

# The Global Convention on Higher Education

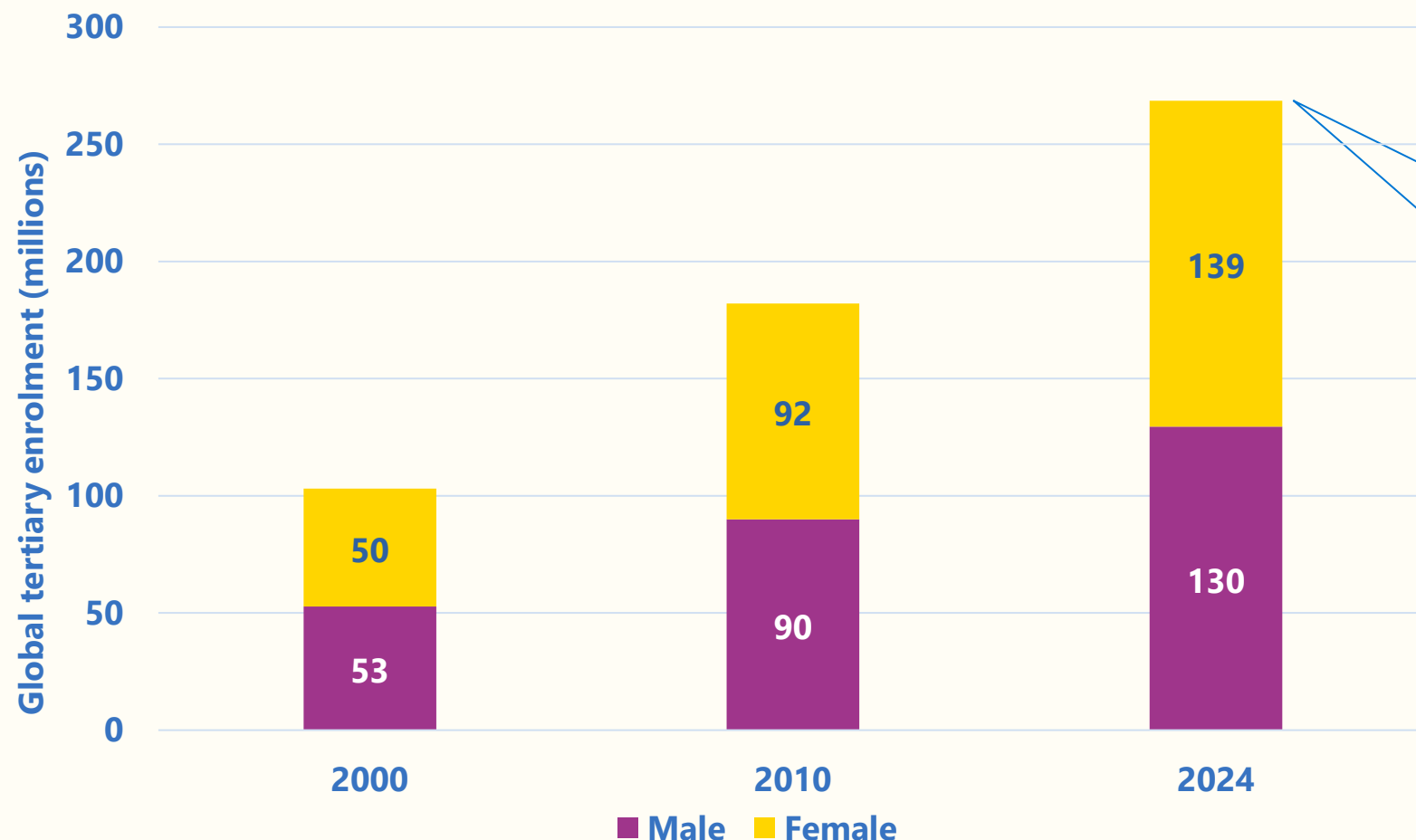
Unlocking global mobility through recognition

Leila Loupis, UNESCO

11 June 2026



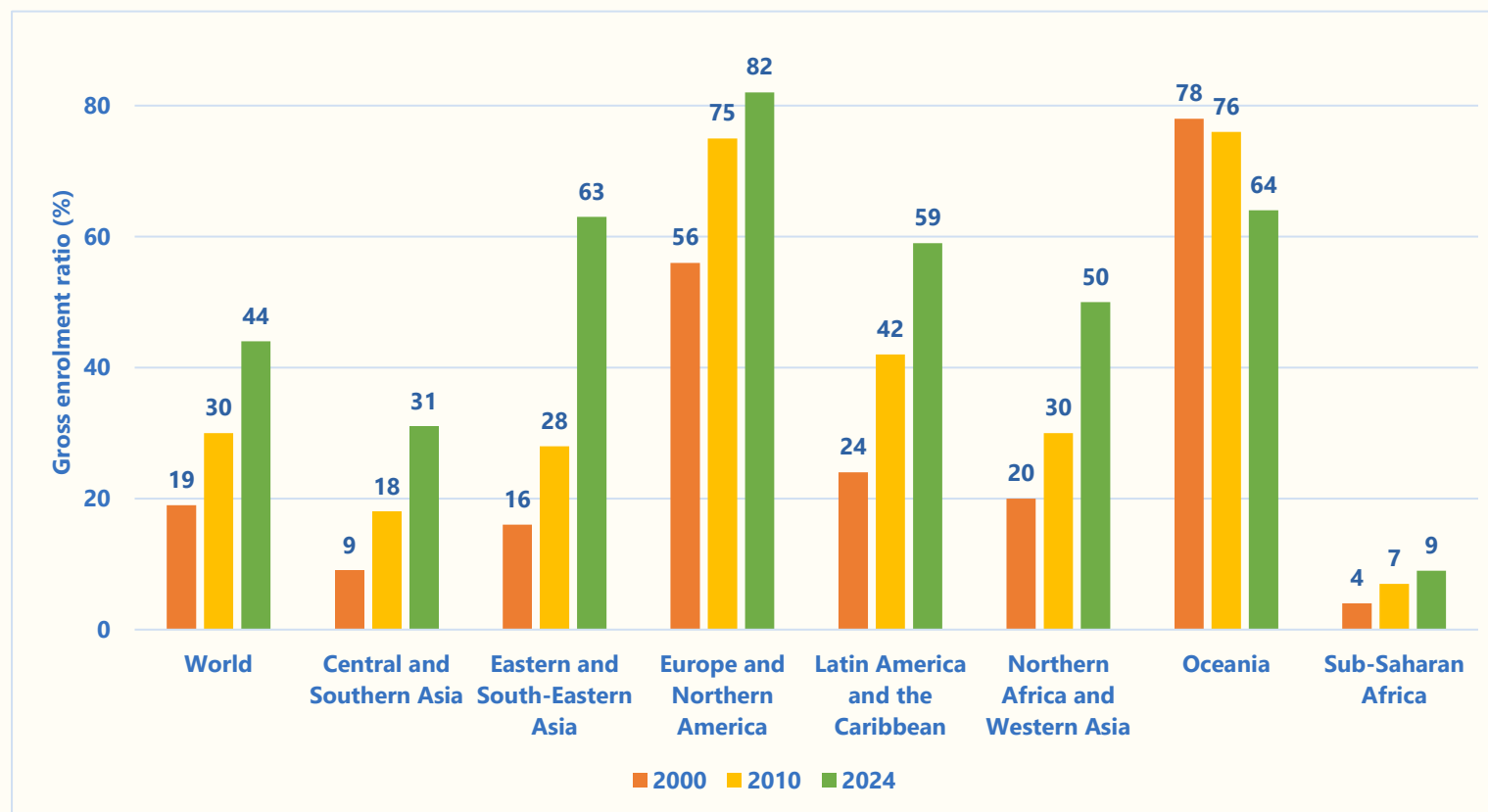
# Global tertiary education enrolment by gender, 2000-2024 (number of students)



The number of students in higher education globally **more than doubled** over the past two decades, rising to **269 million**.

