



Proposal
of
Archimedes Foundation (Estonia)
Academic Information Centre (Latvia)
Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (Lithuania)
to
The Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia
The Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Estonia
The Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania
on automatic recognition between Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

The document was prepared with the support of Erasmus+ NARIC project No. 553086-EPP-1-2014-1-LV-EPPKA3-NARIC “Automatic Recognition between Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania” (2014-2016).

1. Purpose and brief background of the document

Since the reestablishment of independence, the cooperation between the Baltic countries in various sectors including education has been one of the priorities of their governments. Through the years, the Baltic countries have built mutual understanding of and trust in the education systems of other Baltic countries due to similar historical developments and reforms carried out in relation to participation in the European Higher Education Area. There is already student and labour force mobility between the Baltic countries, and long experience of assessment and recognition of qualifications between them. However, the Baltic qualifications have to undergo the same procedure of recognition as other foreign qualifications, which may be rather time and labour consuming process.

Therefore, Archimedes Foundation (Estonia), Academic Information Centre (project coordinator, Latvia) and the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (Lithuania) as diploma recognition ENIC/NARIC offices conducted desk study aimed at determining the feasibility and conditions for automatic recognition among the three Baltic States. The study included several aspects:

- Information on the national education systems (awarded qualifications);
- Legislation of recognition procedures;
- Status of the implementation of Bologna tools (National Qualifications Frameworks, ECTS, Diploma Supplement, quality assurance, learning outcomes) and their role in automatic recognition;
- Recognition practice of the qualifications of the three Baltic states (including examples of difficult cases from the previous experience);
- Feasibility of automatic recognition.

The study explored the potential role and procedures of automatic recognition, and provided list of qualifications which could be subjected to automatic recognition.

2. Conclusions of the study

In terms of the study the most significant preconditions for automatic recognition were identified:

- Successful implementation of the Bologna tools to ensure quality and transparency of qualifications;

- Similarity and harmonisation in recognition procedures and criteria. Qualifications subjected to the automatic recognition are fully recognised on the same level in the three countries;
- Consistency in recognition practice. The same implementation of automatic recognition has to be ensured in the three Baltic countries in terms of its status, legal effects, provision of information, procedure, etc.

According to the results of study, the automatic recognition may be implemented due some existing preconditions:

- The Bologna tools have been fully implemented in the three Baltic States.
- There are differences in terms of criteria and procedures used by the three ENIC/NARIC offices: some offices tend to focus on learning outcomes and/or the function of qualification; in some cases, the duration and/or workload of study are also seen as an important criterion.
- The differences in the recognition criteria and procedures sometimes result in non-recognition of some qualifications and/or in varying practice of the recognition of the same qualification.

Despite some differences in recognition criteria and practice, the Baltic ENIC/NARIC offices see great potential for automatic recognition and have prepared this proposal to the national authorities regarding automatic recognition. The introduction of automatic recognition would assist in removing administrative obstacles in case of qualification recognition between the Baltic countries; thus, fostering the mobility of students and labour force between the Baltic countries. In addition, the implementation of automatic recognition, based on mutual understanding and trust, would foster more sustainable cooperation between Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

This proposal refers only to the higher education qualifications and qualifications providing access to higher education programmes.

3. Definition of automatic recognition in the Baltic countries

Automatic recognition means that countries agree which qualifications are comparable according to all assessment criteria and there is no need for further evaluation. Automatic recognition principles refer to qualifications in the terms of general requirements as defined by the Lisbon Recognition Convention. However, decision whether the qualification holder meets specific requirements set up for admission to specific education programmes and/or for access to a labour market is taken by particular HEI or employer. For example, automatic recognition does not interfere with employer's requirement that applicant must have two years of professional experience after the graduation or with HEI's requirement that some Master study programmes admit only applicants whose average academic records in previous studies are not lower than a particular grade.

Automatic recognition will refer only to those access and higher education qualifications of the Baltic countries, which belong to the present national education system and are awarded according to the procedures set by national legislation. Automatic recognition in this context concerns only those qualifications obtained in the Baltic countries and issued by the state accredited education institutions on completion of accredited study programmes.

4. Proposed procedures to be used in the case of automatic recognition

Regarding national education systems and regulating legislation two alternatives would be the most appropriate between the Baltic countries:

- Partially implemented automatic recognition in terms of procedure and fully implemented in terms of decisions;
- Fully implemented automatic recognition in terms of decisions and procedure.

The procedures regarding national peculiarities could be the following. The applicant submits their qualification to the organization they intend to join (HEI or employer). The organization in question considers the applicant's qualification without any specific procedure and takes a decision about their eligibility. It is assumed that the organization uses the table of comparability of qualifications (see section 4) and available information about the education systems of other Baltic countries at its disposal to take this decision. In case when the HEI or employer does not possess sufficient information about the awarding institution or the authenticity of the provided documents is subjected to doubt, the HEI or

employer may consult with the respective ENIC/NARIC office. The ENIC/NARIC office evaluates the qualification and provides an information. It is expected that the involvement of ENIC/NARIC office will be rather exceptional.

The possible issues that can be the reason for involvement of ENIC/NARIC office may concern the following aspects:

- Status of the awarding education institution (to be sure it has the right to award respective degrees);
- Status of the programme (to know if the degree has been awarded during the period when the programme was accredited);
- The authenticity of the document (reasonable measures should be taken to verify if the diploma is not forged);
- Whether the qualification is subjected to automatic recognition.

5. List of qualifications, which should be automatically recognized between Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

The qualifications of the Baltic countries, which may be subjected to the automatic recognition procedures, are listed in the table below. It should be emphasized that the automatic recognition refer only to those qualifications issued after the conclusion of specific agreement between the Baltic countries. The procedures of automatic recognition have to be implemented as far as they are not in contradiction with the respective national legislation.

List of qualifications subjected to the automatic recognition

	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania	Notes
Access qualifications (EQF level 4)	<i>Gümnaasiumi lõputunnistus</i> (Certificate of General Secondary Education); <i>Kutsekeskhariduse lõputunnistus</i> (Certificate of Vocational Secondary Education)	<i>Atestāts par vispārējo vidējo izglītību</i> (Certificate of general secondary education) <i>Diploms par profesionālo vidējo izglītību</i> (Diploma of vocational secondary education)	<i>Brandos atestatas</i> (Maturity Certificate)	N.A.
First cycle (EQF level 6)	<i>Bakalaurus</i> (Bachelor) <i>Rakenduskõrghariduse diplom</i> (Diploma of Professional Higher Education)	<i>Bakalaura diploms</i> (Bachelor's diploma) <i>Profesionālā bakalaura diploms un augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms</i> (Professional Bachelor's diploma and higher professional qualification diploma)	<i>Bakalauras</i> (Bachelor) / Bachelor and professional qualification <i>Profesinis bakalauras</i> (Professional Bachelor) / Professional Bachelor and professional qualification ¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Latvia – automatic recognition procedures apply to <i>Profesinis bakalauras</i> (Lithuania) awarded after July 2015 • Qualification should provide direct access to Master's studies

¹ Automatic recognition is possible to graduates of *Profesinis bakalauras* after July 2015 when rights to have direct access to a Master's programme came in force.

