



unesco

UNITWIN/UNESCO CHAIRS PROGRAMME

Online webinar

26 June 2026

Inga Nichanian, UNITWIN/UNESCO CHAIRS PROGRAMME, UNESCO



AGENDA

- **BACKGROUND**
- **APPLICATION CYCLE & CRITERIA**
- **ROLES AND SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES**
- **REORIENTING THE WORK OF UNESCO CHAIRS AND UNITWIN NETWORKS**
- **OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION**
- **Q&A**

BACKGROUND

Background

UNITWIN is the abbreviation of "University Twinning and Networking"

- Launched in 1992 to:

Create UNESCO Chairs in higher education institutions (HEIs) to develop training and research activities through international inter-university cooperation

UNESCO intersectoral program covering all areas of the Organization and the priorities of its mandate

Coordinated by the Division for the Futures of Education within the Education Sector.

Documents:

[The UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme: guidelines and procedures \(revised March 2022\)](#)

[Activities of the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs programme \(doc. 215 EX/9\)](#)

[Comprehensive partnership strategy \(doc. 207 EX/11\)](#)

[Strategic orientations for the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme \(doc. 176 EX/10\)](#)



Federico Mayor
Director General of
UNESCO
(1987-1999)

What is a UNESCO Chair or a UNITWIN Network?

UNESCO Chair

A UNESCO Chair is a team led by a higher education or research institution that partners with UNESCO on a project to advance knowledge and practice in an area of common priority. The partnership is formalized through an agreement between the Director-General of UNESCO and the head of the institution hosting the UNESCO Chair (Rector, President, Vice-Chancellor).



UNITWIN Network

A UNITWIN Network is a partnership between UNESCO and a network of higher education or research institutions of at least three institutions in different countries, at least two of which must be located in the Global South, and which pool their competencies and resources around particular theme(s). The partnership is established through an agreement between the Director-General of UNESCO and the head of every institution proposed as a partner in the network.