Global tertiary education enrolment: Enrolment in tertiary education, all programmes, both sexes. Individuals officially registered in ISCED 5 - 8 programmes, or stage or module thereof, regardless of age.

# Gross enrolment ratio (%) by region, 2000-2024



## 19% to 44%

The average world's gross **enrolment ratio** for higher education more than **doubled**, increasing from 19% in 2000 to 44% in 2024.

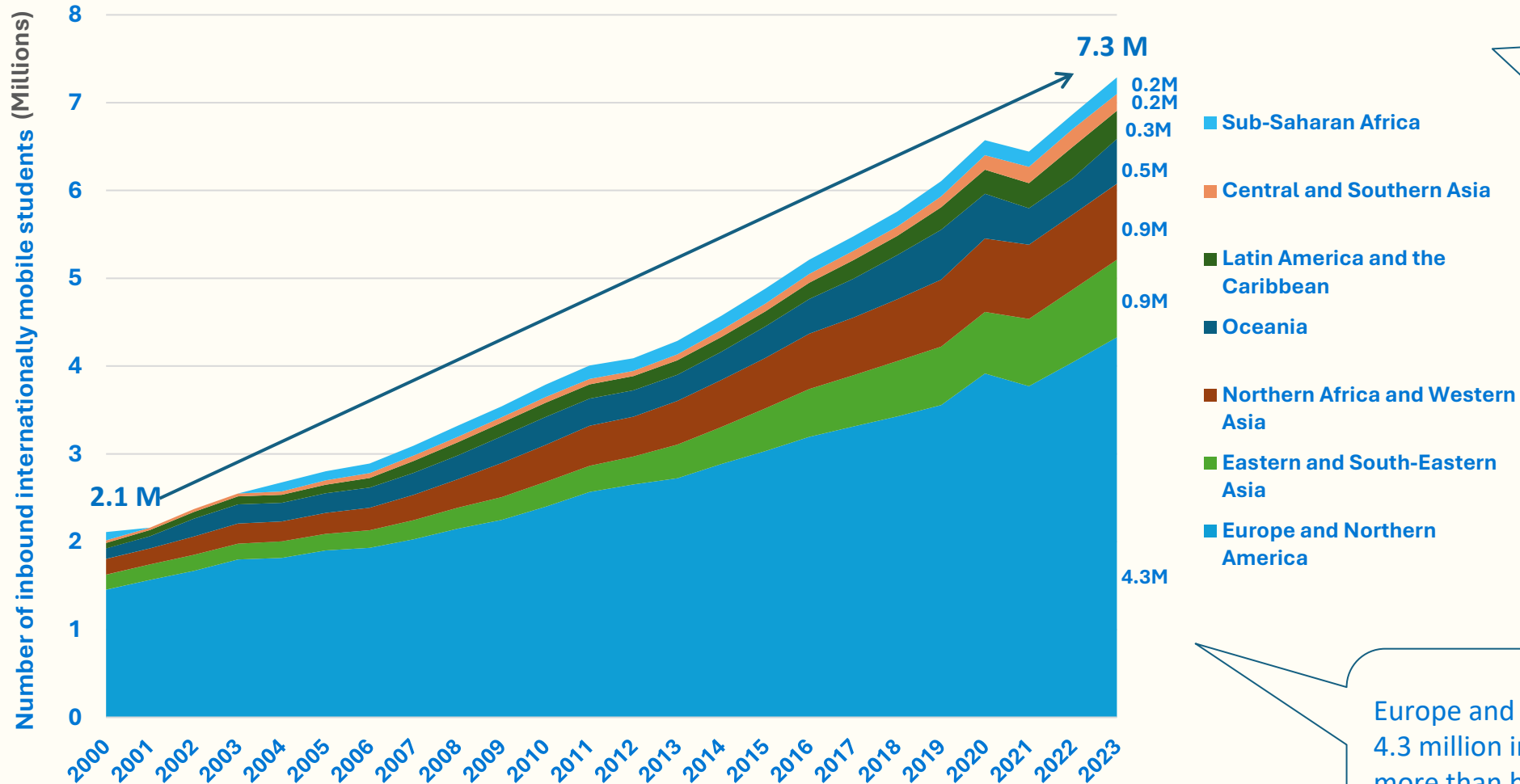
## 82% vs 9%

The global enrolment average masks **large disparities** in access to higher education, with the highest world region at 82% and the lowest at just 9%.

Gross enrolment ratio (GER) for tertiary education, ISCED levels 5 to 8: Total enrolment in tertiary education regardless of age expressed as a percentage of the population in the 5-year age group immediately following upper secondary education.

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

# International mobile students by host region, 2000-2023



The global number of internationally mobile students more than **tripled** during the last two decades, rising from **2.1 million in 2000** to over **7.3 million in 2023**.

