



Fifth Session of the Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education 2011 Committee *in conjunction with the* Third Asia Pacific Network of National Information Centres Plenary and the Eighteenth Session of the Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific

The Tokyo Convention

Building a regional community of practice to enhance recognition of qualifications in higher education within Asia-Pacific

22 to 24 November 2023

Preamble

The Asia-Pacific is a unique and diverse region of the world and is home to approximately 60 per cent of the world's population.¹ It also has some of the world's oldest higher education institutions and a large proportion of the world's 235 million higher education enrolments, with East and Southeast Asia alone responsible for one third of these enrolments.² The Asia-Pacific region is experiencing massive student and graduate mobility flows, both physical and virtual. Sustainable, cooperative, and effective mechanisms are required to effectively manage these mobility flows, both within the region and more broadly.

Context

Opportunities for students and graduates to study or work abroad enable individuals and societies to benefit from the ideas, knowledge, and skills gained from other education and training systems. This can provide a wide array of social, cultural, and economic benefits at all levels of society and enable countries to build highly skilled populations. However, the true value of education is only realised when that education is recognised.

Qualifications recognition supports students and graduates to pursue further education and training, and to pursue employment opportunities. Improving access to quality education helps to achieve the Education 2030 agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 4 to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Qualifications recognition also helps to manage differences in education systems and qualifications, while maintaining education standards and minimising unreasonable barriers to mobility.

In an age of green and digital transformation, interconnectedness, globalisation, and rapid change, including political, social, and environmental factors and crises, regional and global cooperation is critical to supporting international mobility, both inbound and outbound, physical, and virtual. Students and graduates need assurance that their studies and qualifications will be assessed in a fair and timely manner and as far as possible recognised, wherever they are from and wherever they are going. This is particularly important with the increasing uptake worldwide of new and diverse forms of learning, which was accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The UNESCO *Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education* (Tokyo Convention) provides a flexible, practical, and sustainable mechanism to fully realise the benefits that education brings to individuals, their families, communities, and societies. It encourages the adoption of best principles and practices, supports an individual's right to an assessment for recognition through a framework for international cooperation focused on increased transparency, information exchange, builds trust, and facilitates well-informed recognition decisions. The Tokyo

¹ United Nation's World Population Prospects 2022.

² UNESCO's Higher Education Global Data Report 2022.

Convention, now in its fifth year of implementation, plays an important role within the Asia-Pacific region, strengthening education, employment, and cultural ties.

The Tokyo Convention is now complemented by the new *Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education* (Global Convention), which entered into force in March 2023 and builds upon the best principles and practices enshrined in the Tokyo Convention. The Global Convention is the first global instrument facilitating interregional mobility and cooperation and reflects the changing education environment and the emergence of new and innovative ways of learning. Strong regional representation is critical to both the Tokyo Convention and the Global Convention's effective implementation.

Actions

To facilitate greater recognition of studies and qualifications, and cooperation within the Asia-Pacific region and more broadly, delegates from the Tokyo Convention States Parties and guests from across the region gathered in Bangkok, Thailand from 22 to 24 November 2023 for the Fifth Session of the Tokyo Convention Committee. The meeting was held in conjunction with the Third APNNIC Plenary and the Eighteenth Session of the Bangkok Convention Committee.

Participants committed to:

- encourage and support countries to sign on to the Tokyo Convention and the new Global Convention to facilitate greater intraregional and interregional mobility and cooperation, to help more countries realise the benefits that the conventions can provide, and to facilitate a strong and well-represented regional network.
- strengthen cooperation, information provision and exchange, and the sharing of experiences to facilitate recognition decisions and address common challenges, which will support student, graduate, and academic mobility, and support individuals to pursue employment opportunities.
- advance a deeper understanding of the diversity of qualifications, education and training systems, quality assurance systems, and qualifications recognition systems within the region, facilitating confidence and trust.
- foster a shared understanding of the Tokyo Convention provisions to ensure qualifications are recognised as fully, widely, and consistently as possible, to minimise barriers to mobility, and to support more complementary recognition arrangements.
- develop a workplan to 2030, which builds on initiatives and work achieved to date and will implement further strategic, practical, and capacity building activities to facilitate effective implementation of the Tokyo Convention.
- develop an action plan to 2030 for the Asia-Pacific Network of National Information Centres (APNNIC), which will support the establishment of a strong, collaborative, and cohesive network and build a regional community of practice.

UNESCO, as the Secretariat and the dedicated UN agency for education, will continue its mandate of attaining quality education and lifelong learning for all, consistent with the Education 2030 Agenda. UNESCO will facilitate information exchange and communication among Member States in the Asia-Pacific region and support the pursuit of commitments made.