

United Nations Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

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**Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas  
and Degrees in Higher Education in the Arab States**

Adopted at Paris 22 December 1978



# **Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in the Arab States <sup>1</sup>**

## **Introduction**

*The preparation of regional conventions on the recognition of studies and diplomas in higher education including the present one, has been undertaken by Unesco as part of a vast campaign designated to organize the co-operation of States in this field. These instruments are intended to provide assessment criteria, units of measurement, methods and techniques whereby the qualifications acquired can be evaluated. Each convention institutes an intergovernmental committee composed of representatives of the Contracting States which is responsible for promoting and extending application of the texts and for receiving and examining periodic reports from States on progress to date and difficulties met with in applying the conventions.*

*The Convention has not yet come into force.*

1. Adopted at Paris on 22 December 1978 by an international Conference of States, convened by Unesco.

## Preamble

The Arab States, Parties to the present Convention.

*Considering* the common heritage and the close community, intellectual and cultural ties which bind them together, and desirous of giving clearer, concrete expression to the intellectual and cultural co-operation enshrined in the Arab Cultural Treaty of 21 Dhoul Hydghah 1364 (27 November 1945) and the Pact of Arab Cultural Unity of 16 Chawal 1383 (29 February 1964), and the relevant bilateral and multilateral agreements.

*Desirous* of promoting education and scientific research, strengthening their co-operation in those areas and making good use of human resources, with the aim of achieving economic, social and cultural development and maximum integration of the area and of preserving their cultural identity,

*Convinced* of the necessity of ensuring the recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees in higher education with a view to facilitating the mobility of students, members of the teaching profession, and other specialists and research workers within the region, and being aware of the need to develop education, to promote access thereto and improve its quality and to promote lifelong education,

*Convinced* that, on account of the diversity and complexity of programmes of study, it is desirable that the recognition of stages of training completed should take into account not only the diplomas and degrees obtained but also the courses of studies followed and the knowledge and experience acquired,

*Resolved* to organize their co-operation and strengthen it in respect of recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees of higher education by means of a convention which would be the starting point for concerted, dynamic

action carried out, in particular, through national, bilateral, subregional and regional bodies set up for that purpose,

*Expressing the hope* that this Convention will be a step towards more wide-ranging action leading to an international convention between all the Member States of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization,

Have agreed as follows:

## I. Definitions

### Article 1

1. For the purpose of the present Convention the 'recognition' of a certificate, qualification, diploma or degree of higher education obtained in one of the Contracting States means its acceptance by the competent authorities of another Contracting State and the granting to the holder of the rights enjoyed by persons possessing a certificate, qualification, diploma or degree issued by that State with which the certificate, qualification, diploma or degree obtained in the first Contracting State is comparable. Such rights extend to either the pursuit of studies, or the practice of a profession, or both, according to the applicability of the recognition.

- (a) Recognition by a Contracting State of a certificate, qualification, diploma or degree awarded by another Contracting State with a view to undertaking or pursuing studies at the higher level shall entitle the holder to enter the higher educational and research institutions of any other Contracting State under the same conditions as those applying to holders of a similar certificate, qualification, diploma or degree issued in the Contracting State concerned. Such recognition does not exempt the holder of the certificate, qualification, diploma or degree from complying with the other conditions laid down by the law or with the regulation; governing admission to higher educational institutions.
- (b) A Contracting State which recognizes a certificate, qualification, diploma or degree enabling the holder to practise a profession thereby recognizes the holder's technical ability and confers on him rights and obligations identical to those which he would have if he obtained such a certificate, qualification, diploma or degree directly in that State with a view to the practice of the same profession. Such recognition does not exempt the holder of the certificate, qualification, diploma or degree from complying with the other conditions laid down by the law in force in each State or conditions for the practice of the profession concerned which may be laid down by the competent governmental or professional authorities.

2. For the purposes of the present Convention:
  - (a) 'secondary education' means that stage of studies of any kind which follows primary, elementary, preparatory or intermediate education and the aims of which may include preparing pupils for higher education;
  - (b) 'higher education' means all types of education and research at post secondary level. Such education is open to all persons who have obtained a diploma or certificate attesting that they have successfully completed their education at the secondary level or at an equivalent level in accordance with the conditions laid down for that purpose by the State concerned.
  