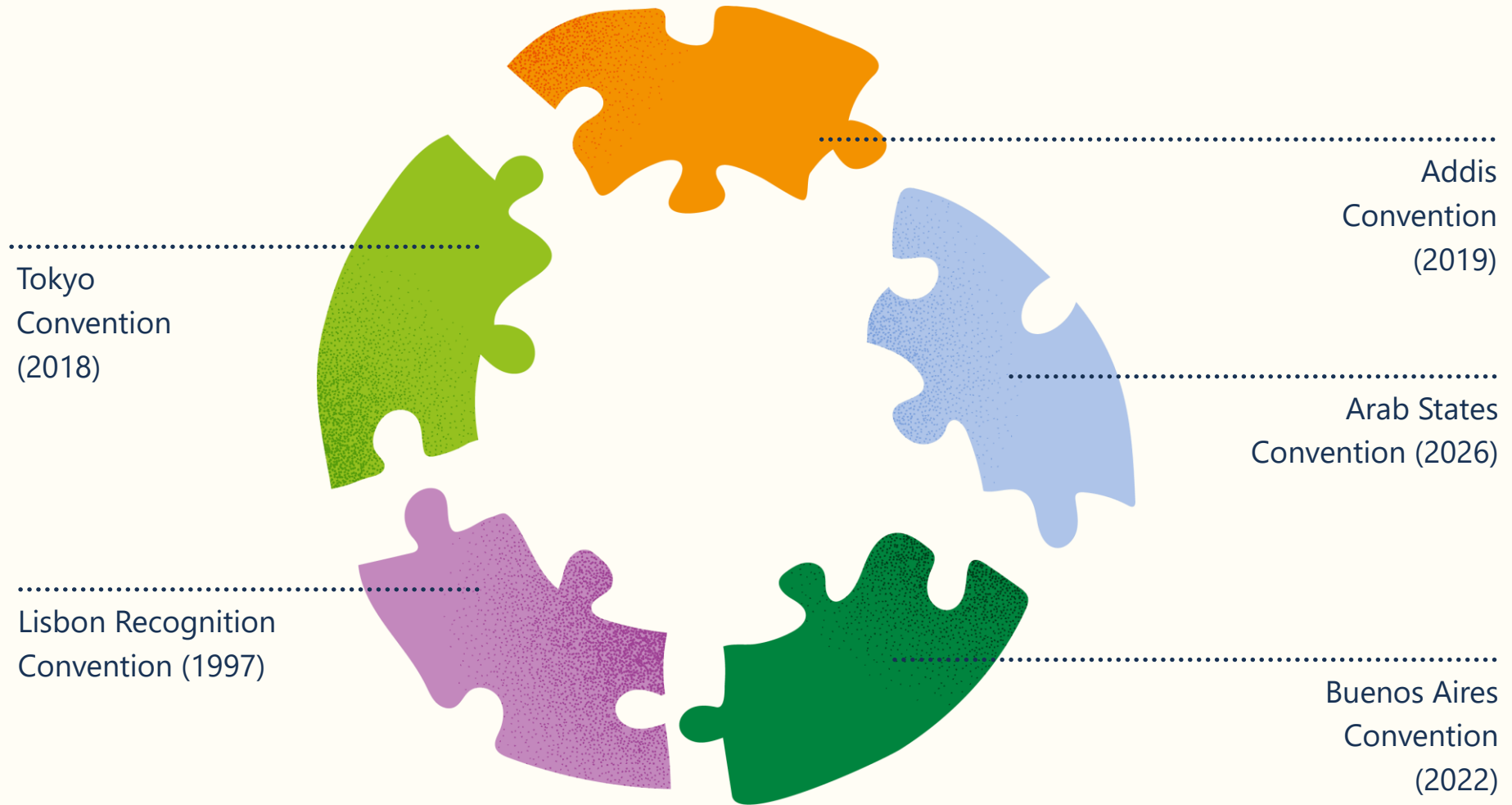
The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted the steady growth of international student mobility, causing a slowdown in 2020 and 2021.

Europe and North America hosted 4.3 million international students in 2023, more than half of the world's internationally mobile students

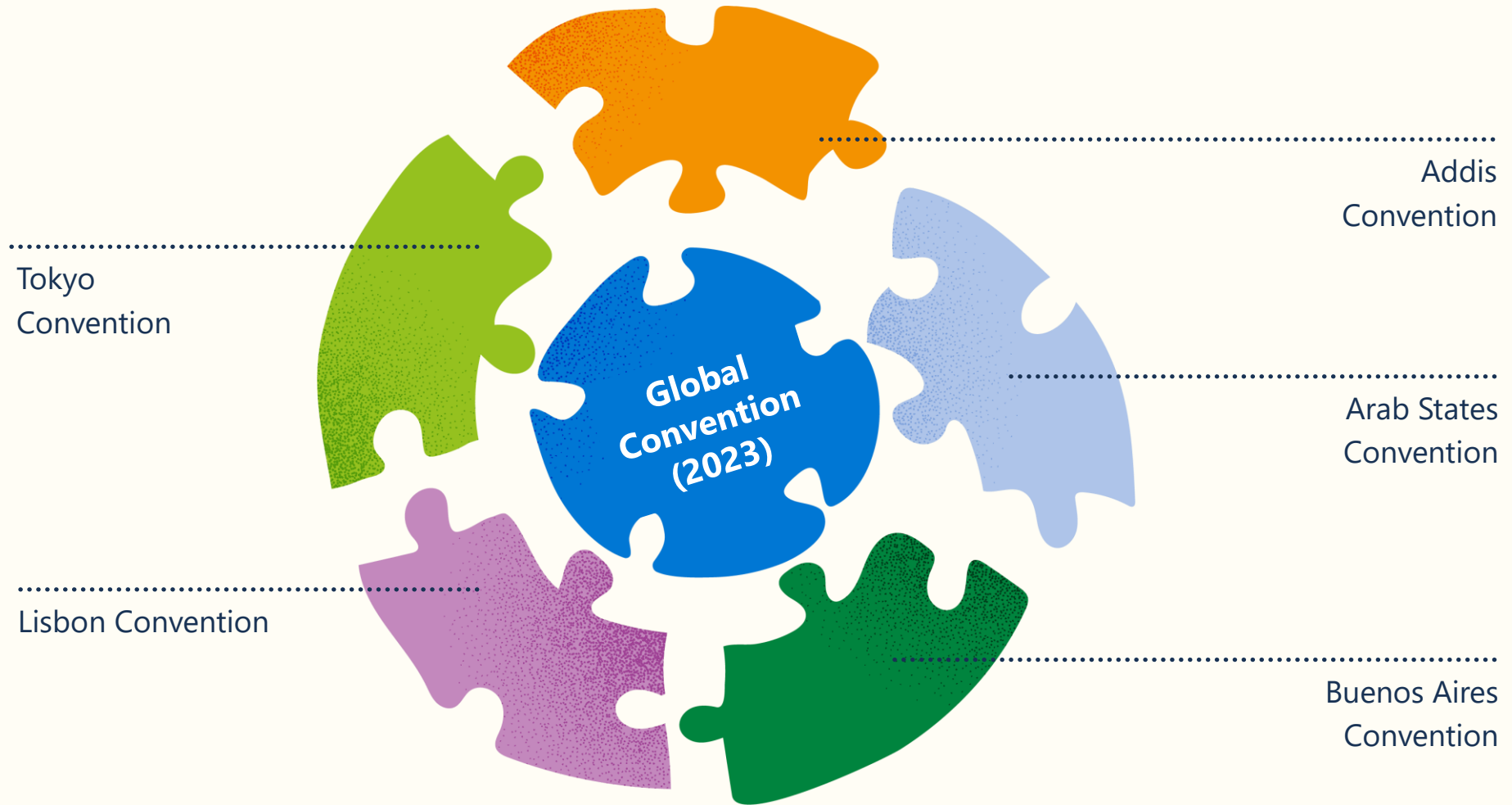
Internationally mobile students are individuals who have physically crossed an international border between two countries with the objective to participate in educational activities in the country of destination, where the country of destination of a given student is different from their country of origin.

