

Recognition in Europe: Principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, implementation and challenges

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Let's forget formal statements on "recognition"

Recognition =
evaluation a foreign qualification
with a view to positioning it correctly
in the host country's

- a) education system -
academic recognition
- b) employment system –
professional recognition

In Europe, academic and professional recognition is separated

Lisbon Recognition Convention covers

- academic recognition and
- “academic recognition for professional purposes”

EU directive(s) on professional recognition

- cover regulated professions

Outcome of recognition depends on several factors not necessarily linked to the quality of the qualification itself

- properties of the education system of origin,
- purpose, for which it is sought,
- properties of the host system

Historic development of the recognition concepts and terminology

- *Nostrification* – the foreign qualification is identical to the one it is compared with,
- *Equivalence* – the foreign qualification can replace the home prototype in all aspects,
- *Recognition* – the foreign qualification has no substantial differences with regard to the purpose for which it is going to be used,
- *Acceptance* – the foreign qualification is inferior to the prototype but not so much that differences can not be compensated

Lisbon Recognition Convention in one sentence

A foreign qualification
of a comparable level qualification
should be recognized
if there are no *substantial differences*

Foreign qualification holders' prayer

... and forgive us
our differences
as we forgive
those who
differ from us ...



Basic principles of the LRC legal framework

- Applicant has the right to fair recognition,
- Recognition of comparable level qualifications if no substantial differences are evident,
- Should there be a claim of a substantial difference, the burden of proof is on the competent authority
- Mutual trust among states (based on QA)
- Information provision – on educational systems and on individual qualifications

What happens if the differences ARE substantial?

The recommendation is:

look for possibilities for *alternative* or *partial* recognition

At professional recognition under EU general systems' directives:

If the differences are substantial, the applicant can choose between

- aptitude test or
- adaptation period

Legal framework of the Lisbon Convention

- Lisbon Recognition Convention (1997)
- Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures (2001),
- Code of good practice in the provision of transnational education (2001)
- Recommendation on the recognition of joint degrees (2004)

Substantial differences may be in

- learning outcomes and competencies,
what the holder knows, understands and what he/she can do
- access to further studies or employment,
may even be legally stipulated – but they should follow from learning outcomes
- key elements of the programme (courses, modules , practical placements, dissertation, etc)
are important only with a view of *learning outcomes*

Substantial differences may be in

- duration/workload of studies –
as long as difference in workload leads to differences in (the relevant) learning outcomes
- quality of the programme/institution
but QA could also be seen as assuring that the stipulated outcomes are being reached in reality

So, WHY on the EARTH,
don't you evaluate learning
outcomes when assessing
foreign
qualifications?!

- *Because so far the qualifications
are not (yet) being described
in terms of learning outcomes...*

If qualifications are described in terms of learning outcomes

- transparency of qualifications is growing,
- international comparability is growing,
- credential evaluators can much better understand the function of the foreign qualification,
- recognition can be focused on these learning outcomes that are relevant to the purpose for which recognition is sought,
- it is simpler to grant partial recognition when full recognition is impossible,
- it is easier to recognize (allocate credits) for prior (experiential) learning

A glance at professional recognition in EU

2 systems of recognition:

1. **Recogn. by minimum coordination of training**

Covers: doctors, dentists, pharmacists, nurses of general care, midwives, architects, veterinarians

Training is coordinated across the EU/EEA,
recognition is automatic

1. **General system of recognition:**

Covers: all other regulated professions
recognition is NOT automatic

Recognition if there are no substantial differences in training, placements any additional requirements

If there are substantial differences, either *aptitude test* or *adaptation period* is applied

Implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention

Who has ratified?

- Signed the Convention: 53 states – Europe + Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Israel, USA,
- Ratified: 50 states
- Signed but NOT ratified: Canada, Italy, USA,
- Neither signed nor ratified: Greece

Is ratification of the Convention enough?

- Sorry, ratification is just the first step...
- Introduction of Diploma Supplement and ECTS
- Establishing and maintaining an ENIC centre

Less developed issues

- Amendments to national legislation,
- actual implementation of the principles of the Convention (also at the level of HEIs)
- Getting the information “down to the academics”

National implementation: main issues

- Transposing Convention's principles into the national legislation,
- Establish recognition information centre,
- Adapt quality assurance system
- Make HE institutions aware of Convention principles and recognition practices
- Create institutional recognition policies
- Include institutional recognition procedures in the list of issues addressed by quality assurance procedures – both internal/ institutional and external
- **AND CHANGE THE ATTITUDES!!!**

Some too optimistic beliefs

1. “When all countries ratify the LRC, recognition in Europe will become easy”
2. “When all countries provide the information on institutions and qualifications, recognition in Europe will become easy”
3. “When all countries introduce quality assurance, recognition in Europe will become easy”
4. “When all countries introduce outcomes-based qualifications frameworks, recognition will become automatic”
5. “When all countries include institutional recognition procedures among the issues covered by quality assurance, recognition will improve.

Challenge – countries have recognition in 2 stages but which?

Stage I	Stage II
recommendation	recognition decision
level recognition	recognition for further studies
recognition for further studies	establishing equivalence
establishing equivalence	issuing host country's diploma

Challenge – very different attitudes

Maximally positive:

“is the foreign qualification really so bad that I cannot recognize it (fully or at least partially)?”

Maximally negative:

“is the foreign qualification really so good that I cannot find a way to turn it down?”

Things to do

- Get the principles of convention “down” to individual academics
- Spread good practice across Europe,
- Fully implement European Register on Quality Assurance,
- Ensure that all courses and qualifications are linked to learning outcomes
- Implement qualifications framework
- And work with attitudes, attitudes, attitudes....

Thank you for your attention!