

Terms of Reference
of the Regional SEE Working Group on Recognition of Qualifications

<p>Name of the Working Group</p> <p>South-East European Working Group on Recognition of Qualifications (SEE WG Recognition)</p>
<p>Composition</p> <p>Albania (tbc), Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo*¹, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia and observers.</p> <p>Co-Chairs: Croatia and Slovenia</p>
<p>Members</p> <p>Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of the Republic of Slovenia (Tjasa Bericic, Sabina Zajc), Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia (Ana Tecilazic Gorsic, Loredana Maravic), Ministry of Education and Science of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (Borco Aleksov), Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Aida Duric, ENIC (tbc), Kosovo* (names tbc), Serbia (Natalija Konjević, Katarina Randić, Jelena Kaležić).</p> <p>Observers: Regional Platform for Benchmarking and Cooperation in Higher Education and Research (Ladislav Novak), Regional Cooperation Council (Mladen Dragašević).</p>
<p>Context</p> <p>The Bucharest Communiqué committed participating countries to setting up a fast track to recognising each other's qualifications, ultimately paving the way for a realising the long-term goal of automatic recognition of comparable academic degrees. Ministers proposed that a Pathfinder Group of countries would explore ways to achieve this. The European Commission is facilitating the work of the group, which is composed of representatives from 10 countries: BE-fr, BE-fl, DE, DK, EE, HR, LU, NL, PT, SE, and SI. The Pathfinder Group looks for the best practice in the Benelux, Nordic and Baltic and SEE (South-East European) regions.</p> <p>With the objective to formalise cooperation among the SEE countries on the issues of recognition and to assure synergies with other regional initiatives, most notably with the Education Reform Initiative of Southern and Eastern Europe (ERI SEE) which has been designated for the monitoring of the implementation of the Education and Competencies dimension of the South East Strategy 2020², the SEE Working Group on Recognition of qualifications has been set up.</p>

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

² SEE 2020 Strategy – Jobs and Prosperity in a European Perspective was adopted in November 2020. www.see2020.rcc.int

In order to secure synergy with existing regional government initiatives in education, as well as funding for the meetings of SEE WG Recognition, a reference to the SEE WG Recognition has been made in the 2014 Work Programme of (ERI SEE)³.

Purpose

The purpose of the SEE WG Recognition is to contribute to improved recognition of qualifications in the SEE with the use of Bologna transparency instruments and based on increased trust in reliable quality assurance arrangements.

The Group is keen to see how the existing Bologna tools can be better used and articulated more effectively with recognition procedures, in particular quality assurance systems and mechanisms, such as qualifications frameworks, ECTS, grading tables and the Diploma Supplement.

The SEE WG Recognition will look on both, academic recognition and the recognition with the purpose of employment in another country. The latter includes both qualifications for non-regulated professions and those that provide access to regulated professions (as regulated for the EU MS by the Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications). Given the fact that, two out of seven participating countries are the EU MSs, both Croatia and Slovenia have separate recognition procedures for qualifications providing access to regulated professions according to the Directive 2005/36 and for those gained in the third countries. Therefore the group has agreed that the complex issue of recognition of qualifications will be discussed as a whole.

With a view of being in line with the overall task of the Pathfinder Group, the SEE WG Recognition will explore the potential of improving academic recognition of bachelor and master degrees towards possible automatic recognition. While not cutting across the autonomy of institutions to make decisions about admitting individual students, the possibilities will be explored of granting an individual the automatic right to be considered (though not necessarily admitted) for entry to a programme of further study at the higher level in another country. In addition cross border quality assurance will be discussed and the possible repercussions it might have on recognition (possible automatic recognition at the system level).

Finally, the Group members will use the opportunity to learn from each other to see what may be improved in their own national systems.

Reference to the Bucharest Communiqué

At the European level, in preparation of the Ministerial Conference in 2015 and together with relevant stakeholders, we will...

- Coordinate the work of ensuring that qualifications frameworks work in practice, emphasising their link to learning outcomes;
- Support the work of a pathfinder group of countries exploring ways to achieve the automatic academic recognition of comparable degrees;

At the national level, together with the relevant stakeholders, and especially with higher

³ www.erisee.org

education institutions, we will:

- Allow EQAR-registered quality assurance agencies to perform their activities across the EHEA, while complying with national requirements;
- Ensure that qualifications frameworks, ECTS and Diploma Supplement implementation is based on learning outcomes;
- Invite countries that cannot finalize the implementation of national qualifications frameworks compatible with QF-EHEA by the end of 2012 to redouble their efforts and submit a revised roadmap for this task;
- Review national legislation to fully comply with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and promote the use of the EAR-manual to advance recognition practices;

Reference to the South East Europe 2020 Strategy:

Key Strategy actions in Dimension D 'Education and Competences':

- Increase equitable access to, and participation in, high quality education at all levels, aligned with measures for a smooth recognition of qualifications supporting mobility in SEE (first out of four Key strategy actions).

