Global perspectives on LLL

Reporting from the 4th meeting of the Coordination Group on Global Polivy Dialogue

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The context

The Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue (CGGPD) is the working structure of the Bologna Follow-Up Group for the 2024–2027 mandate with the aim to promote dialogue and cooperation between the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and other regions of the world.
Co-chair Italy, Moldova, UNESCO

This 4th meeting brought together representatives from five intergovernmental higher-education areas, EU and UN institutions, and national experts — in Rome, 17–18 February 2026.

5

intergovernmental higher-education areas in dialogue

2 Days

of plenary sessions, national case studies and working-group dialogue

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bologna process

EUROPEAN Higher Education Area

Why LLL?

A changing global environment

- Technological change
- Economic volatility
- Geoeconomic realignments
- Environmental challenges
- Demographic shifts
- Income inequality

OECD Survey of Adult Skills > Adults with higher income and holding a higher education degree more likely participate in LLL

Changing higher education systems and institutions

- Rapid enrolment expansion with persisting disparities
- Internationalisation of higher education
- Technology plays an increasing role
- Accountability frameworks have grown in complexity

23% of countries < 1% youth and adults aged 15 and above in education and learning programmes.

In 2023, one person per minute enrolled in Gen AI courses. In 2024, 8 per minute.

WEF. 2025. Future of Jobs Report 2025; UNESCO. 2022. Beyond Limits. New Ways to Reinvent Higher Education. Working document for the World Higher Education Conference. 18-20 May 2022)

Coursera report 2025 5th GRALE.

Policy Layer

Legal frameworks, international commitments, and intergovernmental priorities

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EU EHEA Policy Milestones

- 1988 Magna Charta: LLL in preamble
- 1999 Bologna Declaration: credit system incl. non-formal learning
- 2022 EU Council Recommendation on micro-credentials
- Underpins all three EHEA goals: knowledge society, competitiveness, broader access
- From qualification to certification: academic achievements >>credentials certifying competences and skills
- Transparenct and comparability tools: ECTS, NQFs, QA as backbone enablers

Policy Layer

Legal frameworks, international commitments, and intergovernmental priorities

EU Central Asia Higher Education Area and Kazakhstan

- Not a constitutional right, but recognised as a key element to support equitable and inclusive education
- Shaped by international commitments (UNESCO 2030 agenda)
- Framed as both workforce development and social inclusion

Common Space in SE Asian Higher Ed.

- Term widely used for 20 years — but still disconnected from socio-economic development
- E-learning expands access, digitalization and AI play a key role
- Micro-credentials, e-learning and the right to education still to be integrated into a broader LLL strategy

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Policy Layer

Legal frameworks, international commitments, and intergovernmental priorities

East Africa Common Higher Education Area

- Lifelong learning is a strategic instrument for access to education.
- LLL included in the legal and policy framework of the East African Community
- The East African Qualifications Framework enables recognition of prior learning (RPL), credit accumulation and transfer — reaching learners who never entered the formal system.

Espacio Latinoamericano y Caribeño

- “Lifelong learning” rarely used — but access is framed as a human right and public good
- A young population drives high demand; retention is a central challenge
- Adult literacy and digital transformation remain unresolved gaps

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Transversal topics

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Micro-credentials

- A way to make skills comparable and recognisable
- A tool to link academia and industry
- A tool to support and streamline RPL

Digital transition & AI

- Linked to LLL from different perspectives
- Major driver of LLL
- A way to reach remote areas//digital divide

Key Enablers

The tools that make LLL pathways transparent, readable, and comparable

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Qualification Frameworks (NQF/EQF)

- EHEA: EQF + national NQFs aligned
- CAHEA: NQF designed to link to EHEA
- EACHEA: East African QF meta-framework

Quality Assurance (QA)

- EHEA: ESG + EQAR register
- CAHEA: QA and accreditation through national registers
- SE Asia: Geely Talent Development Group, QA system for e-learning ASEAN University Network
- EACHEA: QA underpinning principle

Recognition & RPL

- EHEA: Lisbon Conv. + two-track approach
- CAHEA: recognition of non-formal education
- EACHEA: RPL for non-formal learners

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World Examples — National & Institutional

Part 2: Jamaica · Uganda · Italy · Asia-Europe (ASEF)

JM Jamaica

NQF launched 2017. PLAR (prior learning assessment & recognition) implemented in synergy with micro-credentials. Relevant agility to adapt to labour markert and cooperate with industry.

UG Uganda – Refactory

Software-skilling academy. 1,500+ trained (46% women); 91% job placement in 6 months. No MC policy framework yet — working with TVET Council. TVET Act 2025 as new anchor. Example of bottom-up, demand-driven LLL.

IT Italy / CIMEA

Micro-credentials referenced in NQF (2022). Three cooperation models: high (CIMEA + HEI co-issue), medium (MAReN: 5-ECTS EQF-7), low (MARTe: methodology-only). Shows trade-off: close cooperation → stackability.

ASEF InnoLab 7 (Europe–Asia)

200+ participants from 39 countries. Two tracks: MC development & AI skills. 7 prototype MC programmes produced. Raising awareness, shering tools to create MCs, bringing together different actors

bologna process
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Key Takeaways

- LLL is a priority addressed from different perspectives
- Policy convergence is real — all regions move toward skills-centred, flexible, quality-assured LLL
- EHEA tools (NQF, ECTS, QA, MC Recommendation) serve as building blocks for other regions
- Micro-credentials are the frontier: highest policy momentum
- Social impact: LLL ecosystem is providing access to all and meets personal, societal, and work needs

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