Strengthening of National Information Centres (NIC) and a Regional NIC Network
Part 1

Discussions and Suggestions at the 11th Session
Challenges mentioned at the 11th Session

- Lack of quality information on programs and institutions;
- Lack of in-depth information (i.e. inadequate data on the QA system and the quality of qualifications);
- Prevalence of fraudulent qualifications in AP region

Trust is enabled by a better understanding of others’ systems and efforts to promote a culture of quality
Way Forward suggested at the 11th Session

For Member States

- Establish and/or strengthen the National Information Centres (NICs) that will provide the lists of recognized qualifications and HE institutions in each country.

For UNESCO and Regional Committee

- Facilitate the establishment of a network that brings together competent recognition authorities in the region to operate as community based on trust, mutual respect, and reciprocity.
Suggestions (Cont’d)

For UNESCO and Regional Committee

- Use the APARNET as infrastructure for sharing good practices, uploading conference documents and country reports.
- Facilitate the revival and support the further development of APARNET into a working website linked to country data bases and managed by a dedicated staff- eventually APARNET ought to be able to handle the languages used in the AP region.

Asia-Pacific Academic Recognition Network
APARNET
Part 2

Establishment of NICs and Strengthening of the Networks in the Asia-Pacific Region
1. NICs in the Revised AP Convention Text

Article VIII.3

- Each Party shall take adequate measures for the development and maintenance of a National Information Centre that will provide higher education information. The form of the National Information Centre may vary.

Article VIII.1

- Each Party shall provide adequate information on any institution belonging to its HE system, and on its quality assurance system, ....

Article VIII.2

- Each Party shall provide relevant, accurate and up-to-date information in order to facilitate the recognition of qualifications in higher education by providing....
Information that need to be shared by NICs

- A description of its HE system;
- An overview of the different types of HE institutions belonging to its HE system, and of the typical characteristics of each type of institution;
- A list of recognised and/or accredited HE institutions (public and private) belonging to its HE system, indicating their powers to award different types of qualifications and the requirements for gaining access to each type of institution and program;
- An explanation of quality assurance mechanisms; and
- A list of educational institutions located outside its territory which the Party considers as belonging to its education system.
Observation from Country Reports
on the Establishment of NICs

- Some countries, such as Australia and New Zealand, maintain well-functioning NICs
- Most Member States reported on-going internal discussions on how to establish and operate NICs
  - Most are to designate or have already identified a department within related ministries or the Quality Assurance Agency to function as the NICs
  - There is a need for increased information sharing on the roles and functions of NICs and funding of NICs, etc.
- Issues raised for a well-functioning NIC include
  - Capacity building of responsible staff;
  - Securing additional funding to maintain the NIC
2. Current Platforms for Information-Sharing

- UNESCO Portal to Recognised Higher Education Institutions
- APARNET (Asia-Pacific Academic Recognition Network)
- UNESCO Bangkok HE webpages
2-1 UNESCO Portal to Recognised Higher Education Institutions

The Portal was established in accordance with the UNESCO/OECD Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border HE

To provide interested parties with access to authoritative and up-to-date information on the status of HE institutions, systems and quality assurance mechanisms in participating countries

Target audience (users): students, employers, credential evaluators, HEI admissions offices and other interested parties
Information Provided

- Recognised higher education institutions
- Recognised higher education programs
- Information for students planning to study in the country
- The higher education system
- Foreign credential assessment and recognition
- Financial assistance opportunities
- Cross-border higher education
- The National Information Centre
- Other information sources
- Definitions of key terms
Countries part of UNESCO Portal

- Argentina
- Armenia
- Australia
- Belarus
- Belgium
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Bulgaria
- Canada
- Chile
- China
- Colombia
- Costa Rica
- Croatia
- Cuba
- Cyprus
- Estonia
- Ireland
- Jamaica
- Japan
- Kazakhstan
- Kenya
- Kuwait
- Latvia
- Liechtenstein
- Lithuania
- Malaysia
- Mexico
- Namibia
- New Zealand
- Nigeria
- Norway
- Pakistan
- Paraguay
- Saudi Arabia
- Spain
- Sweden
- Thailand
- Trinidad and Tobago
- United Kingdom
- United States of America
- Uruguay
The country information on the portal is managed and updated by the relevant competent authorities in each participating country.

A National Focal Point is nominated by each participating country responsible for validating all country information on the Portal.
Joining the Portal

Two main documents:

- A letter confirming the interest of the Member State in joining this UNESCO Portal
- Submission of a 'Designation of a National Focal Point' form

Most Member States, which have not joined yet, agree on the importance of information-sharing through the UNESCO Portal, and expressed their readiness and willingness to upload necessary information.

Some countries seem to prefer the establishment of a internal **EMIS** (Educational Management Information System), which will be able to be linked to the Portal afterwards.
APARNET was established by the recommendations of the 6th Session of the Regional Committee meeting in Bangkok, Thailand in Nov 2000.

APARNET aims to facilitate discussion and the exchange of information amongst the NICs of the UNESCO Asia Pacific Regional Convention.

APARNET consists of this website and a listserv (email-based information sharing forum).

http://www.aparnet.org
Information Provided by APARNET

- Regional Recognition Conventions
- Asia Pacific Regional Convention documents and publications
- Country reports
- Discussion papers
- APARNET Listserv
2-3 UNESCO Bangkok Webpages

- Provide information related to UNESCO Bangkok’s programs to promote academic mobility
  - Guidelines on cross-border HE
  - Asia-Pacific Convention: Overview
  - Past Meetings: Conferences, Regional Committee Meetings and regional seminars, etc.
- Resources

3. Remaining Issues

- Revitalisation of APARNET? Or UNESCO HE webpage to serve as the base for information sharing?
  - Alternatives:
    - UNESCO Bangkok maintains the network under its website
    - Or, Member States may take turns to maintain APARNET

- There is a need to recruit qualified experts and mobilise funding for maintenance of the platform and capacity building
  - Visiting scholars or secondees to UNESCO Bangkok
  - Annual regional workshops and cooperation with other regions.
THANK YOU!