# Evaluation of UNESCO's Regional Conventions on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education

## *Committee on Conventions and Recommendations*
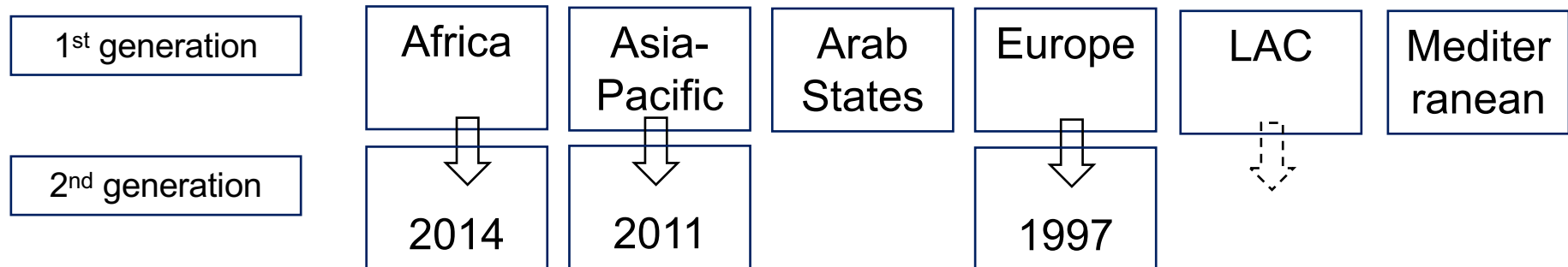
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**Background: Conventions**

| 1st generation | Africa | Asia-Pacific | Arab States | Europe | LAC | Mediterranean |
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| 2nd generation | 2014 | 2011 | | 1997 | | |

- **5 regional + 1 inter-regional** conventions 1974-1983

- **1993 Recommendation**

- Europe revision 1997 **Lisbon Convention**, now embedded in Bologna Process

- **Asia-Pacific and Africa Conventions** not in force yet

- Preparations for LA and Global Convention ongoing

# Background: Evaluation

- **Purpose**: findings and recommendations to inform the development, management and implementation of the new generation of conventions, and feed into a potential future global convention

- **Focus on**:
    - importance and role of conventions,
    - governance and management,
    - effectiveness of UNESCO support.

**Background: Evaluation**

UNESCO

United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Internal Oversight Service

- **Methodology**: desk study; 100 interviews; field missions to Bangkok, Nairobi, Addis Ababa; observation of regional meetings and capacity building events; drawing on experience with other UNESCO Conventions

- **Challenges**: no baseline, lack of data on implementation, lack of statistical data overall; high workload of staff

# Importance and role of the Conventions

Recognition conventions are relevant:

- Mobility of students and workers increasing

- Conventions are the only standard-setting instruments on recognition at regional levels

- Contain provisions for recognition of qualifications of refugees

- Trade agreements and other mechanisms contain provisions on recognition

- Higher Education is now a priority (eg. SDGs, World Bank etc.)

# Relevance / Importance of the Conventions

Challenges:

- Ratification low (with the exception of Europe) – misunderstandings, political concerns, autonomy of universities, long ratification processes.

- Need to include a more complete set of indicators in C/5 (in line with ED Strategy on standard-setting instruments)

# Governance / Management Mechanisms of the Conventions

Europe (1997 Lisbon Conv.): strong governance mechanism (and strong ENIC/NARIC network)

1st generation of Conventions:

Asia & Pacific: governance mechanism functional

Others: not meeting, not facilitating implementation of Conventions

1993 Recommendation:

•   Committee on Conventions and Recommendations

# Management Mechanisms – Findings

Monitoring and reporting:

- Monitoring and reporting on first generation of Conventions largely insufficient
- This is one of the main challenges encountered in the standard-setting work on recognition
- Exception Asia & Pacific: some follow up happening
- Exception Europe: recent monitoring initiative.

# Management Mechanisms – Lessons

- Monitoring mechanism needs to be improved: indicators, objectives, time-lines, periodic reporting to feed into Committee decisions

- Evolving guidelines ensure that conventions remain relevant

- Continuity of Committee, Secretariat activities during the year is essential

- Committee / Bureau / Chair / Networks need TOR, workplans

- Involvement of a variety of stakeholders needed (Academia, students, RECs, private sector)

- Importance of networks

- Cooperation / exchange between convention secretariats important

# UNESCO Support – Achievements

- Ongoing Secretariat support to existing Conventions governance mechanisms and meetings (Europe, Asia & Pacific)
- Provides co-Secretariat to ENIC Network
- Involvement in Bologna follow-up group (Diploma Supplement)
- Development of two revised conventions (Asia & Pacific, Africa)
- Efforts towards revised LA Convention, Global Convention ongoing
- Knowledge exchange between regions (good practice)
- Increased awareness of Ministries of Education, Parliamentarians (Africa)
- Tools (e.g. Guidelines for National Information Centres) etc.

**Internal Oversight Service**

- Convention Secretariats lack capacities
- Workload likely to increase in the future
- Lack of a 'compelling story' that responds to sub-regional context
- Achievements not always sustained over time
- FOs (other than Convention Secretariats) not much involved in recognition work
- Main partner remains education sector

# UNESCO support – Way Forward

- Ensure continued relevance of the Conventions to all stakeholders
  - Explore relevance of Conventions to regional / global trade agreements
  - Involve regional organizations in awareness raising
  - Collect data on mobility and recognition that helps demonstrate importance of the Conventions and monitor progress in implementation

- Develop a 'good story' (or several)!

- Raise awareness within UNESCO (FOs)

- Engage stakeholders beyond the education sector (Labour, Foreign Affairs, etc.)

- Strengthen governance of the Conventions

- Improve management and coordination of UNESCO's support activities (HQ – Fos)

# UNESCO support – Way Forward

- Be more strategic:
  - Work with champion countries
  - Identify champions inside UNESCO
  - Use networks (Chairs, NatComs, Academia)
  - Use other networks (Association of Universities network etc.)
  - Identify entry points for advocacy (f.ex. regional meetings of Deans)
  - Long-term fund-raising (vs. piecemeal approach)
  - Alternative modalities of capacity building and advocacy
- Sustain efforts over the years and improve follow-up
- Apply a gender lens to the work on the recognition conventions.

# ED sector follow up on evaluation

- ED Management Response: welcomes IOS evaluation

- Action Plan: pending

- IOS annual follow-up on implementation of Action Plan

- Access the full report on IOS' website:

http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/about-us/how-we-work/accountability/internal-oversight-service/

# Thank you!