

"Background Paper"

a potential tool for the recognition of refugees' qualifications

Introduction

Recognition bodies consider missing documents as the most important problem experienced when dealing with refugee applicants. Credential evaluators are also concerned with the related problem of verifying documents. Often the degree was retained at or had not yet been issued by the higher education institution at the time of departure. Sometimes documents are destroyed in a war. Afterwards it is quite impossible to obtain documents or a legalisation from authorities in the refugee producing country.

Next to suggested measures like special examinations, interviews, sworn statements, competence tests, the use of supporting evidence and a provisional recognition for employment, the Working Party wants to raise the idea of a *Background Paper*.

The Background Paper

The Background Paper intends to be a tool

- for the credential evaluator to reconstruct the educational background of the refugee in order to facilitate the (future) assessment
- for the refugee to affirm his or her academic achievements towards other evaluating bodies, like universities and employers, in order to gain access to further studies or an appropriate job.

The Background Paper itself is not an evaluation, but a reliable describing reconstruction of the academic achievements linked with the available documents and supporting evidence.

The Background Paper is a twofold paper:

1. Overview of the claimed educational background with the available documents and supporting evidence
2. Checklist, based upon the DS model, that can be used by the credential evaluator to add more relevant information

Example of overview

Educational Background	
Qualification	Evidence
Secondary education	diploma
Higher education -first degree	Student ID + transcript of 1st year
Higher education -second degree	No educational documents, but teacher statement + employment contract

CHECKLIST

This checklist is a working model. Some items may not be appropriate.

The credential evaluator should be aware that the checklist is meant to be an extra aid for future employers and for the refugee in order to get his/her life back on track. It is certainly not an extra way to increase the bureaucracy burden of the refugee.

- 1 INFORMATION IDENTIFYING THE HOLDER OF THE QUALIFICATION
 - 1.1 Family name(s):
 - 1.2 Given name(s) or maiden name:
 - 1.3 Date of birth (*day/month/year*):
- 2 INFORMATION ON THE EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND ACHIEVEMENTS
 - 2.1 Name of qualification and title conferred (*in original language*):
 - 2.2 Main field(s) of study for the qualification:
 - 2.3 Name and status of awarding institution + previous names (*in original language*):
 - 2.4 Name and status of institution administering studies (*if different from 2.3 and in original language*):
 - 2.5 Language(s) of instruction/examination:
- 3 INFORMATION ON THE LEVEL OF THE QUALIFICATION
 - 3.1 Level of qualification:
 - 3.1 Official length of programme:
 - 3.2 Access requirements(s)
- 4 INFORMATION ON THE CONTENTS AND RESULTS GAINED
 - 4.1 Mode of study:
 - 4.2 Programme requirements:
 - 4.3 Programme details: (e.g. modules or units studied), and the individual grades/marks/credits obtained:
 - 4.4 Grading scheme and, if available, grade distribution guidance:
 - 4.5 Overall classification of the qualification (*in original language*):
- 5 INFORMATION ON THE FUNCTION OF THE QUALIFICATION
 - 5.1 Access to further study:
 - 5.2 Professional status (*if applicable*):
- 6 INFORMATION ON INCOMPLETE STUDIES
- 7 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
which is found relevant by the credential evaluator
- 8 USED SOURCES
- 9 RECOGNITION PROCEDURES
Legal text

RECOMMENDATION ON INTERNATIONAL ACCESS QUALIFICATIONS

Adopted at the First meeting of the Committee of the Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region, Vilnius, 16 June, 1999.

PREAMBLE

The Parties to the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (the Lisbon Recognition Convention),

Conscious of the fact that the right to education and freedom of choice is a human right and that a fair recognition of qualifications is a key element of the right to education and a responsibility of society;

Taking into account the growing diversity in educational systems throughout Europe and the world and the multitude of alternative ways of learning available to students;

Having regard to the increasing internationalisation of higher education as well as of education giving access to higher education;

Considering that any recommendation adopted under the aegis of the Council of Europe and UNESCO should promote international understanding and tolerance and foster mutual confidence and peace among peoples and nations;

Considering that international access qualifications facilitate international academic mobility, one of the major objectives of UNESCO and the Council of Europe;

Having regard to the Lisbon Recognition Convention and in particular Section IV which addresses the Recognition of Qualifications giving Access to Higher Education;

Taking into account that the Lisbon Recognition Convention concerns the recognition of qualifications belonging to the education systems of the Parties and therefore does not cover international access qualifications;

Considering that Article X.2.5 of the Lisbon Recognition Convention foresees the elaboration of recommendations, declarations and protocols as subsidiary to the Convention, and that while Parties are not legally bound by such texts, they should use their best endeavours to encourage their application;

Considering, however, that an international recommendation addressing the recognition of international access qualifications is timely and necessary;

have agreed as follows:

I. DEFINITION

For the purpose of this Recommendation, International Access Qualifications refer to secondary school leaving qualifications awarded upon completion of a programme:

- distinct from the programmes offered within national education systems
- administered by one or more bodies external to national education systems
- having an international orientation and scope per se
- meeting the general requirements for access to higher education
- subject to well-defined and transparent quality assurance mechanisms
- incorporating a core curriculum of sufficient academic rigour.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS

A. TO THE PARTIES OF THE LISBON RECOGNITION CONVENTION

1. Each Party should recognise International Access Qualifications for the purpose of access to programmes belonging to its higher education system, unless a substantial difference can be shown between the International Access Qualification assessed and the comparable qualification(s) of the Party in which recognition is sought.
2. The Parties are encouraged to acknowledge the merits of an International Access Qualification, taking into account the core curriculum and the academic rigour of the programme in resolving possible differences.
3. Parties are encouraged to show flexibility in the assessment of International Access Qualifications in the spirit of the increasing internationalisation and diversification of education.
4. The Basic Principles as laid down in Section III of the Lisbon Recognition Convention shall apply to the assessment of International Access Qualifications.
5. The competent recognition authorities should use criteria and procedures for the assessment of International Access Qualifications comparable to those applied in the assessment of the access qualifications of the other Parties.
6. Parties should encourage the ENIC Network to maintain up-to-date information on International Access Qualifications and to regularly review new developments.
7. Each Party should take all possible measures to widely disseminate the provisions of the present Recommendation.

B. TO PROVIDERS OF INTERNATIONAL ACCESS QUALIFICATIONS

1. In order to facilitate the recognition of International Access Qualifications, each Provider shall establish transparent systems for a complete description of the programmes offered, the evaluation systems, the qualification(s) awarded and the administering bodies.
2. Furthermore, each Provider shall:
 - a. make available reliable information on the programmes offered and on the basic values they promote
 - b. use the UNESCO/Council of Europe/European Union Diploma Supplement
 - c. furnish transparent information on the quality assurance mechanism(s) of the programmes leading to the qualification.
 - d. provide information essential for the verification of the authenticity of qualifications and documents.
3. Acknowledging the need for relevant, accurate and up-to-date information, each Provider should establish and maintain an information contact point.
4. Each Provider should see to it that students are fully informed of the provisions of the present Recommendation.