spring 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 Conference will be held at UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, in November 2018. 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 HED initiative will feed into the proposed 3rd World Conference on Higher Education in 2020.

In preparation to the International Conference, eight regional consultation meetings will be held 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 will be held 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 (PR China), UNESCO launched in 2017 a project in favour of 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 Council, established in 1968, is a

regional body responsible for higher education accreditation and quality assurance in the CAMES countries, and for the implementation of higher education and research policies in several francophone countries in Africa. 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 and promotion of good practices in the enhancement and maintenance of quality assurance and qualifications frameworks, 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.

- *Capacity Building Training Modules in Internal Quality Assurance in Higher Education.* UNESCO in partnership with the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) has developed capacity building and Training Modules in Internal quality Assurance in Higher education. The module(s) provide the various notions of quality and quality assurance in higher education as perceived by different stakeholders, and how quality can be interpreted, looking also at the advantages of quality assurance, management of QA, and its close links with qualifications frameworks. Each module identifies major tenets and requirements for an IQA system in higher education aimed at implementation of QA policies, procedures and instruments of the IQA system of in respective 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 on-line in English. Spanish and French versions will be published on-line in spring 2018; The Guide was 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.

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

UNESCO co-organized a Forum with the ICDE (International Council for Open and Distance Education) 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 Forum was attended by government representatives, rectors/presidents and deans from higher education institutions as well as representatives from the private sector and other organizations.

Models for Open, Online, Flexible and Technology Enhanced Higher Education.

In order to count with reliable and systematized information on different types of models implemented by different institutions in the field of online, open, flexible and technology-enhanced higher education, UNESCO has partnered with the initiative to develop of good practices to lead to guidelines for member states.

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 |