
Survey on external quality assurance of recognition - Explanatory note

The scope of this study is “recognition for academic purposes” or “**academic recognition**”. It covers the range of recognition policies and practices (most frequently put in place by higher education institutions) in the following contexts:

- Recognition of **academic qualifications** (qualifications providing access to higher education and higher education qualifications). It covers recognition (normally, in a context of admission for further studies) of **formal** academic qualifications; these qualifications can be of a different nature and delivered in a wide range of situations:
 - Domestic or foreign qualifications;
 - Qualifications delivered at home or in the context of cross-border higher education (CBHE);
 - Academically-oriented or professionally-oriented qualifications (Vocational Education and Training -VET);
 - Qualifications obtained through different modes of delivery (including e-learning or blended learning formal qualifications).
- Recognition of **periods of study** (credits) gained in other institutions (domestic or abroad); i.e. credits achieved as part of an Erasmus exchange.
- Recognition (normally, in a context of admission) of **prior learning**, also known as recognition of **informal and non-formal** learning. Informal learning is learning that results from daily activities related to work, family or leisure. Non-formal learning is learning which results from planned activities, but which do not constitute formal learning (community or non-credit adult courses, professional development courses, continuing education, MOOCs not awarding ECTS credits, etc.).

Academic recognition is one of the main objectives of the Bologna Process since its creation. **The Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC)** sets up some agreed common operating principles that are legally binding for the concerned countries.

However, **after almost 20 years of existence, implementation of the LRC is still a challenge**. Particularly, **students are still facing major barriers to mobility because of imperfect academic recognition** of periods of study, certificates, diplomas and degrees obtained in another national system or institution. Even though the situation is different depending on the country (with different legal frameworks and bodies involved), several reports make it evident that **academic recognition in European higher education is largely within the hands of higher education institutions**. The fact that higher education institutions are autonomous, and the member states have limited capacity to bind them to the principles of the LRC, is identified as a major challenge.