



1st Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM1)
in Bucharest, Romania on 18-19 November 2025



Asia-Europe Meeting

ASEM Education

Workshop A Regional cooperation processes and their role in shaping and transforming higher education

Moderator: **Horia Oniță**, Head of the European Higher Education Area Secretariat (Romania)

Speakers:

- ✦ **Elisa Petrucci**, Co-chair of the European Higher Education Area's Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue and Head of International Cooperation and Policy Development Department at CIMEA, Italy
- ✦ **Christelle Mae Agustin**, Programme Officer at SEAMEO RIHED (Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation-Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development)
- ✦ **Nilinthone Sacklokhom**, Academic Officer at the Ministry of Education and Sports, Lao PDR

Rapporteur: **Cleo Cachapero**, Asia-Europe Foundation

Political and policy priorities in the European Higher Education Area

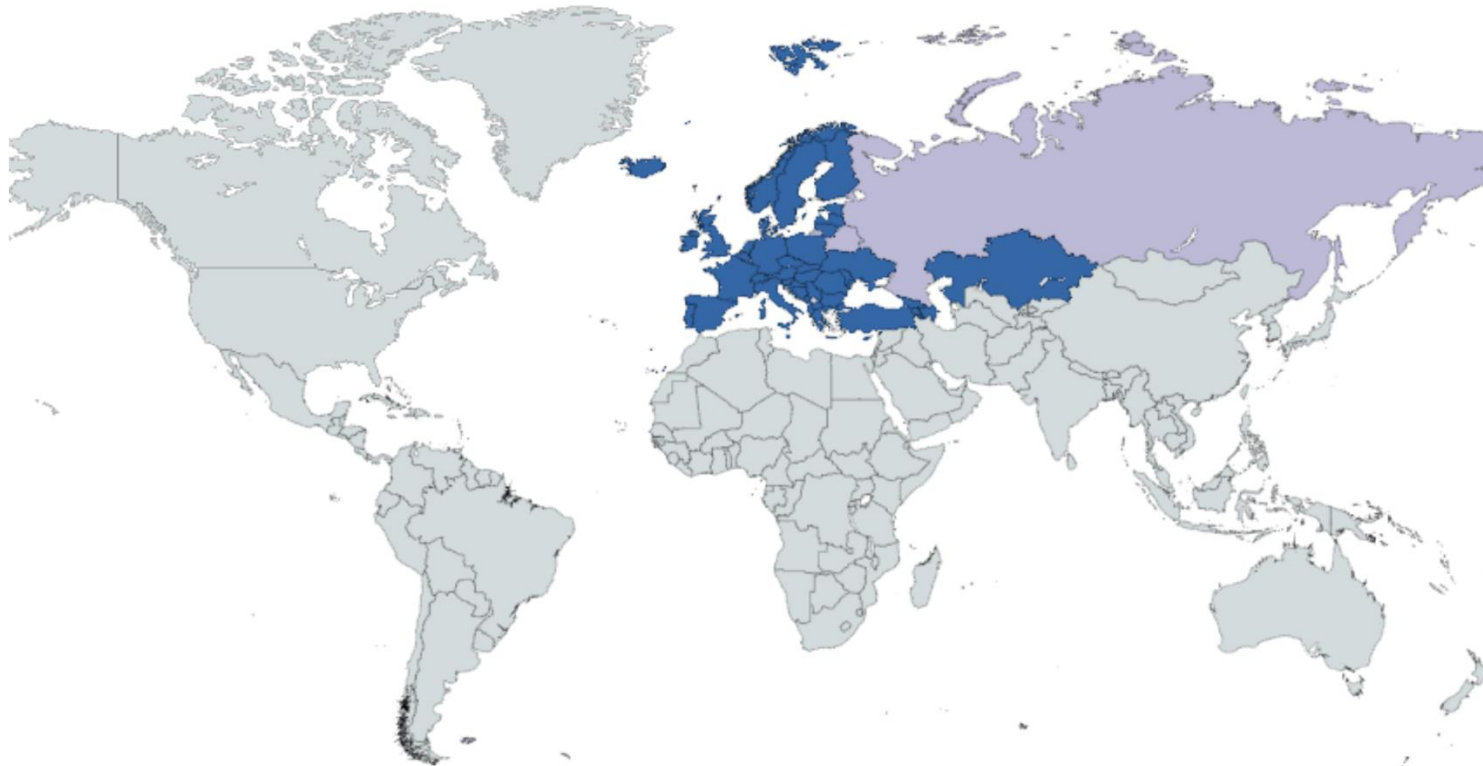
Horia-Șerban Onița
Head of the EHEA Secretariat

18th of November 2025

ASEM Education 1st Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM1)