3. For the purpose of the present Convention, 'partial studies' means any education of which the duration or the content is partial by comparison with the norms prevailing in the institution in which it was acquired. Recognition by a Contracting State of partial studies pursued in an institution situated in the territory of another Contracting State and recognized by that State may be granted in accordance with the educational level reached by the student in the opinion of the State granting recognition.

## **II. Aims**

### **Article 2**

1. The Contracting States solemnly declare their firm resolve to co-operate closely with a view to:
  - (a) enabling the educational resources available to them to be used as effectively as possible in the interests of all the Contracting States, and, for this purpose:
    - (i) to adopt terminology and evaluation criteria as similar as possible, especially as regards the harmonization of the names of diplomas and degrees and of stages of study, in order to simplify the application of a system which will ensure the comparability of credits, subjects of study and diplomas;
    - (ii) to improve the system for the exchange of information regarding the recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees;
    - (iii) to co-ordinate the entrance requirements of the educational institutions of each country;
    - (iv) to adopt a dynamic approach in matters of admission to further stages of study, bearing in mind not only knowledge acquired, as attested by diplomas and degrees, but also the individual's experience and achievements, so far as these may be deemed acceptable by the competent authorities;

- (v) to adopt flexible criteria for the evaluation of partial studies, based on the educational level reached and on the content of the courses taken, bearing in mind the interdisciplinary character of knowledge at university level;
  - (vi) to make their higher educational institutions as widely accessible as possible to students from any of the Contracting States;
  - (vii) to recognize the studies, diplomas and degrees of such persons, and to encourage exchanges and the greatest possible freedom of movement of teachers, students and research workers in the region;
  - (viii) to alleviate the difficulties encountered by those returning home after completing their education abroad, so that their reintegration into the life of the country may be achieved in the manner most beneficial both to the community and to the development of their own personality;
- (b) constantly improving higher education curricula in the Contracting States through planning and continuous evaluation so as to take account of the personality and identity of the Arab nation, of development requirements and of the recommendations made by the competent organs of Unesco, ALECSO and the Association of Arab Universities concerning the continuous improvement of the quality of education, the promotion of lifelong education and the democratization of education;
  - (c) promoting the widest and most effective use of human resources so as to contribute to the acceleration of the development of the countries concerned whilst at the same time avoiding the 'brain drain' from the Arab States;
  - (d) promoting interregional co-operation in the matter of the recognition of studies and academic qualifications.

2. The Contracting States agree to take all necessary steps at the national, bilateral and multilateral levels in particular by means of bilateral, sub-regional, regional or other agreements, agreements between universities or other higher educational institutions and arrangements with the competent national or international organizations and other bodies, with a view to the progressive attainment of the goals defined in the present article.

### **III. Undertakings for immediate application**

#### **Article 3**

1. For the purpose of the continuation of studies and direct admission to the subsequent stages of training in higher educational institutions situated in

their territories, each of the Contracting States recognizes, under the same academic conditions as those applicable to its nationals, secondary school leaving certificates issued in the other Contracting States, provided their possession qualifies the holders for direct admission to the subsequent stages of training in higher educational institutions situated in the territories of those Contracting States.

2. Admission to a given higher educational institution may, however, be dependent on the availability of places, and on compatibility with the host country's planning and development needs.

#### **Article 4**

Each of the Contracting States agrees to take all necessary steps with a view to:

- (a) recognizing, for the purpose of the immediate pursuit of studies and admission to the subsequent stages of training in higher educational institutions situated in its territory and under the conditions applicable to its nationals, academic qualifications obtained in a governmental higher educational institution situated in the territory of another contracting State and recognized by it, denoting that a full course of studies at the higher level has been completed to the satisfaction of the competent authorities, taking into account the relevant provisions of the preceding articles;
- (b) endeavouring to establish the procedures, criteria and methods for recognizing degrees and diplomas awarded by higher educational institutions situated in the other Contracting States, as well as recognizing, for the purpose of the pursuit of studies, periods of study and partial studies in such institutions;
- (c) endeavouring to apply the provisions of paragraph (b) of the present Article to the studies, diplomas, degrees and qualifications awarded by regional higher educational institutions, under the authority of the league of Arab States or any other Arab intergovernmental organization.