General objectives

- Consider and make recommendations on specific issues of regional and national policy and practice related to quality assurance, qualifications frameworks, recognition of qualifications and transparency instruments and their mutual interaction;
- In consultation with the ENIC and NARIC offices in the region and the countries' representatives in the Network of National QF correspondents, develop policy proposals aiming to improve the interaction between qualifications frameworks and the recognition of qualifications;
- Consider developments in relation to EQAR-registered quality assurance agencies operating in countries other than their countries of origin and make policy proposals or recommendations;
- Improve cooperation with stakeholders (social partners, professional associations, chambers and employers) in recognition processes.

Specific tasks

- Analyse **cross recognition** based on questionnaires prepared by Slovenia, discuss the analysis of cross recognition at the seminar/PLA in order to elaborate measures for enhanced regional cooperation, drafting a handbook on levels of qualifications in the SEE Region and cross recognition of pre-Bologna and Bologna qualifications, adoption of the handbook by the national authorities, on-line publishing, printing out the handbook and its

wide dissemination;

- Analyse **national legislation** on recognition in the SEE Region with a scope of peer learning, peer review and exchange of experience and practice at the policy level (seminar/PLA); Identify obstacles to recognition and propose measures for simplifying recognition procedures for the purpose of employment and continuation of education (including cooperation on amendments to national legal framework for recognition);
- Enhance **IT tools** and improve information infrastructure for a more efficient recognition practice at the ENIC/NARIC offices and the HEIs in the region;
- Enhance regional cooperation among ENIC/NARIC offices through a setting up of and facilitating work of a **regional ENIC/NARIC network** (meetings at regional level, seminars, PLA, visits with a purpose of sharing experience and knowledge on the recognition policies and practice, implementation of the LRC and the use of the Bologna tools). Introduce automatic recognition as a policy experiment, share information and experience on developing and implementation of existing bilateral agreements on automatic recognition with a view to explore further possibilities for bilateral and multilateral agreements on automatic recognition. Improve internal procedures of the recognition authorities, in particular HEIs.
- Improved transparency of recognition of foreign qualifications by providing clear and accessible information on recognition to potential applicants (development of on-line tools and other in
- formation and promotion material). Compiling a list of national quality assurance agencies/links to accredited study programmes.
- Cooperation on the recognition of professional qualifications in reference to the Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications.

Events

The co-chairs will propose and organize at least one seminar/PLA per year on issues related to recognition, back to back with the Group meetings.

Meeting schedule:

The Working Group will meet at least twice a year (back to back with the ERI SEE annual knowledge exchange activity/seminar on removing obstacles to recognition or back to back to the Governing Board Meeting.

- 19-20 June 2013 – Novi Sad, Srbija:
Meeting of the BFUG members from the participating countries and consultative members (RCC and the EC) – setting up the framework for cooperation;
- 27-28 September 2013 – Dubrovnik, Croatia:
First meeting of the regional representatives to the working group dealing with

recognition of qualifications (back to back with the meeting of the PF Group);

- 25 March 2014 – Ljubljana, Slovenija:
Co-chairs meeting on assuring synergies between various regional initiatives, more particularly ERI SEE, on the recognition policy; agreeing on the future steps;
- 22 September 2014 – Zagreb, Croatia, in synergy with ERI SEE seminar on 23 Sept on Removing Obstacles for Recognition of Qualifications

Liaison with activities of other WGs' networks' and initiatives

- BFUG Pathfinder Group on automatic recognition
- Education Reform Initiative of Southern and Eastern Europe (ERI SEE)
- Regional Platform for Benchmarking and Cooperation in Higher Education and Research
- Regional Cooperation Council, coordinator of the implementation of the South East Strategy 2020
- Council of Europe – SEE Network of National Correspondents for NQFs

Additional remarks

This Terms of Reference represents a framework for cooperation on the policy of recognition of qualifications. Activities will be elaborated in the ERI SEE Work Programme 2015.