

The Global Recognition Convention going local?

Analysis of the GC & LRC to support the GC's implementation in the ENIC-NARIC Networks.

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Contents

Executive Summary	3	9	Trust in education systems	17	
1	Introduction	4	10	Conclusion	18
1.1	Background	4			
1.2	Rationale	5			
1.3	Research question & methodology	6			
1.4	Content	6			
1.5	About the I-AR project	7			
	Funding and partners	7			
2	Precedence	8			
3	Substantial difference	9			
4	Quality assurance	10			
5	Qualifications framework	12			
6	Inclusive education and lifelong learning	14			
7	Cross-border education	15			
8	Periods of study, partial studies and partial recognition	16			
			11	Epilogue	19



Executive Summary

In 2019 the new Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning higher education, or Global Recognition Convention in short (GC), was adopted. The treaty offers a global legal framework for fair cross-border recognition of qualifications.

This paper presents the main outcomes of a systematic analysis how this new global treaty relates to the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) adopted in 1997. To this end, both legal texts have been compared, looking at areas that may require clarification. The leading question was:

“What areas of the GC require clarification when comparing the treaty to the LRC, and what are the implications for recognition bodies?”

To conduct the analysis, the sections of the GC were mapped against the sections of the LRC. Next, it was reviewed whether the GC included definitions not covered by the LRC.

The analysis mainly showed that the two conventions are fully compatible and that there are no substantial differences between the LRC and GC.

While the GC is short and concise compared to the LRC, even though it contains new concepts and features, there are no significant new practices or processes that need to be introduced when implementing the GC.

Topics which at first glance do not appear to be covered in the GC actually feature in the subsidiary texts and/or the compendium of good practices produced by the ENIC-NARIC Networks. A clear example is the definition of substantial differences, which is featured in the GC but not in the LRC, yet the same definition has its basis in the European Area of Recognition (EAR) manual, which translates the LRC into practice. Other topics include: quality assurance, qualifications frameworks, inclusive education and lifelong learning, cross-border education, periods of study vs recognition of partial studies, and actions against fraudulent practices.

Differences occur in the way the conventions operate, for example, how the Conventions' bureaus are elected and so forth. Additionally, describing its relation to other conventions, the GC introduces the principle of precedence, meaning that the article of either the GC or a regional convention like the LRC which is most favourable to recognition applies. While this principle is not included in the LRC, it is in line with the LRC - principle that the competent recognition authority bears the burden of proof, and the GC does not interfere with good practices of the LRC, unless it improves them.



1 Introduction

This paper analyses the new Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning higher education (2019) against the principles of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (1997), in order to identify whether there are areas in need of clarification to foster implementation.

This introduction provides the background and rationale for conducting the analysis, as well as the leading research question and the methodology used. The last paragraph elaborates on the presentation of results and content of the paper.

1.1 Background

The Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education - here referred to as the “Global Recognition Convention” (GC) - was adopted by the general conference of UNESCO at its 40th session in November 2019. The GC entered into force on 5 March 2023, in line with its Article XVIII, which states that “the Convention shall enter into force three months after the deposit of the twentieth instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval, or accession”.

The GC is a unique milestone for international student mobility because it offers for the first time ever a global legal framework for fair cross-border recognition of qualifications. In doing so it supports the ever-increasing group of internationally mobile students, which has reached roughly 5 million students annually to date, and as such also supports international higher education cooperation at large.

The treaty complements the “new generation” of regional UNESCO treaties¹ on mutual recognition of foreign qualifications, most of which have become effective by this date. These treaties are tuned to the regional contexts, but all have fundamental principles in common. The text of the GC has been drafted with the common principles of these modern regional UNESCO treaties in mind, and with the purpose of being complementary to these treaties. The added value of the GC is that it provides a legal framework for inter-regional student mobility and higher education collaboration, which is not covered by the regional treaties. Ratifying countries to the GC have to recognise qualifications from other regions according to the same principles and procedures as in the LRC. In other words, qualifications from your home country should also be subject to the same principles and procedures of fair recognition

¹ See: Higher education regional conventions, UNESCO. Link: <https://www.unesco.org/en/higher-education/conventions>



Within the UNESCO Europe-Northern America region, the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC, 1997) applies. The LRC is a combined UNESCO/Council of Europe treaty comprising 56 state parties. The European National Information Centres for academic recognition (ENICs) have a task under the treaty to support its implementation in their national contexts.