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

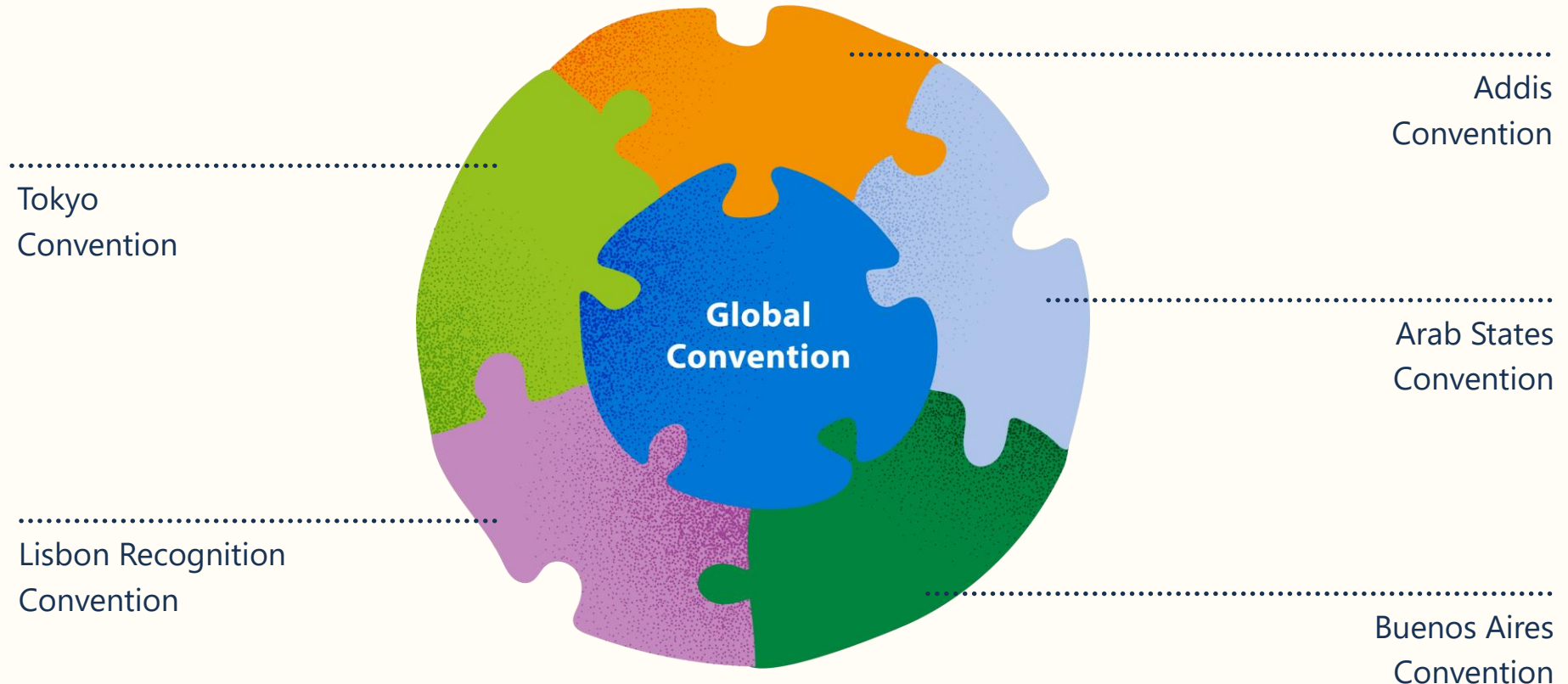
# Linkages between global and regional conventions



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# Global Convention: 41 States Parties and growing



**2.2 million (30%)**

of the world's 7.3 million mobile students are hosted by the States Parties



**20+ Member States**

Are reported to be well-advanced with ratification procedures, including countries in all UNESCO regions



**Regional conventions**

37 out of 41 countries that ratified the Global Convention are States Parties to one or more regional conventions

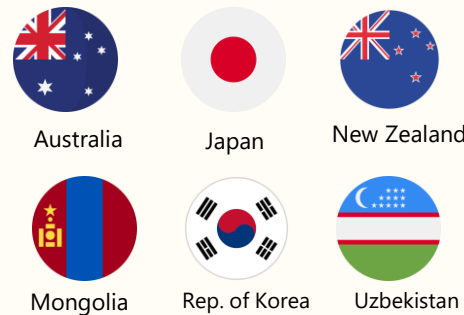
## Africa



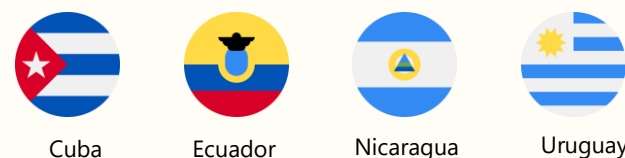
## Arab States



## Asia and the Pacific



## Latin America and the Caribbean



## Europe



# Qualifications recognition under the conventions



Facilitates mobility through international cooperation



Provides an inclusive framework for fair recognition



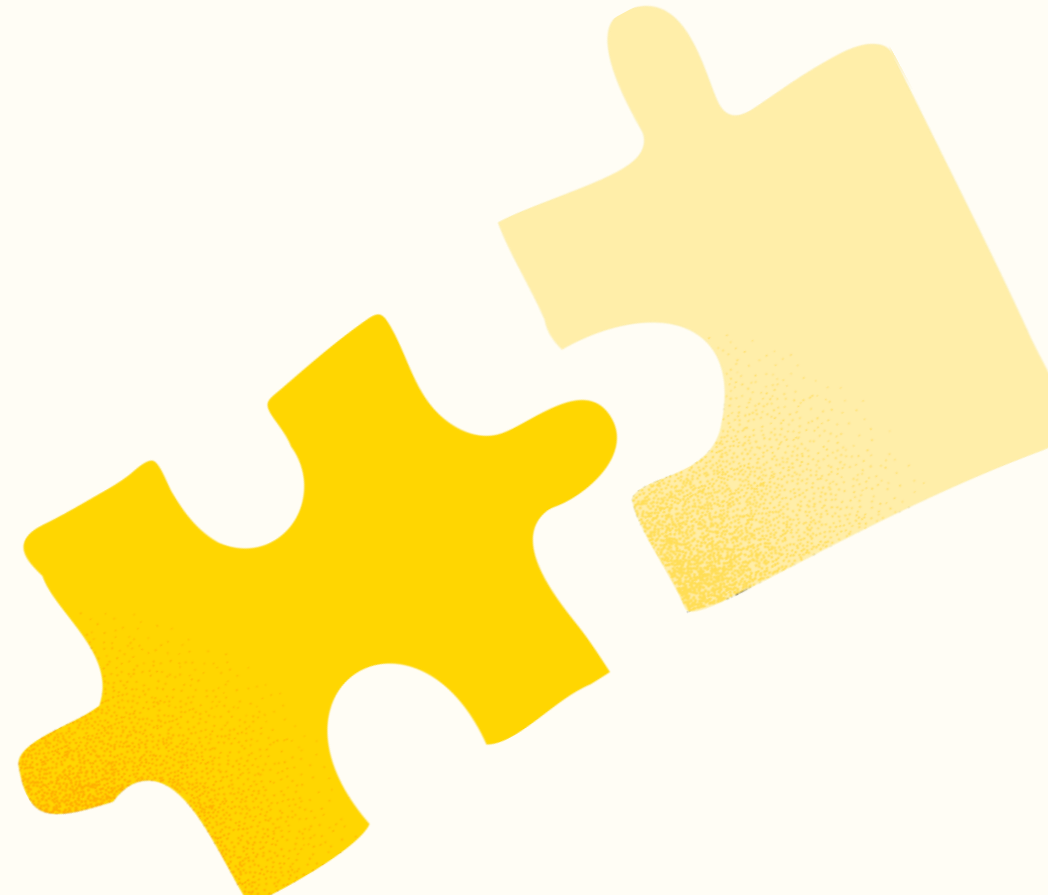
Does not require automatic recognition



Respects domestic laws and Institutional autonomy

# Benefits of the Global Convention on Higher Education

- Inter-regional coordination to advance international cooperation in higher education
- Building a global higher education policy space of exchange and dialogue
- Complementing and enhancing the cohesion among regional conventions

