

NARIC Ireland News Brief

No:1



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Welcome to the first NARIC Ireland News Brief. We focus on the Council Recommendation on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad (2018). We share the outcomes of the ARAQUA project, looking towards automatic mutual recognition of access qualifications which provides food for thought nationally.

Feedback and questions welcome to the team naric@qqi.ie



Q: What is an access qualification?

A: An access qualification in this context is one that gives access to higher education in the Member State where the qualification was granted. Access qualifications can be upper secondary or VET qualifications.

Promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad

(European Council Recommendation 2018)

Automatic mutual recognition of periods of learning abroad and of qualifications is understood as an essential step in strengthening a common education area across Europe, a way of making it easier to study and carry out research, regardless of where in Europe we achieved our learning or award.

This Recommendation addresses learning and qualifications achieved in upper secondary school, VET and higher education, and is rooted in the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

The Recommendation notes that at upper secondary level, holders of qualifications giving access to higher education in one Member State often lack certainty about whether the qualification grants access to higher education in another Member State. In particular, VET qualifications that are recognised on one Member State for access to higher education may have variable recognition in others. The Recommendation seeks to address this. All students, including those 'third country nationals' who obtain a qualification in one Member State, should be confident that their qualification, awarded by a competent authority in one Member State is valid in any other Member State, for the purpose of accessing further learning activities. Member States are to put in place by 2025, the necessary steps to achieve automatic mutual recognition for the purpose of further

learning without having to go through a separate recognition procedure, so that:

1. a higher education qualification acquired in one Member State is automatically recognised at the same level, for the purpose of accessing further studies, in the others.
2. the outcomes from a learning period abroad at higher education level in one Member State are automatically and fully recognised in the others, as agreed beforehand in a learning agreement and confirmed in the Transcript of Records, in line with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System;

Member States are to make substantial progress towards the automatic mutual recognition for the purpose of further learning, so that:

- i) an upper secondary education and training qualification giving access to higher education in the Member State where this qualification was granted is recognised, only for the purpose of giving access to higher education, in the other Member States
- ii) the outcomes from a learning period of up to one year abroad in another Member State during upper secondary education and training are recognised in any other, with the learner not being required to repeat the programme year or achieved learning outcomes in the country of origin, provided that the learning outcomes are broadly in line with the national curricula in the country of origin.

In every instance, the receiving Institution has the right to set admission criteria and to verify the authenticity of documents presented.

The importance of quality assurance, credit accumulation systems and transparency tools such as the use of learning outcomes are underlined throughout.

National Qualification Frameworks or systems are referenced to the European Qualifications Framework and updated as appropriate.

Public information is available through e.g. Course Catalogues, and Diploma Supplements are issued automatically and free of charge to all graduates and where possible in a digital format.

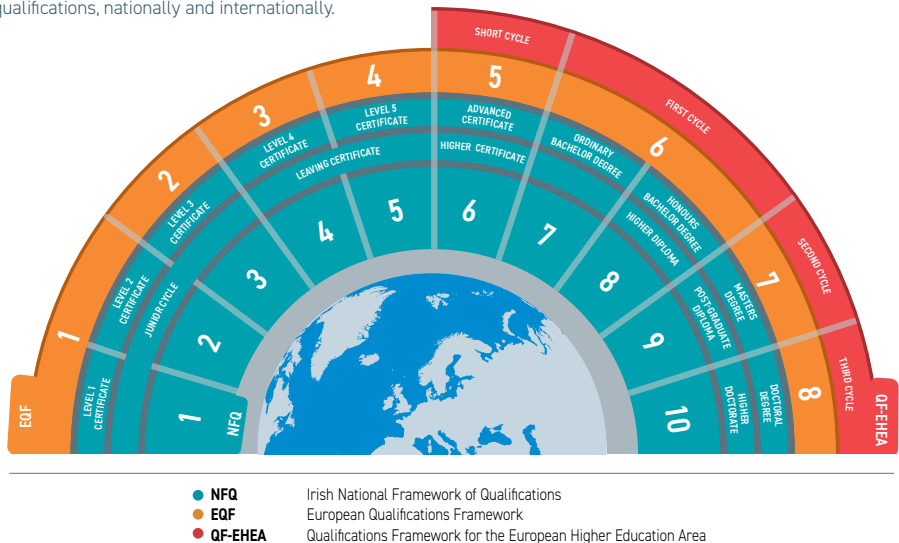
Transparent criteria for recognition are applied throughout each higher education institution. VET and upper secondary education and training institutions facilitate mobility and recognition through general principles and tools for recognition, including guidance material, and the use of transparent criteria and tools e.g. learning outcomes based learning agreements and the ECVET suite of tools.

The use of the recognition of prior learning between VET and higher education supports permeability and mobility.

National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC) are to cooperate with quality assurance bodies, higher education institutions and national stakeholders, to disseminate information, develop online tools to improve efficiency, transparency and consistency so as to reduce administrative burdens for users of services, having had their own capacity and that of credential evaluators strengthened.

[Council Recommendation of 26 November 2018 on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad](#)

Qualifications Frameworks - Going Global
 Enhancing the transparency, quality and mobility of qualifications, nationally and internationally.