Duration: **four years**



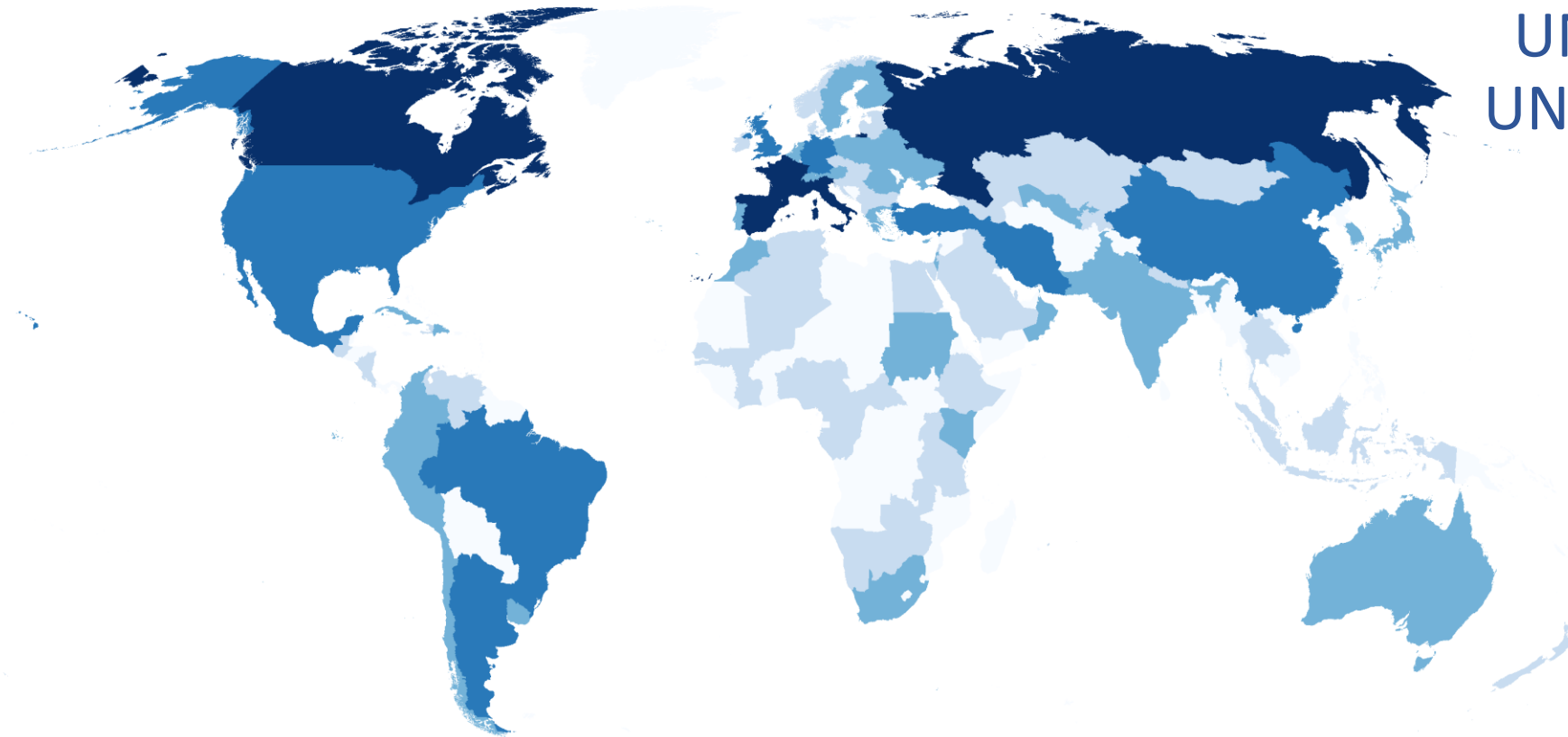
unesco

1100+

UNESCO Chairs &
UNITWIN Networks

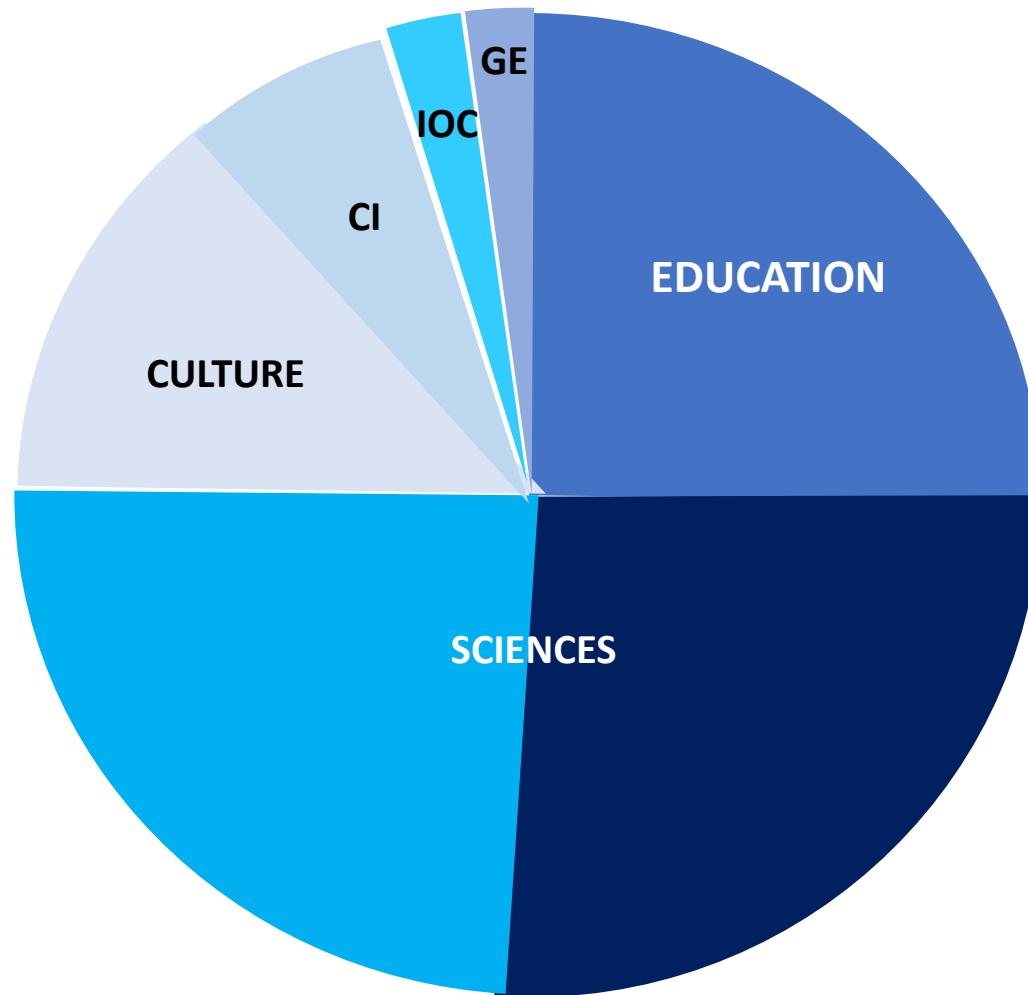
130

Countries

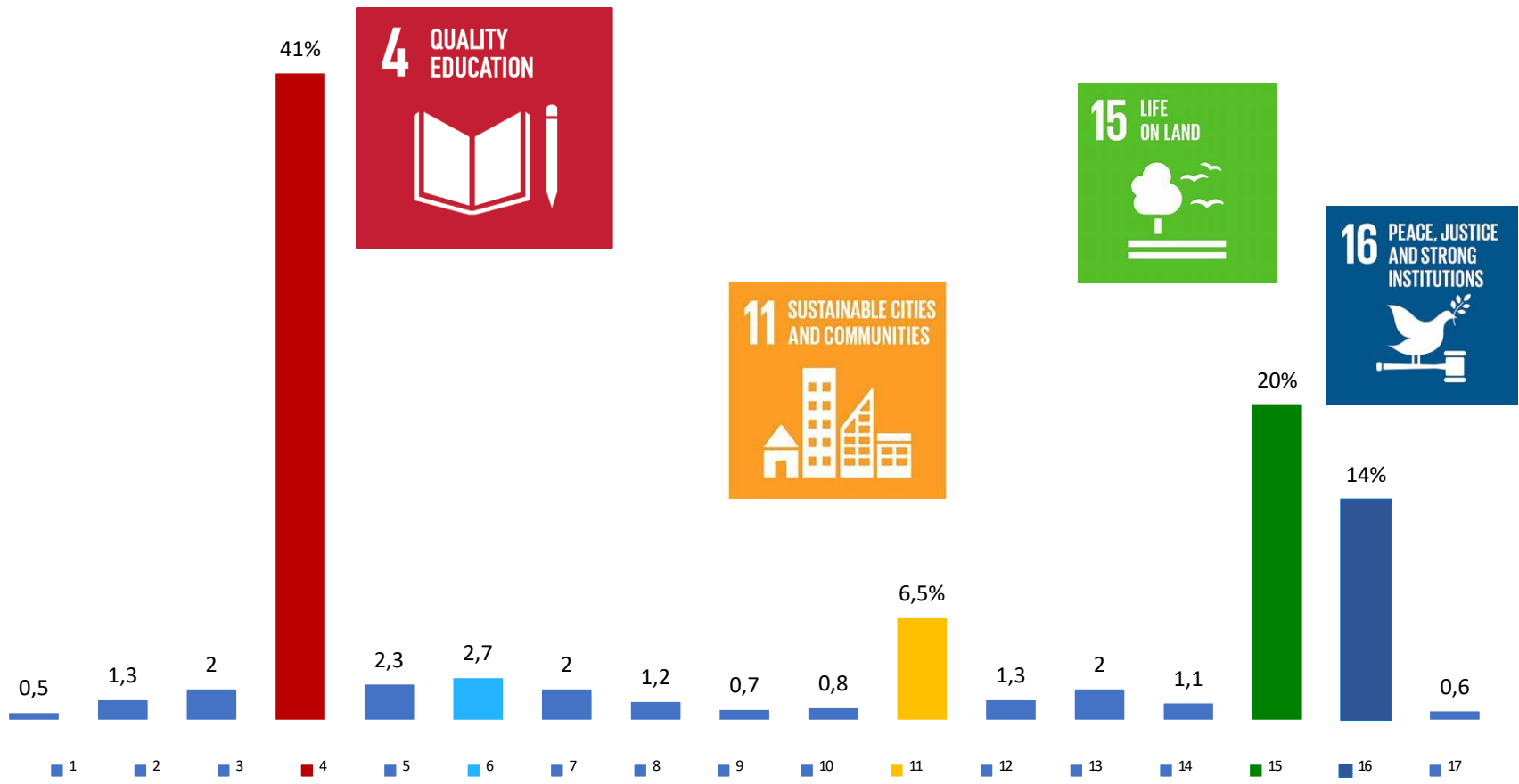


Legend:
No chairs
Less than 5 chairs
Between 6 and 15 chairs
Between 16 and 29 chairs
30 or more chairs

Network by Sector



BY UN SDGs (2015-2025)



Flemish UNESCO Chairs

- **Vrije Universiteit Brussel (3)**

UNESCO Chair on Critical Heritage Studies and Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2014)

UNESCO Chair on Adult Education (2018)

UNESCO Chair on Open Water Science and Education (2022)

- **KU Leuven (3)**

UNESCO Chair in Building Sustainable Peace (2007)

UNESCO Chair in Preventive Conservation, Monitoring and Maintenance of Monuments and Sites (2009)

UNESCO Chair on Comprehensive Sexuality Education (2025)

- **Erasmus Brussels University of Applied Sciences and Arts (1)**

UNESCO Chair on Images of the Futures and Co-creation (2020)

