CNED — CONSEJO NACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN

ARCU-SUR: Is it an effective system for mutual recognition and regional integration?

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Introduction

- Expansion and massification of enrollment in higher education as well as the exchange of students, teachers and graduates between universities and countries are trends that cannot be ignored.

- These trends affect quality assurance across borders.

- ¿How countries manages these cross-border effects?

- In South America there are declared intentions of developing mutual recognition

   => ARCU-SUR initiative

ARCU-SUR: Background

- In 1998 the experimental MERCOSUR mechanism (MEXA) is created

- Its objectives were to
  - Advance toward the recognition of degrees in participating countries
  - Promote quality in Higher Education in participating countries
  - Facilitate regional mobility of professionals

- After a positive assessment the implementation of a definitive accreditation system was agreed in 2006: ARCU-SUR

- Countries participating are Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay (Mercosur members); Bolivia and Venezuela (in process of being incorporated); and Chile, Colombia, Peru and Ecuador (Associated countries).

General situation of Higher Education in the region

- A subcontinent limited in its language, with an extended surface

    - Languages: Spanish and Portuguese

- Massification of Higher Education

- Accreditation Systems

- Mercosur per capita income: US$ 10,530

    - Chile: US$ 14,299. Chile holds 54th place worldwide.

    - Bolivia US$ 1,342. The lowest in Latin America, along with Haiti and Nicaragua.
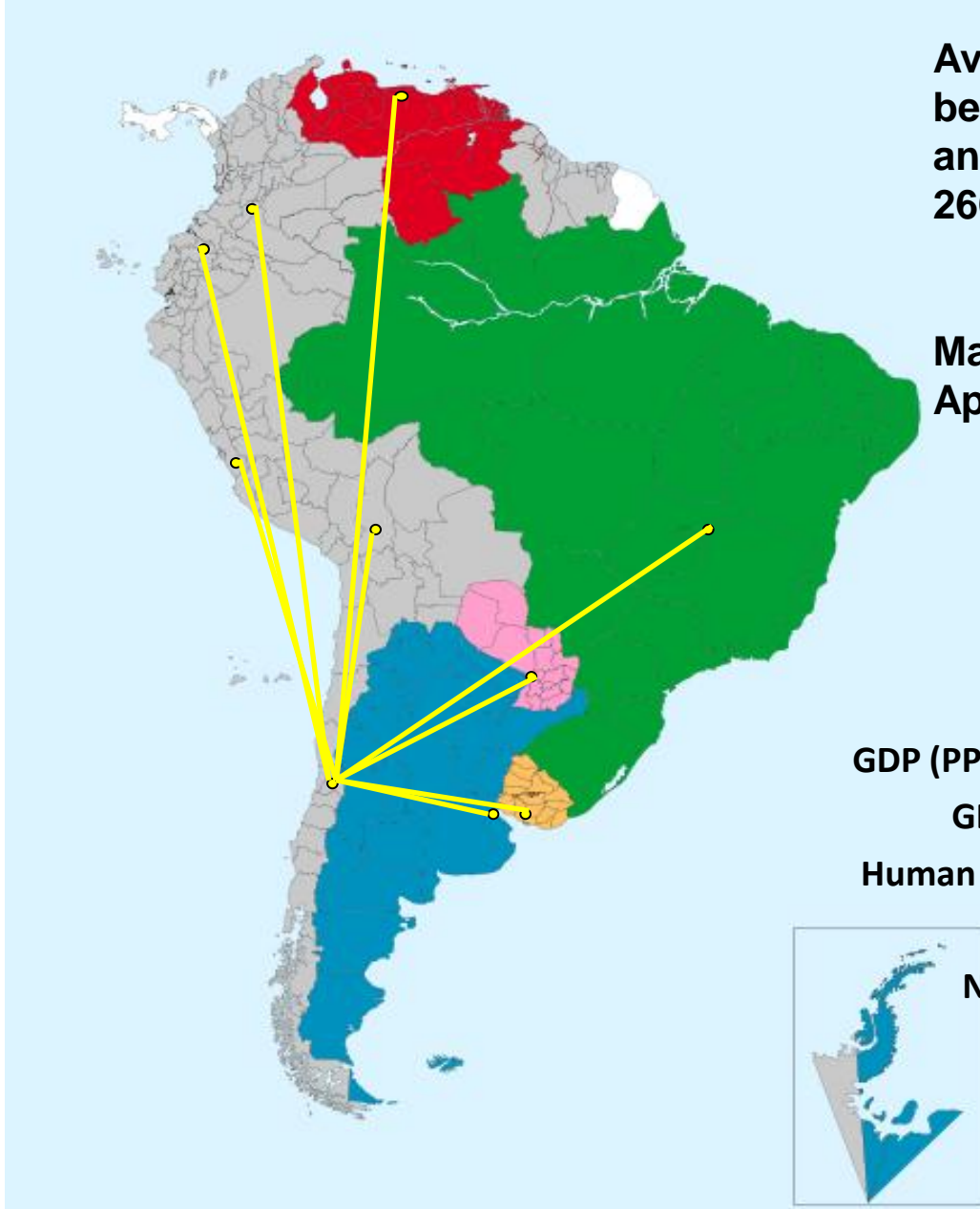
Average distance between Santiago and others capitals 2664 Km; aprox.