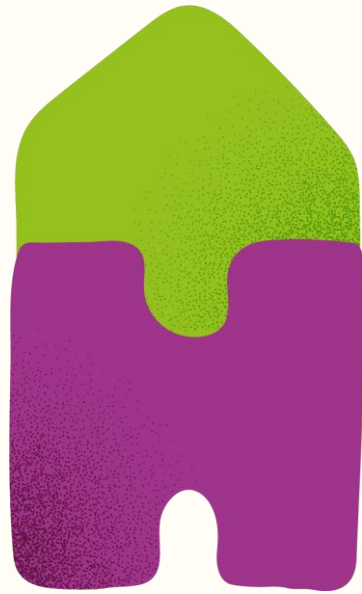


# Benefits of the Global Convention on Higher Education



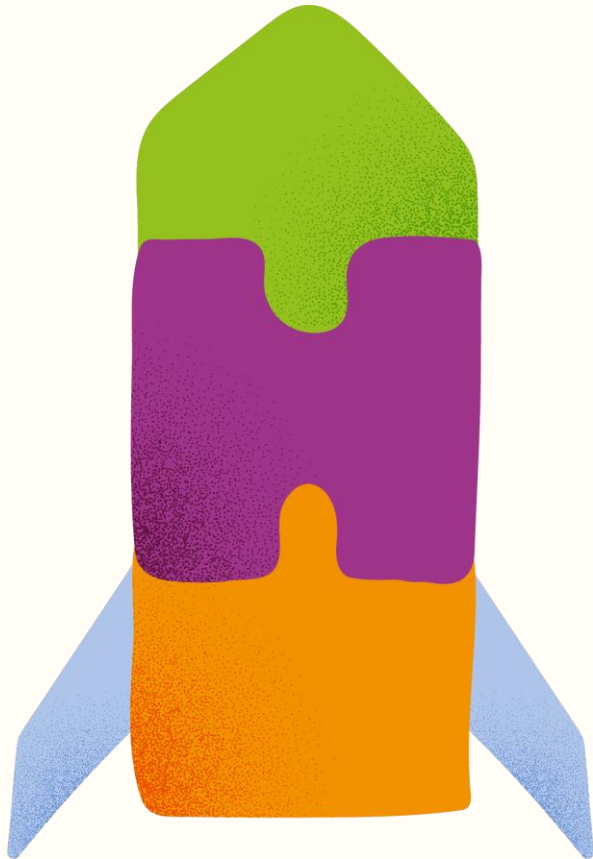
## Students

- Facilitates mobility access to higher education internationally
- Supports entry into the labour markets
- Helps refugees and displaced persons access opportunities



## Institutions

- Enhances education quality and builds trust in institutions
- Foster international cooperation in education, research and innovation
- Diversifies mobile student, faculty, and researcher populations

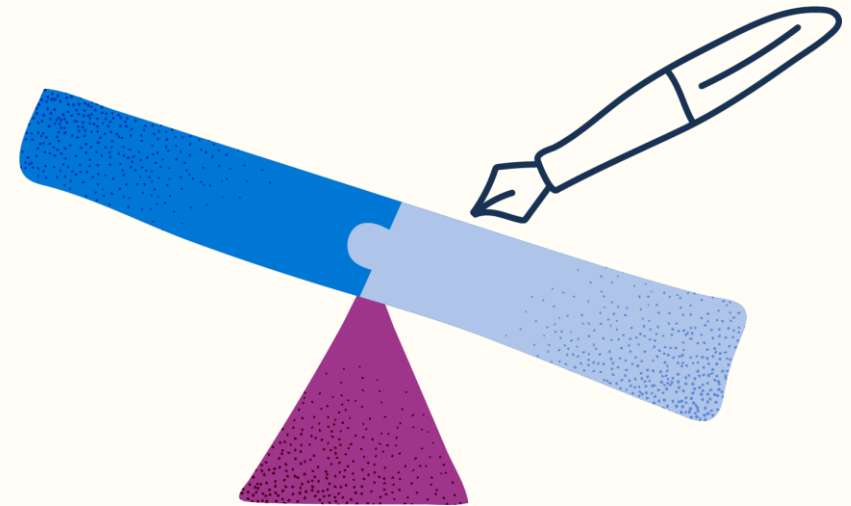


## States Parties

- Facilitates access to inbound, outbound and circular/return mobility
- Strengthens international cooperation on recognition practices in higher education
- Supports academic exchange, research and innovation
- Fosters trust and confidence in the quality and reliability of qualifications.
- Promotes inclusion and lifelong learning by recognizing diverse learning pathways
- Provides guidance on recognizing refugees' and displaced persons qualifications
- Promotes the sharing of accessible, up-to-date, reliable, information on HE qualifications and systems.
- Enables participation in global policy dialogue on emerging issues

## Fairness and transparency

The Global Convention requires that procedures and criteria for the recognition of qualifications be fair, transparent, and non-discriminatory. It states that recognition decisions should be based on reliable information, clear criteria, and reasonable timeframes.



## Quality assurance

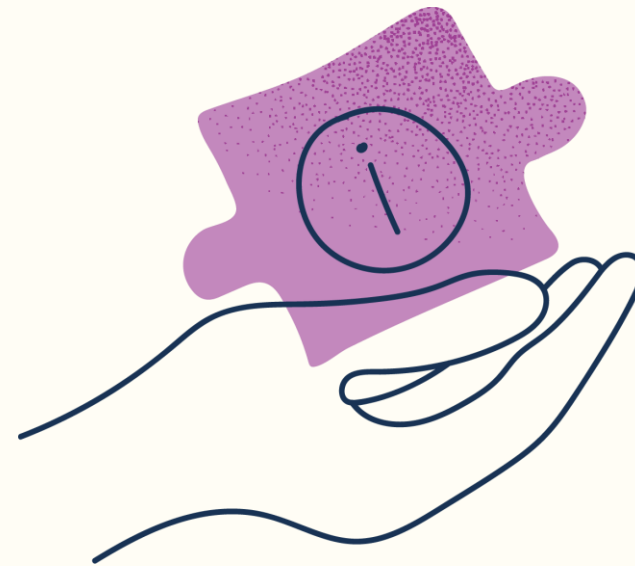
- Quality assurance plays a fundamental role in promoting access to higher education learning opportunities, upholding academic standards, and ensuring the credibility of qualifications.
- To strengthen quality assurance, the Global Convention on Higher Education aims to:
  - Promote a **culture** of quality assurance in higher education systems
  - Develop **capacities** for reliability, consistency and complementarity in quality assurance practices
  - Encourage State Parties to provide **accurate information** about their quality assurance mechanisms



