



National Action Plan for Recognition

SWITZERLAND

1. Legislation

1.1 Lisbon Recognition Convention

Switzerland was one of the first countries to ratify the Lisbon Recognition Convention in 1998 (24th March 1998).

1.2 Review of national legislation relevant to recognition

The existing decentralized laws and regulations proved to be flexible enough to deal with the Lisbon Recognition requirements and its subsidiary texts. The universities have adapted their admission regulations in order to guarantee fair assessment. The Bologna Directives of the Universities, the Universities of Applied Sciences and the Universities of Teacher Education are in conformity with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

1.3 Bilateral or regional recognition agreements

Switzerland has signed bilateral recognition agreements with Austria, Germany, Italy and France. All these agreements are in conformity with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

2. Recognition practice

2.1 Criteria and procedures

All competent authorities have implemented the Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications and Periods of Study. The time required to process application for recognition is one to three months depending on the responsible body.

2.2 Joint degrees

Joint degrees are legally allowed. Three Swiss universities offer joint master's programs in collaboration with leading partner universities from France, Spain, Holland, Italy, UK and Singapore. One university has signed the Double Degree Agreement for Management Education in Europe (DAFME). Besides these international joint master's programs, most universities offer joint masters together with other Swiss universities. Thanks to bilateral agreements, there is also the possibility to obtain a joint or double doctorate (cotutelle de thèse) from a Swiss and an Italian or French university. Joint or double doctorates offered only by Swiss universities are not awarded.

The Swiss Confederation welcomes and encourages the implementation of joint degrees. It can offer financial support for double degrees at the doctorate level.

2.3 Overview of institutional practice

Higher education institutions and recognition authorities collaborate very closely. The recognition bodies meet regularly to discuss their recognition practices. Together with the Swiss ENIC the CRUS Commission for Admission and Equivalence supports and monitors the implementation of the Convention and discusses arising problems. A workshop is organized every year to discuss necessary adaptations of the admission requirements. At institutional level, the practice is overseen by the three executive bodies (Rector's Conference of the Swiss Universities, Swiss Conference of Universities of Applied Sciences, Swiss Conference of Universities of Teacher Education) which collaborate closely.

2.4 Transparency tools for recognition

Across all sectors of tertiary higher education (Universities, Universities of Applied Sciences and Universities of Teacher Education), the new system is based on a first cycle (bachelor) comprising 180 ECTS credits and a second cycle comprising 90 or 120 ECTS credits. According to the legal framework for the two-tiered programmes, the use of ECTS is mandatory and is, therefore, applied in all bachelor and master programmes. In the academic year 2005/06, this concerned 48% of the total student population at the Universities and 30% of the student population at the Universities of Applied Sciences, respectively. As the traditional single-tier programmes are being discontinued, the above figures will rapidly increase each year. It is expected that in 2010/11 ECTS will apply to over 95% of all students (including further education programmes).

The Diploma Supplement is available at all HEIs (Universities, Universities of Applied Sciences, Universities of Teacher Education) and for all bachelor and master diplomas free of charge. It is issued automatically to all students together with their qualification, in the language of the institution (e.g. German, French or Italian) and in English. 100% of the students graduating in 2007 with a Bachelor or Master degree will receive a DS. Some institutions also deliver a DS together with the old diplomas (Lizentiat/Diplom).

The elaboration of a NQF for higher education is a mandate of the State Secretariat for Education and Research to the three Rectors' Conferences (Universities, Universities of Applied Sciences and Universities of Teacher Education). In September 2005, a steering committee was set up including representatives of the State Secretariat, the Center of Accreditation and Quality Assurance, the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education, the Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology, student bodies and the body of the non-professorial teaching staff. The steering group has close links to all national Bologna bodies. A small working group including an expert in the field of education is in the process of developing the first draft. The final draft is to be presented to the responsible political bodies (Swiss University Conference and Council of Universities of Applied Sciences) for approval in 2008.

2.5 Borderless/transnational education

HEIs recognize a qualification if both the awarding and the providing institution is recognized or accredited.

3. Information provision

3.1 Provision of information on recognition

Information on recognition procedures can be found on the website of the Swiss ENIC and on the websites of the competent recognition authorities. Each HEI is responsible for the provision of information on recognition criteria and procedures. All competent authorities and all HEIs provide information on recognition on their websites.

Information on the national education system can be found on the following websites:

- www.crus.ch→English→4. Swiss Information Centre for Academic Recognition Matters→Recognized Swiss Universities
- www.crus.ch→English→Range of subjects at Swiss universities
- www.kfh.ch→English→Universities of Applied Sciences and Offers
- www.skph.ch→English→Links→Universities of Teacher Education
- www.berufsberatung.ch→Studium

The Swiss ENIC has its own homepage which is linked to the ENIC-NARIC website.

3.2 Information package for applicants

All recognition authorities and HEIs give the applicant an acknowledgement of the receipt of their application and provide information on the rights of applicants and the procedures for recognition (including the right to appeal against a decision).

4. Structures

4.1 National information centre

Switzerland has a fully operational ENIC which is a department of the Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities (CRUS). It serves as the main information point on the recognition of higher education and higher education access qualifications at national level. It gives advice on the professional recognition of qualifications and counsels the HEIs on questions concerning academic recognition. The Swiss ENIC collaborates with the competent recognition authorities on national and international level and is part of the CRUS Commission for Admission and Equivalence, which oversees the recognition practice of the universities. It provides information on education systems, on qualifications awarded abroad and their comparability to the qualifications in the home country, on officially recognized institutions and on admission requirements. It is part of the ENIC-NARIC Network. It is responsible for the implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the Diploma Supplement.

The centre is adequately staffed with two scientific collaborators and two secretaries and has a budget of CHF 405'000.-

4.2 Cooperation recognition/quality assurance bodies

The Swiss ENIC collaborates with the Center of Accreditation and Quality Assurance of the Swiss Universities (OAQ). Information is exchanged particularly with regard to the legal status of institutions. The Swiss ENIC recognizes accreditation decisions taken by the OAQ. Both centres are member of the ECA and are in the national working group on the elaboration of the national qualifications framework.