Over the last decades, the ENIC Network and the European Union's National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) Network have collaborated to build an impressive infrastructure and knowledge base to support fair recognition in the European region. In addition, new developments have been included in the legal framework of the LRC through various subsidiary texts adopted by the LRC Committee. This Committee is one of the two bodies established under the LRC and tasked with (monitoring) its implementation.

1.2 Rationale

A new global treaty emerging in the context of a well-functioning regional convention (the LRC) naturally leads to the question how the two treaties relate to one another. From involvement in consultations and in the drafting of the GC's text, it is commonly understood in the ENIC-NARIC Networks that the treaties are quite similar.

Yet, while the underpinning principles of the GC and LRC are equivalent, the treaties are not identical. A famous example is the inclusion of a definition of "substantial differences" in the GC. While this definition is fully in line with the understanding of a substantial difference in the ENIC-NARIC Networks and how it is implemented in practice, the LRC does not include such a definition. This example raises the question as to whether there are other definitions, topics, or articles where the two conventions differ from each other.

In order to promote transparency and facilitate the implementation of the GC, the Erasmus+ 'I-AR' project established a specific objective: to systematically analyze the GC in comparison to the LRC. The aim was to identify any specific aspects of the GC that may need additional clarification for effective implementation in the LRC region by ENIC-NARICs.



1.3 Research question & methodology

1.3.1 Research question

To achieve the above goal and conduct the analysis, the following research question was formulated:

“What areas of the GC require clarification when comparing the treaty to the LRC, and what are the implications for recognition bodies?”

1.3.2 Methodology

To answer this question, the analysis was conducted in two phases. The first phase mapped the sections of the GC against the LRC and its subsidiary texts. The definition section focused solely on whether the LRC includes definitions not covered by the GC.

In the next phase, the project team identified the areas in the GC that either lacked coverage or only had partial coverage within the LRC. These areas would benefit from clarification. In addition, the project team proposed potential steps that can be taken to achieve further clarification and facilitate the implementation process. This reflection was carried out in the spirit of the GC

and LRC, against the established good practice within the ENIC-NARIC Networks, given that the basic principles of both conventions stem from the same basis.

In addition, the following important clause from the GC was taken as a lead:

Precedence The Global Convention does not modify any rights and obligations under the regional recognition conventions and any other treaties.

1.4 Content

The “raw” analyses of the different sections in the first phase are published separately as annexes to this publication. The areas identified as needing clarification are listed and further elaborated in the chapters 2 to 9. These are: the principle of precedence, substantial differences, quality assurance, qualification frameworks, inclusive education and lifelong learning, cross border education, periods of study versus recognition of partial studies and actions against fraudulent practices. Chapter 10 offers a conclusion, while chapter 11 offers an epilogue for further thought.



1.5 About the I-AR project

The “Implementation of Automatic Recognition in the Networks” (I-AR) project is co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme and coordinated by Nuffic. It aims to implement fair automatic recognition in the ENIC-NARIC Networks. To this end it offers guidance on policy development in recognition on European and national levels.

The activities of the I-AR project include the following activities:

- European level
 - Creating a table with system-level comparisons of qualifications in the EHEA that national authorities can use to apply de facto automatic recognition or enter (non) legally binding AR agreements between countries, and as such supports efficient and consistent implementation.
 - Producing a 2nd edition of the EAR manual, which supports fair and automatic recognition practices in the EU/EHEA.
 - Analysing the implications of the Global Recognition Convention on the Lisbon Recognition Convention to support streamlined implementation in line with the LRC and automatic recognition.