Madrid- Stockholm. Aprox

	Mercosur
Area (Km 2)	$ 11,889,654.00
Population (2009)	378,400,000
Density (pop/Km2)	20
GDP (PPP) 2007; (MM US $)	$ 2,770,723
GDP per capita (US $)	$ 10,530
Human development index	0.826
Common currency	NO
Number of countries	10

ARCU-SUR: Description

- It is managed as part of Mercosur's Education Sector,
- It respects each country's legislation and universities' autonomy,
- It considers careers with degrees that are officially recognized and that have graduates,
- The degrees considered are:
  - Medicine
  - Agronomy
  - Architecture
  - Engineering

ARCU-SUR: Characteristics of the accreditation process

- Participation is voluntary.

- Only programs taught in universities.

- Requires a self-assessment process that considers the graduate profile and regional quality criteria.

- Considers an external assessment by peer committees.

- Process ends with an accreditation resolution

- It is valid for six years

ARCU-SUR: Dimensions to be assessed

- Institutional Context

- Academic Project

- Human Resources

- Infrastructure

ARCU-SUR: Purpose

…improve the education of human resources in the region

…facilitate people's **mobility** between different countries in the region

…support regional mechanisms for the **recognition** of university certification

…allow for a coordinated and supportive implementation of a program for regional **integration**

…strengthen the technical abilities of National Assessment Agencies

ARCU-SUR: Assumptions

The viability of ARCU-SUR's purpose rests on two assumptions:

- Shared quality criteria on the Mercosur level, favor the education process in terms of academic quality
- The development of a culture that favors assessment, promotes quality in the region's Higher Education.

Assessment of the ARCU-SUR experience (1)

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- – Compatibility of technical and political criteria.
- – The structure of the grading system, as well as the organization of curriculum, regulation mechanisms, cultural elements and the role of HEI in national systems, are different between countries.
- – Implicit motivations that are not explicit.
- – Structure and power of the QA systems differ largely between countries.
- – High cost of evaluators training.
- – Only a few programs are involved.

Assessment of the ARCU-SUR experience (2)

In Chile…

- Little interest of HEI in participating. National benefit is greater.
- True interest is reduced to favoring the exchange of students from specific programs and universities that are perceived as similar in quality.
- The real impact on the system is still unknown.

Critique of Assumptions

Assumption 1): *"Shared quality criteria on the Mercosur level favors the education process in terms of academic quality"*

Not necessarily!

Comment 1): It is still unknown how heterogeneous/homogeneous the conception and implementation of quality assurance is.