About the EHEA



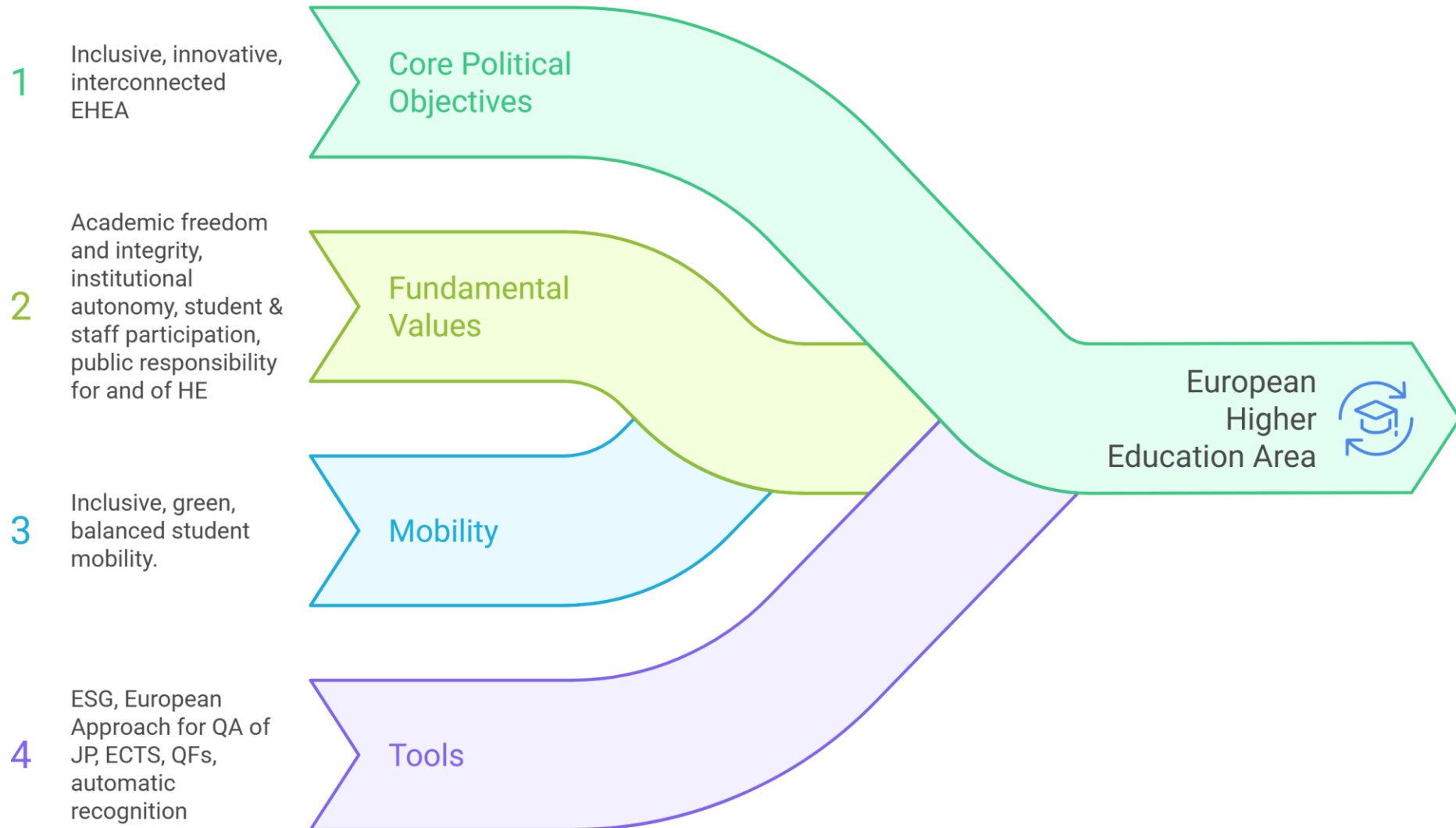
**TIRANA
EHEA MINISTERIAL
CONFERENCE**

29 - 30 MAY 2024

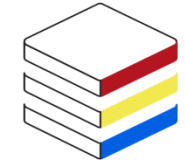


Co-funded by the
European Union

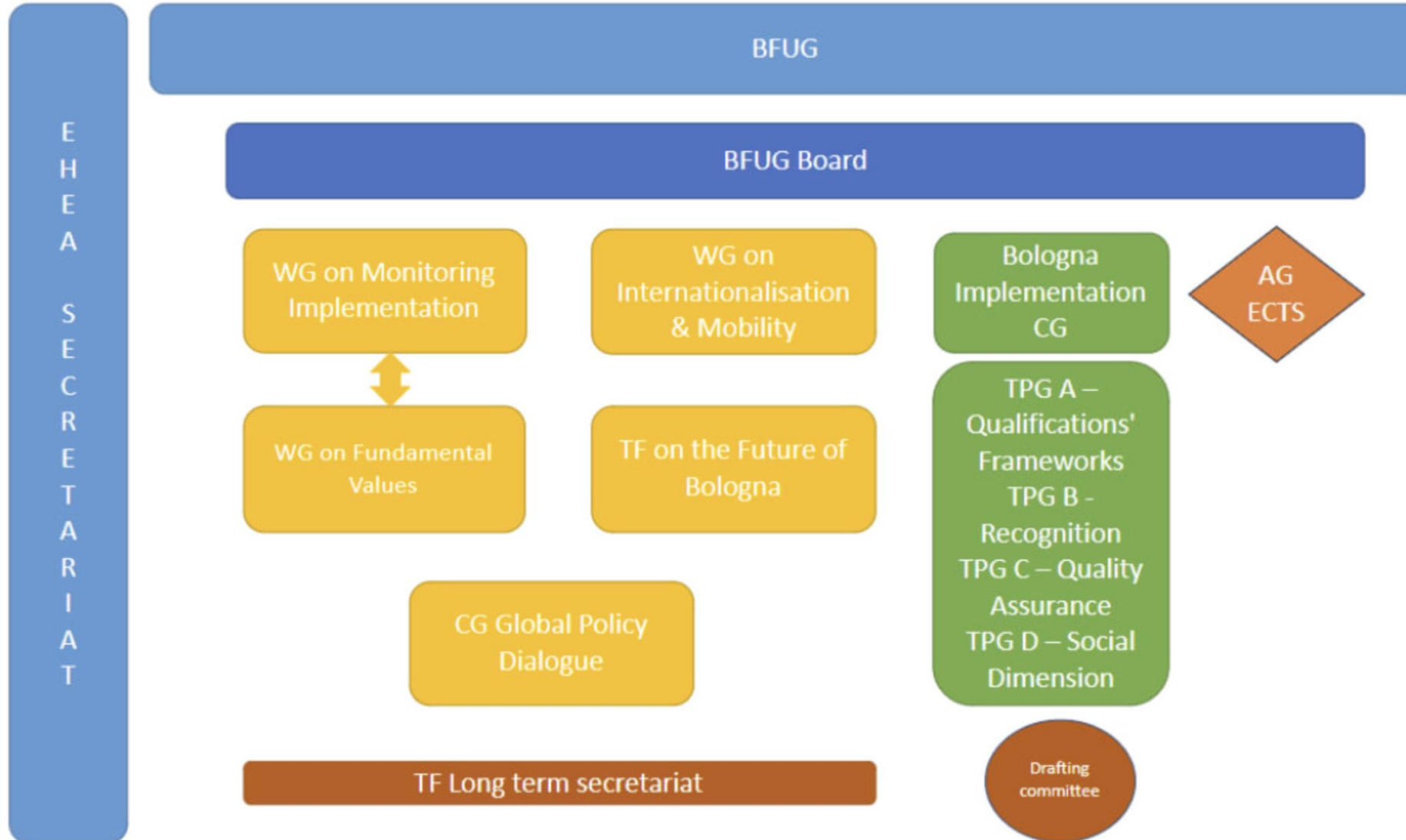
EHEA priorities



EHEA priorities

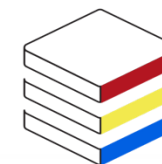


EHEA
Secretariat



Co-funded by the
European Union

EHEA priorities



EHEA
Secretariat

The Bologna Process: from Sorbonne, 1998 to Paris, 2018

Mobility of students and teachers	Mobility also for researchers and administrative staff	Social dimension of mobility	Portability of loans and grants	Attention to visa and work permits	Attention also to pension systems and recognition	Target: 20 % graduate mobility by 2020	Explore path to automatic recognition of academic qualifications		Student digital data exchange
A common two-cycle degree system	Easily readable and comparable degrees	Fair recognition Development of joint degrees	Inclusion of doctoral level as third cycle	QF-EHEA adopted National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) launched	NQFs by 2010	NQFs by 2012	Roadmaps for countries without NQF	Implementation of key commitments	Short cycle as a stand-alone qualification level Revised Diploma Supplement
		Social dimension	Equal access	Reinforcement of the social dimension	National action plans	National targets for the social dimension to be measured by 2020	Widening access and completion rates	Social inclusion	Inclusion of under-represented and vulnerable groups
		Lifelong learning (LLL)	Alignment of national LLL policies Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)	Flexible learning paths	Partnerships to improve employability	LLL as a public responsibility Focus on employability	Enhance employability, LLL and entrepreneurial skills through cooperation with employers	Employability	Combine academic and work-based learning
Use of credits	A system of credits (ECTS)	ECTS and Diploma Supplement (DS)	ECTS for credit accumulation		Coherent use of tools and recognition practices	Implementation of Bologna tools	Ensure that Bologna tools are based on learning outcomes	Adoption of ECTS Users Guide	
	European cooperation in quality assurance (QA)	Cooperation between QA and recognition professionals	QA at institutional, national and European level	European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance (ESG) adopted	Creation of the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR)	Quality as an overarching focus for EHEA	Allow EQAR registered agencies to perform their activities across the EHEA	Adoption of revised ESG and European Approach to QA of joint programmes	Ensure compliance with ESG 2015 Promote European Approach for QA of joint programmes
Europe of Knowledge	European dimensions in higher education	Attractiveness of the EHEA	Links between higher education and research areas	International co-operation on the basis of values and sustainable development	Strategy to improve the global dimension of the Bologna Process adopted	Enhance global policy dialogue through Bologna Policy Fora	Evaluate implementation of 2007 global dimension strategy		Develop synergies between EHEA – ERA
								Learning and Teaching: Relevance and quality	Innovation and Inclusion in Learning and Teaching Digitalisation and digital skills
								Sustainable Development	Support to UNSDGs
1998 Sorbonne Declaration	1999 Bologna Declaration	2001 Prague Communiqué	2003 Berlin Communiqué	2005 Bergen Communiqué	2007 London Communiqué	2009 Leuven/ Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué	2012 Bucharest Communiqué	2015 Yerevan Communiqué	2018 Paris Communiqué



Co-funded by the
European Union

Tirana Ministerial Communiqué 2024



- As in Paris in 2018, we today reaffirm our **three key commitments** to be preconditions for the successful development and innovation of the EHEA, that is to:
- implement a **three-cycle system** of programmes and degrees, based on **learning outcomes** and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), compatible with the overarching qualifications framework of the EHEA (QF-EHEA);
 - support the recognition of qualifications throughout the EHEA by implementing the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (**Lisbon Recognition Convention**) and its principles, while working towards **automatic recognition** in the EHEA; and
 - promote a **quality culture in higher education**, fostered by fit-for-purpose quality assurance processes in line with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).



Co-funded by the
European Union



Tirana Ministerial Communiqué 2024

- The 2024 Bologna Process Implementation Report confirms and illustrates the still **incomplete and uneven implementation** of these key commitments, but also the important contribution of the Thematic Peer Groups under the guidance of the Bologna Implementation Coordination Group in improving the situation.
- Therefore, we commit to ensuring that we have, or will devise, and will publish appropriate **action plans** to address any **remaining implementation gaps**, and to promoting knowledge-sharing activities related to the EHEA.
- As the **Bologna Process tools** have developed throughout the last decade, we mandate the BFUG to work on their **future-proof development**, dissemination and **possible expansion**.