- **Ghent University (1)**

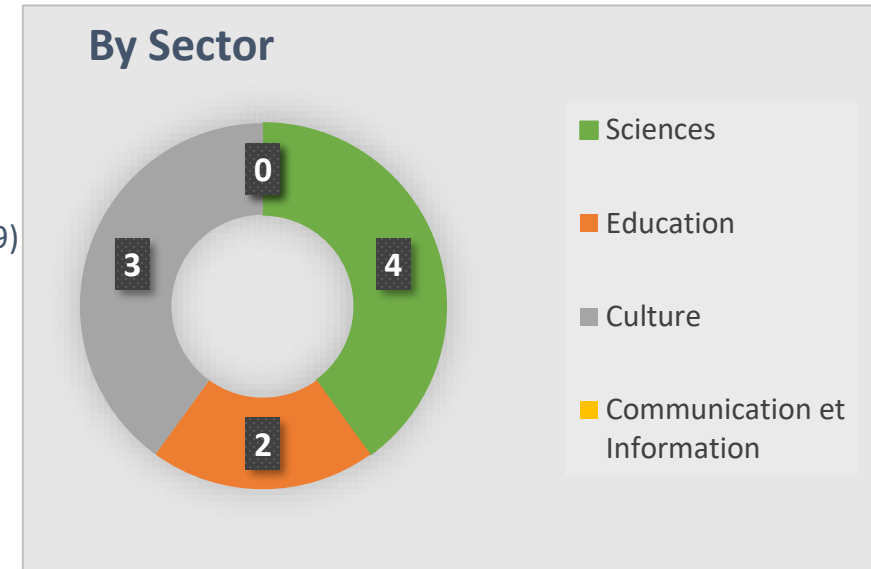
UNESCO Chair in Eremology (2007)

- **University of Antwerp (1) University of the Witwatersrand (South Africa)**

UNESCO Chair in Cultural Entrepreneurship and Policy (2024)

2 New applications submitted in 2026

1. Open Water Network by Vrije Universiteit Brussel
2. Chaire UNESCO sur le Patrimoine et Changement climatique: Penser l'Habiter au croisement des usages, des matérialités et de la socio-technique (re-submission) , Université de Mons



