



FINNISH NATIONAL  
BOARD OF EDUCATION

# LISBON RECOGNITION CONVENTION (LRC) – Principles and Practice

Dr. Carita Blomqvist, Head of Unit  
Recognition and International Comparability of Qualifications  
Finnish National Board of Education  
Chair of the Committee of the LRC



## Contents

- **Bologna Process and recognition**
- **Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC)**
- **Implementation of the LRC**
- **Project: European Area for Recognition (EAR)**
- **EAR Manual**
- **Concluding remarks**



## Bologna Process

- **Recognition has been at the heart of the Bologna Process since the Process started - and remains to be so**
- **Need to rethink recognition and go beyond old practices has been widely accepted**
- **Different interpretations of the main principles**
- **Real commitment is a prerequisite for improving recognition**



## Lisbon Recognition Convention adopted in 1997

- **The only legal text in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)**
- **Subsidiary texts**
- **Applies also outside of the EHEA , since some signatories are non-European**
- **Concerns access qualifications, periods of study and final qualifications**
- **Implementation bodies:**
  - **Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee**
  - **ENIC/NARIC Network ([www.enic-naric.net](http://www.enic-naric.net))**
  - **ENIC/NARIC Centres**



## Main principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention

- **Recognition = formal acknowledgement by a competent authority of the value of a foreign educational qualification**
- **Applicants entitled to fair assessment of their qualifications within reasonable time limit**
- **Transparent, coherent and reliable procedures and criteria used in the assessment**
- **Qualifications issued by institutions belonging to the education system of other countries shall be recognized, unless a substantial difference can be shown between the qualification for which recognition is sought and the corresponding qualification in the country in which recognition is sought**



## Substantial Differences

- **Central concept, but difficult to define**
- **Recognition unless substantial differences**
- **Basic assumption: substantial difference should be an exception, not a rule**
- **Is the difference substantial in relation to the function and purpose of the qualification and recognition?**
- **A difference merely in formal terms is not enough**
- **More emphasis on learning outcomes: what a person knows and is able to do (no detailed comparison of curricula!)**



## Importance of subsidiary texts

- **Recommendation on International Access Qualifications (1999)**
- **Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications (2001, 2010)**
- **Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education (2001, 2007)**
- **Recognition of Joint Degrees 2004**
- **Recognition and Qualifications Frameworks (2013)?**



## European Higher Education Area and the LRC

- **The status of the LRC does not change with the EHEA but some developments within the EHEA are important for the implementation:**
  - **Relationship between quality assurance and recognition on international, national and institutional level**
  - **Increasing number of qualifications not linked to a national system (information concerning status of the institution is important for recognition)**
  - **Global dimension of the EHEA**



## Implementation of the principles of the LRC

- **The legal texts are mainly in place, but implementation remains a challenge**
- **Recommendations made to higher education institutions:**
  - **Make the recognition of qualifications part of the internal quality assurance of the institution**
  - **Draw up institutional guidelines for recognition ensuring the implementation of the LRC**
  - **Ensure implementation of the LRC at the level of faculties and departments**
  - **Cooperate with other HEIs and the national ENIC/NARIC with a view to ensure coherent recognition across the country**



## The goal of the European Area for Recognition project *- the recognition manual*

- **Aimed primarily at recognition information centres (ENICs/NARICs)**
- **Contains standards and guidelines on all aspects of recognition**
- **Links theory to practice**
- **Provides a point of comparison by giving examples of the current situation in Europe**
- **Helps reach general agreement on how to move from the current situation towards the situation described in the manual**



## Contents of the *draft* EAR manual

### Introduction

1. Schematic outline of the recommended procedure for the assessment of foreign qualifications
2. Transparency and Information Provision
3. Accreditation and Quality Assurance (status of the institution)
4. Authenticity
5. Purpose of Recognition
6. Diploma Supplement (and other information tools)
7. Qualification Frameworks
8. Credits, grades, credit accumulation and credit transfer
9. Learning Outcomes
10. Substantial Differences