Co-funded by the
European Union



EHEA
Secretariat



Other commitments:

- We reaffirm our commitment to making **automatic recognition of qualifications and learning periods** abroad a reality for all students and graduates,
- We commit to supporting **transnational cooperation**, including for joint programmes and joint degrees, through better implementation of the **key commitments** and by removing undue administrative and legal barriers.
- We will also promote **more robust and transparent quality assurance of transnational education** delivered worldwide, in line with the ESG, to protect the interests of students;
- We are committed to countering **diploma and accreditation mills, fraudulent qualifications and academic cheating services**, made more accessible through developments in the digital field
- We commit to measuring progress in the implementation of the **Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension** of Higher Education in the EHEA
- We commit to supporting the **ethical, trustworthy, responsible, and rights-based use of AI** in learning and teaching
- We reaffirm our commitment to **enabling all learners to acquire international and intercultural competencies (...)** and achieve the benchmark of **at least 20% of mobile students**.

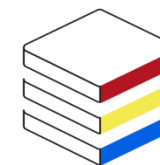


For adoption in Iași-Chișinău Ministerial Conference (26-27 May 2027):

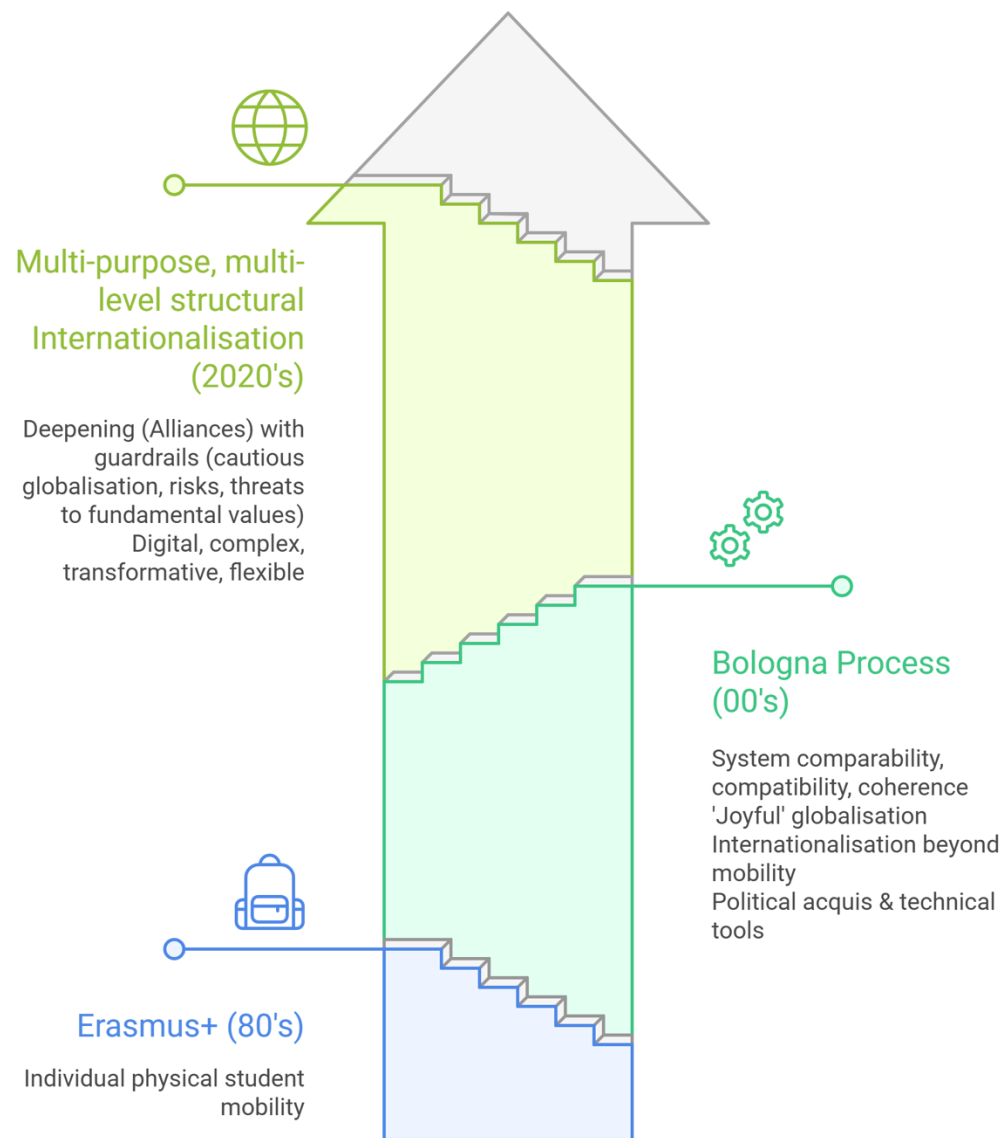
- Revised Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in EHEA
- Revised European Approach for the Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes
- Revised ECTS User's Guide
- 2027 Bologna Process Implementation Report
- Action Plan on Internationalisation and Mobility
- First monitoring exercise of the six fundamental values



Waves of internationalisation in Europe



EHEA
Secretariat



Co-funded by the
European Union

Skills of today vs skills of tomorrow: technological, social and emotional skills will become even more important.

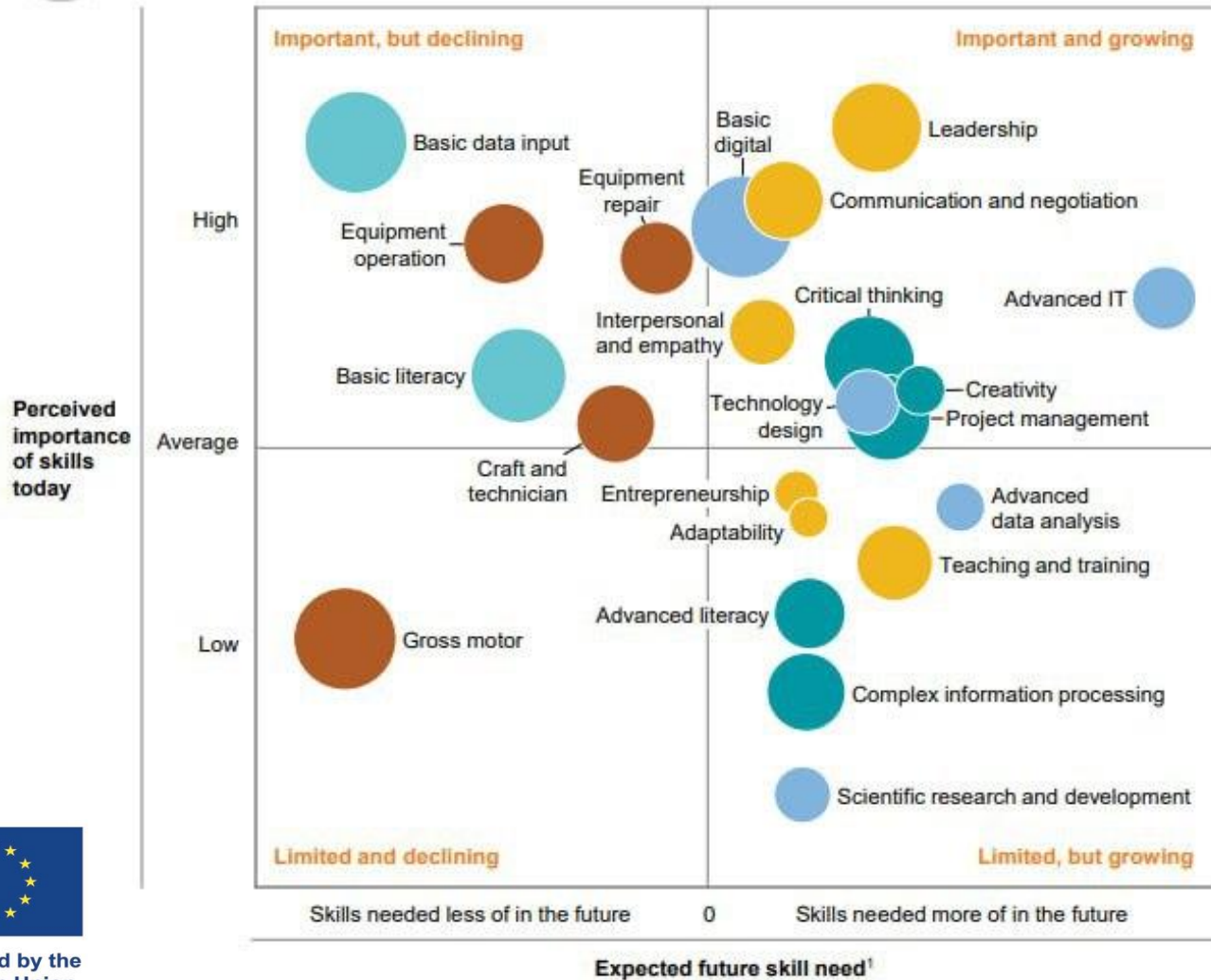
Based on McKinsey Global Institute workforce skills executive survey, March 2018

