



## Bologna Process Follow-Up Seminar

### New Challenges in Recognition: recognition of prior learning and recognition of European degrees outside

Riga, 25 – 26 January 2007

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The Bologna Seminar *New Challenges in Recognition: recognition of prior learning and recognition between Europe and other parts of the world* (Riga, Latvia; 25 – 26 January 2007) was a well organised *European/international forum* as well as another opportunity to *share good practices* and *deepen understanding of new paradigms* in higher education.

The following conclusions and recommendations were summarized:

**1.** First of all, the seminar reaffirmed that *recognition of higher education qualifications, of periods of studies acquired abroad or of prior (experiential) learning are an integral part of the right to education and the promotion of the freedom of movement.*

Seminar also reaffirmed the *value aspects of higher education*. Recognition should not be understood in a narrow instrumental sense but *in relation to all fundamental objectives of the higher education*:

- *preparation for the labour market;*
- *preparation for life as active citizens in democratic society;*
- *personal development;*
- *development and maintenance an advanced knowledge base.*

**2.** Participants encourage all European HEIs, ENIC/NARIC centres and other competent recognition authorities *to assess qualifications from other areas of the world with the same open mind with which they would like European qualifications to be approached elsewhere*, and to assess qualifications from outside Europe according to the criteria and

procedures outlined in the Council of Europe/UNESCO Recognition Convention and its subsidiary texts.

In view of the great variety of higher education systems and approaches worldwide this should include shifting the emphasis further *from input characteristics* of the qualifications *to the learning outcomes* achieved.

The Convention and its principles should be observed in a spirit of openness to all potential partners and a revision of regional conventions in a mutual dialogue should be encouraged as well.

**3.** *Reliable, easily understandable and easily accessible information on education systems and qualifications frameworks is essential to promoting the fair recognition of qualifications from the EHEA in other parts of the world.*

To a large extent information on educational systems is already provided. Yet, there is a need to adapt this information for easier understanding by those from outside the EHEA who are not familiar with the specific terminology created through the Bologna Process. The information should be made available on the web together with other information on the Bologna Process.

**4.** Participants firmly support *the proposal to establish policy fora with partners from other areas of the world*, as a part of the Bologna Process in a global context.

They encourage the BFUG to make recognition the topic of one of these fora, building on the work undertaken in this area by ENIC/NARIC Networks and involving them closely in this work.

A promotion of cooperation between the ENIC/NARIC Networks and similar networks from other world regions, in particular with a view to the development of a common understanding of recognition criteria, procedures and practices as well as transnational higher education provision is highly recommended.

**5.** European HEIs rely today on a number of useful tools developed through the Bologna Process and these tools are often well accepted in other areas of the world. These tools should be kept update and efficient. Participants realize that the *Diploma Supplement was designed already in 1998* and that *afterwards European higher education systems have undergone substantial reforms*. The Diploma Supplement is still well suited but it is *recommended to amend and renew its Explanatory Report* (e.g. joint degrees, workload and credits, quality assurance systems, transnational higher education etc.). Since the Diploma Supplement is a joint instrument, amendments have to be adopted both in the framework of the Lisbon Convention Intergovernmental Committee and the European Commission.

**6.** Participants realize that *recognition of prior learning and credit allocation for competences acquired outside formal higher education (APL/APEL)* is well developed only in a relatively small part of the emerging EHEA. Therefore, it is essential that progress be made in this area in the next period and ministers in London should make a specific commitment in this regard. Existing and planned developments to create national

lifelong learning systems, including the “new style” qualification frameworks, should include systems to facilitate APL/APEL and recognition of prior learning should be used also for access to higher education. This will, *inter alia*, require that study programmes and individual courses of formal higher education be linked to *learning outcomes* and *competences*. ENIC/NARIC Networks can give information also about APL/APEL and similar strategies in various countries – in Europe and worldwide – and their educational systems.

**7.** The seminar proved that *recognition issues are substantially interlinked with quality assurance issues*. Therefore, participants encourage ENQA, in conjunction with E-4 partners and other appropriate bodies, to *explore the creation and implementation of good practice* (models, procedures and guidelines) *for recognition procedures in general*, including *APL/APEL*, consistent with their ‘Standards and Guidelines’ and in the context of lifelong learning.

**8.** National higher education authorities are encouraged to include *elements to facilitate APL/APEL in the national lifelong learning systems*, including the development of ‘new style’ qualifications frameworks. National authorities are also expected to introduce *operational guidelines and principles for APL/APEL fully integrated with national quality assurance processes* and to promote the widespread implementation and acceptance of APL/APEL and lifelong learning by academics, employers and students.

**9.** Similarly as in quality enhancement issues, main responsibility for improvement of recognition lies with institutions. All European HEIs are encouraged to *put in place clear processes and practices that transparently detail their internal APL/APEL systems and procedures for staff, students and employers*. They are also expected to adopt appropriate staff development strategies to overcome barriers to broader implementation of APL/APEL and to ensure that all processes are transparent, fair, rigorous and efficient.

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