



AUTOMATIC RECOGNITION OF HIGHER EDUCATION ACCESS QUALIFICATIONS – CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES

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COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION

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on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad

(2018/C 444/01)

- By 2025, Member States put in place the steps to ensure that
 - a HE qualification acquired in one MS is automatically recognised at the same level in any other MS, for the purpose of granting access to further studies.
 - the outcomes from a learning period abroad at HE level in one MS are automatically and fully recognised in the others
- Make **substantial progress** towards **automatic mutual recognition** by 2025 so that :
 - **an upper secondary education and training qualification** giving access to higher education in the Member State where this qualification was granted is recognized for the purpose of giving access to higher education in any other Member States, without having to go through any additional procedure;
 - the outcomes from a **learning period of up to one year abroad** in another Member State during upper secondary education and training are recognised in the country of origin, provided that the learning outcomes are broadly in line with the national curricula in the country of origin.

Automatic mutual recognition of a qualification

“the right for holders

Is it a right that can be legally enforceable?

of a **qualification of a certain level**

A bachelor is a bachelor is a bachelor → applies also for access qualifications

that has been issued by one Member State

Quality assurance and trust in quality of the education system

to be **considered for entry to a higher education programme in the next level**

Access right, not admission. At equal level to and through equal processes as applicants with qualifications from the country of application. → non-discrimination

in **any other Member State,**

Bilateral or multilateral agreements only a first step towards all EU/EEA countries

without having to go through any separate recognition procedure.”

no checks of content/learning outcomes of the qualifications at access level, only authenticity

- “This shall not prejudice the **right** of a higher education institution or the competent authorities **to set specific evaluation and admission criteria for a specific programme**.
- It does not prejudice the right to check, if the qualification is **authentic** and, in case of an upper secondary education and training qualification, **if it really gives access to higher education in the Member State of issuance** or, in duly justified cases, if the granted qualification meets the requirements for accessing a specific higher education programme in the receiving Member State.”

Council Conclusions

RECOGNISES THAT:

2. [...] The successful implementation of automatic mutual recognition hinges on **accelerating as well as sustaining the progress that has been made [...] towards greater transparency and trust.**

5. The network of National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARICs) is central to the implementation of the automatic mutual recognition of qualifications in Europe, in particular in higher education, as the **NARICs represent an important source of knowledge, information and good practice** for all actors dealing with automatic mutual recognition.

6. Bilateral, multilateral and regional agreements on automatic mutual recognition in the EU can foster trust and transparency, support automatic mutual recognition, and provide inspiration for broader European cooperation with a view to implementing the 2018 Recommendation.

AGREES THAT:

2. The impetus to lay a solid foundation for automatic mutual recognition in the EU based on trust remains strong. [...]

3. It is imperative that **greater efforts be made by all the relevant actors** to live up to the 2018 Recommendation and to put in place all the necessary steps by 2025. Most importantly, automatic mutual recognition hinges on the Member States working together to foster mutual trust and transparency.

5. Trust and transparency amongst education and training systems is a key component to ensure automatic mutual recognition. Thus, efforts to **build a culture of trust and transparency** around automatic mutual recognition must be stepped up at all decision-making levels, with due respect for subsidiarity.

AGREES THAT:

7. It is important to focus on digitalisation processes and the **use of digital tools which enable easier verification of the authenticity of qualifications while allowing for efficient fraud prevention**, as well as on the tools developed under the Erasmus+ programme. Together with the Diploma Supplements and the Q-Entry database, these tools can add value by decreasing costs and the administrative burden.

8. [...] it is essential to **foster, sustain and further develop trust among staff** involved in the decision-making process as well as to **provide them with the relevant training** so that they have the necessary knowledge and understanding of the relevant tools and frameworks for recognition and the skills to use them appropriately. Considering that decisions are often taken at institutional or local level, the development of relationships between teachers, trainers, learners, leaders and administrators can play a key role in making automatic mutual recognition a practical possibility. [...]

INVITES THE MEMBER STATES [...] to:

2. **Establish the mindset** that a qualification giving access to a certain level of higher education in the Member State where it was awarded is automatically recognised for eligibility for access to higher education at the same level in another Member State, without prejudicing the right of a higher education institution to set specific admission criteria for specific programmes, in order to allow citizens to be mobile across the EU.

3. **Support higher education institutions in applying automatic mutual recognition** as defined in the 2018 Council Recommendation, including by **providing clear guidance and relevant training**. Where higher education institutions are responsible for automatic mutual recognition, support them in facilitating consistent national approaches.

12. **Encourage cooperation between decision-makers on recognition and the NARICs to avoid inconsistencies**, and to make automatic mutual recognition more effective and resource-efficient as well as to correctly apply established tools and instruments.

A few thoughts...

- More awareness and ambition are needed for automatic recognition
- Change of mindsets appears to be the biggest challenge
- There is no single right path towards automatic mutual recognition
- National databases vs. a joint European database
- Mapping of recognition practices can only be the first step
- Erasmus+ call for NARICs 2024 (Deadline 18 December 2024): stronger focus on impact of the projects to be supported

Thank you



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