Critique of Assumptions

Assumption 2) *"The development of a culture that favors assessment promotes quality in the region's Higher Education"*
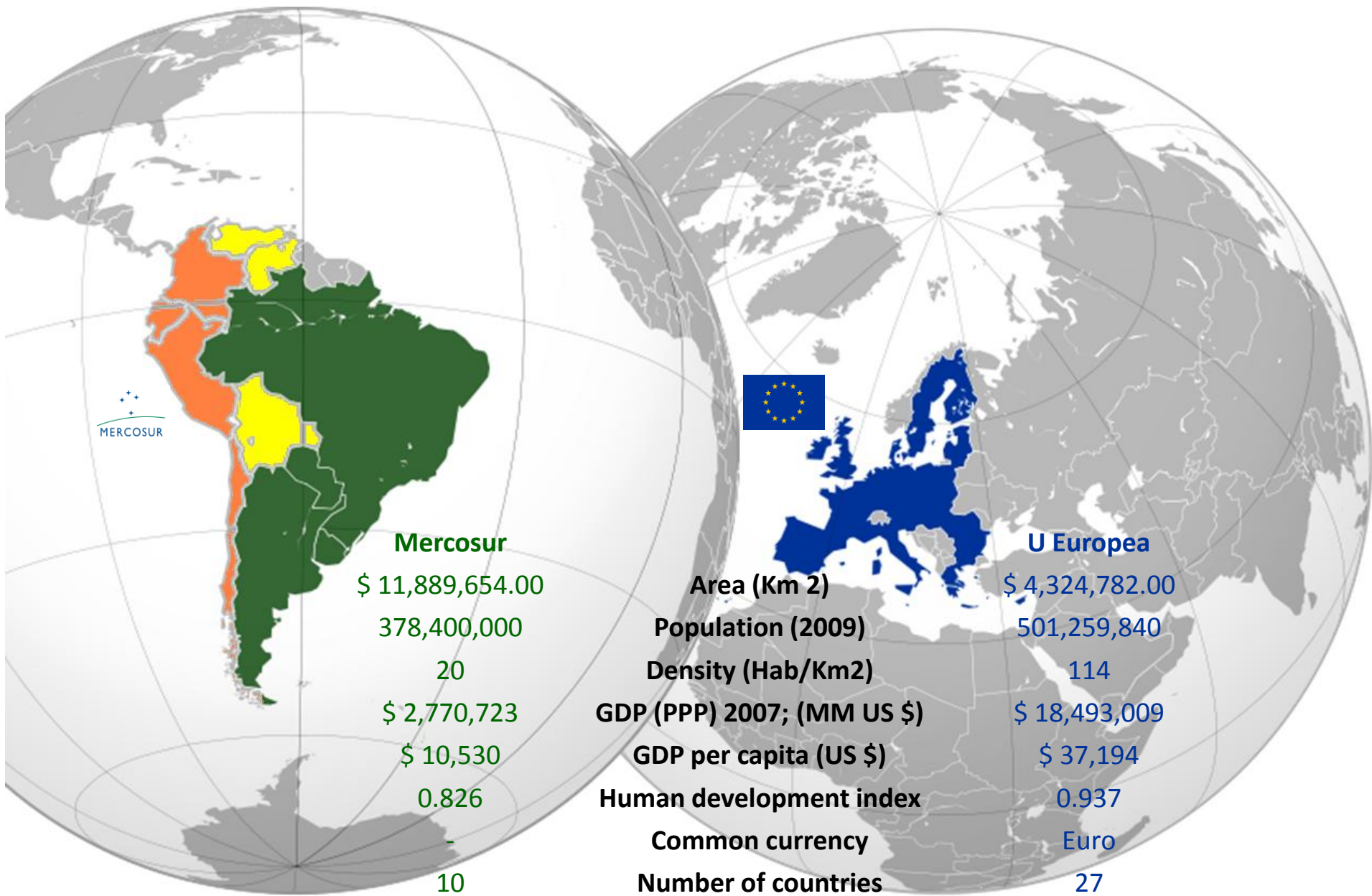
Comment 2): This assumption is more of an ambition than a confirmed fact.