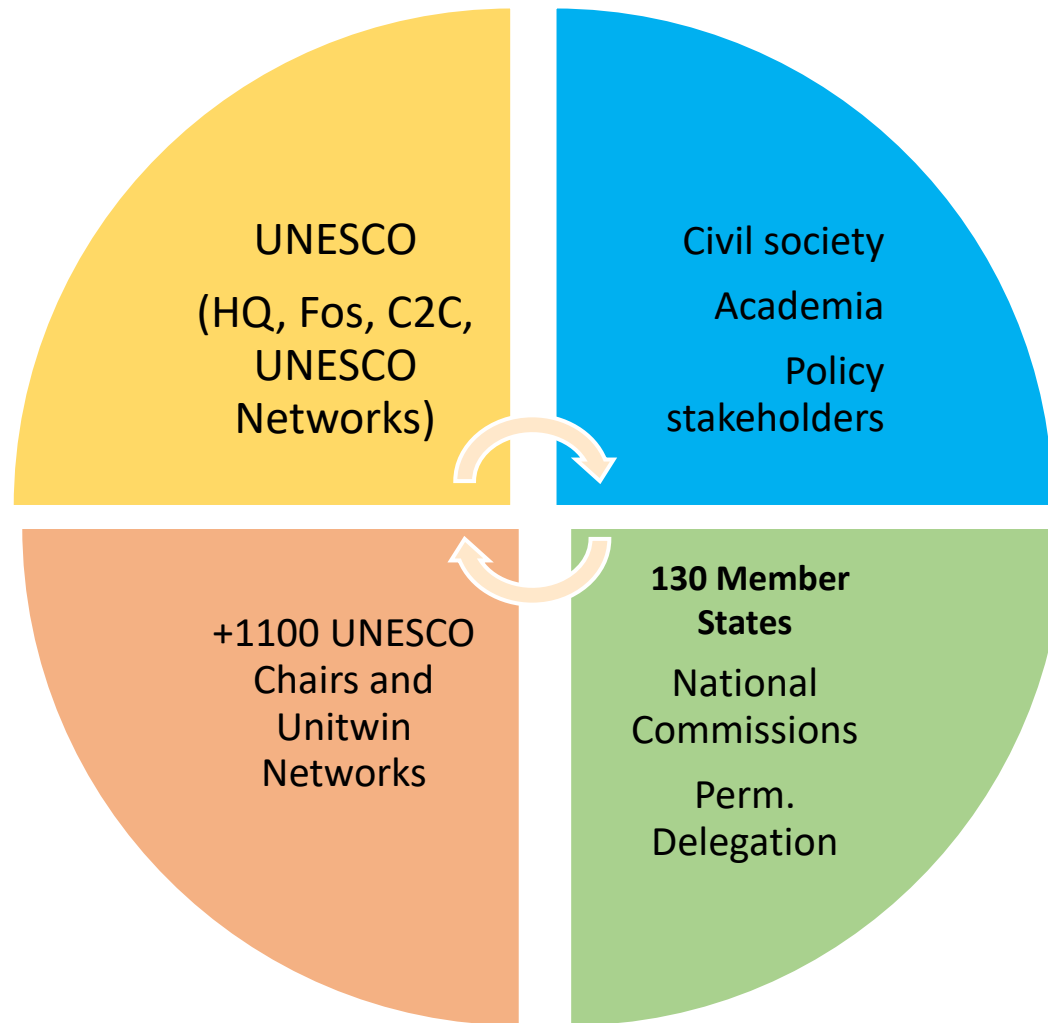
UNESCO Chairs /Unitwin Networks

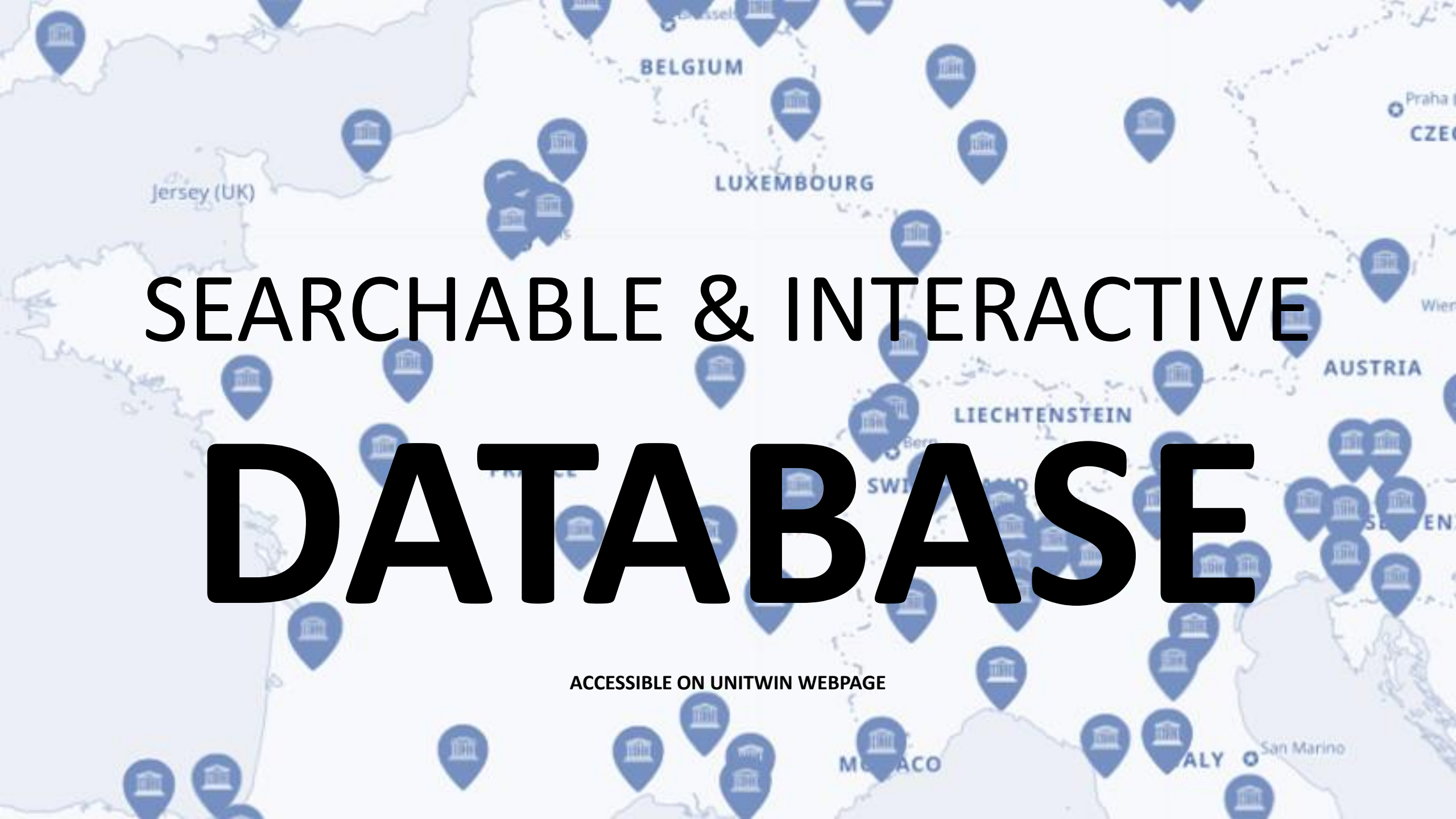
Objectives

- To contribute collectively to UNESCO priorities and Programmes
- To strengthen collaboration between UNESCO Chairs and other UNESCO Chairs and Unitwin Networks for building a better understanding and for driving education's transformation in line with the Sustainable Development Goals
- To support Member States in implementing the UNESCO **strategies** and its **recommendations** [on Open Science - UNESCO Digital Library](#) and [on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence - UNESCO Digital Library](#)
- To build synergies between UNESCO Chairs, UNITWIN Networks and other UNESCO Networks
- To exchange of scientific research and increase student mobility
- To share best practices through an on-line platform
- To contribute to the global community of practice
- To facilitate interaction of the Networks through the National Commissions
- ...



Interaction



A light blue map of Europe serves as the background. Numerous blue location pins are scattered across the map, each containing a white icon of a classical building with columns, representing a university. Labels for various European countries are visible, including Jersey (UK), BELGIUM, LUXEMBOURG, SWITZERLAND, LIECHTENSTEIN, AUSTRIA, and ITALY. The text 'SEARCHABLE & INTERACTIVE' is centered in the upper half, and 'DATABASE' is centered in the lower half, both in a large, bold, black, sans-serif font.

