

ENIC NETWORK (COUNCIL OF EUROPE/UNESCO) NARIC NETWORK (EUROPEAN COMMISSION)

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Vaduz (Liechtenstein), 18-20 May 2003

STATEMENT BY THE ENIC AND NARIC NETWORKS ON THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

(VADUZ STATEMENT)

STATEMENT

1. The ENIC and NARIC Networks, in a declaration adopted at their annual meeting in Vilnius in June 1999, declared their willingness and ability to contribute to the Bologna Process. The Networks outlined the basis for their work to help implement the European Higher Education Area in the **ENIC report on *Recognition Issues in the Bologna Process***. Their work to improve and facilitate recognition of qualifications in Europe rely on and seek to implement the **Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region** (Lisbon Recognition Convention) as well as, for professional recognition, the **European Union Directives on professional recognition**.
2. In terms of the **legal framework for recognition**, the ENIC and NARIC Networks played an important role in preparing the UNESCO/Council of Europe *Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education* and the

Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications, both of which were adopted by the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee in 2001. At their 2003 meeting, the Networks considered a *draft Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees*, to be submitted to the Convention Committee for adoption in 2004.

3. The ENIC and NARIC Networks, meeting in Vaduz on 18 - 20 May 2003 for their annual joint meeting, hereby confirm their intention to continue to contribute to the Bologna Process aiming to establish a European Higher Education Area by 2010. In so doing, they draw on a membership of national centres representing countries party to the Bologna Process as well as countries interacting with the European Higher Education Area in other ways.
4. The ENIC and NARIC Networks fully support the ultimate goal of the European Higher Education Area: to facilitate the mobility of students, staff and higher education graduates within as large a part of Europe as possible. They recognize that the European Higher Education Area must be built on both national policies and joint policies in key areas agreed within a European framework, and that without commitment to and implementation of these policies at national level, the European Higher Education Area will not become an effective reality.
5. The ENIC and NARIC Networks consider the Bologna Process to be the most important reform of higher education in Europe in the present generation and see their contribution to it as helping **build bridges between education systems and qualifications** and as **fora for the further development of recognition policies in Europe and beyond**.
6. The recognition of qualifications is of key importance to the realization of several key goals of the Bologna process:
 - increased academic and professional mobility
 - transparency
 - increased employability of higher education graduates
 - the European dimension

and is also important to the “external dimension” of the Bologna Process, i.e. the interaction between the European Higher Education Area and other parts of the world, some of which participate in the ENIC network on an equal footing. The outcomes of transparent quality assurance procedures are also of key importance to the recognition of qualifications, and the ENIC and NARIC Networks declare their intention to continue their cooperation with the European Network for Quality Assurance in higher education (ENQA). Last, but not least, the ENIC and NARIC Networks see higher education as part and parcel of a comprehensive system of Lifelong Learning. Improved recognition of higher education qualifications as well as of access qualifications will therefore help implement this important goal of the Bologna Process, as outlined in the Prague Communiqué.

7. The role of the ENIC and NARIC Networks in developing the legal framework for the recognition of qualifications in Europe also points to their key role in **implementing this framework** and in **developing recognition policies at**

European level as well as of **the mission of each member of the Networks at national level.**

8. On this background, in their further contribution to the European Higher Education Area, the ENIC and NARIC Networks will in particular seek to:
- (a) **facilitate recognition of qualifications issued within the framework of the two tier degree structure** being adopted by the countries participating in the Bologna Process, with a view to reducing the time, effort and cost required for the recognition of qualifications within the European Higher Education Area. They will continue to develop and improve methods for recognition of qualifications based on their level, quality and profile;
 - (b) **develop cooperation between the recognition and quality assurance networks**, in keeping with the request by Ministers in their Prague Communiqué. In this, they refer to the ongoing discussions between the ENIC and NARIC Networks and representatives of the European Network on Quality Assurance in higher education (ENQA). While they consider that clear and transparent quality assurance procedures, as well as publication of their outcomes, will greatly facilitate the recognition of qualifications, the ENIC and NARIC Networks also underline that, while quality assurance is essential for recognition, it cannot substitute the individual assessment needed to place a qualification into another education or employment system;
 - (c) **improve information on the recognition of foreign qualifications.** In this, they will continue to promote the European Credit Transfer System, the Diploma Supplement and other tools to improve transparency as well as to develop improved guidelines and systems for information exchange. In the latter, they refer in particular to the conclusions of the Bologna Seminar on Recognition Issues in the Bologna Process, organized jointly by the Council of Europe and the Portuguese authorities in Lisbon on 11 – 12 April 2002;
 - (d) **improve recognition of joint degrees** and other possible innovative initiatives aiming at increasing student mobility and bridging the gaps between national education systems. In this, they will build on the study and pilot on joint degrees at masters level carried out by the European University Association and supported by the European Commission and they will contribute to the implementation of the draft Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees referred to above once it shall have been adopted by the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee;
 - (e) **develop recognition procedures aiming at the recognition of learning outcomes** rather than the formal paths that have led to these outcomes. In this, they will in particular build on the results of the Joint Quality Initiative and the TUNING project supported by the European Commission as well as on the work carried out on the recognition of prior learning and non-traditional qualifications. Recognition based on learning outcomes is important also with regard to facilitating **lifelong learning**;

- (f) **contribute to the development of transparent qualifications frameworks** at national level as well as in the context of the European Higher Education Area;
 - (g) **improve recognition of qualifications from other parts of the world** as well as improved recognition of qualifications from the European Region elsewhere. In this, they will in particular build on and contribute to the work of the UNESCO Global Forum on Quality Assurance, Accreditation and the Recognition of Qualifications;
 - (h) **underline the need for international cooperation to be based on clear and transparent quality standards** and work for the implementation of the Council of Europe/UNESCO Recognition Convention and its subsidiary texts as well as, as appropriate, the European Directives on professional recognition;
 - (i) **develop model terms of reference for national information centres.**
9. The goals set by the ENIC and NARIC Networks, as well as by their individual members are ambitious and of key importance to the success of the Bologna Process. The Networks, as well as their individual member centres, are prepared to meet the challenges of the Bologna process and contribute to realizing the opportunities the European Higher Education Area holds forth. They invite national authorities as well as other actors, such as international organizations, higher education institutions, professional associations, student organizations, employers and NGOs, to make greater use of the experience and expertise of the Networks and their members. The ENIC and NARIC centres will seek close cooperation with other information centres in their countries, notably the National Reference Points active in the framework of the Bruges-Copenhagen process for vocational education and training,
10. Reaching these goals will depend on the efforts, experience, knowledge and skills of the Networks, their members and the Organizations serving the Networks, but also of the resources put at their disposal. The ENIC and NARIC Networks take this opportunity to underline the need for each country to maintain an adequately staffed and equipped national information centre, in keeping with the requirements Article IX.2 of the Council of Europe/UNESCO Recognition Convention as well as contributing to the running of both Networks.

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