- National level
 - Providing national guidance through improved AR regimes in ENIC-NARIC offices.
- Institutional level
 - Building capacity for higher education institutions by strengthening the link between ENIC-NARIC and HEIs, improving information provision on fair and automatic recognition, and organising national seminars on automatic recognition for higher education institutions.

Funding and partners

The I-AR consortium consists of the following partners: ENIC Ukraine and the ENIC NARICs of Flanders, Lithuania, Poland, Norway, Austria, Italy, France, Estonia, Ireland, Czech Republic, Denmark, and The Netherlands (coordinator), the EUA, ESU and ECA.



2 Precedence

This analysis focuses on what is new in the GC compared to the LRC, that is - which definitions, concepts and provisions are not found in the LRC that signatories to the GC will have to adhere to. However, one could also look for differences the other way around. For the most part, the analysis would then show that the GC generally aims at keeping it short and concise, and sticking to plain language. As an example, the LRC contains several lengthy provisions on non-discrimination and decision times, whereas the GC simply states *that recognition of qualifications should be transparent, fair, timely and non-discriminatory*. Likewise, the LRC has several provisions on recognition of access qualifications with examples of differences between State Parties, while in the GC this is comprised in one concise provision stating *that each party is obliged to recognize qualifications giving access to higher education in other states parties, unless substantial differences can be shown between access requirements in the state party where the qualification was obtained and the state party where recognition is sought*. Several other examples of the same nature can be found.

Communicating in plain language and minimizing the number of provisions means there is a risk of something being omitted or less favourably worded (from an applicant perspective) in the GC. In our reading, we came across one example related to the provisions on refugees and displaced persons. In the LRC this group is defined as *refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation, whereas in the GC the group is defined as refugees and displaced persons*. However, the GC also includes a clause on precedence, stating that:

“the Global Convention does not modify any rights and obligations under the regional recognition conventions and any other treaties. The provisions in the Global Convention do not take precedence of any provisions more favourable to recognition in other treaties.”

In other words, whenever a recognition body faces discrepancies between the GC and other conventions and/or treaties, the provision that is more favourable to the applicant should always be given precedence.

In the following chapter, we will turn our attention to the instances where we have found the GC to go beyond the provisions of the LRC and examine what this means in practical terms for LRC signatory countries that are considering signing the GC as well.



3 Substantial difference

Central to the LRC as well as the GC is the concept of substantial differences. A basic principle underlying both conventions is that recognition should be given unless a substantial difference can be shown between a foreign qualification and the corresponding domestic qualification. This “differs from an equivalence-based approach, where the aim is to establish that the foreign qualification is essentially similar to a domestic one.”²

The term ‘substantial difference’ is used in both conventions, but only the GC provides a definition of this term. This definition is connected to why an applicant is seeking recognition. Substantial differences are defined in the GC as those differences that would “most likely prevent the applicant from succeeding in a desired activity, such as, but not limited to, further study, research activities, or employment opportunities.”³

At first glance, this would seem to limit the scope of national recognition authorities to define what constitutes a substantial difference. The emphasis on the applicant’s purpose for seeking recognition also means that a difference may be considered

substantial in one context (e.g., for seeking admission to further studies) and not substantial in another (e.g., for seeking access to the labour market).

Despite the absence of an explicit definition in the LRC, a similar definition has been included in the European Area of Recognition Manual⁴ since 2012. The EAR Manual was recommended for use as “a set of guidelines for recognition of foreign qualifications and a compendium of good practices” by the 47 ministers of education of the Bologna countries in the EHEA Communiqué in 2012.⁵

Despite differences in the practical application of the concept of substantial differences still remain, there is already a shared understanding⁶ between most LRC signatory countries on what constitutes a substantial difference. Therefore, the introduction of an explicit definition of the term should not pose any additional challenges for recognition authorities. It should be noted that there are still discrepancies in interpreting substantial differences.

2 A practical guide to recognition: Implementing the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education, p. 9, Link: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374905>.

3 Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education, SECTION I. DEFINITION OF TERMS, <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/global-convention-recognition-qualifications-concerning-higher-education?hub=66535>.