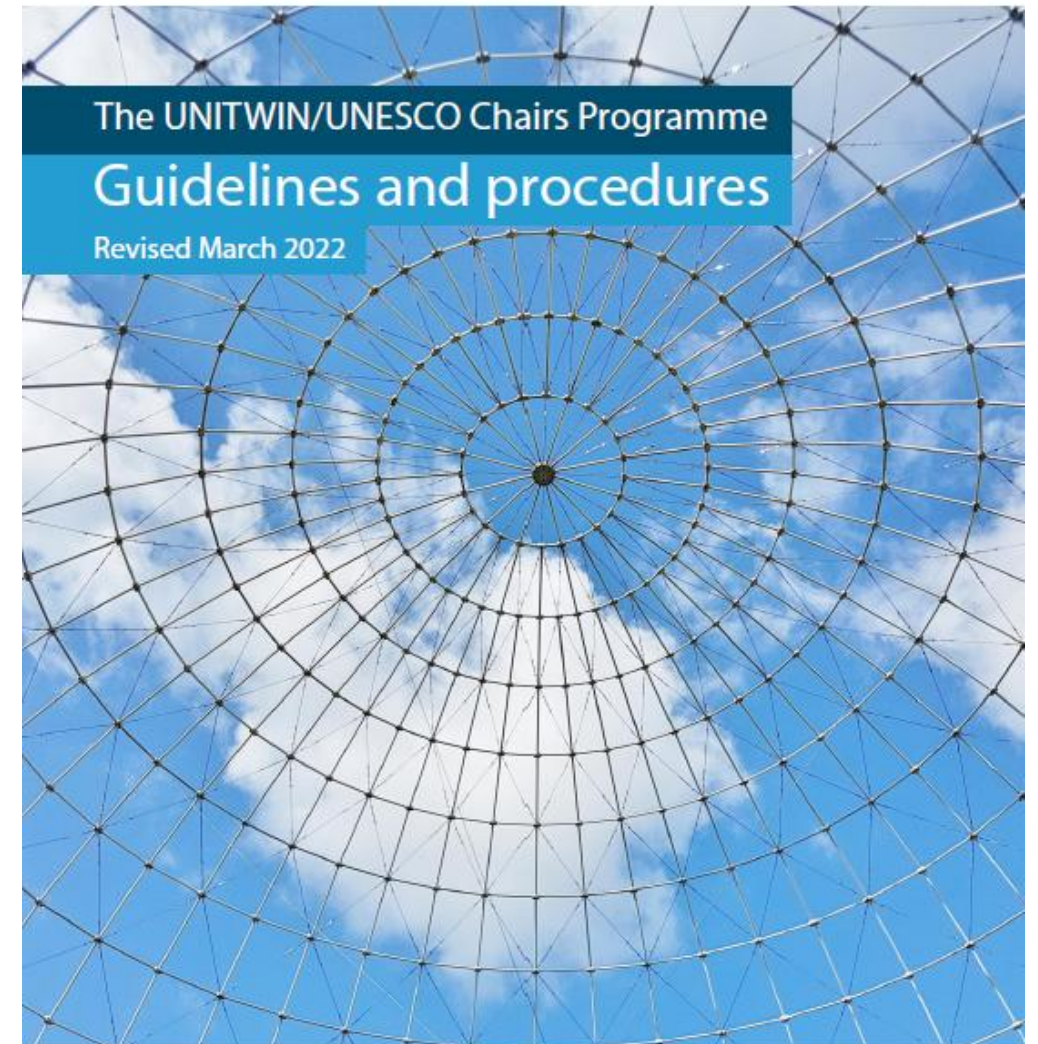
SEARCHABLE & INTERACTIVE DATABASE

ACCESSIBLE ON UNITWIN WEBPAGE

APPLICATION CYCLE

APPLICATION CYCLE

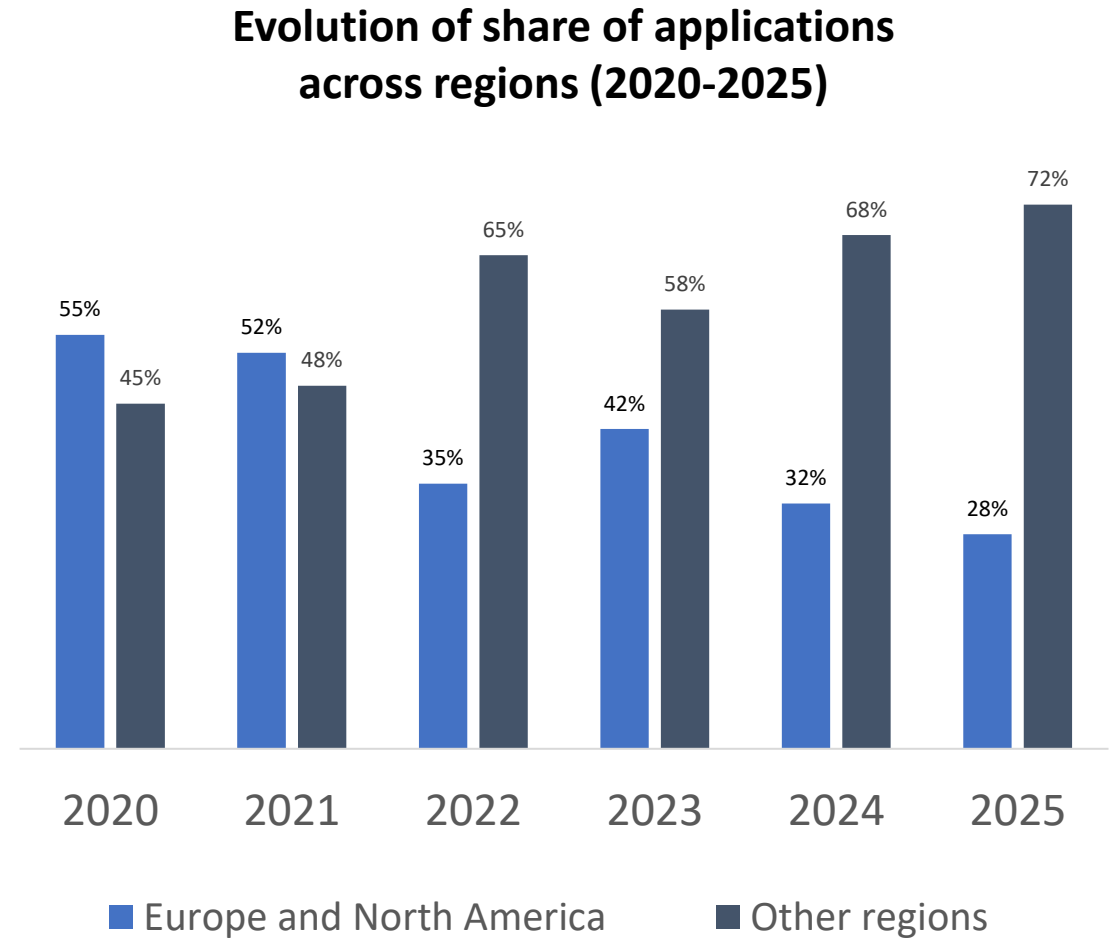
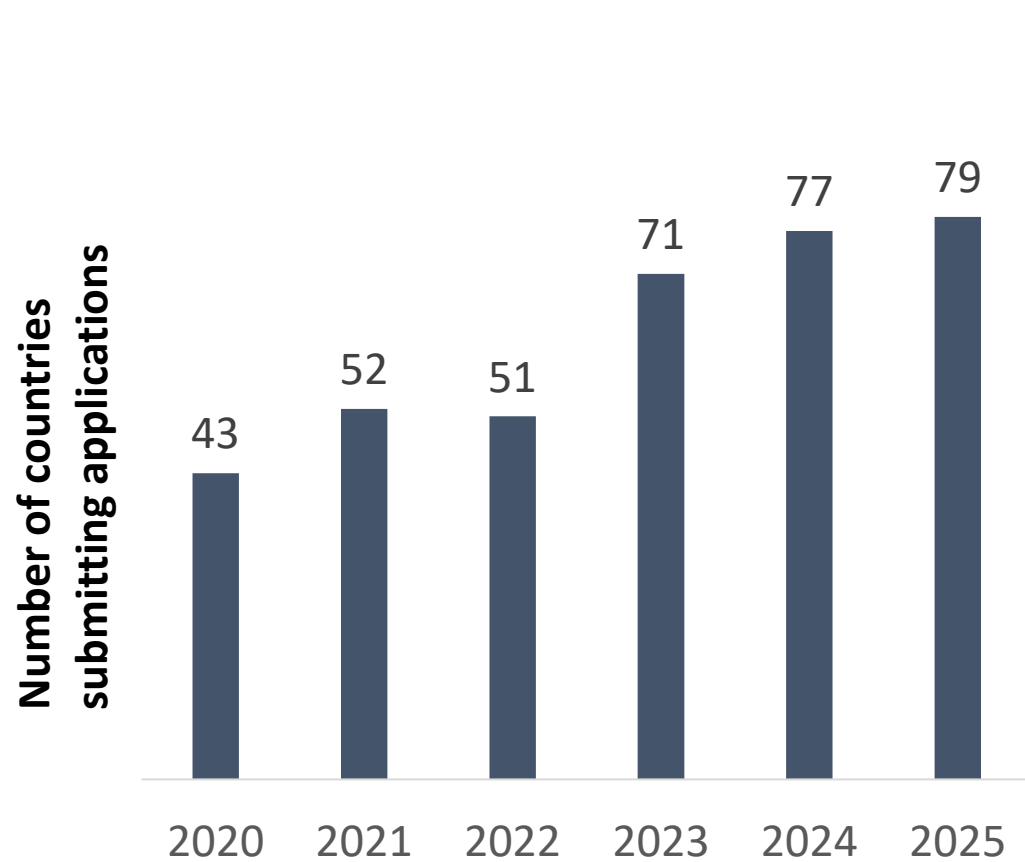
1. Up to **two applications** per country, plus one additional (resubmission, network)
2. Application submitted through the **online submission platform between 1 March and 30 April**
3. Only complete files will be processed
4. Applications must meet all required criteria
5. **NEW link for the account request form**
<https://forms.office.com/e/SM8Qbeuv4v> | Applicant will receive an email with the link to the application platform



