Erasmus+ Project:
Evaluation for Transparency
and
Recognition of Skills and Qualifications (TLQAA+)

WP3: Recognition of Qualifications and Quality Assurance

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Bibliographical Study and Recommendations to the Lebanese Higher Education

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Definition of Foreign Qualification Recognition

“Its acceptance by the competent authorities of the State concerned as entitling its holder to be considered under the same conditions as those holding a comparable qualification awarded in that State and deemed comparable”. (UNESCO, Paris meeting 1993).

Why Recognition of Foreign Qualification?

- To facilitate the mobility between institutions and countries.
- To ensure better interaction and flexible spreading of knowledge and skills.
- To recognize previous degrees and credits in order to facilitate their enrolment in higher education institution or programme.
- To seek and practice a regulated profession (recognition of a professional degree or qualification and the associated knowledge, skills and competences).

Source: The European Recognition Manual for Higher Education Institutions, Practical guidelines for credential evaluators and admissions officers to provide fair and flexible recognition of foreign degrees and studies abroad Second edition 2016

Terms related to Recognition.

Three important key terms related to recognition:

• **Formal or legal specifications** that a qualification must meet in order to be accepted as fulfilling the set standards (Recognition can be unilateral, mutual or based on regional/trade agreements).

• **Transparency** is the degree to which the value of qualifications can be identified and compared in education, training, at workplace and more.

• **Comparability** is the comparison of one qualification with another, based on a common format or instrument, such as tables,....

*Source: Keevy and Jansen, 2010.*

Dimensions of Recognition Process

The following dimensions are considered when studying a recognition process:

**Cross-border versus within system recognition:** The cross border recognition is about the recognition in one system of a qualification issued from a higher education institution operating in another system.

**Direction of recognition:** It is very common to distinguish between incoming and outgoing mobility direction. This distinction has to be done as cross border recognition but also within one system.

**Scope of the recognition:** The recognition can be at the system level, at the institutional level or at the labour market level.

Source: Level-setting and recognition of learning outcomes: The use of level descriptors in the twenty-first century, UNESCO, 2015, [http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/igo/](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/igo/)

Dimensions of Recognition Process

**Acceptance versus Equivalence:**

*Acceptance* is a process by which a foreign qualification is recognised without necessary having highly comparable curriculum and even if there are differences, on the condition that the curricular discrepancies cannot be defined as ‘substantial difference’.

*Equivalence* consists in comparing a qualification to an existing qualification in the recognising system and stating on the matching.


International legal Recognition conventions

To facilitate the international recognition of qualifications in higher education, several recommendations and standards were adopted based on:

- Qualification frameworks (QFs)
- Quality assurance (QA)
- Guidelines of information centres.

Several conventions were established to organize and adopt transparent and precise processes for qualifications recognition based on standards and QA.

Source: Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European region

International legal Recognition conventions

Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Certificates, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in *Latin America and the Caribbean (1974).*

International Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Certificates, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in the *Arab and European States bordering on the Mediterranean (1976).*

Convention on the Recognition of Studies, *Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in the Arab States (1978)*

Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Certificates, Diplomas, Degrees and other Academic Qualifications in Higher Education in the *African States (1981; known as the Arusha Recognition Convention);*

International legal Recognition conventions

Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in *Asia and the Pacific (1983)*;

Recommendation on the Recognition of Studies and Qualifications in Higher Education *(1993)*.

The Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the *European Region (1997; known as the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LCR))*;


UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees concerning Higher Education in the States belonging to the Europe Region. (Paris December 1979)


The LRC forms the basis for recognition procedures in the European region. It lies down the fundamental principles of the fair recognition of qualifications and periods of study.


The main principles of the LRC are:

1. Applicants have a right to fair assessment.

2. There is recognition if no substantial differences can be proven and in case of substantial differences they must be demonstrated by the recognition authority.

3. Legislation or guidelines encourage comparing learning outcomes rather than programmes’ contents.

4. Applicants have the right to appeal based on the recognition decision.

To give detailed recommendations and to serve as guidance for institutions and evaluators, a subsidiary texts were added to LRC. Mainly:


• **Bologna Process** played a major role in placing the issue of recognition on the European agenda.