## Information provision

To ensure individuals' right to assessment of their qualifications, States Parties should:

- Create and/or ensure they have **national information centres/national implementation structures** to ensure the transparency of the recognition systems
- Provide access to relevant, accurate and up to date information about its higher education system, qualifications, etc.
- Where possible, use technology to ensure easy access to information



# Qualifications recognition of refugees and displaced persons

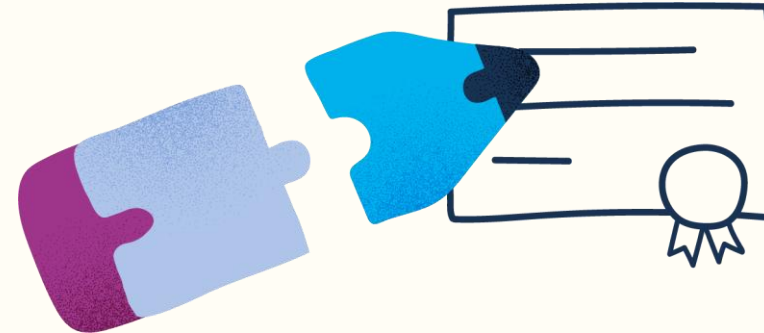
Each State Party must do what is possible, within its own education system and laws, to create fair and practical ways to help refugees and displaced people have their qualifications recognized to enter higher education, continue their studies, or enter the workforce— even when they cannot provide documents to prove their previous studies, learning, or qualifications from another country.





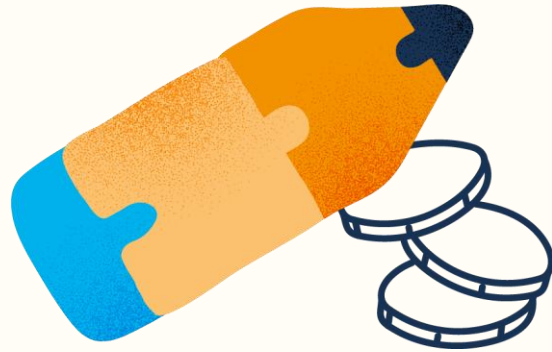
## Substantial difference

Significant differences between the foreign qualification and the qualification of the State Party which would most likely prevent the applicant from succeeding in a desired activity, such as, but not limited to, further study, research activities, or employment opportunities.



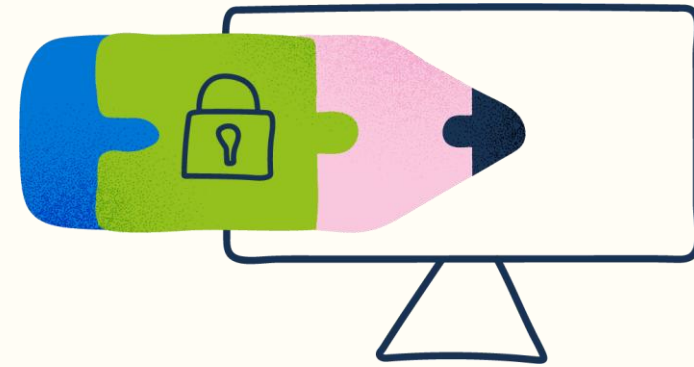
## Partial recognition

Recognition of a full and completed qualification which cannot be fully recognized on account of the demonstration of substantial differences by a competent recognition authority.



## Affordability

Assessment should be fair, transparent and affordable, and provided in a non-discriminatory and professional manner. In case an assessment is not provided free of charge, the cost of the assessment should be affordable, and should not impede applicants from applying and/or seeking recognition.



## Fraud prevention through the use of technology

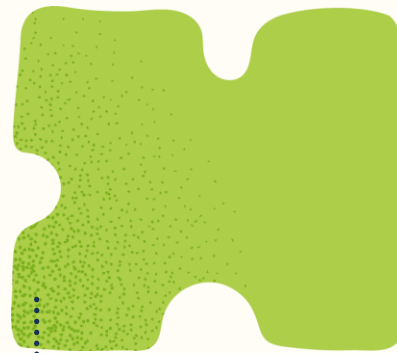
States Parties commit to adopting measures to eradicate all forms of fraudulent practices regarding higher education qualifications by encouraging the use of contemporary technologies and networking activities among States Parties.

# Addis Convention – 14 States parties

**Ratified by:**

	Burkina Faso		Mauritius
	Cabo Verde		Mauritania
	Congo Brazzaville		Senegal
	Djibouti		Seychelles
	Gambia		South Africa
	Guinée		Togo
	Holy See		Zambia

- Adopted by UNESCO Member States in December 2014 and entered into force in **December 2019**.
- It establishes a legal framework for the fair and transparent recognition of higher education diplomas in Africa.
- 14 States Parties (Africa and the Holy See).
- The 3rd session of the Convention Committee was held in Marrakesh in December 2025.
- The **African Network of National Implementation Structures (ANNIS)** was launched in September 2022 and the Charter and Guidelines adopted in Marrakech,
- The 2026-2027 work plan, which is part of Campus Africa, focuses on cooperation through the regional network, capacity building and quality assurance.

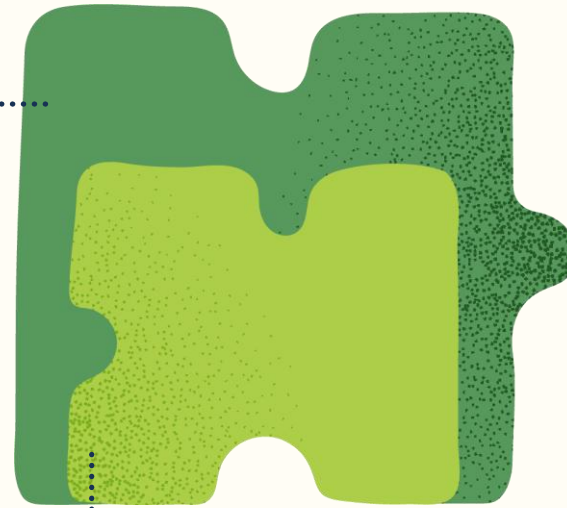


## National

- National implementation structures/information centres
- Competent recognition authorities

## Regional

- Regional Recognition Convention Committees (Representatives of States Parties)
- Bureau (Chairperson, Vice-Chairpersons, Rapporteur)
- Regional networks of national implementation structures (e.g. ENIC/NARIC, APNNIC, CINALC, ANNIS)



