UPDATE FROM UNESCO

A. Quality Assurance in Higher Education

1. UNESCO-Shenzhen Municipal Government Cooperation in Higher Education.

In 2016 UNESCO and the Shenzhen Municipal Government (PR China) signed a cooperation agreement 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. Other beneficiaries will be the existing and emerging quality assurance networks in Africa. The project includes three interrelated components:

I. Support the establishment of national quality assurance agencies in Niger, Togo, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali and Zambia.
II. Institutional capacity building of recently established quality assurance agencies in Egypt, Gambia, Malawi, Namibia and Senegal.
III. Consolidation of quality assurance networks in Africa, the African Quality Assurance Network and the East African Quality Assurance Network.

2. 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. CAMES is subscribed to by nineteen countries namely Benin Republic, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central Africa Republic, Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Guinea-Conakry, Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, Chad, Senegal, and Togo. 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.

3. 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, such as: quality assessment, quality audit and accreditation, licensing, quality assessment and quality improvement, 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.

4. 2018 International Conference in Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Within the framework of Education 2030, UNESCO is organizing an International Conference on Quality Assurance entitled 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 October 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. Eight regional meetings 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 will precede the international conference. The outcomes of the QA in HED initiative will feed into the proposed 3rd World Conference on Higher Education in 2020.

B. UNESCO Chairs/UNITWIN Programme

1. New Chairs

53 UNESCO Chairs and 2 Networks have been newly established in 38 Member States and 45 HEIs, since March 2016, covering all current UNESCO's priorities. Regional and thematic breakdown as of 1st November 2016: AFR-3; APA-8; ARB-4; ENA-33; LAC-7

- The majority of the Chairs and Networks are covered by the priorities of the Social and Human Sciences Sector (13 Chairs) - within new fields, such as a refugee integration through languages and the arts (University of Glasgow), "Pratiques de la philosophie avec les enfants: une base éducative pour le dialogue interculturel et la transformation sociale "(Université de Nantes);
- Natural Sciences (12 Chairs) - new fields "Geoparks, regional sustainable development and healthy lifestyles" (The University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro, Portugal), "Sustainable Environmental Management, Education for Sustainable Development, Gender Equality in Environmental Sciences, Sustainable Ecotourism"- (Eastern Macedonia and Thrace Institute of Technology, Greece), Hydropilitics (University of Geneva), as well as on climate change and disaster reduction.
- 10 Chairs are in Education- new fields: "Globalizing a Shared Education Model for Improving Relations in Divided Societies" (Queen's University Belfast) and "Personalized and Adaptive Distance Education (Swiss Distance University of Applied Sciences" (SDUAS)).
- 7 Chairs in Culture; new fields such as a geo-information technologies as well as geo-ecological methods in order to analyze, model, and visualize environmental changes at UNESCO designated sites (University of Heidelberg); first UNITWIN Network for Higher Education in the Performing Arts (Georgetown University; The International Theatre Institute (ITI), coordinated by Shanghai Theatre Academy).

2. Commemorating the 25th anniversary of the UNESCO Chairs Programme:

Three events are so far planned in view of the above celebration:

- May 2017-Chairs on HED- Romania
- 4-5 May 2017- World Forum on I-dialogue in Baku
- 5-7 July 2017- Conference "Mobilizing UNESCO Science Chairs) For Policy Action Towards 2030 Agenda"- Geneva
- International conferences on Gender issues within the Global Network of the UNESCO Chairs on Gender (TBC)

C. ICTs for Higher Education and Lifelong learning

1. 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 2017; 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.

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

UNESCO will co-organize 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 event will be organized through a collaborative work including other partners. The target groups are government representatives, rectors/presidents and deans from higher education institutions as well as representatives from the private sector and other organizations. All of the will participate by invitation.

3. 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.

4. Mobile Learning Week 2017

Mobile Learning Week 2017 with the theme "Education in Emergencies and Crises", organized jointly with UNHCR (the UN Refugee Agency) will be held from 20 to 24 March 2017 at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. The registration and a call for proposals will open soon. Events to be organized include:

- o **Symposium**, March 20-21: will identify innovations that leverage mobile technology to improve the learning opportunities for vulnerable children and adults, especially those who have been displaced, in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda.
- o **Workshops**, March 22: will provide explanations of technology-enhanced learning. They will highlight innovative solutions that leverage technology to improve the quality of learning for vulnerable and displaced people, whether in isolation or as part of broader interventions.
- o **Policy Forum**, March 23: will examine the role policies play in fostering innovation in the education sector and facilitating the use of mobile technology for learning, particularly for vulnerable and displaced populations. It will be jointly organized by UNESCO, UNHCR, and ITU and will bring together ministers of education and ministers of ICT to discuss how newly affordable mobile devices can help address urgent educational challenges and meet the needs of students, teachers and administrators.
- o **Webinars and side events**, March 24**:** UNESCO will host an online discussion about the ways mobile technology can help assure educational opportunities to children and adults in emergency and crisis situations. The webinar format will allow online participants to comment, contribute, and pose questions alongside a panel of ICT in education specialists.

D. UNESCO Conventions on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications

1. LAC Convention Review Process

- Following the 2015 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* (Brasilia, October 2015), has been launched and a working group created for re-drafting the convention main text with a view to this being presented to the next General Conference in 2017;
- The working-group is composed of 20 experts and representatives from the region.

2. Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications

In March 2016, following a General Conference decision 38/ Resolution 12, UNESCO established, in cooperation with the Member States, a Drafting Committee to propose a preliminary draft for the future Global Convention of Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications was established. Two meetings of the Drafting Committee have already taken place: the first at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris in May 2016 and the second in Rome, hosted by the Holy See, in September 2016. A third meeting is scheduled to 13-15 February 2017 at UNESCO HQ and a fourth one will eventually be foreseen for the spring 2017. The draft text of the Convention is to be submitted for discussion to the next session of the General Conference in November 2017

3. IWG of the Addis Convention

The Informal Working Group (IWG) of the "Addis Convention" was established with a view to facilitating the ratification and the implementation processes of the revised "Arusha Convention" on Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications for the Africa Regional. Three subgroups have been established to focus on three main fronts: the ratification, implementation and capacity building of the Convention. The first meeting of the IWG took place in January 2016 and another meeting will take place in 2017.