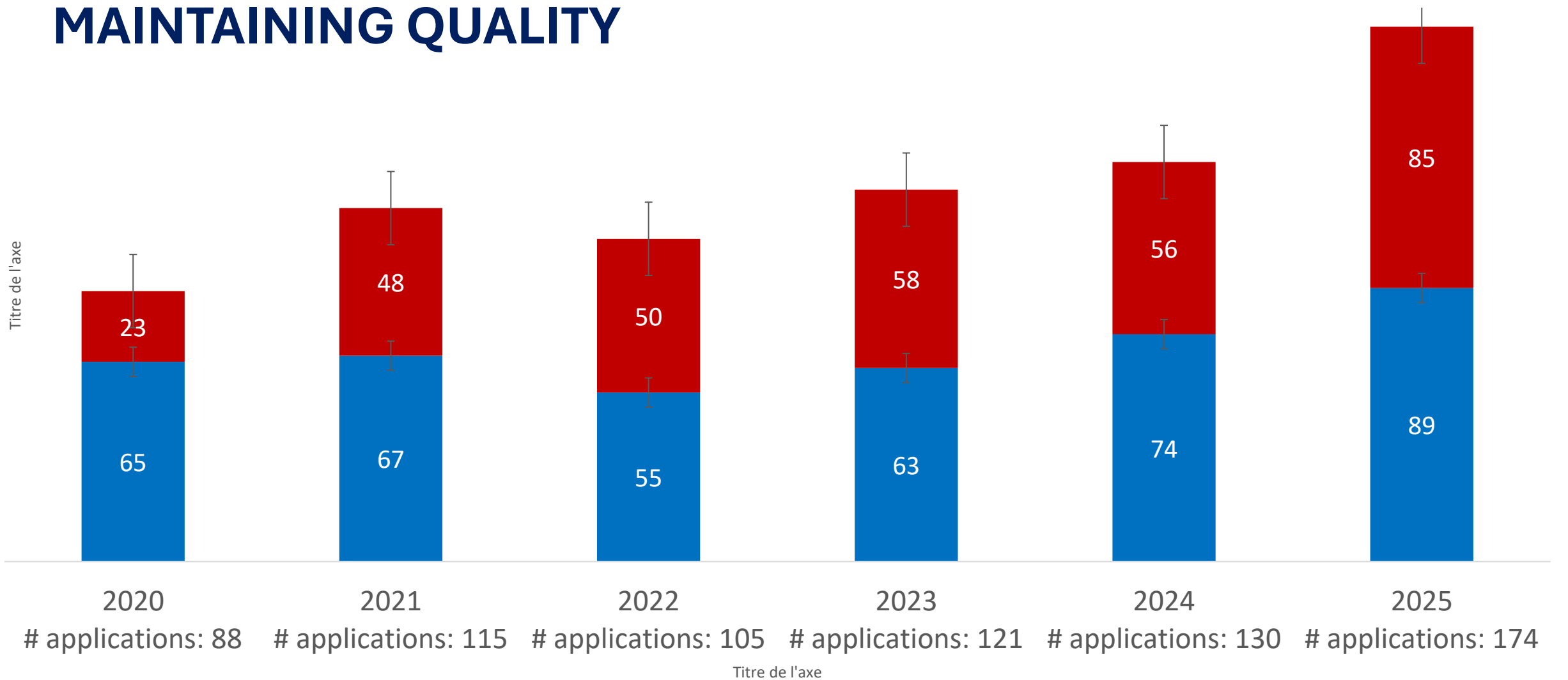
Process and timeline for establishing a UNESCO Chair



INCREASING INTEREST FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH



MAINTAINING QUALITY



■ Accepted ■ Rejected

CRITERIA FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF UNESCO CHAIRS & UNITWIN NETWORKS

CONNECT WITH
**UNESCO
PRIORITIES**

PROPOSE AN
**INTEGRATED
APPROACH**
RESEARCH, TEACHING,
COMMUNITY

**RELEVANT
EXPERTISE &
INSTITUTIONAL
CAPACITY**

DEMONSTRATE
**SOUTH-SOUTH
COLLABORATION**

PROMOTE
**FORWARD LOOKING
APPROACHES AND
FORESIGHT**

PROMOTE
**OPEN & FREE
PUBLICATION
APPROACHES**

ENCOURAGE
TRANSDISCIPLINARITY

**COMMUNICATION
STRATEGY**

UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks

MEMBERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES



JOIN

an outstanding
group of academics



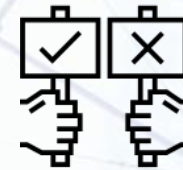
CONNECT

on actions towards
sustainable
development



ENHANCE

institutional capacities



CONTRIBUTE

to intellectual debates



SHAPE

future generations

CURRENT LOGO

to be used on websites and all materials



unesco

Chair

ROLES AND SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES



STRATEGIC & PROACTIVE ENGAGEMENT OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSIONS FOR UNESCO

ESTABLISHMENT, RENEWAL AND MONITORING OF UNESCO CHAIRS & UNITWIN NETWORKS

- Responsible for the pre-selection of applications to be submitted for evaluation
- Ensure proposals put forward are aligned with UNESCO priorities and complete
- Provide letters of support to selected proposals
- Support them in connecting with other Chairs and UNESCO Networks (ASPnet, Learning cities, Creative cities and Category II Centres)
- Support the applicants in connecting them with UNESCO experts and entities to explore possibilities of collaboration
- Engagement and participation in decisions for renewal or non-renewal as relevant



STRATEGIC & PROACTIVE ENGAGEMENT OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSIONS FOR UNESCO

COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

- Annual meetings & orientation sessions & dialogues
- Share information and good practices, and disseminate impact and activities with relevant stakeholders
- Support communications, e.g. website, correct use of logo
- Support in submitting candidacies for UNESCO prizes and awards + participation programme + fellowships
- Help Chairs in their search for funding, notably by providing letters of support to researchers
- Developing the network of Chairs in the Global South
- Celebrate flagship activities of links to International Days , including UNESCO's day together with UNESCO Chairs and other UNESCO Networks



STRATEGIC & PROACTIVE ENGAGEMENT OF THE UNIVERSITIES

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT AND COMMITMENT

- Provide institutional support to the establishment of a UNESCO chair and / or a Unitwin Network
- Ensure the successful implementation of the UNESCO Chairs and Unitwin Networks
- Ensure that UNESCO Chairs play a role in overall strategic planning of their HEIs
- Support the appointment of women to become Chairholders, Network Coordinators
- Ensure the sustainability of UNESCO Chairs and Unitwin Networks (i.e. staff and financial resources they need to carry out their work)
- Provide letters of support to promote their projects
- Facilitate international cooperation , partnership and academic exchanges and students' mobility
- Promote and (co) organize activities of the Chairs or a Network with the NatComs, FOs, UNESCO HQ
- Celebrate International days by promoting the work of the UNESCO Chairs and Unitwin Networks



STRATEGIC & PROACTIVE ENGAGEMENT OF THE UNESCO CHAIRS AND UNITWIN NETWORKS

CONTRIBUTION TO PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES AND UNESCO'S MANDATE

- Ensure the successful implementation of the UNESCO Chairs and Unitwin Networks
- Ensure that UNESCO Chairs play a role in overall strategic planning of their HEIs
- Support the appointment of women to become Chairholders, Network Coordinators and women leadership positions and in academia more broadly
- Ensure the sustainability of UNESCO Chairs and Unitwin Networks (i.e. staff and financial resources they need to carry out their work)
- Provide letters of support to promote their projects
- Facilitate international cooperation and partnership
- Promote and (co) organize the main activities of the Chairs or a Network with the NatComs, FOs, UNESCO HQ
- Celebrate International days by promoting the work of the UNESCO Chairs and Unitwin Networks

REORIENTING THE WORK OF UNESCO CHAIRS & UNITWIN NETWORKS

2021 AUDIT

of the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme

- **Better leverage the expertise of the UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks**
- **Improve efficiency and management of the Programme, including streamlining processes**

REORIENTING THE WORK OF UNESCO CHAIRS & UNITWIN NETWORKS

ENCOURAGE
TRANSDISCIPLINARITY

PROMOTE
FORWARD LOOKING
APPROACHES AND
FORESIGHT

CONNECT WITH
CURRENT UNESCO
PRIORITIES

FOSTER MORE SOUTH-SOUTH
COLLABORATION

PROMOTE
OPEN & FREE
PUBLICATION APPROACHES

BETTER
COMMUNICATION

Mission of the UNITWIN/UNESCO CHAIRS Programme

Advance UNESCO's laboratory of ideas function through research, innovation and knowledge creation



