

## UNESCO Higher Education Activity Report for the Bologna Follow-up Group Meeting

March 2026

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This report provides an overview of UNESCO's activities since November 2025 which are of relevance to the European Higher Education Area.

### 1. Global and regional conventions on Higher Education

Forty (40) countries have now ratified the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education which entered into force in 2023, Zambia being the latest to join in February. This represents nearly one-third of the world's 7.3 million internationally mobile students according to the most recent data. Some 20 other countries are in the process of ratifying either the Global or the respective regional Convention or both.

In line with the adopted work programme for the Global Convention, three new texts subsidiary texts are being prepared for adoption in 2027. These are new guidelines for States parties on: the relationship between the Global and regional conventions; quality assurance, including transnational education; and the recognition of the qualifications of refugees and displaced persons. UNESCO established two Open-Ended Working Groups tasked with drafting two of these subsidiary texts. So far, two meetings of each group have been held with the Secretariat, which is responsible for drafting the guidelines and managing the consultation process. These meetings involved members of the Open-Ended Working Groups, the Bureau, the States Parties, and representatives from other regions. UNESCO Secretariat is working with the Bureau on the third subsidiary text concerning the recognition of qualifications for refugees and displaced persons.

#### Capacity-building webinars on the Global Convention on Higher Education

In line with the adopted work program, UNESCO began a series of webinars in 2025 to build capacity and accelerate the ratification and implementation of UNESCO's recognition conventions. These webinars target higher education officials, admissions officers, policymakers, credential evaluators, and national implementation centers, with the aim of engaging a community of practice and other relevant stakeholders in the recognition landscape.

UNESCO is continuing these webinars in 2026. The first was held on 27 January on the theme "*What does it mean to be part of a regional network for qualifications recognition?*" A second webinar will take place on 17 March on "*Different kinds of learning: Ensuring fair recognition.*" A third session is planned for June 2026 and will focus on fraud and recognition. To further strengthen these capacity building activities, UNESCO also aims to engage regional secretariat offices in developing additional webinars that address practical and region-specific issues.

As was the case in 2025, participation and engagement have remained strong, with an average of around 200 participants joining from across the world for each edition.

#### Regional recognition conventions

Following the Tenth Session of the Committee of the Lisbon Recognition Convention on 22 October in Paris, hosted by UNESCO, the newly elected Bureau met in early 2026. As part of the workplan for 2025 – 2028 period, a monitoring exercise on mapping substantial differences is foreseen. The Bureau will

hold a consultation meeting during the Annual ENIC-NARIC meeting in May 2026 to further consult on its plans for the coming three years.

The [Third Session](#) of the **Addis Convention** Committee was held on 17 and 18 December 2025 in Marrakech, Morocco. During this meeting, delegates adopted two important new documents: the Charter for the African Network of Implementation Structures and the Guidelines for the Establishment of National Implementation Structures, paving the way for the operationalization of the African Network of Implementation Structures (ANNIS) in the upcoming biennium. In addition to that, a new Bureau was also elected, comprising Senegal, Mauritania, South Africa, and Zambia.

The [Fourth session](#) of the **Buenos Aires Convention** Committee met in Montevideo, Uruguay, on 24-25 February, alongside the meeting of the Network of National Information Centres in Latin America and the Caribbean (CINALC) bringing together representatives from some 20 countries in the region, both States Parties and Observers. Two main topics were discussed, one focusing on the recognition of qualifications for refugees and displaced person and another mapping exercise on the academic credit systems in Latin America and Caribbean.

## 2. Other Key Initiatives

**Campus Africa Flagship:** The Campus Africa Flagship, launched in 2022 as part of UNESCO's Operational Strategy for Priority Africa 2022-2029, aims to support more inclusive, quality-assured, equitable and gender-responsive higher education systems in Africa. The **Campus Africa Leadership Lab (5-9 December 2025)**, co-organized by UNESCO and IAU, was held at the University of Pretoria and brought together 24 university leaders from 14 African countries, including 7 women. The Lab equipped executive leaders with practical tools in strategic planning, resource mobilization, social responsibility, and academia-industry linkages. It also promoted peer learning and network building, supporting leaders to identify concrete actions contributing to more sustainable institutional growth.

The **UNESCO-China Funds-in-Trust Phase III (CFIT III)** is now organizing the closing event, with the title: *Higher Technical Education in Africa for a Technical and Innovative Workforce*. This event, to be held on 11 and 12 May 2026, will bring together CFIT III project key stakeholders, including representatives from higher education institutions, ministries, development partners, private sector actors, and youth, to reflect on the CFIT III project results and achievements, showcase innovative solutions developed by partner institutions, and chart a roadmap for sustaining its outcomes beyond the current project cycle.

## 3. Looking ahead for 2026

UNESCO convened the third [World Higher Education Conference](#) in Barcelona in 2022 as part of a once-a-decade process of multilateral policy dialogue, deliberation, and peer learning. On **12 March 2026** UNESCO will be launching a finalized "roadmap" for higher education transformation, ***Transforming higher education: Global collaboration on visioning and action***, that is the latest iteration in collectively fashioning and realizing a forward-looking higher education agenda. The roadmap advances UNESCO's vision of higher education as a critical part of the right to quality education throughout life and as a global common good. It draws on consultations involving over 15,000 participants, 250 sessions, 1,500 inputs, and 250 knowledge products from all world regions.

Following its launch, UNESCO will be introducing the principles and lines of transformation outlined in the publication during a series of regional and thematic events, and will also be preparing a series of derivative, short programme documents that provide further guidance on the implementation of the

roadmap.

On **30 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026**, UNESCO is organizing the 4th Forum on Micro-Credentials on “Co-constructing a lifelong learning university in Egypt”, with the Minister of Higher Education, the Supreme Council of Egyptian State Universities, IUSAT and international partners.

In 2026-2027, UNESCO will be working on the revision process of the **1997 UNESCO Recommendation Concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel**. An Independent Expert Group is being established to assist in the revision process, and several consultations will be conducted to ensure an inclusive approach.