#### **Article 5**

Each Contracting State agrees to take the necessary steps to ensure as far as possible that certificates, diplomas, degrees or qualifications issued by the competent authorities of the other Contracting States are effectively recognized for the purpose of practising a profession, in accordance with Article 1, paragraph 1.

### **Article 6**

1. Any person, of whatever political or legal status, who has followed studies in one of the Contracting States shall be entitled to benefit from the provisions of Articles 3, 4 and 5, provided this is not contrary to the laws and international legal obligations of the host country.

2. Without prejudice to the provisions contained in Article 20 of the present Convention, any national of a Contracting State who has obtained in the territory of a non-Contracting State one or more certificates, qualifications, diplomas or degrees similar to those defined in Articles 3, 4 and 5 above may avail himself of those provisions which are applicable, on condition that the certificates, qualifications, diplomas or degrees in question have been recognized in his home country and in the country in which he wishes to continue his studies or practise a profession.

## **IV. Machinery for implementation**

### **Article 7**

The Contracting States shall endeavour to attain the goals defined in Article 2 and shall ensure that the agreements set forth in Articles 3, 4 and 5 above are put into effect by means of:

- (a) national bodies;
- (b) the Regional Committee, which will seek the co-operation of the existing competent regional institutions, and in particular the Arab Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization and the Association of Arab Universities;
- (c) bilateral or subregional bodies.

### **Article 8**

1. The Contracting States recognize that the attainment of the goals and the execution of the agreements defined in the present Convention will require, at the national level, close co-operation and co-ordination of the efforts of a variety of national authorities whether governmental or non-governmental particularly universities and other educational institutions. They therefore agree to entrust the study and solution of the problems involved in the application of the present Convention to appropriate national bodies, with which the sectors concerned will be associated, and to take all the administrative measures required to speed up the functioning of these national bodies effectively.

2. Every national body shall have at its disposal the necessary means to enable it either to collect, process and file all information of use to it in its activities relating to studies, diplomas and degrees in higher education, or to obtain the information it requires in this connection at short notice from a separate national documentation centre.

### **Article 9**

1. A Regional Committee of Contracting States composed of representatives of all the Contracting States is hereby set up and its secretariat entrusted to the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in co-operation and co-ordination with the Arab Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization and the Association of Arab Universities. Unesco, ALECSO, the Association of Arab Universities, and any other international governmental or non-governmental organization designated by the Committee shall be permitted to be represented at its meetings.

2. The function of the Committee of Contracting States shall be to promote and extend the application of the present Convention. It shall receive and examine the periodic reports which the Contracting States shall communicate to it on the progress made and the obstacles encountered by them in the application of the Convention and also the studies carried out by its secretariat on the said Convention. The Contracting States undertake to submit to the Committee their reports at least once every two years.

3. The Regional Committee shall assist the institutions of higher education in the Contracting States in carrying out at their request self-evaluation in regard to this Convention at least once every five years, in accordance with a system to be established by the Committee for this purpose. The Committee shall also address recommendations of a general or individual character to the Contracting States.

4. The Regional Committee shall undertake the necessary studies required to adapt the objectives of this Convention in accordance with the evolving requirements of social, cultural and economic development in the Contracting States, and shall submit its recommendations to them; these recommendations shall take effect after their approval by not less than two-thirds of the Contracting States.

5. The secretariat of the Committee of Contracting States shall co-operate with national bodies to obtain the information needed by them in their activities.

6. The Regional Committee shall be entitled to propose to Contracting States plans and procedures for implementing the Convention and co-ordinating its practical application by the Contracting States and Unesco.

#### **Article 10**

The Regional Committee shall meet for the first time three months after six States have deposited their instrument of ratification. It shall elect its Chairman and adopt its Rules of Procedure. It shall set up the technical organs and bodies needed for the accomplishment of its work and shall define their competence and powers. It shall meet at least once every year and whenever necessary.

