



# The European Education Area & the automatic mutual recognition of education qualifications

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# What is the objective?

**EU Council Recommendation 2018** on automatic mutual recognition (for further learning) of education qualifications between the 27 EU Member States:

- **For higher education:** *put in place* automatic mutual recognition by 2025 of
  - HE qualifications
  - outcomes of learning periods abroad in HE
- **For upper secondary education:** *make substantial progress towards* automatic mutual recognition by 2025 of
  - upper secondary qualifications giving access to HE;
  - outcomes of learning periods abroad during upper secondary education and training



# What is understood by automatic mutual recognition of a qualification?

“the right for holders of a qualification ... issued by one Member State to be considered for entry to a higher education programme in the next level in any other Member State, ***without having to go through any separate recognition procedure.***”

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 ...”



# What is understood by automatic mutual recognition of outcomes of a learning period abroad?

“**At HE level**, the right to have the learning outcomes of a learning period recognised as agreed beforehand in a learning agreement and confirmed in the Transcript of Records, in line with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) ...”

“**At upper secondary level**, the right to have the learning outcomes from a learning period abroad in one Member State recognised in the country of origin, provided that the learning outcomes are broadly in line with those in the national curricula of the country of origin.

This shall not prejudice the right of an education and training institution to set specific requirements in advance of a period of learning mobility, or to check that those requirements have been fulfilled on return from a period of learning mobility”

# What are the main engines behind the move towards recognition (1)

- **European Education Area by 2025**
  - **European Commission, Nov 2017:** for “a Europe in which learning, studying and doing research would not be hampered by borders. A continent, where spending time in another Member State – to study, to learn, or to work – has become the standard” – including “removing obstacles to the recognition of qualifications, both at the level of schools and higher education”
  - **European Council (EU Heads of State/Government), Dec 2017:** call to prioritise cooperation on mutual recognition (among other initiatives, such as encouraging new transnational European Universities alliances)
  - **EU Council of Education Ministers, Nov 2018:** adoption of Recommendation on automatic mutual recognition
  - **EU Council of Education Ministers, Feb 2021:** adoption of Resolution on ET strategic framework towards the European Education Area, including a pledge to continue working on full implementation of 2018 Recommendation

# What are the main engines behind the move towards recognition (2)

- New Erasmus+ programme (2021-2027)
  - Expanded programme with budget of EUR 26.2 billion + 2.2 billion from EU external instruments for 7-year period (almost doubling compared to 2014-2020 period)
  - Transnational learning **mobility opportunities for 10 million people**, including school pupils, HE students, VET learners and adult learners
  - Erasmus+ interim evaluation 2017: 20% mobile learners face problems with recognition of study period abroad in Erasmus+ context
  - **Expansion of transnational learning mobility requires renewed attention for recognition**



# What are the EU's ways of policy intervention in education?

- TFEU Article 165:
  - **No harmonisation** of the education and training laws and regulation of the Member States; EU must respect the education systems of the Member States
  - **Mutual learning** (accelerating the exchange of experiences and good practices between Member States)
  - **Council Recommendations** (non-binding guidance)
  - **Financial incentives** through Erasmus+, including financial support for transnational partnerships and policy reform, notably EU tools and measures fostering quality, transparency and recognition of qualifications (NARICs, EQF, Europass, EQAVET, ECVET, EQAR, ENQA, bottom-up projects)
  - **Cooperation with third countries and IOs** (Council of Europe, UNESCO, Bologna Process ...)



# What are the Europe's main existing tools aiding recognition?

- **Lisbon Recognition Convention (1997):** 54 parties, but uneven, weak implementation
- **Bologna Process and EHEA (1999):** 49 countries, automatic mutual recognition as political priority – ECTS, Diploma Supplement, European Quality Assurance Register for HE, ESG
- **European Qualifications Framework:** improves transparency, comparability and portability of qualifications at all levels education and training, thus facilitating recognition
- **Europass digital credentials**
- **ENIC-NARIC network: National Academic Recognition Centres:** sharing best practices in recognition; **FraudSCAN database**
- **Automatic mutual recognition between smaller groups of countries:** Benelux, Baltics, Nordics



# What are some of the EU's main new initiatives aiding recognition?

- **New Erasmus Charter for Higher Education:** Commitment by HEIs to ensure full automatic recognition ECTS credits achieved abroad
- **41 new European University alliances:** with transnational inter-university campuses with seamless mobility and automatic recognition of learning outcomes abroad
- **European Student Card:** with trustworthy digital exchange of data on mobile students between institutions
- **Review of 2006 Recommendation on quality assurance in HE**
- **EP Preparatory Action on recognition of study periods abroad in secondary education:** new network of experts; study on application 2018 Recommendation in national secondary school systems; preparing draft European framework to support secondary education recognition; online info site

## To look out for

Towards the end of 2022, the European **Commission will report** on progress of the implementation of the 2018 Recommendation, based on Member State contributions:

- Taking stock of progress achieved
- Identifying areas where work must be deepened and/or accelerated towards 2025