4 EAR Manual, chapter on “Substantial differences” <http://ear.enic-naric.net/emanual/Chapter10/default.aspx>.

5 Bucharest Communiqué, http://www.ehea.info/Upload/document/ministerial_declarations/Bucharest_Communique_2012_610673.pdf.

6 See e.g. Substantial differences: A glimpse of theory, practice and guidelines (CIMEA, 2021), https://www.cimea.it/Upload/Documenti/7590_Brochure_substantial_differences.pdf.



4 Quality assurance

One concept highlighted in the GC is quality assurance (QA). The emphasis on quality assurance can be explained from the fact that strong QA systems allow for building trust between systems, and support mutual recognition of foreign qualifications.

QA in the GC is defined as *an ongoing process by which the quality of a higher-education system, institution, or programme is assessed by the competent authority/authorities to assure stakeholders that acceptable educational standards are continuously being maintained and enhanced*. UNESCO's *Practical Guide to Recognition - Implementing the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education* further elaborates that:

(...) only qualifications that are quality assured by the competent authority in the issuing country should be recognized, since quality assurance and recognition of qualifications are interlinked.

No comparable definition can be found on QA in the LRC. At the time the LRC was written and adopted, the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) and the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) were still in the making. However, as the Bologna process and European Higher Education Area (EHEA) matured and established common standards for QA, we also see this reflected in the area of recognition. In the 2013 subsidiary text to the LRC, *Recommendation on the Use of Qualifications Frameworks in the Recognition of Foreign Qualifications*,⁷ quality assurance is introduced as an important prerequisite for the effective use of qualifications frameworks for recognition:

- *A transparent link between recognition, qualifications frameworks and quality assurance should be established;*
- *If a National Qualifications Framework has been self-certified or referenced, there is an assumption that the individual qualifications included in the framework by the competent authority are quality assured. Therefore as a general rule there is no need for the recognition authority to investigate the quality of the qualification.*

⁷ https://www.cicic.ca/docs/lisboa/Recommendation_on_the_use_of_qualifications_frameworks_in_the_recognition_of_foreign_qualifications.pdf.



Furthermore, the 2015 report by the EHEA Pathfinder Group on Automatic Recognition stresses that implementing adequate quality assurance mechanisms on a national level is crucial for improving recognition standards and thereby paving the way for Automatic Recognition. The Pathfinder Group recommends:

to support the role of Quality Assurance assessing recognition processes in HEIs and to commit to strengthening Quality Assurance in general through, inter alia, supporting the implementation of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

The European Area of Recognition (EAR) Manual also includes QA as a key element in the recognition process. The introduction of chapter three on Accreditation and Quality Assurance states that:

the fact that an institution and/or the programme is recognized or accredited indicates that the qualification in question represents an appropriate minimum level of education in that particular country.

The EAR manual further recommends that:

credential evaluators should rely on accreditation or quality assurance by competent bodies as evidence that an institution or programme complies with minimum quality standards.

Thus, for all countries that have adopted the ESG as a working standard for QA in higher education, implementing the GC would not call for any additional action on their part. For countries outside of the EHEA and for countries not compliant with the ESG, implementing the GC may require additional action to strengthen QA systems.



5 Qualifications framework

Another concept closely related to quality mentioned in the GC and not in the LRC main text is that of qualifications frameworks (QF). A QF is defined as “a system for the classification, publication and organization of quality assured qualifications according to a set of criteria.” The UNESCO Handbook compliments the definition by stating that:

the level of a qualification in the formal education system of the issuing country is often defined by a set of level descriptors in relation to a national qualifications framework. Such frameworks, where available, are useful transparency tools for determining the level of a qualification.