For further information consult: www.QQI.ie

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ARAQUA



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ARAQUA, automatic recognition, access qualifications

NARIC Ireland was delighted to participate in the ERASMUS+ ARAQUA project, led by AIT Latvia, focusing specifically on the automatic recognition of HE access qualifications. The research partners, Denmark, Estonia, Italy, Latvia, Malta, Romania, Slovakia and the United Kingdom developed individual country reports for a comparative report (*ARAQUA comparative report*) surveying access qualifications and characteristics. The Irish Leaving Certificate, while not included in the comparative report was of interest to project partners because it is not placed at a single Framework level including on the EQF (p28). Clarity in relation to the inclusion of qualifications in the NFQ and to the progression eligibilities for graduates of different programmes is essential to consideration of automatic recognition. The recommendation of the working group was that access qualifications ‘must include reference to EQF Level 4 (NFQ L5) with the corresponding learning outcomes. If a HE access qualification has a different NFQ level, additional evaluation of a credential is necessary’.

Project outcomes include (but are not limited to)

- A list of agreed HE access qualifications that are subject to automatic recognition among the partner countries (except Ireland)*
- A list of minimum requirements for HE access qualifications to be subject to automatic recognition – e.g. should be included in the NFQ, with corresponding learning outcomes and with reference to EQF Level 4 provide general eligibility rights for the holder to apply for admission to HE programmes, should enjoy public confidence for the purpose of progress and successful participation in the national context, should be quality assured through the established procedures of the country ([AIC_ARAQUA_buklets_A5_PREVIEW](#))

We recommend the Reports and presentations of the Dissemination events for further consideration in respect of qualifications at Level 5 nationally, and for deeper understanding of access qualifications and education systems in our partner countries. NARIC Ireland is grateful to our partners and particularly to NARIC Latvia for their work in the preparation of these reports.

*NARIC Ireland had a limited role in this important project owing to our limited resources.

ARAQUA, 2022-2024 is an ERASMUS+ NARIC project No 101101645 “Road to Automatic Recognition of Higher Education Access Qualifications.”

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Automatic Recognition, Access qualifications and Me!



I am an award holder/graduate

Q: Would Automatic Recognition mean that I have automatic access to any educational programme in Europe?

A: Yes, but you do not have automatic admission. It means that your qualification on the NFQ, referenced to the EQF, would be recognised at the same level for the purpose of accessing further studies. Another institution would have the right to have admission criteria specific to a particular programme that you would need to satisfy in the ordinary way. You will also need to present documentation that is authentic, typically digitally.

Q: How do I find out what level my qualification is at?

A: Your programme provider is obliged to tell you what level of award your programme leads to, but you can also check on [Irish Register of Qualification](#)

Q: I am doing my Leaving Certificate and would like to study abroad. Is the Leaving Certificate recognised through an Automatic Mutual Recognition agreement?

A: Not yet. Please speak with your Guidance Counsellor, and check out [Eunicas Study in Europe / European Universities Information / EUNICAS](#).



I am an Access Officer

Q: What does Automatic Mutual Recognition mean for my work?

A: Where there is a nationally agreed automatic mutual recognition arrangement, it means that your work is lessened. There is a mutually agreed position between countries in relation to different qualifications. Your role is therefore setting admission requirements rather than interrogating quality assurance etc. The work becomes mutual and refers also to national qualifications.



I am a Quality Assurance Officer

Implementation of the Recommendation is consistent with the implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and

- is evidence of implementation of ESG 1.4

Student admission, progression, recognition and certification Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student “life cycle”, e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification ([ESG_2015.pdf](#))

- helps meet the Code of Practice for TrustedED Ireland (5.2) 'HE providers should recognise qualifications that are recognised for the purpose of access to programmes in an international applicant's own higher education system, unless a substantial difference can be demonstrated between the requirements for admission in the applicant's own higher education system and those of the Irish HE provider' ([iem-01-he-code-of-practice-october-2023.pdf](#))

Q: I would like to develop mutual recognition arrangements. Where do I start?

A: Start with data; from where are the majority of your qualification recognition demands coming? ARAQUA partners had high volume recognition demand for the access qualifications noted. NARIC Ireland is receiving increasing numbers of queries in relation to national qualifications. Irish HEIs have 'de facto' recognition of a wide range of access qualifications published on the CAO website, and also specifying admission requirements. ([Draft 1](#)).



I am a Guidance Counsellor / Careers Advisor

Q: Is automatic mutual recognition of qualifications relevant for my students taking programmes leading to awards at Level 4 and level 5?

A: Yes! The most pressing concern is that many students may want to spend time in higher education in other Member States. It is important that there is clear understanding of the progression eligibilities associated with the programme currently undertaken. Automatic mutual recognition will not enhance progression eligibilities. It is based on the progression eligibilities associated with the award in the member State where It is awarded. If the award does not currently give access to higher education in Ireland, it will not give access to higher education overseas under automatic mutual recognition arrangements.

What is the national advantage of automatic mutual recognition?

For all of us, clarity and confidence through transparent mutual recognition arrangements increases opportunities for learning mobility with fair recognition.

Opportunities in Ireland and overseas strengthens the European education area.