Bubble size =
Hours worked in 2016, billion



Skills

- Physical and manual
- Basic cognitive
- Higher cognitive
- Social and emotional
- Technological

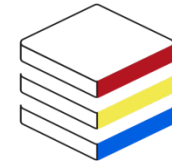


Different skills

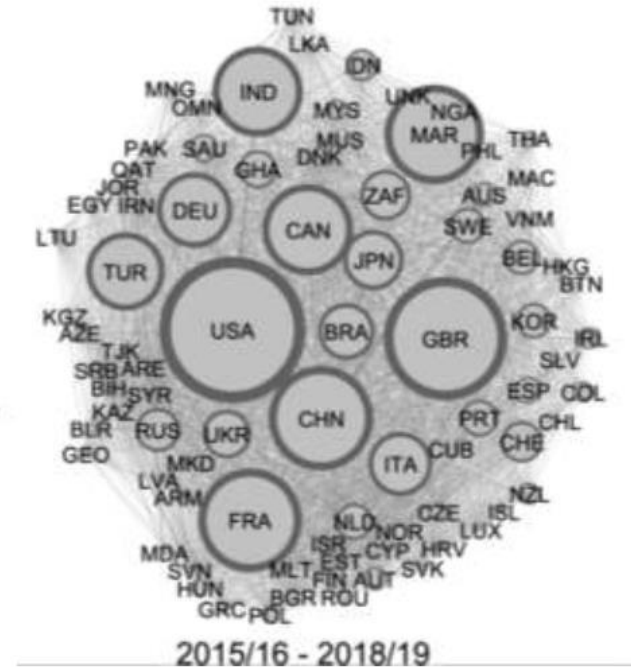
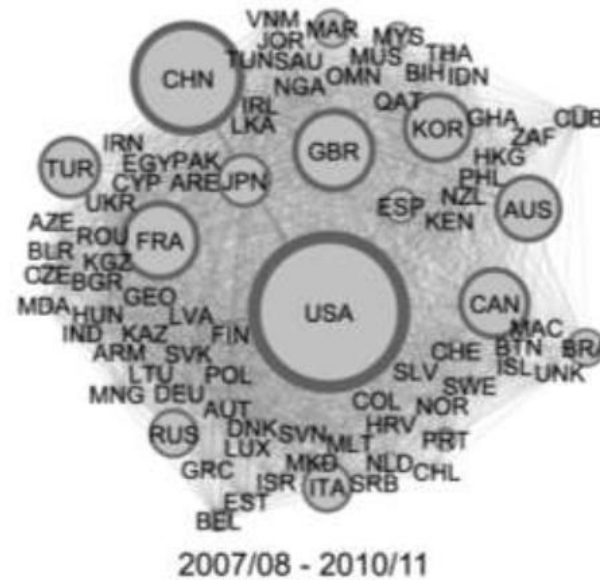
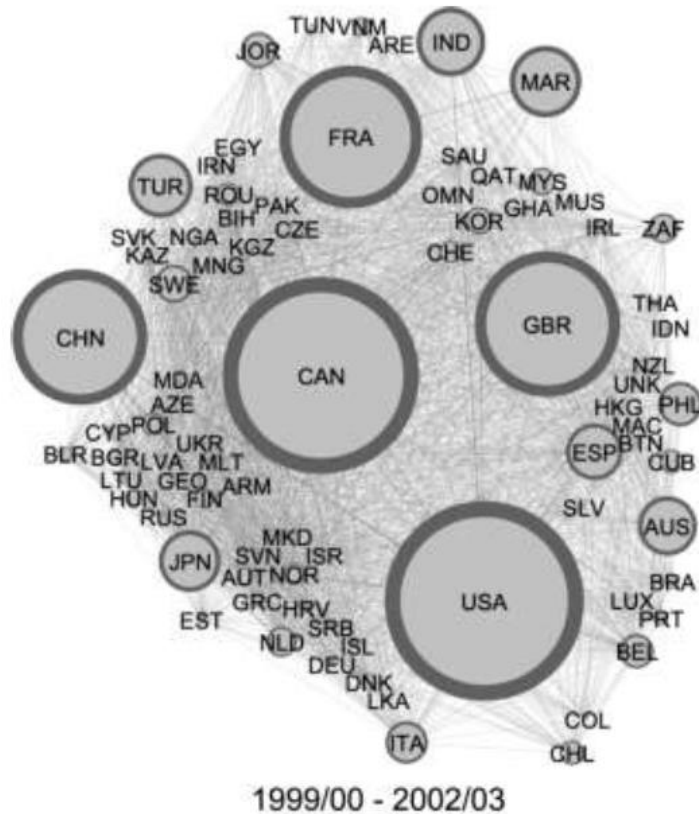
McKinsey, 2018