## National

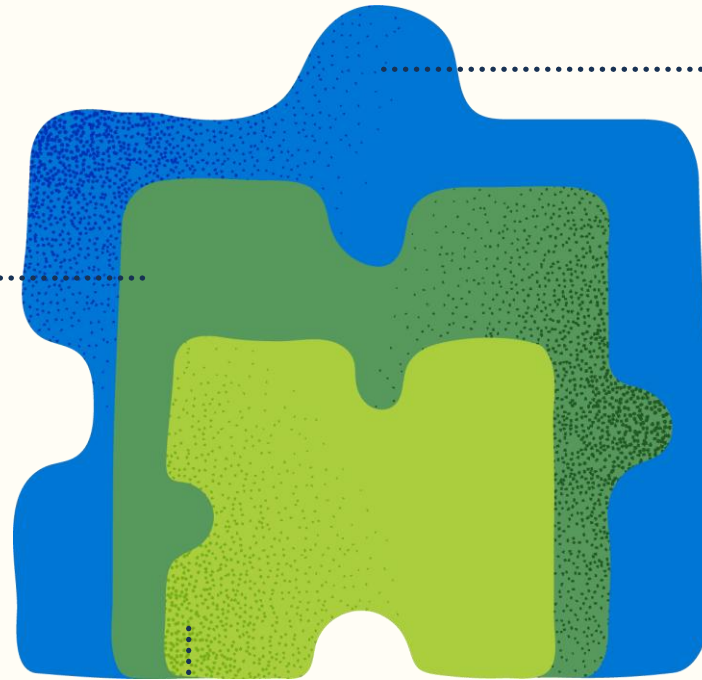
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# Implementation structures and cooperation

*Global, regional, and national organizations for accreditation, quality assurance, qualification frameworks, and recognition of qualifications.*

## Regional

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- Bureau (Chairperson, Vice-Chairpersons, Rapporteur)
- Regional networks of national implementation structures (e.g. ENIC/NARIC, APNNIC, CINALC, ANNIS)
- Secretariat



## Global

- Intergovernmental Conference of the States Parties (Representatives of States Parties, Heads of Regional Conventions)
- Bureau (Chairperson, Vice-Chairpersons, Rapporteur)
- Networks of National Information Centres
- Working Groups
- Secretariat

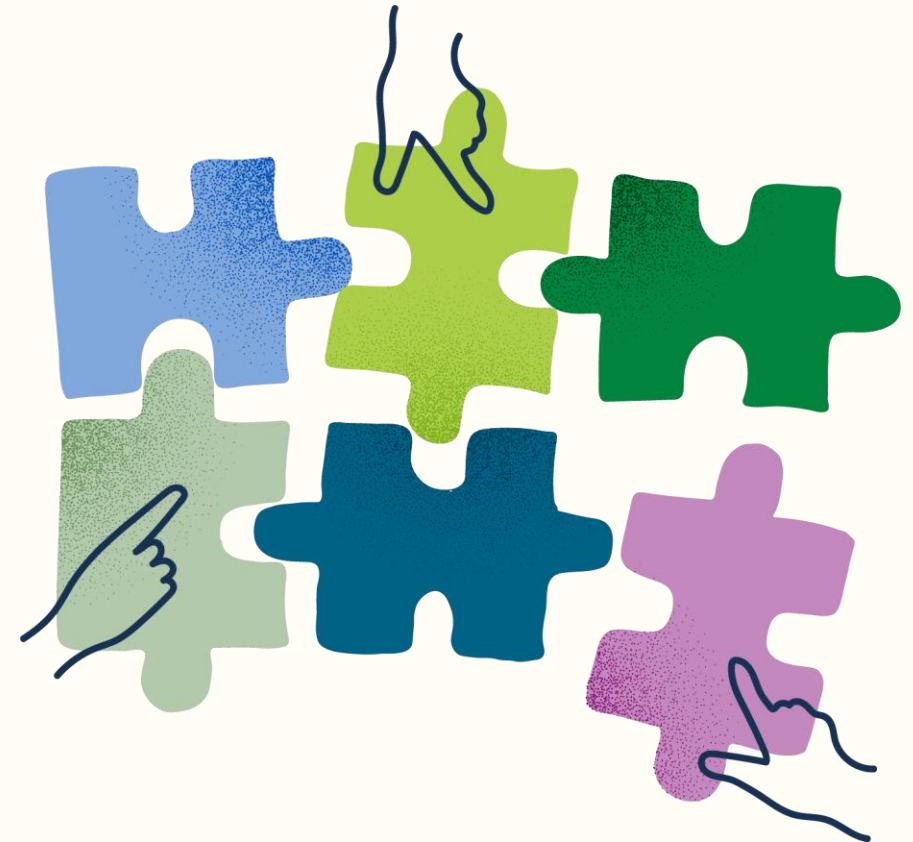
## National

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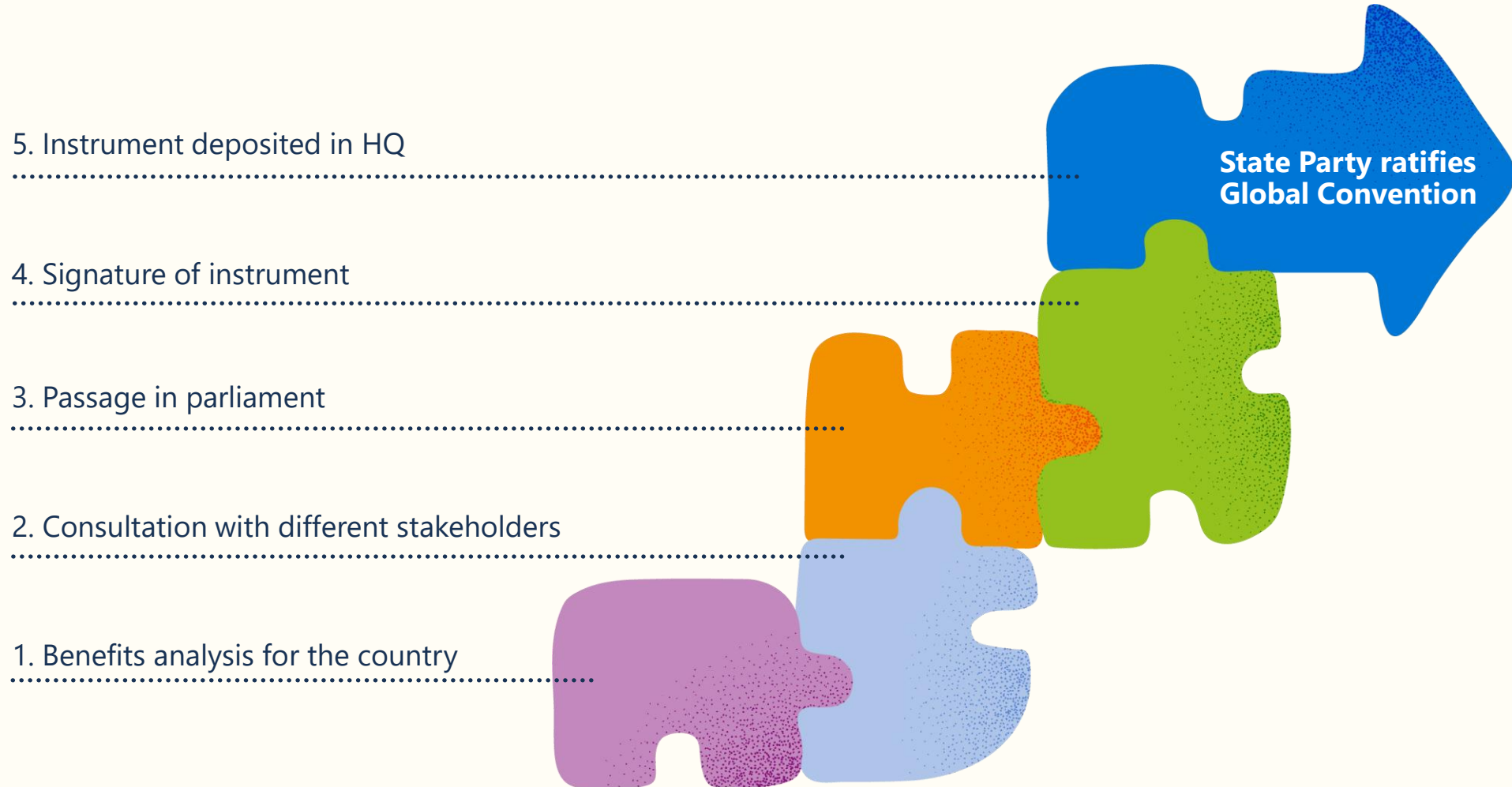
Operating under the auspices of the regional conferences/committees, **Networks of National Implementation Structures** are mandated to facilitate the practical application of the Convention through information exchange, capacity building, and technical assistance provided upon request.

