

# GEORGIA - National Action Plan for Recognition

## 1. Legislation

### *1.1 Lisbon Recognition Convention*

Georgia was among the countries that in April 1997 in Lisbon signed the Convention on Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (The Lisbon Recognition Convention). In 1999 the Parliament of Georgia ratified the Lisbon Convention and from December 1999 Georgia is a full member of the Convention.

### *1.2 Review of national legislation relevant to recognition*

In December 21, 2004 the Parliament of Georgia adopted “The Law of Georgia on Higher Education. Article 50 of the Law on Recognition of Educational Credentials Issued Abroad states that:

1. The recognition of study programs taken in a foreign higher education institution and the results of academic achievements shall take place if the compatibility of such programs with the Georgian higher education institutions’ study programs is established.
2. The formal recognition (acknowledgement) of educational credentials issued abroad and establishment of equivalence and authenticity of the educational credentials issued in Georgia shall be the responsibility of a National Information Center for Academic Recognition, which is a part of the European network, after consulting with the relevant services of the relevant higher education institutions, in compliance with international treaties, bilateral or multilateral agreements and appropriate provisions of the Georgian legislation. Once recognition of the credentials is in place, the decision regarding the continuation of studies or employment in Georgia shall be made by a higher education institution or an employer respectively.

To date the Division of Academic Recognition and Mobility of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia acts as Georgian ENIC. The amendments to the "Law of Georgia on Higher Education" envisage integration of the Center with the Legal Entity of Public Law – the National Centre for Education Accreditation and it will be renamed and called - *Georgian Center for Educational Accreditation and Academic Recognition*. After the reorganization the Centre will prepare the Review of National Legislation on Education of Georgia. The review will be made by the end of 2007, when the legislation of Georgia on education and science is fully operational.

The Georgian Center for Educational Accreditation and Academic Recognition will publish the Review in the first quarter of 2008. The publication will be bilingual - in Georgian and English languages. The electronic version will be available on the Center’s web page and will be distributed among international organizations and ENIC/NARIC Network.

### ***1.3 Bilateral or regional agreements on recognition***

Recognition of qualifications issued by the countries signatory to the Lisbon Convention is carried out in the framework of the Convention and its supplementary documents. Several times the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia rejected the proposals from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to join its multilateral agreements on academic recognition, since Georgia is a member of the Bologna Process and many CIS countries also are signatory to the Process, therefore recognition of qualifications among these countries will be carried out in the framework of the Bologna Process. As for Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan and other countries, Georgia already has bilateral agreements with majority of these countries and the basic principles of Lisbon Convention are implied within these agreements. Georgia also has bilateral agreements with Egypt, Iran and China.

## **2. Recognition practice**

### ***2.1 Criteria and procedures***

In general the recognition procedures of foreign academic qualifications is implemented by the Division of Academic Recognition and Mobility of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia. In its activities the division follows the Recommendations on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications and Periods of Study. Other bodies that deal with the recognition procedures (state higher education institutions and employers) as a rule consult with the Division of Academic Recognition and Mobility and follow the recommendations elaborated by the Division on further steps to be taken.

In order to improve implementation of the recommendations it is necessary to disseminate the information among all stakeholders about the criteria and procedures. It is especially necessary for private institutions in order to avoid any mistakes or complications. For example, there were cases when students had been admitted in universities without having an official legal right to access the higher education institution in Georgia. Later on, the students encountered certain problems because of this mistake. Also, there were cases when citizens were employed at positions unsuitable for their qualification.

It takes up to 15-30 days for the Division of Academic Recognition and Mobility to process and issue the certificates of recognition. In order to make the process more flexible and speedy the division annually compiles virtual database of all graduates in Georgia. The higher education institutions are requested to provide the list of detailed and standardized information about the diplomas/credentials of all graduates at their institutions. Therefore the division has a complete list of all graduates since 2000 that make the procedure much more transparent and less bureaucratic.

### ***2.2 Joint degrees***

Georgian legislation does not envisage specific legal provisions for joint degrees. However, higher education institutions may introduce joint degrees without any obstacles. Several universities already started work on introducing the joint degrees. Legislative framework for joint degrees will be provided, after structural reorganization of higher education institutions is completed.