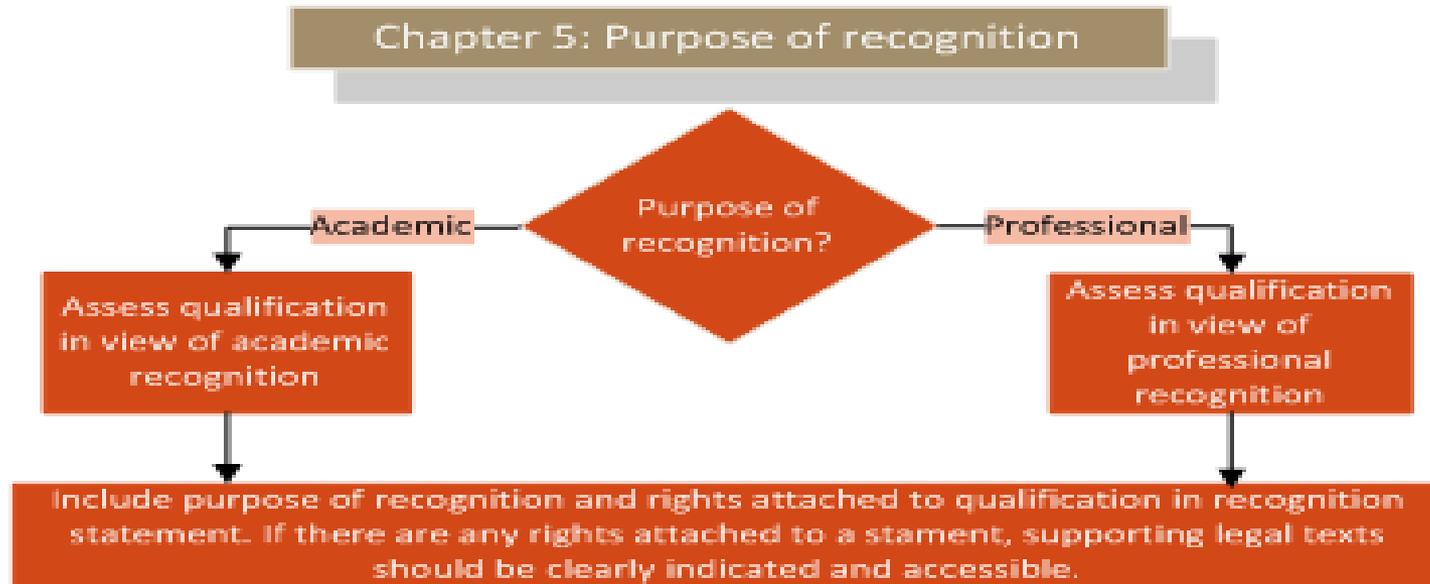
## Contents of the *draft* EAR manual

11. **Alternative recognition. Right to appeal**
12. **Refugees**
13. **Non-Traditional Learning**
14. **Transnational education**
15. **Qualifications awarded by joint programs  
Non-Recognised but Legitimate Institutions**
16. **Diploma and Accreditation Mills**
17. **Sources of Recommendations for EAR Recognition  
Manual**
18. **Glossary**



## Tools within the EAR Manual

- ◆ Illustrative flowcharts for the credential evaluators  
(*example taken from the draft*)



- ◆ The flowcharts are accompanied with explanatory comments



## Briefly about the process

- **The EAR Manual is the result of broad collaboration: eight ENICs/NARICs represented in the project team**
- **The steering group: presidents of the ENIC network and of the LRC Committee**
- **Testing, external consultation and review were used widely in this 2-year project**
- **The online EAR Manual will be launched in January 2012**  
**[www.eurorecognition.eu](http://www.eurorecognition.eu)**
- **Online format chosen as it allows quick updates and improved access to information**



## The EAR manual and Lisbon Recognition Convention

- **The EAR manual is designed as a tool that supports the existing LRC practices and recommendations**
- **It extends good practices to all European countries and harmonises recognition by promoting transparency and consistency**
- **Besides an established tool for credential evaluators, the manual is also a source of information and good practice for all interested parties**



## Concluding remarks

- **Recognition should remain at the centre of higher education policies**
- **Need to improve the implementation of “hard” instruments: LRC and its subsidiary texts...**
- **... and “soft” instruments, i.e. ENIC-NARIC offices, ENIC-NARIC Networks, Diploma Supplements**
- **EAR Manual links to both “hard” and “soft” instruments**
- **Need to link with related policy issues/developments, like quality assurance, European and national qualifications frameworks, transfer to learning outcomes etc.**