Contribute to the development and implementation of international standard-setting instruments



Empower future generations by fostering UNESCO's values and promoting just, sustainable and open societies

Generate academic and societal impact by connecting research, policy and practice across disciplines & countries



**OPPORTUNITIES
FOR COLLABORATIONS
THAT MOBILIZE ALL NETWORK MEMEBRS**

UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks

MEMBERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES



JOIN

an outstanding
group of
international
academics



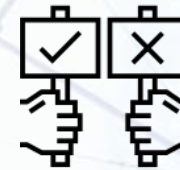
CONNECT

on actions towards
sustainable
development



ENHANCE

institutional capacities



CONTRIBUTE

to international debates



SHAPE

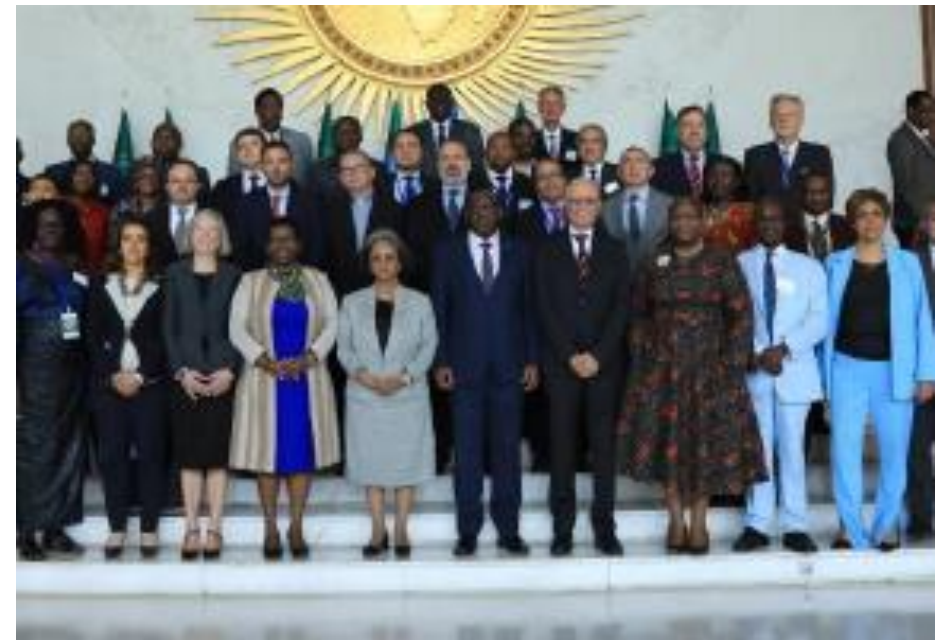
future generations

Approaches for engaging with UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks

TRANSFORMING KNOWLEDGE FOR JUST AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURES (PARIS, Nov 2022)



UNESCO-AFRICAN UNION FORUM ON TRANSFORMING KNOWLEDGE FOR AFRICA'S FUTURE (ADDIS ABABA, Oct 2024)



Approaches for engaging with UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks

PARTICIPATION IN AND CO-DESIGN OF UNESCO EVENTS



FACILITATING THE ORGANISATION OF UNESCO-CHAIR LED EVENTS



INVITATION TO CONTRIBUTE TO IDEA GENERATION AND KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION



UNESCO FOR PEOPLE



Khaled El Enany, Director General of UNESCO
(2025-2029)

RENEWED INTEREST IN THE NETWORK'S EXPERTISE TO ADVANCE UNESCO'S MISSION



World Futures Day, December 2025
Informal gathering of Chair teams and the Director-General



Global Network of UNESCO Chairs and UNESCO 80: Dialogues with the Director-General of UNESCO, 29 January 2026

Follow-up to the UNESCO80 Partner Survey - UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks: Shaping UNESCO's Future Together



**ONLINE UNESCO CHAIRS AND UNITWIN
NETWORKS SEMINARS**
Futures Dialogues | UNESCO



DIGITAL LEARNING WEEK

Frontiers, Frictions and Facts , Education in the Age of AI
Paris, 7-11 September 2026



WORLD FUTURES DAY 2026

Paris, first week of December 2026

The 4th edition of Luanda Biennale – *“Strengthening Water Governance in Africa as a tool for conflict prevention, mediation and resolution”* (2026)



unesco

Programme de jumelage
et mise en réseau

Les Chaires UNESCO et réseau UNITWIN en action



UNESCO Chair on Natural and Cultural Heritage for Sustainable Mountain Development (Caroline Ouko) - © Theresa Triabides

UNESCO Chair on Natural and Cultural Heritage for Sustainable Mountain Development Centre for Training and Integrated Research in ASAL Development (CETRAD) (Kenya)

The chair's work is dedicated to improving food systems, particularly for mountain populations, who are disproportionately affected by food insecurity. These populations also play a vital role in biodiversity conservation, water management, and social governance of common-pool resources. Currently, the co-chairs are developing a proposal for North-South collaborative research on sustainable food systems and ecosystem restoration. The focus is on university teaching and research, aimed at influencing policy and supporting societal action. Key activities include a 2024 joint research project on ecosystem restoration and sustainable food systems in Kenya and co-hosting the 2023 biennial conference of the International Association for the Study of the Commons.

Les travaux de la chaire sont consacrés à l'amélioration des systèmes alimentaires, en particulier pour les populations montagnardes, qui sont touchées de manière disproportionnée par l'insécurité alimentaire. Ces populations jouent également un rôle essentiel dans la conservation de la biodiversité, la gestion de l'eau et la gouvernance sociale des ressources communes. Actuellement, les coprésidents élaborent une proposition de recherche collaborative Nord-Sud sur les systèmes alimentaires durables et la restauration des écosystèmes. L'accent est mis sur l'enseignement et la recherche universitaires, dans le but d'influencer les politiques et de soutenir l'action sociétale. Les principales activités comprennent un projet de recherche conjoint en 2024 sur la restauration des écosystèmes et les systèmes alimentaires durables au Kenya et l'organisation conjointe de la conférence biennale de 2023 de l'Association internationale pour l'étude des biens communs.



Meeting with (migrant) farmers in Atebubu-Amaniam District, Ghana in a Ph.D. project titled - Fusion or Disruption: How Migration Shapes Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) of Smallholder Farmers in Ghana, 16th January 2024, Ghana (Mozoi) © UNESCO Co-Chair in Biocultural Diversity, Sustainability, Reconciliation and Renewal (Mohammed Abubakar)

UNESCO Co-Chair in Biocultural Diversity, Sustainability, Reconciliation and Renewal University of Saskatchewan (Canada)

One of the strands of the UNESCO Chair in Biocultural Diversity, Sustainability, Reconciliation and Renewal works is to weave Indigenous and Western knowledge to promote sustainability through innovative cross-country and purpose-led projects in rural and Indigenous communities, recruiting and mentoring engaged, socially committed graduate students to develop research to promote and support productive, biodiverse landscapes and territories. Mohammed Abubakar's doctoral research, supervised by UNESCO Co-Chair, Dr. James Robson, partners with three farming communities in Ghana to explore how rural-rural migration might shape and impact farmer TEK (traditional ecological knowledge) and the implications that these impacts and changes may have on sustainable rural development in such regions. The project is contributing to our understanding of (understudied) rural-rural migration dynamics, and farmer TEK as both a place-based but also adaptive dynamic system. The work also builds knowledge of African indigeneity in global sustainability discourses.