Besides…

"… developments in higher education in Latin America (including quality assurance initiatives) cannot be separated from the economic and political changes in the region, which in turn are part of globalizing forces..." (Torres and Schugurensky)

(*) Torres Carlos A. & Daniel Schugurensky. The political economy of higher education in the era of neoliberal. *Higher Education* 43: 429–455, 2002.

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	Mercosur		U Europea
Area (Km 2)	$ 11,889,654.00		$ 4,324,782.00
Population (2009)	378,400,000		501,259,840
Density (Hab/Km2)	20		114
GDP (PPP) 2007; (MM US $)	$ 2,770,723		$ 18,493,009
GDP per capita (US $)	$ 10,530		$ 37,194
Human development index	0.826		0.937
Common currency	-		Euro
Number of countries	10		27

International flow of students
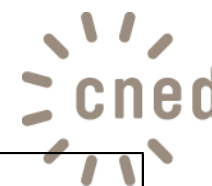
REGION	Students abroad	International Mobility Rate	Destination							
			Sub-Saharan Africa	North America & Western Europe	Latin America & Caribbean	Central Asia	South West Asia	Eastern Asia & Pacific	Arabic Countries	Central & Eastern Europe
Sub-Saharan Africa	223.181	4,9	**25**	65	0,8	0	0,9	4,6	3,2	1
North America & Western Europe	486.981	1,4	0	**88**	1,1	0	0,2	6,2	0,8	4
Latin America & Caribbean	177.995	**0,9**		**74**	**23**		0	2,6	0,3	0,3
Central Asia	96.314	4,6		17	0	**32**	0	3,7	0,3	46
South West Asia	275.840	1,3	0	71	0,2	1,9	**1,6**	22	0,9	3
Eastern Asia & Pacific	846.618	1,7	0	55	0,3	0,4	0,2	**43**	0,2	1,3
Arabic Countries	206.549	2,8	0,1	69	0,1	0,5	1,9	5,6	**18**	5,6
Central & Eastern Europe	330.563	1,6	0	63	0	3,1	0	1,2	0,2	**32**
WORLD (no especified)	321.799									
WORLD	2.965.840	1,9								

Source: Global Education Digest 2010, UIS-UNESCO

	Students abroad	International Mobility Rate
Argentina	9060	0,4
Bolivia	9749	2,5
Brazil	23410	0,4
Chile	6664	0,8
Colombia	18082	1,2
Ecuador	8434	1,6
Paraguay	2243	1,2
Perú	14719	1,2
Uruguay	2207	1,6
Venezuela	12428	0,6
South America	**106996**	**0,73**

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	Students abroad	International Mobility Rate
South America	106996	0,73

	USA	Spain	France	Italy	Portugal	Germany	Australia	Cuba	Argentina	Chile	Venezuela	Otros paises
South America	28,6	13,7	7,0	2,1	2,5	3,3	0,7	13,2	1,9	1,9	0,7	24,5

Main destinations of Brazilian students

32.4%

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Main destinations of Argentinean students