Just as for quality assurance, there is no corresponding definition in the LRC, which again shows that the process of developing a common standard for referencing the level of a qualification was not complete. However, the use of QFs for recognition purposes is mentioned in other authoritative texts related to the LRC. The Recommendation on the Use of Qualifications Frameworks in the Recognition of Foreign Qualifications includes the following definitions:

- a. *“National Qualifications Framework(s) (NQFs)” refers to qualifications frameworks developed at the national or sub-national level and specific to a country’s structure of education and training;*
- b. *“Overarching frameworks” refers to regional frameworks to which NQFs are related (for example the QF-EHEA and EQF-LLL);*
- c. *“Qualifications frameworks” refers in general terms to both NQFs and overarching frameworks.*

As point b. indicates, two overarching frameworks have been developed on the European level. In 2005, the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) was adopted by the European ministers responsible for higher education as part of the Bologna process. The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) was first introduced by the EU in 2008, and then revised in 2017. For both QFs there are tools available for comparing a country’s own NQF to QF-EHEA and EQF in processes called self-certification and referencing, respectively.



The implementation and use of QFs for recognition purposes have been high on the agenda of the ENIC-NARIC network over the past decade. As discussed above, this is closely linked to a country's QA system. According to the EAR Manual, QA and QFs are two of the cornerstones for establishing systemic trust in the quality of another country's higher education system.

Most LRC signatory countries already have NQFs in place and use QFs as a tool in their recognition practices. Therefore, implementing the GC should not introduce any significant obstacle for countries that have implemented the LRC and have been active in the developments introduced in the ENIC-NARIC Networks.



6 Inclusive education and lifelong learning

As the LRC dates from 1997, many recent developments regarding the need for inclusive education and lifelong learning opportunities for all are not reflected in the convention.

Many new terms have been given an explicit definition in the GC, subsumed under the definition of lifelong learning as

a process which refers to all learning activities, whether formal, non-formal, or informal, covers the entire lifespan and has the aim of improving and developing human capacities, knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies.

The GC also includes definitions of formal learning, informal learning, non-formal learning, traditional and non-traditional learning modes, and prior learning that are not found in the LRC.

The new convention sets out a clear requirement for the signatory countries to recognize higher-education qualifications and qualifications giving access to higher education from other countries irrespective of how the qualification has been obtained, provided that the qualification has been subject to quality assurance mechanisms that are comparable to qualifications acquired through traditional learning modes. In other words, qualifications obtained through the completion of an education programme, through traditional or non-traditional learning modes or through the validation of prior learning should be treated equally.

Although this broadens the scope of what is included in the definition of a qualification in the GC compared with the LRC, similar recommendations are already given in the Revised Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications⁸ adopted by the LRC Committee, which states that:

The assessment process should acknowledge that recognition of prior learning, credit transfer, different forms of access to higher education, joint degrees and life-long learning will all shorten the duration of some academic qualifications without diminishing the learning outcomes and a decision not to grant recognition should not be motivated by duration alone.

Similar recommendations are also already given in the EAR Manual⁹.

As most LRC signatory countries are likely to have systems in place for the validation of prior learning and obtaining qualifications outside the formal education system, the recognition of foreign qualifications obtained in similar ways should not pose a significant challenge for recognition authorities.

⁸ [https://www.enic-naric.net/fileusers/FINAL_REVISIED_Recomm...for_Rec_Foreign_Qualif_29%2006%2010_\(PUBLISHED\).pdf](https://www.enic-naric.net/fileusers/FINAL_REVISIED_Recomm...for_Rec_Foreign_Qualif_29%2006%2010_(PUBLISHED).pdf).

⁹ EAR Manual, chapter on NON-TRADITIONAL LEARNING <http://ear.enic-naric.net/emanual/Chapter13/introduction.aspx#introduction1>.



7 Cross-border education

The GC includes a new definition of *cross-border education as all modes of educational delivery which involve the movement of people, knowledge, programmes, providers and curriculum across States Parties' borders, including, but not limited to, quality-assured international joint degree programmes, cross-border higher education, transnational education, offshore education and borderless education*, and also includes new definitions of mobility and international joint degrees not found in the LRC.

The basic principle in the GC is that international joint degrees should be assessed in the same way as qualifications acquired in a single country, provided that at least one of the countries where the qualification has been obtained is party to the convention.

Countries may make the recognition of higher education qualifications acquired through cross-border education or through foreign educational institutions operating on its soil subject to specific legal requirements or require agreements with the awarding institution's country of origin.

