

EduTalks@Council of Europe- Transnational Education: Challenges and Opportunities for Academic Integrity and Quality Assurance

Tuesday, 1st April 2025 11:00 – 12:00 CET

Speakers



Elena Cirlan is a Senior Policy and Project Coordinator at ENQA. Her main tasks include representation of the Association externally, coordination of projects, and management of the Association's statutory activities. She has been involved in projects such as QA-FIT, IMINQA, MICROBOL, BSWE FORward and EUniQ. Before joining ENQA in April 2022, Elena worked for the European University Association (EUA) where she managed EUA's Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP), coordinated the annual European Quality Assurance Forum (EQAF) and worked on the implementation of projects related to quality assurance and micro-credentials.



Stig Arne Skjerven is the first elected Chair of the Conference of the State Parties of the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education. He has been instrumental in the work in the various phases of the establishment and implementation of the Global Recognition Convention, including being part of the Expert Group developing the draft, intergovernmental negotiations and leading working groups. He has also twice been elected Chair of the European Network of Information Centres / ENIC Bureau. Skjerven has also been instrumental in the establishment of the Qualifications Passport for Refugees, by the Council of Europe and UNESCO respectively. His experience also cover roles like Norway's Deputy Permanent Delegate to UNESCO, Director of Norway's ENIC-NARIC office, Director of Academic Affairs at a Norwegian Higher Education Institution, project management of quality assurance in higher education, and various roles involving communication, policies, global partnership and capacity building in higher education.



Francesca Villa is a Senior Credential Evaluator at CIMEA, the Italian national information center for recognition procedures within the ENIC-NARIC networks. With over a decade of experience in credential evaluation at CIMEA and various higher education institutions, she specialises in transnational education (TNE), focusing on the recognition of relevant qualifications awarded through TNE, as well as qualifications from French and Francophone educational systems. In her previous roles as a registrar and international admissions specialist, Francesca actively contributed to the development of academic recognition policies and procedures in alignment with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). She has also contributed to designing digital platforms, CRM systems, and databases that enhance credential evaluation and streamline admission and enrollment processes for international students. In 2022, Francesca was appointed Director of APICE, the Italian Professional Association of Credential Evaluators—the first national professional body in this field. APICE fosters collaboration among credential evaluation professionals across Italian higher education institutions and the national information center, promoting integrity and transparency in academic recognition processes.



Vangelis Tsiligiris is an expert in transnational education (TNE) and internationalisation, with over 20 years of experience in higher education. He has led major academic initiatives as the founder of the TNE Hub, an international research and practice community, and has been actively involved in policy advisory roles for governments and international organisations. Currently a Professor of International Education at Nottingham Business School, Nottingham Trent University. Vangelis has designed and managed large-scale TNE partnerships, online education programmes, and global capacity-building projects. His research focuses on TNE models, student mobility, and internationalisation strategies, contributing to both academic scholarship and higher education policy.

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Abstracts

Transnational Education offers numerous benefits, including providing students access to international academic programmes and fostering diversity and collaboration in higher education. However, it also presents challenges related to academic integrity, quality assurance, and student support, highlighting the need for a unified, proactive approach to mitigate risks and ensure inclusive, high-quality education.

Elena Cirilan

The UNESCO Global Convention for Recognition concerning Higher Education, alongside the regional conventions like the Council of Europe / UNESCO Lisbon Recognition Convention, aims to include all provisions relating to higher education, including Transnational Education. In the Global Recognition Convention, the term used is “Cross-Border Education”, which is defined as “all modes of educational delivery which involve the movement of people, knowledge, programmes, providers and curriculum across States Parties’ borders, including, but not limited to, quality-assured international joint degree programmes, cross-border higher education, transnational education, offshore education and borderless education”. During the panel discussion Skjerven will share his views this definition and how the definition can be operationalised with regards to both aspects of mobility and quality.

Stig Arne Skjerven

‘Transnational Education (TNE) is reshaping global learning opportunities, yet challenges persist due to inconsistent terminology, fragmented quality assurance frameworks, and incoherent monitoring practices. Exploring how harmonised terminology, policies, and strengthened international collaboration can enhance the integrity and accessibility of TNE is essential to foster recognition, protect learners’ interests and prevent substandard providers from operating in regulatory grey areas.’

Francesca Villa

‘Transnational Education (TNE) has significantly expanded global learning opportunities, enabling students to access diverse academic programmes across borders. However, this growth presents challenges in upholding academic integrity and ensuring robust quality assurance. In this EduTalk, I will explore the complexities of maintaining academic standards in TNE, addressing issues such as fraud, inconsistent terminology, and limited student support. I will discuss the necessity for a strategic approach, harmonised frameworks and international collaboration to effectively manage TNE risks. Additionally, I will examine how technological advancements can aid in preventing misconduct and enhancing quality assurance in TNE programmes.’

Vangelis Tsiligiris