L'un des axes de travail de la chaire UNESCO sur la diversité bioculturelle, la durabilité, la réconciliation et le renouveau consiste à « tisser » les connaissances autochtones et occidentales afin de promouvoir la durabilité par le biais de projets novateurs, transnationaux et ciblés dans les communautés rurales et autochtones, en recrutant et en encadrant des étudiants diplômés engagés, socialement engagés, afin de développer des recherches visant à promouvoir et à soutenir des paysages et des territoires productifs et biodiversifiés. La recherche doctorale de Mohammed Abubakar, supervisée par le coprésident de l'UNESCO, le Dr James Robson, s'associe à trois communautés agricoles du Ghana pour explorer la manière dont la migration rurale-rurale peut façonner et impacter le savoir écologique traditionnel des agriculteurs et les implications que ces impacts et changements peuvent avoir sur le développement rural durable dans ces régions. Le projet contribue à notre compréhension de la dynamique (peu étudiée) des migrations rurales-rurales et des connaissances écologiques traditionnelles des agriculteurs en tant que système dynamique basé sur le lieu et adaptatif. Ce travail permet également de mieux connaître l'indigénéité africaine dans les discours mondiaux sur la durabilité.



© Henry Chwawa

UNESCO Chair for the Preservation and Promotion of Cultural Heritage for National Development Mzuzu University (Malawi)

The project is a joint research between the Mzuzu University UNESCO Chair and University of Yale, Malawi Ancient Lifeways Project. The key activity is education and research for students and community members. The community is involved in research and interpretation of their heritage and development of such heritage sites into tourist attractions.

Le projet est une recherche conjointe entre la Chaire UNESCO de l'Université de Mzuzu et l'Université de Yale, Malawi Ancient Lifeways Project. L'activité principale est l'éducation et la recherche pour les étudiants et les membres de la communauté. La communauté est impliquée dans la recherche et l'interprétation de son patrimoine et le développement de ces sites patrimoniaux en attractions touristiques.



Wellbeing and a Culture of Peace (Atsah Alon) - © Liliare Caffee

UNESCO Chair on Gender, Wellbeing and a Culture of Peace University of Wisconsin-Madison (United States of America)

Health by All Means-Kenya-work in East Africa with the Train-the-Trainers model on health promotion and disease prevention in collaboration with Nikumukue NGO (Remember me in Kiswahili). The Chair works with twenty villages in rural Kenya and is intended to expand its outreach to train a larger number of health promoters who will assist the local governments of Kenya and Tanzania as Community Health Workers in government-run rural clinics and district hospitals. The Chair has expanded its collaboration with new organizations in Kenya, such as Beyond Fistula to train fistula survivors to become health promoters and help with reinsertion into communities.

La santé par tous les moyens-Kenya-travail en Afrique de l'Est selon le concept de «formation des formateurs» sur la promotion de la santé et la prévention des maladies en collaboration avec l'ONG Nikumukue (Remember me in Kiswahili). La Chaire travaille avec vingt villages des zones rurales du Kenya et vise à étendre sa portée pour former un plus grand nombre de promoteurs de santé qui aideront les gouvernements locaux du Kenya et de Tanzanie en tant qu'agents de santé communautaires dans les cliniques rurales et les hôpitaux de district gérés par le gouvernement. La Chaire a élargi sa collaboration avec de nouvelles organisations au Kenya, telles que Beyond Fistula, pour former les survivantes de la fistule à devenir des promoteuses de santé et contribuer à la réinsertion dans les communautés.



© Database Global Education and Learning (GEL)

UNESCO Chair in Global Citizenship Education in Higher Education University of Bologna (Italy)

GEL is a Global Education and Learning database, with the Global Education Digest offering a curated bibliography of academic and research materials relevant to global education, as outlined in the Maastricht Global Education Declaration (2002). Under the Chair's guidance, this multilingual platform promotes visibility for the Global Education community, serving researchers, policymakers, and practitioners alike. The Chair emphasizes the inclusion of non-English resources and grey literature, expanding access and fostering a more inclusive GE network.

Le GEL est une base de données sur l'éducation et l'apprentissage à l'échelle mondiale, comme indiqué dans la déclaration de Maastricht sur l'éducation à l'échelle mondiale (2002). Sous la direction de la Chaire, cette plateforme multilingue favorise la visibilité de la communauté de l'éducation à la citoyenneté mondiale, au service des chercheurs, des décideurs politiques et des praticiens. La Chaire met l'accent sur l'inclusion de ressources non anglophones et de littérature grise, afin d'élargir l'accès et de favoriser un réseau d'éducation mondiale plus inclusif.



© Mata Amritanandamayi Math

UNESCO Chair on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham (India)

The Amrita Watoto Boma Children's Home, supported by the UNESCO Chair, is located on 11 acres by the Athi River in Nairobi, Kenya. It provides essential care for 180 children, offering food, education, healthcare, and extracurricular activities such as yoga and creative arts. Selected from nearby villages, these children receive holistic support from dedicated teachers, staff, and volunteers. The home also operates a school library open to local children and extends its services to Nairobi, providing meals and fostering community service by engaging children in helping 250 others from nearby villages every other Sunday. Aligned with UNESCO's mission of promoting inclusive education and community empowerment, the home nurtures vulnerable children, helping them become compassionate, responsible individuals. Its work not only addresses fundamental needs but also contributes to long-term community development.

Le foyer pour enfants Amrita Watoto Boma, soutenu par la Chaire UNESCO, est situé sur un terrain de 11 hectares au bord de la rivière Athi à Nairobi, au Kenya. Il fournit des soins essentiels à 180 enfants, en leur offrant de la nourriture, une éducation, des soins de santé et des activités extrascolaires telles que le yoga et les arts créatifs. Sélectionnés dans les villages voisins, ces enfants bénéficient d'un soutien holistique de la part d'enseignants, d'employés et de bénévoles dévoués. Le foyer gère également une bibliothèque scolaire ouverte aux enfants de la région et étend ses services à Nairobi, en fournissant des repas et en encourageant le service communautaire en incitant les enfants à aider 250 autres personnes des villages voisins tous les deux dimanches. Conformément à la mission de l'UNESCO qui consiste à promouvoir l'éducation inclusive et l'autonomisation des communautés, le foyer s'occupe des enfants vulnérables, les aidant à devenir des individus compassifs et responsables. Son travail ne se limite pas à répondre aux besoins fondamentaux, mais contribue également au développement à long terme de la communauté.



unesco

University Twinning and
Networking Programme

UNESCO Chairs & UNITWIN Network in action



JOIN_{the} LinkedIn group

for UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN
Network teams and partners



Q&A



Thank you

Learn more: www.unesco.org/education

 @UNESCO

<https://www.unesco.org/en/unitwin>



unesco

United Nations
Educational, Scientific
and Cultural Organization

Education
2030 