No more giants



EHEA
Secretariat

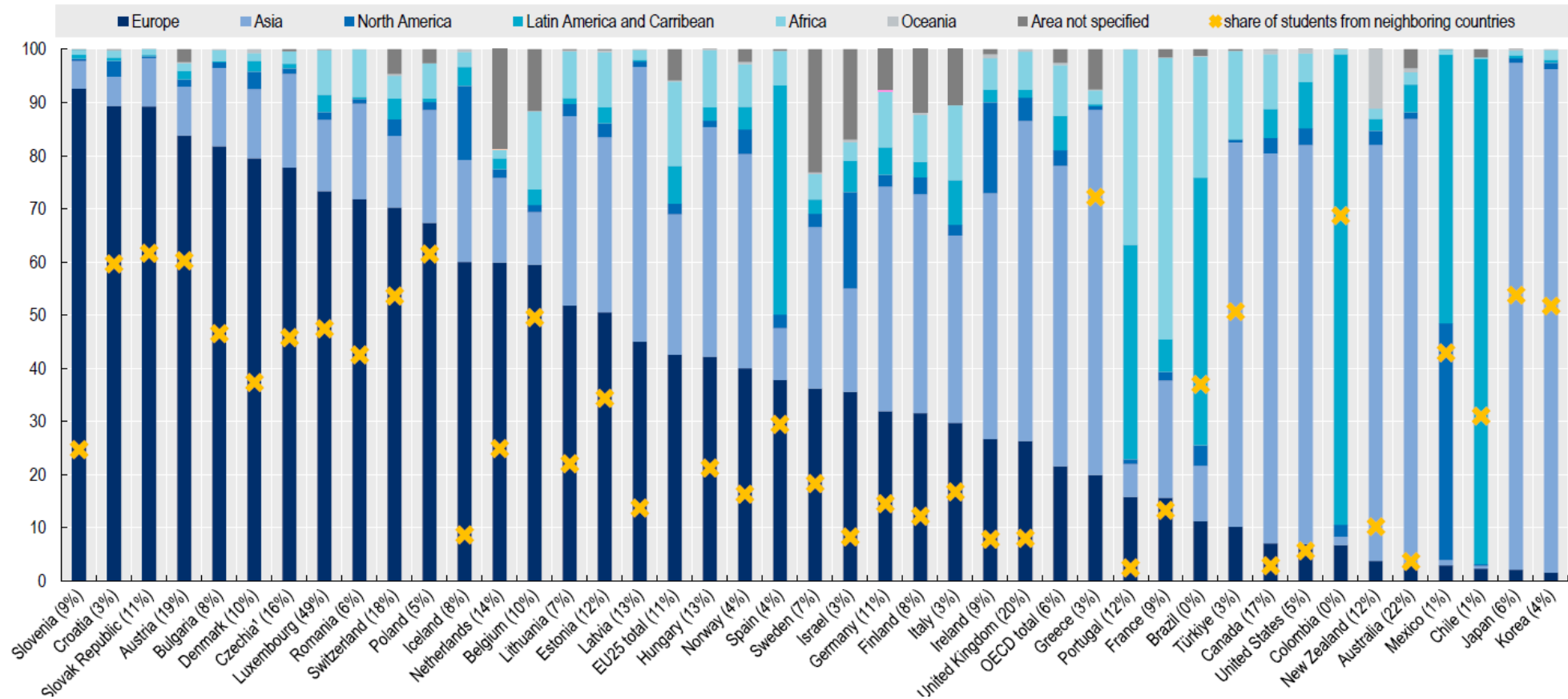


Glass, 2024



Co-funded by the
European Union

Know thy neighbours

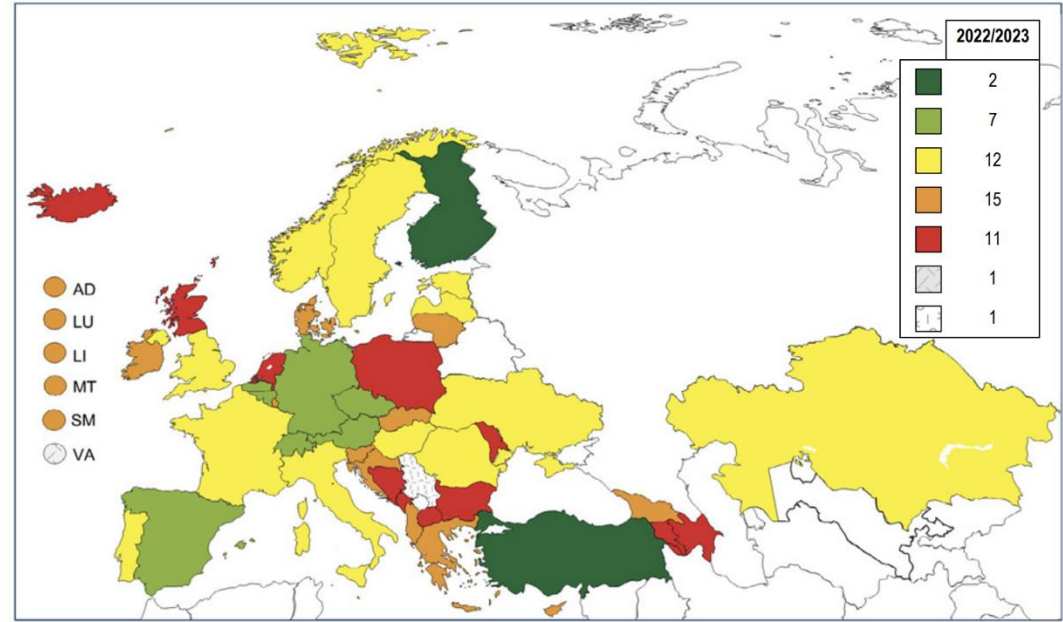


OECD, 2022



Still favouring the rich

Figure 4.16: Scorecard indicator n°16: P&G 8: Supporting vulnerable, disadvantaged or underrepresented groups of students and staff in participating in international mobility, 2022/2023



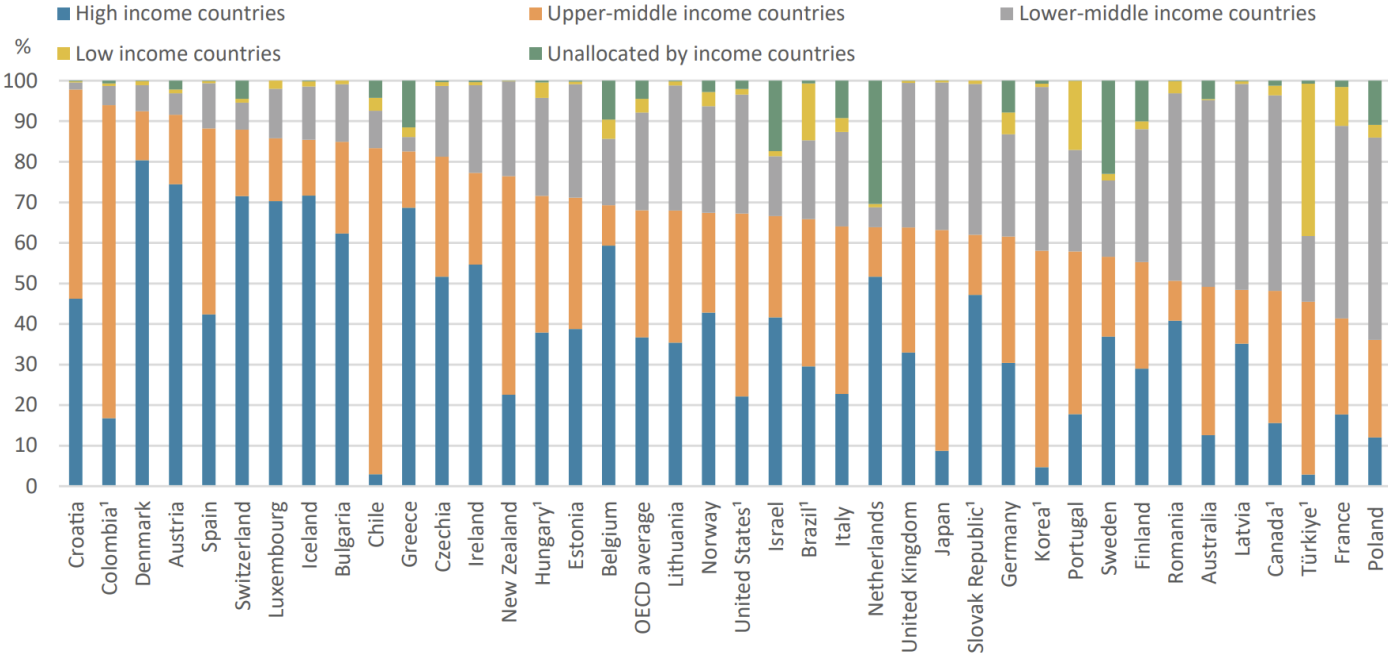
Source: BFUG data collection.



Co-funded by the
European Union

BFUG, 2024

Figure 2. Distribution of incoming international students by origin countries' income level (2022)



Note: The World Bank assigns the world's economies to four income groups – low-income, lower middle-income, upper middle-income and high-income. The classifications are updated each year on 1 July and are based on gross national income per capita in current USD of the previous year.

OECD, 2025

In upper levels, westwards

Figure 6.6: Extent of balance in degree mobility flows within and outside the EHEA, ISCED 5-8, 2020/2021