• Bologna Process has improved: transparency and recognition of qualifications, such as supporting **ECTS**, Diploma Supplement (**DS**) and the implementation of qualifications frameworks (**QFs**).

• Within Bologna Process, the LRC is regarded as the main international legal text that aims to promote the fair recognition of access qualifications and higher education qualifications.


Bucharest Communiqué, 2012.

- Bucharest Communiqué launched a project to explore and achieve automatic academic recognition of comparable degrees.
- The Communiqué recommended the use of the “European Area of Recognition (EAR) manual”.
- It proposed recommendations, standards and guidelines to be used for fair recognition of foreign qualifications and good practices in the European region.
- It encourages HEIs and quality assurance agencies to assess institutional recognition procedures in internal and external quality assurance.

Information and Transparency

• **Transparency** is one of the main principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC).

• The recognition process needs **accurate information** to run smoothly and to be fair, this information includes:
  
  • the degree system.
  
  • the qualification framework.
  
  • the quality assurance (QA) system.
  
  • the Credit Transfer System (CTS).
  
  • the Diploma supplement (DS).
  
  • other information needed sources.

In Europe and Mediterranean region, many organizations and networks were established to provide information such as: *European Network of Information Centres* (ENIC): was created in 1994 to:

• Implement the LRC.

• Develop policy and practice for the recognition of qualifications through providing information on foreign qualifications, education systems, mobility schemes and recognition of foreign awards.

The Network consists of the national information centres of the LRC signatory countries.

The network of **National Academic Recognition Information Centres** (NARIC):

- Created in 1984 to improve the recognition of academic diplomas and periods of study in the member States of the European Union (EU).
- Includes the European Economic Area (EEA) countries and Turkey.

All member countries have **designated national centres**, in order to facilitate the mobility of students, teachers and researchers by providing advice and information concerning the academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study.

*Source: ENIC-NARIC Network. Link: [http://enic-naric.net](http://enic-naric.net)*

Information Networks

- Database **ORTELIUS, located in Florence 1996**, it provides all kind of information on the higher education systems of the EU countries and of individual institutions.

- **Trans Regional Academic Mobility and Credential Evaluation (TRACE)** information system, coordinated by the International Association of Universities (IAU) (It is an international information network for collecting, processing and standardizing information on higher education).

The European Area Recognition (EAR) Manual states that:

1) The recognition of qualifications and the quality assurance are interrelated in both directions.

2) The Bucharest Communiqué 2012 calls clearly for the evaluation of implemented recognition processes:

It encourages higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies to assess institutional recognition procedures in internal and external quality assurance.”
Quality Assurance and Trust for Recognition

The application of an appropriate quality assurance system to a programme that complements the existence of transparent information and supports the trust in the qualifications.

The European Standards and Guidelines (ESG, 2015) states clearly: “Engagement with quality assurance processes, particularly the external ones, allows European higher education systems to demonstrate quality and increase transparency.”

-The purpose of the ESG includes: “support mutual trust, facilitating recognition and mobility within and across national borders.”


The European Recognition Manual for Higher Education Institutions enumerates five elements as required to define a qualification. These elements are:

1- Level of a Qualification
2- Workload
3- Quality
4- Profile
5- Learning Outcomes.

These five key elements show that recognition, qualifications frameworks and quality assurance are strongly interrelated.


At Berlin Conference a set of common references and criteria were established to enhance the compatibility of the various NQFs in EHEA. The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) has been developed and adopted in 2005.

The development of an overarching framework for qualifications for the EHEA helped to:

- Elaborate the national qualifications framework.
- Promote the mutual understanding of national qualifications.
- Facilitate the mutual recognition.
The existence of a QF permits to uniquely define:

- The level of a qualification.
- Provide important information about the workload
- The profile of a qualification.

By translating these levels from one system to another, the recognition process is facilitated.
Recognition in Higher Education in Lebanon.

