

Recognition of academic qualifications – the basics

Howard Davies, Senior adviser, EUA

January 28 2021



Overview of presentation

- Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC)
- Who recognises what, and why?
- What are the principles on which recognition is based?
- How should recognition work in practice?

Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC)

- Bologna tools have been endorsed by Bologna Process ministerial meetings
- They are all underpinned by the LRC - a treaty which is binding on its signatories https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/165/signatures?p_auth=Bfucqew0
- The LRC covers the recognition of full qualifications, including joint degrees, as well as periods of study abroad. It deals with legacy qualifications and refugees who may lack documentation
https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/Recognition/Criteria%20and%20procedures_EN.asp#TopOfPage
- [https://www.enic-naric.net/fileusers/Revised Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees 2016.pdf](https://www.enic-naric.net/fileusers/Revised_Recommendation_on_the_Recognition_of_Joint_Degrees_2016.pdf)

Who recognises what, and why?

- Recognition confers the right to be considered for admission
- The agencies formally established by the Council of Europe and the European Commission (the ENIC-NARIC networks) do not all have the same remit
- Higher education institutions do not – in law or by choice – have the same powers of recognition
- Recognition establishes that a qualification is authentic
- Recognition determines whether a qualification is appropriate for entering / progressing in higher education and/or accessing the labour market

The principles

- Recognition aims to meet the aspirations of the applicant and to widen participation in HE
- Procedures must be ‘transparent, coherent and reliable’
- If there is a shortfall between the foreign applicant’s existing qualifications and what s/he aspires to, the burden of proof lies with the person/agency recognising
- If a ‘**substantial difference**’ exists, recognition can be alternative, partial or conditional
- The applicant has **rights**: to non-discriminatory treatment; to accessible and accurate information; to timely notification of how her/his application is progressing; to a clear decision delivered within a specified timeframe; to guidance on how to appeal the decision

Recognition in practice

- As the Bologna Process has developed, the practice of recognition has evolved
- It is no longer based on *homologisation* or *nostrification*, i.e. checking that the foreign qualification is identical (e.g. in content and/or duration) to the domestic qualification
- Instead of looking for factors that are *identical*, recognition now looks for elements that are *comparable*
- It does this by reference to learning outcomes and to qualifications frameworks
- For full coverage of all practical aspects, download the EAR-HEI Manual at <https://www.nuffic.nl/en/publications/european-recognition-manual-higher-education-institutions>

Thank you for your attention

howard.davies@eua.eu

