GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE RECOGNITION OF HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS

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Outline

• The context
• UNESCO’s action as a standard-setter in higher education
• Current work towards a global normative instrument
• Next steps
The Context

Recognition – a global issue impacted by changes in higher education

- Globalization
- increased internationalization
- technology and its role in making higher education more accessible, affordable, available
- diversification of provision and providers
- demographic challenges
• the massification of higher education and the increased focus on quality, quality assurance and the need for robust frameworks

• mobility - of people, higher education programmes and institutions – both inter and intra-regional

• the move towards building regional higher education and research areas

the need for a global framework
UNESCO as a standard-setter in higher education

- Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in *Latin America and the Caribbean* (1974)

- Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in the Arab and European States Bordering on the *Mediterranean* (1976)

- Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in the *Arab States* (1978)

- Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Certificates, Diplomas, Degrees and others Academic Qualifications in Higher Education in the *African States* (1981)
• Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees concerning Higher Education in the States belonging to the Europe Region (1979)

• Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific (1983)

• Recommendation on the Recognition of Studies and Qualifications in Higher Education (1993)
Modernization of the Conventions

A “new generation” of recognition conventions (the “revised” conventions):

- Europe (1997)
- Asia and the Pacific (2011)
- Africa (2014)
- Latin America and the Caribbean?
- Arab region?
Towards a global normative instrument

- International Conference of States, Tokyo (Nov 2011)
- Feasibility study (2012)
- International Experts’ Meeting, Nanjing (Oct 2012)
- UNESCO Executive Board (April 2013)
- General Conference (Nov 2013)
- International Experts’ Meeting, Paris (July 2014)
Trends in Tertiary Education that will impact Recognition

- The diversification of provision and providers
- The diversified and growing student population
- Demographic trends and the mobility that they will entail
- The emergence of new models of internationalization of higher education
- Changes in the paradigm of learning
Continuing Trends

- Focus on Employability
- Competition
- Rankings
- Quality assurance and qualifications frameworks
- The blurring divide between higher education and postsecondary vocational education and training
Aims:

• Raise awareness of recognition at the policy level
• Encourage inter-regional cooperation and mobility
• Raise the visibility in the public mind that the world is moving towards a far more global higher education community hence the need to build a more equitable and more transparent higher education sector worldwide
• Promote cooperation in recognition between regions and bilateral levels
• Provide a frame for sharing good practices in recognition
Basic principles:

- Equity and the importance that qualifications be assessed in the same way regardless of the country of origin of the qualifications
- Recognize higher education as a public good that should be accessible to all
- Adopt the principle of substantial difference
- Build trust; enhance graduate employability; reaffirm institutional autonomy
- Quality assurance as a major part of recognition processes
- Foster the establishment of networks of recognition experts
- Develop a global instrument that is not overly prescriptive
Key issues:

- Build on the regional recognition conventions and help revitalize/operationalize the less active ones

- Trust and transparency – critical factors of a global convention, as well as for the regional ones
Articulation with regional recognition conventions

- Need to do a comparative analysis of existing regional conventions and to have a clearer view of the recognition challenges in each region.

- Focus on improving the current status of existing regional recognition conventions.

- Flexibility (in education & in recognition principles)
Implementation modalities – guiding principles

- Ensure proper participation and wide ownership
- Include flexible conditions that do not put barriers to implementation
- Monitor what works and what does not work in the regional conventions, and help build capacities to strengthen the regional recognition conventions
- Bring together regional players in Recognition to identify barriers to recognition and modalities to overcome them
- Identify the need for new recognition tools
Next steps

- Draft the preliminary report requested by the General Conference and consult broadly on the key aspects
- Develop the political dialogue around a possible global recognition convention
- Convene another experts’ meeting to discuss the draft preliminary report for the 38th General Conference
- Support regional initiatives for modernization of regional conventions
Thank you!

UNESCO ED/PLS/HED