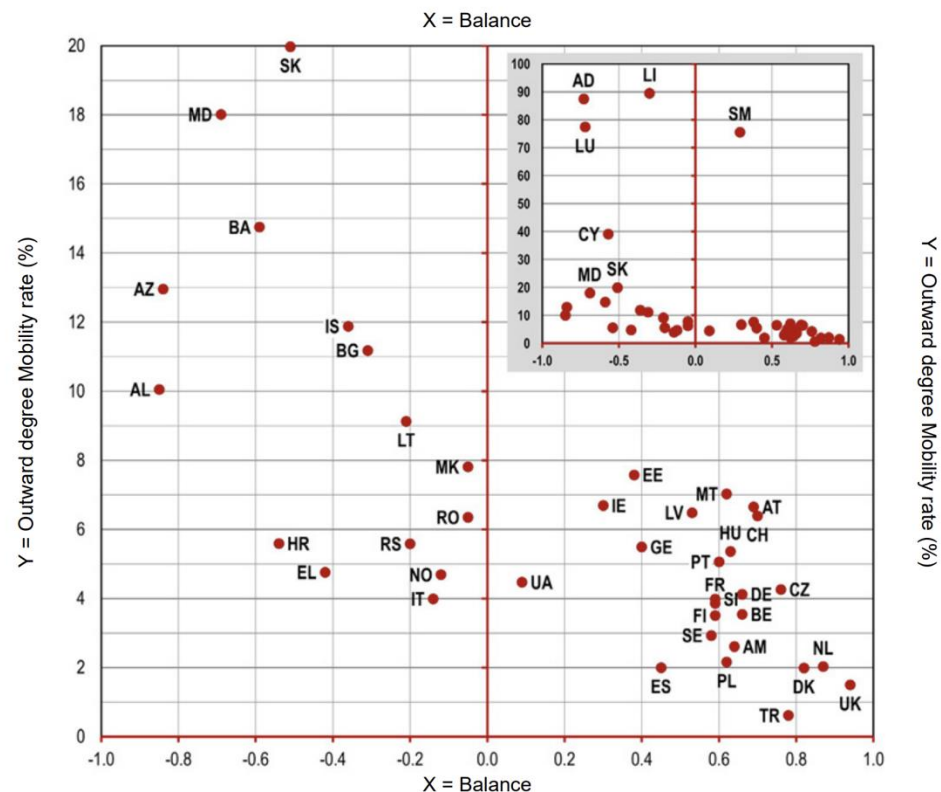
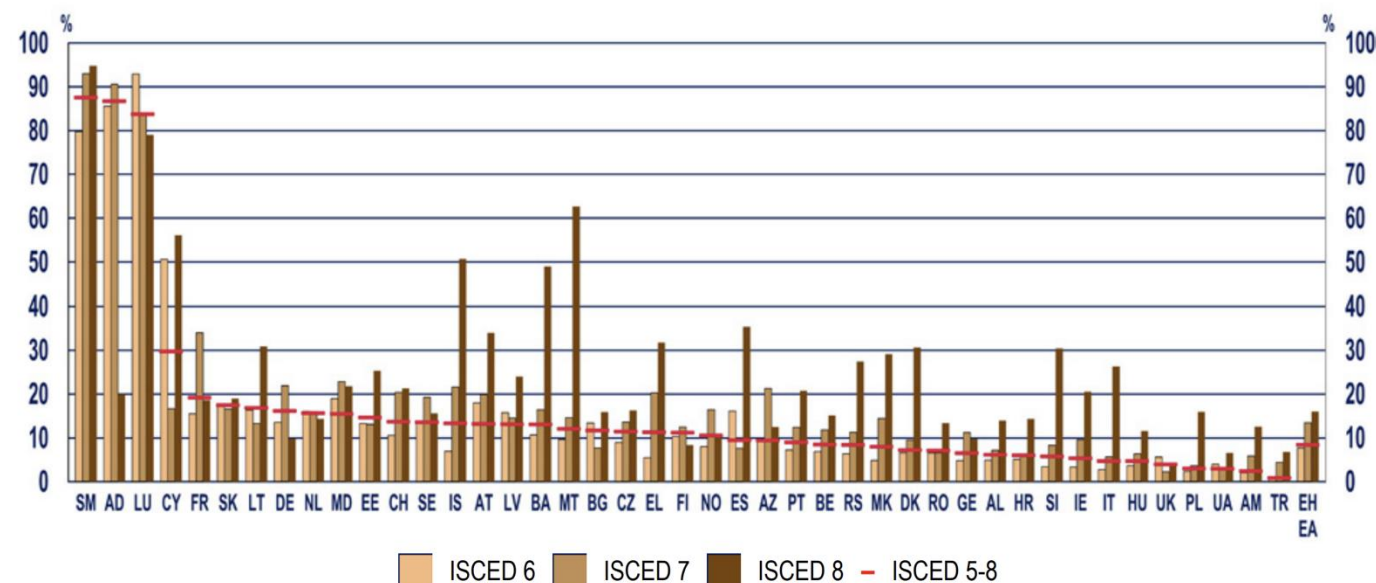


Figure 6.2: Outward degree and credit mobility of graduates, by country of origin and level of educational attainment, 2020/2021, (%)



Regional cooperation processes and their role in shaping and transforming higher education

Elisa Petrucci – CG GPD Co-chair, Italy

ASEM Education

1st Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM1)

“Connecting Education. Fostering collaboration between Asia and Europe”

18.11.2025,

Bucharest, Romania

Working documents

“We welcome the adoption of the **Global Policy Forum Statement** and ask the **BFUG** and its working structures to develop and strengthen **dialogue and collaboration with macro regions** on various levels and with appropriate interlocutors. This includes reciprocal referencing of qualifications frameworks and credit systems, ratification and implementation of the **UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education**, as well as the **second-generation regional recognition conventions**, and alignment and mutual understanding of **quality assurance principles**.”

(The Tirana Communiqué, 2024)



<https://ehea.info/Immagini/Global-Policy-Forum-Statement.pdf>



<https://ehea.info/Immagini/Tirana-Communique.pdf>

CG on GPD - Composition (2024-2026)

Co-chairs (3)

Italy, Republic of Moldova, UNESCO

Members (22 – 15 countries; 6 consultative members; EC)

Albania, Austria, Azerbaijan, EUA, Education International – ETUCE, ENQA, EURASHE, European Commission, ESU, France, Germany, Holy See, Italy, Kazakhstan, Malta, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Romania, Slovakia, UNESCO



Main Goals

1 Ensure dialogue and consolidate trust

Between EHEA and other macro-regions, countries, organisations

2 Identify themes to be addressed globally

Between regions, at intergovernmental level

3 Support mutual understanding on principles

Recognition, quality assurance, ethical international and academic cooperation

4 Fostering quality education for all

Contribute to achieving SDG 4.3

Further info: ToRs [https://ehea.info/Download/ToRs CG_GPD_2024-2027_adopted.pdf](https://ehea.info/Download/ToRs	CG_GPD_2024-2027_adopted.pdf)



Agreed methodology

1

Topic-based work

Horizontally on thematic priorities instead of vertically on geographical regions

2

Alternation of meeting formats

One CG GPD meeting including only members of the group, while the next open to external partners

3

Synergies

Other **BFUG working structures**: TPGs, TF on the Future of Bologna, WG on Internationalisation and mobility.

European and global initiatives:

EU initiatives; ASEAN Roadmap, UNESCO Campus Africa, etc.

Outcomes

Core Priorities

- Bologna Key commitments with a special focus on recognition conventions and quality assurance
- Lifelong learning and micro-credentials
- Recognition of refugees qualifications with insufficient documentation (Art. VII)
- Right to education/social dimension
- Digitalisation and artificial intelligence as transversal topics

Expected results

- Global Policy Statement
- Global Policy Forum
- Topic-specific recommendations from the open meetings with stakeholders

What have we done to date?

1st CG GPD meeting

30.01.2025 – online

17 participants from the Group's members countries

Discussion of the ToRs

First matching exercise: thematic areas and HE actors

2nd CG GPD meeting

21.02.2025 – online

17 participants from the Group's members countries

Interactive discussion on the topics to be addressed

Drafting of the list of HE actors to be involved

3rd CG GPD meeting

29-30.09.2025 – Bucharest

Meeting open to external experts and stakeholders

Recognition and Quality assurance + digitalisation as cross-cutting topic

3rd CGGPD meeting

29-30.09.2025 – Bucharest



Venue and participants

- Held at the National University of Science and Technology POLITEHNICA in **Bucharest and online**
- **Participants:** 24 from the Group's members countries and 8 external experts in presence, 65 online.
- Organised in conjunction with the **SPHERE Bologna Symposium and Annual Conference**, supported by OBREAL and the European University Association

Main topics

- ✓ focus on the topics of **recognition of qualifications** and **quality assurance** (QA) from a global perspective
- ✓ **digitalisation** as a transversal topic
- ✓ **panel discussions and Peer Learning Activities (PLAs)** involving the presidents of the Regional Recognition Conventions and of the Regional Quality Assurance Frameworks
- ✓ Meeting's insights informing the **Global Policy Statement**, adopted at the EHEA Global Policy Forum in 2027 in Iași/Chișinău





Next steps

1. Face to face meetings

- **5th Meeting in Rome** :17 – 18 February 2026 on Lifelong Learning
- **7th Meeting in France**: Dec 2026 on Right to education