Current situation:

• The Ministry of Education has the overall responsibility for higher education in Lebanon.

• It is one of the oldest in the region.

• It includes about 200 000 students, enrolled in one public university, the Lebanese University, (42% of the students), and about 50 private HEIs.

• These institutions adopt a wide diversity of academic systems, with traditional modes of teaching.

Current situation:

• Since 1957 a decree established a committee for the equivalence and recognition of diplomas.

• The equivalence committee operates under the umbrella of the ministry of higher education and is managed by the general director of higher education.

• The committee adopts a transparent process and has several good practices.

• More than 10 000 recognition/equivalence requests are treated per year.

Recognition in Higher Education in Lebanon.

Current situation:
The recognition/equivalence of qualifications is done in two directions:

• Lebanese degrees mainly for Lebanese and foreign students to be recognised abroad.

• Foreign degrees for Lebanese students, and foreign students to be recognised in Lebanon.

Challenges in the Lebanese Higher Education

The Lebanese higher education institutions in cooperation with the ministry of higher education have the responsibility to:

• Harmonize the interaction and the exchange of knowledge among the numerous higher education institutions in Lebanon, in order to straightforwardly recognize each other’s programmes.
• Ensure equitable and easy access for all students.
• Recover the lack of qualified faculty staff in all domains.
• Increase the experience in the quality assurance processes.

Some *specific challenges* are facing the recognition process, such as:

• **Load on the Equivalence Committee:** huge load on the Equivalence Committee, (The law (n.285, April 2014) calls for the simplification of equivalence procedures, decrees and regulations are still lacking in this regard).

• **Absence of Information centres:** There are no similar centres to the ENIC-NARIC in Lebanon, to provide precise harmonised and transparent information about the delivered qualifications.

Challenges in the Lebanese Higher Education

• Lack of National Qualifications Framework and Quality Assurance System: There is no proper QA system in Lebanon, (the draft law for the establishment of a national QA agency in Lebanon is not yet voted).

• Lack of Lebanese Qualifications Framework (LQF).

• Lack of Supporting Tools, such as:
  a) Considering a unique credit system (different systems are coexisting, mainly American credits and European ECTS).
  b) The Diploma Supplement is not adopted largely.

General Recommendations:

1. Develop a set of decrees, procedures and guidelines to complete the law regulating the Lebanese higher education (n. 285, April 2014):
   a) Facilitate the task of the Equivalence Committee by adopting acceptance procedures within system for the Lebanese qualifications.
   b) Define rules and regulations to recognise qualifications with no equivalence in the Lebanese HE.
   c) Define rules and regulations for the recognition of credits and lifelong learning.

Recommendations

General Recommendations (cont.):

2. Build an information centre to:
   a) group the existing database.
   b) provide precise and transparent information about Lebanese qualifications.

3. Ratify the Lisbon Convention: the Equivalence Committee is considering this convention in its regular operations, it is recommended to have this convention ratified at the Parliament to enforce its application.

General Recommendations:

4. Promote the usage of different harmonised supporting tools:
   a) A common credit system. ECTS is an excellent choice since it is student centred and it reflects the workload of the students
   b) The Diploma Supplement
Establish and promote the usage of the Lebanese Qualifications Framework LQF, it shall include:

a) Equivalence: looking into admission and assessment requirements and duration of programmes.

b) Other qualifications apart from those corresponding to the three cycles advocated in the Bologna process, e.g. a qualification between 1st and 2nd cycle degree.

c) Vocational education and training, and qualifications for lifelong learning in general.

The adoption of the LQFs will provide to the recognition processes accurate information in uniform, comprehensive and explicit way.

Establish the Lebanese QA agency and system with the following:

a) Include into the core standards and criteria the evaluation of the recognition procedures adopted in the HEIs

b) Provide transparent information about the QA standards, guidelines and regulations which will improve the trust in the QA processes adopted in Lebanon

c) Connect the Lebanese QA system to international networks (ENQA) which will permit a mutual understanding of the processes and procedures.

Thank you for your attention