



Turun yliopisto  
University of Turku

**Recognition of Prior Learning**  
Country experience: **Finland**

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## CHALLENGES IN THE BEGINNING

- Two sectors of higher education in Finland
  - Recognition of studies from another university/UAS or abroad functioned quite well
  - Recognition of studies from the other sector in Finland a challenge → an obstacle to domestic mobility
- Recognition of non-formal and informal learning new in HE ← possible in university degrees only from 2004 Universities' Act
- Lack of expertise in outcome-based curriculum planning and assessment methods
- Networking with the world of work not systematic



## STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

- **2006:** National working group on RPL
  - Recommendations for common principles and processes of recognition
- **2007-2009:** national projects for universities and UASs; field-specific work of both rectors' conferences
  - Dissemination of principles
  - Development of recognition systems and processes in HEIs
- **2009-2013:** project(s) on implementation of RPL at HEIs (financed by the European Social Fund)
  - Training seminars for both sectors of HE (teachers, tutors, support staff); support services, concrete tools for recognition



## WHO DECIDES ON RECOGNITION?

- System based on the **student's right to apply** for recognition
- Whole degrees and qualifications
  - National ENIC/NARIC centre (National Board of Education)
- Parts of degrees
  - Universities/faculties/departments
  - Bigger formal units of study (e.g. Basic Studies, 25 ECTS): usually at faculty level
  - Modules, separate courses & non/informal learning: usually at department level, by teachers responsible for the module/unit



## VALIDATION PROCESS OF A STUDY MODULE

1. Student makes his/her personal study plan (PSP) with his/her teacher tutor
2. During the PSP process the student gets also information and counselling on validation
3. Student applies for recognition (a form with necessary documents)
4. Evaluation of evidence and/or a proof (exam, essay, interview, portfolio, learning diary)



## ... PROCESS CONTINUES

5. Examination of the proof by the responsible teacher;  
comparison with the intended learning outcomes of the  
module (curricula competence-based)
6. Decision on recognition of a) a whole module, or,  
b) a part of a module, or, c) none
7. Time for appealing (14 days)
8. Registration of the module in electronic study register **or**  
counselling about studies required to complete the module



## SITUATION TODAY

- Implementation model respects the institutional autonomy, **which means that...**  
Processes at institutional level defined and quite clear;  
but still (too) much variation in practices
- Practices and models at institutional level vs. field-specific national practices ← national field-specific cooperation one development tool
- Personal study plan an excellent tool (but connection between RPL and PSP still partly unclear for students – and what about other learning during the studies?)



## ... AND STILL SOME EXPERIENCES

- Looking at the RPL process from students perspective assists in the development of students' study skills
- Expertise of teachers in RPL increased; competence-based thinking more visible in HE in general
- Teachers and students still less familiar with experiential learning
- Better dialogue with employers → benefits also from the point of view of curriculum design