2. Consultations to draft the Global Policy statement

- **Starting in 2026**

3. Invitation to the Global policy Forum

- **March 2026**

4. Iași-Chișinău Ministerial Conference and Global Policy Forum: 26-27 May 2027



Thank You

Regional Workshop

SEAMEO RIHED

18 November 2025

ASEM SOM I

Bucharest



RIHED's Role and Approach

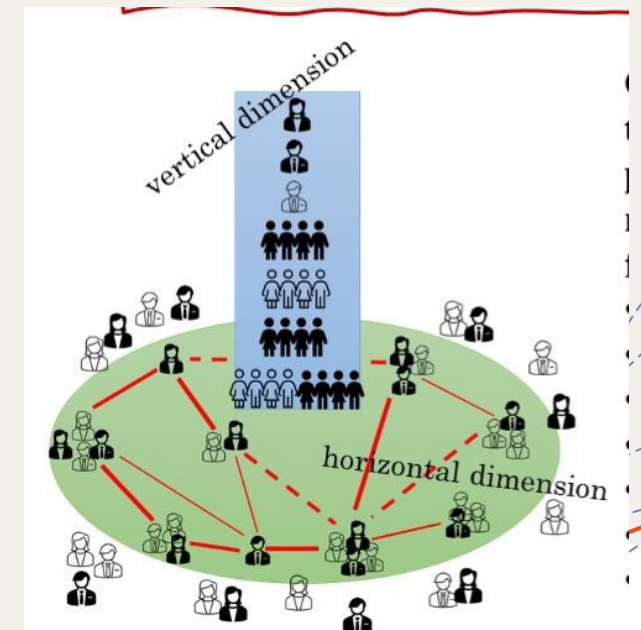
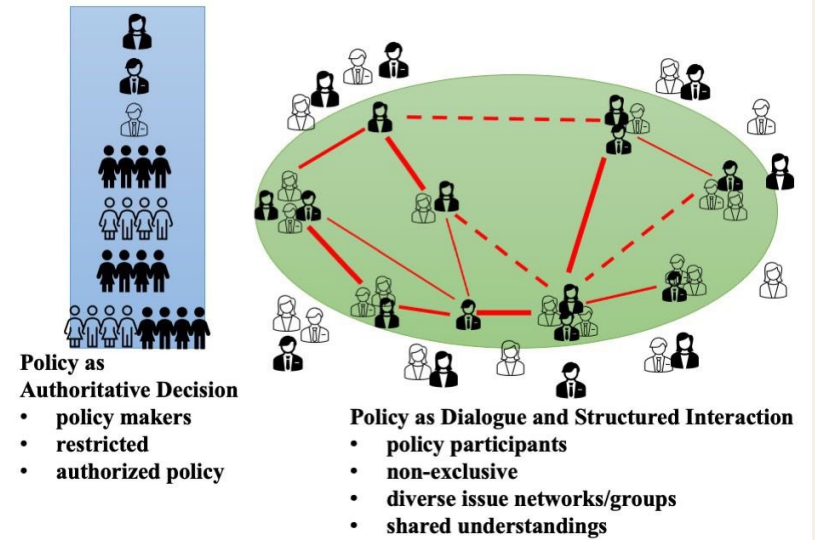
- + RIHED bridges the vertical (decision-making) and horizontal (shared understanding) dimensions of higher education policy by **organising key regional networks and platforms into functioning policy communities**. Rather than operating as isolated programmes or issue networks, these groups are intentionally connected to create shared purpose and coordinated action.

- + This approach enables:
 - Collective and participatory policy processes
 - Cross-boundary collaboration and relationships
 - Integrated expertise and shared knowledge
 - Mutual understanding and common direction
 - Sustained commitment and collective action

- + **Examples of Policy Communities:**
 - AIMS Programme (RIHED)
 - IQAdvance Initiative
 - RIHED-AQAN-AUN Collaboration Framework



Diagram 20 (1) "How CholtisRIHED Manages Policy Works", from *Modern Higher Education: A Personal View* © Choltis Dhirathiti 2025



Background

- + Structured Framework for Regional Integration in Higher Education adopted by the SEAMEO Council in 2008.

Student Mobility programme 2009

Malaysia–Indonesia–Thailand (M-I-T) Pilot Project -> Asian International Mobility for Students (AIMS) Programme

ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN) 2008

2010 Partnership Statement between AQAN, SEAMEO RIHED, and the ASEAN University Network (AUN)

Key Points

Updated Strategies – launch of a series of high-impact initiatives

A.
**New strategic
framework for the
AIMS Programme**

B.
Advancing IQA

C.
**Strengthening
qualifications
frameworks and
management within
higher education
institutions**

D.
**Renewing the 2010
Partnership Statement
between SEAMEO
RIHED, AUN and AQAN**

The Case of AIMS (Asian International Mobility for Students) Programme

AIMS Strategic Framework 2026-2028 (Bacolod Strategy)



What is AIMS?



- The Asian International Mobility for Students (AIMS) Programme
- Intra-regional student mobility programme - one semester undergraduate student exchange with credit transfer
- Supported by governments, implemented by nominated member universities
- Promotes the **harmonisation and internationalisation** of higher education systems
- Supports the development of **global citizens**
- Contributes to **sustainable development** in the region – AIMS Community.