#### **Article 11**

The Contracting States may entrust bilateral, subregional or regional bodies already in existence or set up for the purpose with the task of studying, and contributing to the solution of, the problems involved in the application of the present Convention at the bilateral, subregional or regional levels.

### **V. Documentation**

#### **Article 12**

1. The Contracting States shall periodically engage in wide exchanges of information and documentation pertaining to studies, diplomas and degrees in higher education.

2. They shall endeavour to promote the development of methods and means for collecting, processing, filing and disseminating all the necessary information pertaining to the recognition of studies, certificates, qualifications and degrees in higher education, while taking into account the methods and means used and information collected in this respect by the various national, regional and international agencies, especially the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Arab Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization and the Association of Arab Universities.

## **VI. Co-operation with international organizations**

### **Article 13**

The Regional Committee shall make all the necessary arrangements for associating the competent international organizations, both governmental and nongovernmental, with its efforts to ensure that the present Convention is applied as fully as possible. For this purpose it shall conclude the appropriate agreements and arrangements with them.

## **VII. Institutions of higher education under the authority of a Contracting State but situated outside its territory**

### **Article 14**

The provisions of the present Convention apply to studies pursued in, and to certificates, qualifications, diplomas and degrees obtained from, any institution of higher education which is affiliated to an institution under the authority of a Contracting State and which is situated outside its territory, within the limits authorized by the provisions in force in each of the Contracting States.

## **VIII. Ratification, accession and entry into force**

### **Article 15**

The present Convention shall be open to the signature and ratification of Arab States members of the League of Arab States and of Unesco, and of any other State member of the League of Arab States and of any other State belonging to the Arab States region as defined by Unesco.

### **Article 16**

1. Other States which are members of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization may be authorized to accede to this Convention.

2. Any such request should be communicated to the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, who shall transmit it to the Contracting States at least three months before the meeting of the Regional Committee.

3. The Committee shall meet as an ad hoc committee to take a decision concerning the request. Its members shall be given specific authorization by their governments to that effect. Decisions in such cases shall be by a two-thirds majority of the Contracting States.

4. This procedure shall apply only when a majority of the States referred to in Article 15 has ratified the Convention.

#### **Article 17**

Ratification of the present Convention or accession to it shall be effected by depositing an instrument of ratification or accession with the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

#### **Article 18**

The present Convention shall enter into force one month after two States have deposited their instrument of ratification, but solely with respect to the States which have deposited their instruments of ratification. It shall enter into force for each other State one month after that State has deposited its instrument of ratification or accession.

#### **Article 19**

1. The Contracting States shall have the right to denounce the present Convention.

2. The denunciation shall be signified by an instrument in writing deposited with the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

3. The denunciation shall take effect 12 months after the instrument of denunciation has been received. It shall have no retroactive effects, nor shall it affect the recognition of studies, qualifications, diplomas or degrees which has taken place in accordance with the provisions of the Convention when the State denouncing the Convention was still bound thereby. Such recognition shall continue to have its full effect after the denunciation has become effective.

**Article 20**

This Convention shall not affect in any way the treaties and conventions already in force between the Contracting States or the national legislation adopted by them in so far as such treaties, conventions and legislation offer greater advantages than those provided for in the present Convention.

**Article 21**

The Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization shall inform the Contracting States and the other States mentioned in Articles 15 and 16 and also the United Nations of the deposit of all the instruments of ratification or accession referred to in Article 17 as well as of the denunciations provided for in Article 19.

**Article 22**

In conformity with Article 102 of the United Nations Charter, the present Convention shall be registered with the Secretariat of the United Nations at the request of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

IN FAITH THEREOF the undersigned representatives, being duly authorized thereto, have signed the present Convention.

Done at Paris, this 22nd day of Muharram 1399 (22 December 1978) in the Arabic, English and French languages, the three texts being equally authoritative, in a single copy which shall be deposited in the archives of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. A certified true copy shall be sent to all the States referred to in Articles 15 and 16 and to the United Nations.