

TURKISH ACTION PLAN FOR RECOGNITION

1. Legislation

1.1 *Lisbon Recognition Convention*

Internal ratification process of the Lisbon Recognition Convention signed on December 1, 2004 has been completed. The Convention was approved by the Law No. 5463 of February 23, 2006, and ratified by the Cabinet Decision No. 2006/11158. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs submitted the instrument of ratification to the Council of Europe and the UNESCO, hence the international ratification process has been completed. The Convention will enter into force in Turkey on March 1, 2007.

1.2 *Review of national legislation relevant to recognition*

The five basic principles related to the assessment of qualifications of the Lisbon Recognition Convention were adopted by the Decision of Council of Higher Education (CoHE) dated April 13, 2006. These principles will be applied in the procedure for recognition both during the applications and the assessments of foreign higher education diplomas in Turkey. The above-mentioned Decision foresees that the relevant changes will be made in the “Regulation on Recognition of Foreign Higher Education Qualifications” in order to ensure the implementation of these principles.

According to the Decision of CoHE dated December 1, 2006, the “Regulation on Recognition of Foreign Higher Education Qualifications” will be reviewed in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and its supplementary texts, and necessary changes will be made in the regulation, if necessary. The related work continues and the amended regulation is expected to be adopted by the end of January 2007. When the new regulation comes into force, it will be published on the website and sent to the depository parties of the convention and all ENICs.

1.3 *Bilateral or regional recognition agreements*

Turkey has no bilateral agreement on recognition.

2. Recognition practice

2.1 *Criteria and procedures*

Recognition procedures implemented in Turkey are compatible with the criteria and procedures recommended by the Convention.

2.2 *Joint degrees*

There are no legal obstacles for the establishment and recognition of joint degrees and/or joint study programmes in Turkey. Universities can set up and carry out joint degree programmes through bilateral protocols with the approval of CoHE. The “Regulation on Establishment of International Joint/Dual Degree Programmes in higher education has been adopted by the Decision of CoHE dated December 1, 2006, and came into force after its publishing in the Official Journal No. 26390 of December 28, 2006. This regulation encourages the establishment and provision of international joint/dual higher education programmes in Turkey. International joint programmes have already been in

practice in some universities long before this recent action taken to encourage further cooperation with universities in Europe. Joint/dual/multiple foreign higher education degrees or programmes are recognised in Turkey provided that all participating HEIs are recognised or accredited by the competent authorities of the countries where these institutions operate. The regular recognition procedures are also applied in the evaluation of these degrees.

2.3 *Overview of institutional practice*

According to the Article 7/p of the Higher Education Law No. 2547 of 1981, the Council of Higher Education is the central authority for the recognition of foreign higher education qualifications in Turkey. Higher education institutions have no mandate or competence for the recognition of foreign higher education qualifications. Central regulations are applied to all HEIs in Turkey and bind the institutions in a manner that they must seek the prior higher education degree approved by CoHE before admitting students to a degree programme.

2.4 *Transparency tools for recognition*

Diploma Supplement has been mandatory at all higher education institutions since the end of the academic year of 2005-2006 by the Decision of CoHE dated March 11, 2005. A national Diploma Supplement template was formed in line with the model recommended jointly by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES. An office in the CoHE was charged with checking the compatibility of Diploma Supplement samples from HEIs with national template and giving technical assistance. Diploma Supplement that includes ECTS credits is issued to students upon their graduation, in English, German or French, upon request, first copy being free of charge. As of the end of the academic year of 2005-2006, totally 113,153 Diploma Supplements at Bachelor's, Master's, Doctorate and short cycle levels have been issued at 67 higher education institutions out of then 78. So far, 13 higher education institutions (2 universities in 2005 and 11 universities in 2006) were awarded Diploma Supplement Labels by the European Commission.

All higher education institutions in Turkey use credit system based on the contact hours (i.e. theoretical or practical hours per week). Accordingly, credits assigned per semester to a given course are equal to the weekly lecture hours plus half of the weekly laboratory or practicum hours. Higher education institutions may specify a minimum semester average or cumulative grade point average at the end of a particular semester as a precondition for continuing in the upper class courses of the programme concerned.

ECTS has been used as a credit transfer system for student mobility in the Erasmus Programme since the official participation of Turkey in the EU education and youth programmes in 2003. With the Decision of CoHE dated March 11, 2005, ECTS, as the compulsory constituent of Diploma Supplement, has become mandatory at all higher education institutions in Turkey since the end of the academic year of 2005-2006. As of the end of 2005/06 academic year, totally 45 universities out of then 78 completed their work and ECTS credits have been placed in their Diploma Supplements. ECTS is not used for credit accumulation, as this system is not being practiced in Turkey, yet. On the other hand, it is in the agenda of CoHE that ECTS will become mandatory for general use

and all transcripts issued by higher education institutions will include ECTS credits along with the national credits.

2.5 *Borderless/transnational education*

Higher education qualifications awarded under borderless/transnational education provision are not recognised in Turkey.

3. *Information provision*

3.1 *Provision of information on recognition*

Regulation on recognition of foreign higher education qualifications, information on the Turkish higher education system, qualifications and recognition procedures together with required documents, application forms for the recognition procedures are available at the official website of CoHE. These documents are both in Turkish and in English. Relevant website link addresses are also posted at the ENIC-NARIC website and is updated annually.

3.2 *Information package for applicants*

All the necessary information on criteria and procedures for the recognition of Associate's, Bachelor's, Master's and PhD degrees, including on-line application forms are available both in Turkish and English at the official website of CoHE. As stated above, the relevant website links are also posted at the ENIC-NARIC website, which is annually updated. All applicants are informed about the recognition procedures in written and verbally and at the same time the receipt of the application is acknowledged.

4. *Structures*

4.1 *National information centre*

Turkey is represented in both ENIC and NARIC networks and the national centres within CoHE have been operative for a long time. ENIC/NARIC Turkey attends regularly annual and joint meetings, participates in the ENIC ListServ, study visits, regularly updates information on Turkey at the ENIC-NARIC website and, replies and makes enquiries from/to other ENICs/NARICs. Turkish ENIC/NARIC office with presently 5 staff (civil servants) provides the Equivalence Unit and/or the Recognition Commission of CoHE with information and advice on the recognition of foreign qualifications.

4.2 *Cooperation recognition/quality assurance bodies*

The Turkish ENIC/NARIC office is acting, at the same time, as the liaison office responsible for the relations of Commission for Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement in Higher Education (YÖDEK) and the Commission for NQF for HE with CoHE and universities.