Achievements - 16 Years of Growth

90 member universities

10 Southeast and East Asian countries

6,500 alumni

4,500+ academic staff

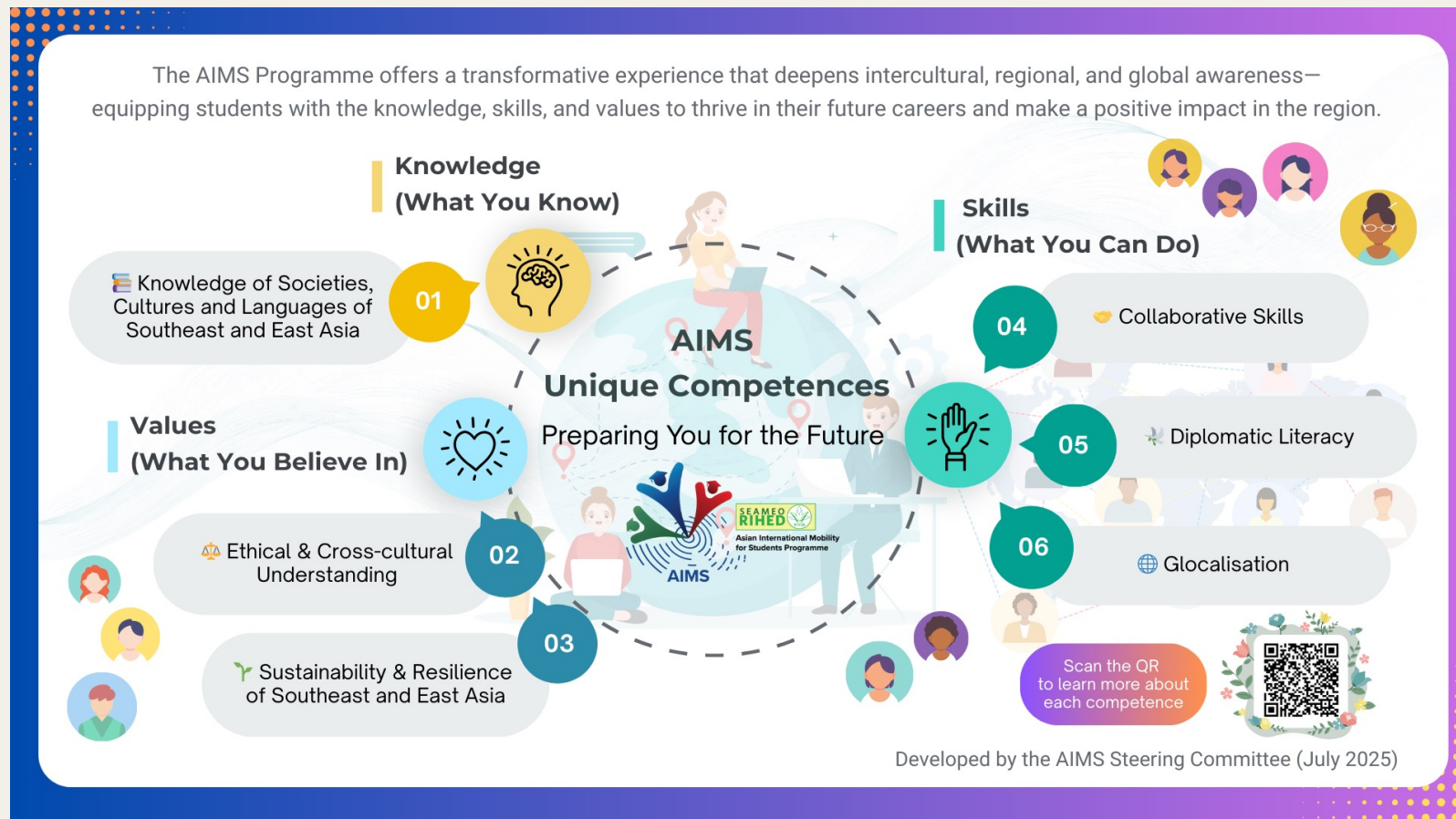
8 academic subject areas on offer

With roughly **10,000** courses

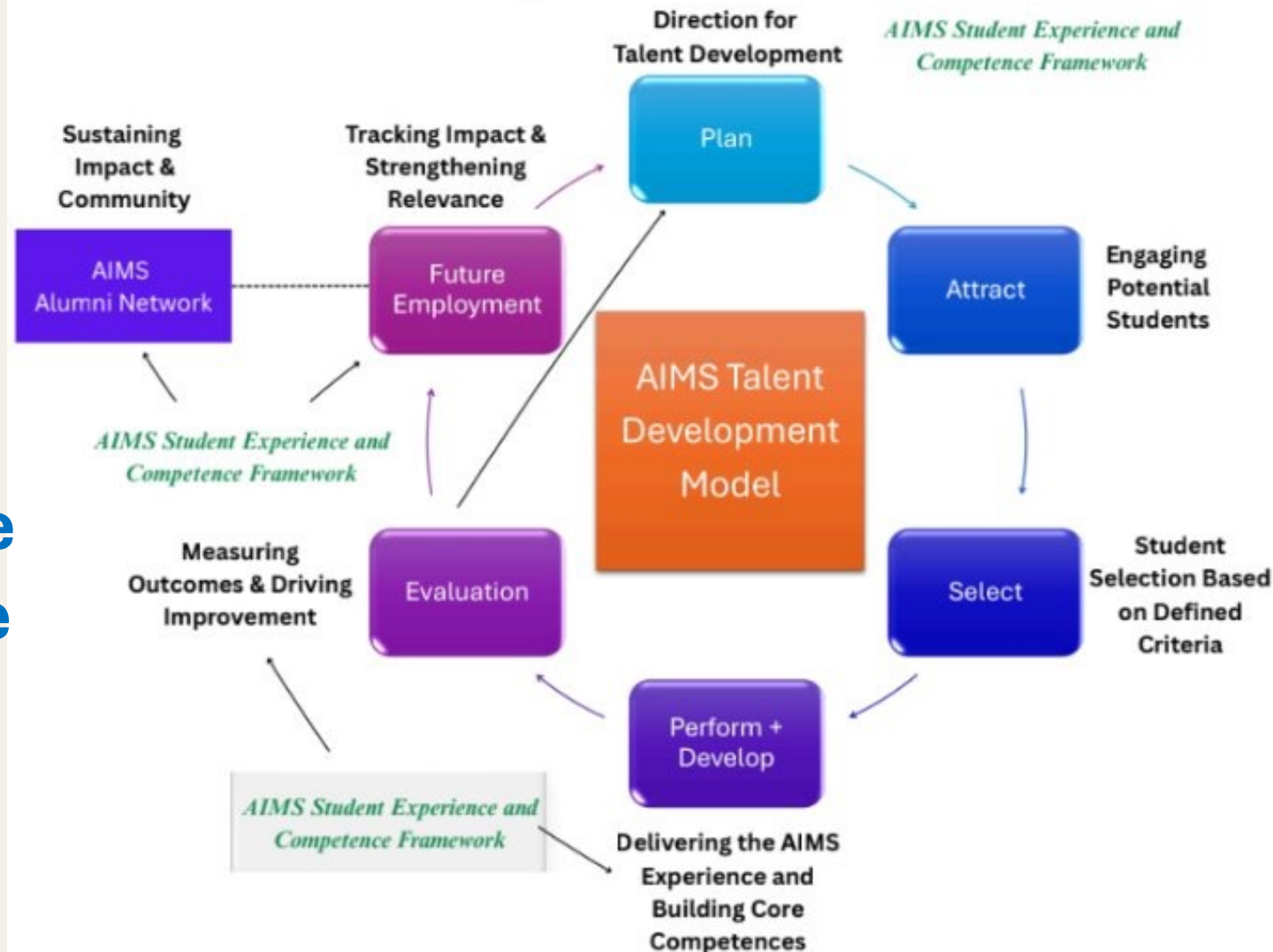
Visit the AIMS website for more information:
<https://aims-rihed.net/>

AIMS Student Experience and Competence Framework (AIMS Unique Competences)

Impact
that we
want



The model consists of 6 interconnected stages:



New strategic
framework for
the AIMS
Programme

How we
manage the
programme

AIMS Operational Plan for the next 18 months

1. Maximise AIMS's unique strengths and resources, consolidating it as the leading academic mobility platform in Asia

2. Drive **regional connectivity** across Southeast and East Asia by:

- Innovating AIMS onboarding activities, including a dynamic AIMS Orientation;
- Expanding and strengthening the AIMS Alumni Network; and
- Enhancing post-AIMS linkages among alumni, universities, industry, and communities to sustain long-term impact.

Table 1: Key Enablers for a Harmonised Common Space in Higher Education / SEA Higher Education Area

1. Mobility SEAMEO RIHED's Asian International Mobility for Students (AIMS) Programme Led by SEAMEO RIHED	2. Quality IQAdvance: AUN-QA Internal Quality Assurance Management Training Led by SEAMEO RIHED, MOET, and AUN	3. Recognition AUN-QEx: Strengthening Qualifications Frameworks and Management Led by AUN and SEAMEO RIHED
4. Lifelong Learning (LLL) Inter-centre collaboration Led by SEAMEO CELLL in partnership with SEAMEO RIHED	5. Digitalisation Inter-agency partnerships to the ASEAN region and East Asia (China and South Korea)	

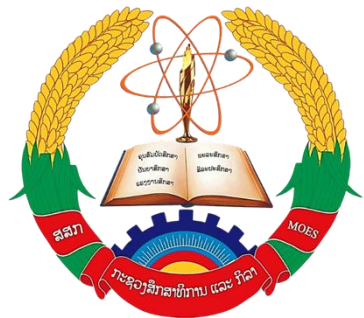
Thank you!

SEAMEO RIHED

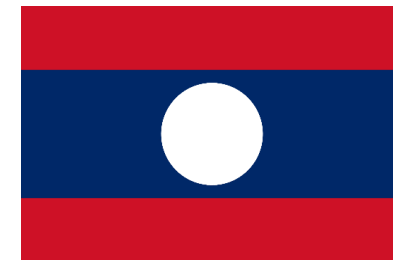
rihed@rihed.seameo.org

<https://www.rihed.seameo.org>





ASEM Education 1st Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM1)
“Connecting Education. Fostering collaboration between Asia and Europe”
18-19 November 2025, Bucharest, Romania



**Workshop A: Regional cooperation processes and their role in
shaping and transforming higher education**

Laos' Experience in Regional Higher Education Cooperation

Presented by: Nilinthone Sacklokham

Department of Higher Education
Ministry of Education and Sports

Context of Higher Education in Laos

- Young and growing higher education system
- Government commitment to quality improvement
- Active engagement in regional cooperation frameworks



Engagement in Regional Cooperation

- SEAMEO RIHED and Common Space in Southeast Asian Higher Education
- ASEAN University Network (AUN)
- ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF)
- ASEM Education Process and inter-regional cooperation
- Participation in SHARE, SCOPE-HE, Erasmus+, ASEM DUO



Benefits and Achievements

- Capacity building and policy learning
- Strengthened QA and credit transfer systems
- Academic mobility and staff development



Challenges

- Limited institutional capacity
- Need for stronger policy coordination
- Language proficiency and digital readiness constraints



Way Forward

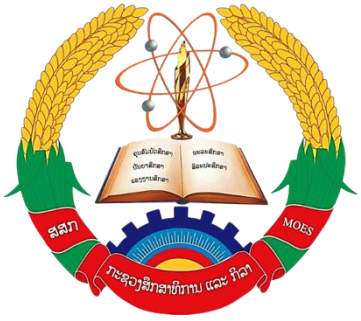
- Strengthen synergies between ASEAN and EHEA
- Improve recognition and QA alignment
- Enhance mobility, digital tools, and capacity building



Conclusion

- Regional cooperation is essential for transformation
- Laos is committed to contributing to Asia–Europe connectivity
- Continued collaboration for an inclusive and sustainable higher education area





Thank you!
Multumesc!

Nilinthone Sacklokham

Academic Affairs Division, Department of Higher Education

Ministry of Education and Sports, Lao PDR

Email: s.nilinthone@gmail.com