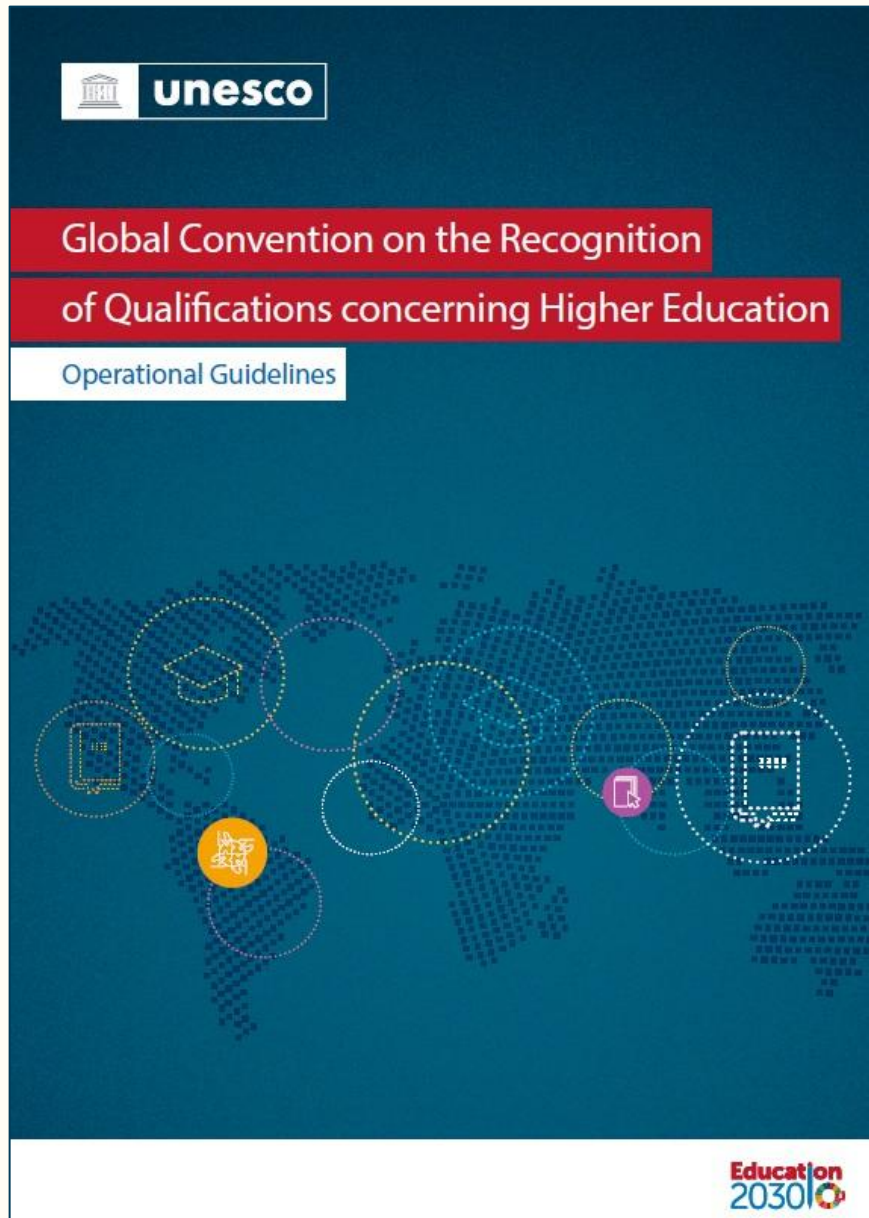
They aim to:

- Strengthen inter-regional cooperation, building trust between systems, and providing guidance and capacity to stakeholders.
- Facilitate the fair, transparent and consistent recognition of qualifications by sharing information, good practices and expertise among national authorities and institutions.



# Global Convention ratification process

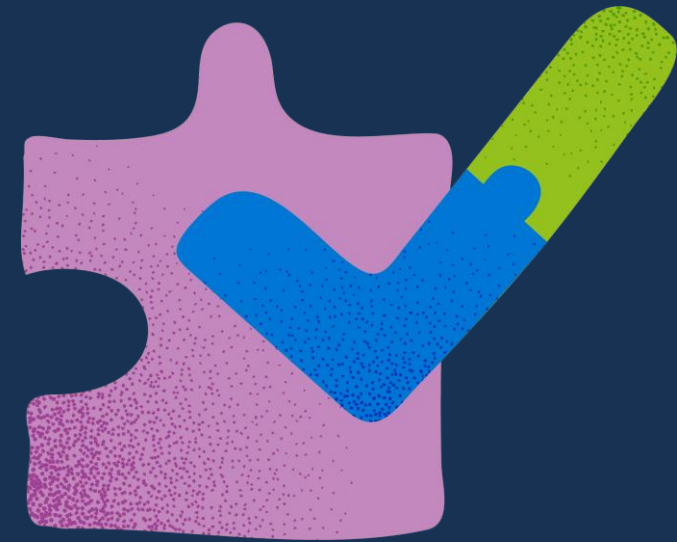




- **Operational Guidelines**  
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000395680.locale=en>
- **What is the Global Convention on Higher Education?** (benefits, how to ratify it, how to implement it)  
[www.unesco.org/en/education/higher-education/global-convention/about](http://www.unesco.org/en/education/higher-education/global-convention/about)
- **A Practical Guide to Recognition**  
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374905>
- **Resolutions** Intergovernmental Conference of the States Parties to the Global Convention  
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000386727> and  
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000389637>
- **Regional recognition conventions**  
[www.unesco.org/en/higher-education/conventions](http://www.unesco.org/en/higher-education/conventions)
- **Model instrument of ratification** for all UNESCO conventions  
[www.unesco.org/en/node/66846](http://www.unesco.org/en/node/66846)

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# THANK YOU



**For more information:**

<https://www.unesco.org/en/higher-education/global-convention>