### ***2.3 Overview of institutional practice***

In cooperation with nongovernmental organizations in Georgia (Open Society Georgia Foundation, Eurasia Foundation, Civil Society Institute, International Institute of Education Planning and Management etc.) the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia organize meetings, seminars, workshops, round tables, trainings and conferences at different higher education institutions of Georgia. The goal of these activities is to raise awareness among academic community, students and all stakeholders involved in higher education about the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention. With the support of the Eurasia Foundation and the Civil Society Institute the booklets on the main documents of the Bologna Process as well as ECTS and Diploma Supplement were published in Georgian language.

However, still much more activities are needed to make the system truly effective and to raise the awareness of the society about the Lisbon Convention and recognition of qualification.

### ***2.4 Transparency tools for recognition.***

According to the draft Decree of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia issued in 2006 all higher education institutions of Georgia should move to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) by 2007/2008 academic year. The seminars and trainings held in 2005-2006 significantly facilitated the process of introduction of ECTS system at all HEIs. However, the HEIs that still do not have fully operational ECTS system may provide additional information about their credit system in the diploma supplement.

Since 2005, all higher education institutions of Georgia issue the international form of the diploma supplement free of charge, automatically and in English Language. The last point of the DS, description of Georgian Education System had been prepared at the Division of Academic Recognition and Mobility in Georgian and English languages.

### ***2.5 Borderless/translational education***

In Georgia such kind of education is not introduced yet. It is planned to begin working on the legislative acts concerning the transnational education at the end of 2007.

## **3. Information provision**

### ***3.1 Provision of information on recognition***

In order to improve provision of information on recognition criteria and procedure it is planned to organize seminars and meetings in 2007-2008 and to publish a booklets concerning these issues in 2008. The information about the national education system will be published in English by the beginning of 2008. The reorganized Recognition Centre will publish the information in cooperation with nongovernmental organizations.

The information concerning the recognition of educational qualifications is systematically published on the web-pages of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia ([www.mes.gov.ge](http://www.mes.gov.ge)). After the reorganization in 2008 the Center will have its own web page and it will be connected to ENIC/NARIC web-page.

### ***3.2 Information package for applicants***

The list of documents necessary for the recognition of qualifications as well as the special application form are posted at the reception hall of MES. An applicant receives the application form as well as submits the necessary documents at the reception hall. It is planned to publish a booklet concerning the mentioned procedures and criteria on recognition after the Centre is established as an independent unit.

## **4. Structure**

### ***4.1 National information center***

At present the Division of Academic Recognition and Mobility issues recommendations on recognition of educational credentials. On the basis of these recommendations an employer or a higher education institution makes a final decision. After the reorganization of the Centre additional functions will be added and the Centre will become more efficient.

Presently, the staff of the division consists of 5 members: head of the division, two senior specialists and two specialists. The budget of the division is the part of the budget of the Ministry of Education and Science. The annual salary of the division is about 29,400 Gel (1GEL = 0.45€)

The workload of the Division is quite big. During 2006 the Division received more than 6000 applications and letters, from which 700 were from abroad and the rest from the citizens of Georgia and various organizations and ministries. 79 forged documents were revealed and posted on the web page of MES. The educational documents of approximately 100 foreign citizens, wishing to be admitted to Georgian higher education institutions were not recognized as valid and had been rejected.

At the national level the Division of Academic Recognition and Mobility cooperates with different secondary and higher education institutions, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of labor, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia, National Accreditation Service etc. At international level the Division cooperates with ENIC and NARIC networks as well as the foreign higher education institutions mainly via Internet.

### ***4.2 Cooperation recognition/quality assurance bodies***

At present there is no quality assurance body at national level. Separate higher education institutions have such services within the institutions as it is stipulated by the Law of Georgia on Higher Education. These bodies closely cooperate with the Division of Academic Recognition and Mobility. The Division holds seminars and meetings and provides the required information. In order to increase interrelationship and cooperation between the Center for Academic Recognition and quality assurance bodies the division will be integrated with the National Center for Education Accreditation in 2007.