28%

Main destinations of Chilean students

25.2%

9.8%
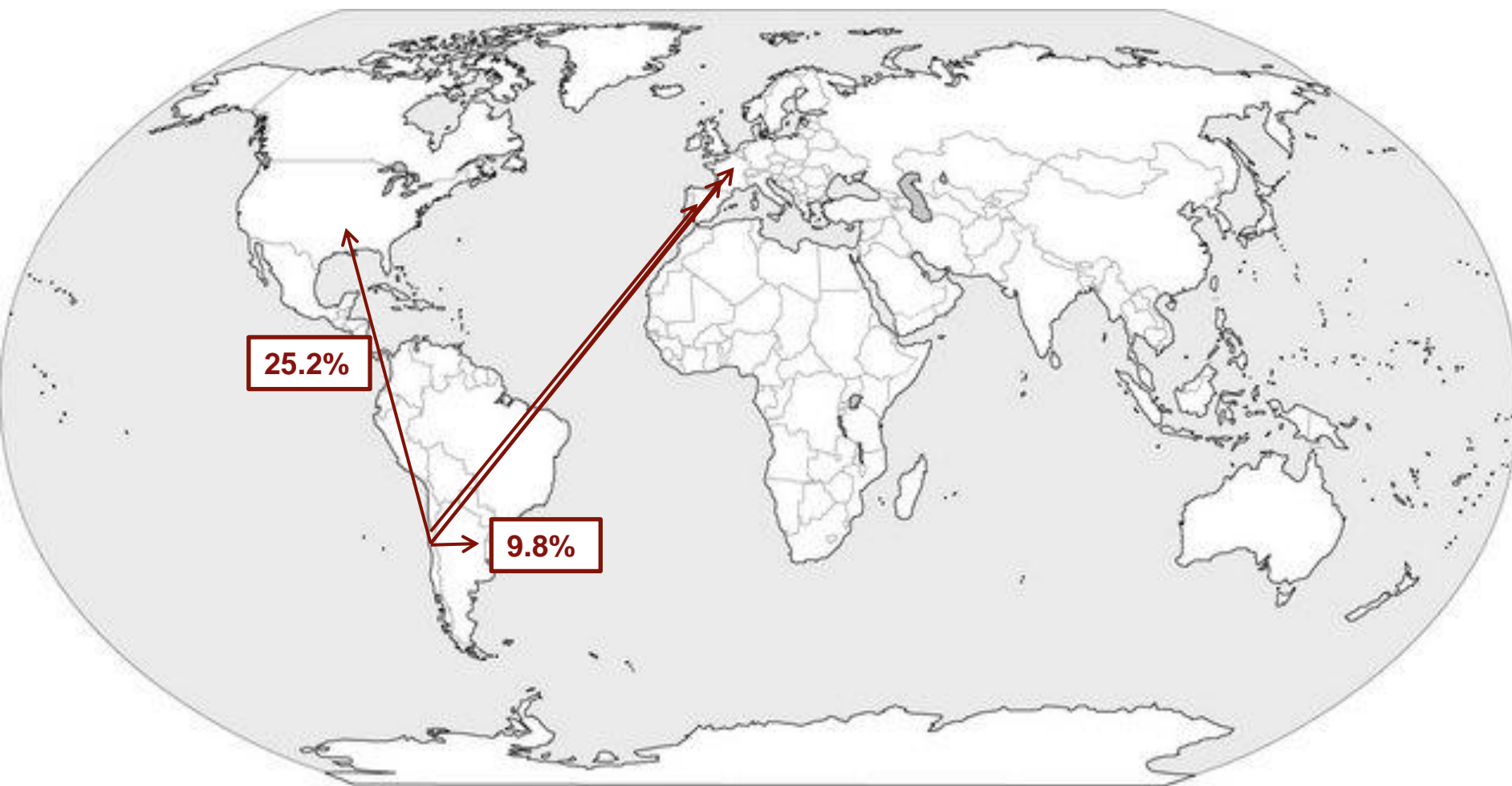
Regional Mobility

- The tradition of regional mobility is non-existent

- Only Argentina and Chile are relatively important destinations in the region, attracting 3.8% of students studying abroad.

Conclusions

- Low interest in moving abroad while studying in higher education ⇨ low enthusiasm in participating in ARCUSUR.

- What difference does the ARCUSUR accreditation make in practice?

- It is a system very similar to other mutual recognition initiatives in other regions.

- However, the same design used in other regional context to regulate a pre-existing situation, is used in SA to promote mobility and integration.

Conclusions

- In SA higher education system, there are other priorities than promoting mutual recognition.

- Instead of a global and complex integration system – that implies a common framework for the entire region – it seems plausible to encourage bilateral initiatives between countries.

- In order to contribute to regional integration, the recognition of accreditations must be complemented with a recognition of previous studies (diplomas and certifications) along with the professional authorization.

- Without incentives, it seems difficult that the traditional inertia regarding student mobility may change.