Although cross-border education is not explicitly covered in the LRC, recommendations on the recognition of such education has been set out in the Revised Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education¹⁰, the Revised Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees¹¹ and the Revised Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications adopted by the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee. Practical recommendations are also given in the EAR Manual¹². Provided that these recommendations are already adhered to, the GC provisions should not pose a significant challenge for recognition authorities.

10 https://www.enic-naric.net/Upload/Documents/Revised_Code_of_Good_Practice_TNE.pdf.

11 https://www.enic-naric.net/Upload/Documents/Revised_Recommendation_Recognition_Joint_Degrees_2016_ENGLISH.pdf.

12 EAR Manual 2nd edition, chapter 16 "Transnational Education".



8 Periods of study, partial studies and partial recognition

Like any other text, the LRC is a child of its time and must be read in that context, hence also when it comes to recognition of study periods. The LRC was written with credit mobility and Erasmus+ student exchange in mind, and this is reflected in the articles on recognition of study periods. The LRC thus focuses on periods of study and defines this as:

any component of a higher education programme which has been evaluated and documented and, while not a complete programme of study in itself, represents a significant acquisition of knowledge or skill.

The GC, however, talks of partial studies. At first glance this might seem like something different from periods of studies. However, when looking at the definition of partial studies, we see a significant overlap with the LRC definition of periods of study:

any part of a higher-education programme which has been evaluated and, while not a complete programme in itself, represents a significant acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies.

This assumption is further strengthened when comparing the LRC subsidiary text Revised Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications and

UNESCO's Handbook for implementing the GC when it comes to partial recognition. While partial recognition should not be confused with partial studies or study periods, the point highlighted here is about the common denominator that parts of a programme represent acquisition of knowledge and as such can be recognized (like partial studies or periods of study).

The LRC subsidiary text states that where, after thorough consideration of the case, the competent recognition authority reaches the conclusion that recognition cannot be granted in accordance with the applicant's request, alternative or partial recognition should be considered, where possible. In UNESCO's Handbook the comparable recommendation is that if a qualification cannot be fully recognized, or is only partially completed, partial recognition should be considered. For both cases, the practical implications are that applicants have the right to have their qualifications assessed with a view to obtaining at least partial recognition, even when the qualifications do not constitute a complete programme and/or if a substantial difference has been identified.

Thus, the practical task of implementing recognition of partial studies in accordance with the GC should not be very different from implementing recognition of periods of study in accordance with the LRC.



9 Trust in education systems

A basic tenet in the GC is that signatory countries should have trust in qualifications obtained in another signatory country and recognise these qualifications on par with domestic qualifications, unless a substantial difference can be demonstrated by the recognition body. Such trust must be built over time. Central elements include good information provision regarding a country's education system and adequate quality assurance mechanisms.

A major problem for trust in foreign qualifications lies in the widespread use of false diplomas, and the large industry of diploma mills, accreditation mills and essay mills that supports it. The GC obligates the parties to the convention to adopt (...) *measures to eradicate all forms of fraudulent practices regarding higher education qualifications by encouraging the use of contemporary technologies and networking activities (...).*

Although similar provisions are not included in the LRC, The Council of Europe's ETINED platform represents an example of ongoing networking activities to combat academic fraud that is open to all LRC signatory countries. A new recommendation on countering education fraud¹³ was adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 2022, and contains clear definitions, recommendations and monitoring mechanisms for member states. Provided that the recommendations are put into practice by the LRC signatory countries, the new GC provisions should not represent a significant hurdle.

13 COUNTERING EDUCATION FRAUD: Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)18 adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 13 July 2022 and explanatory memorandum, [https://book.coe.int/en/legal-instruments/11347-countering-education-fraud-recommendation-cmrec202218-and-explanatory-report.html#:~:text=Recommendation%20CM%2FRec\(2022\)18%20on%20countering%20education%20fraud,prosecution%2C%20international%20cooperation%20and%20monitoring](https://book.coe.int/en/legal-instruments/11347-countering-education-fraud-recommendation-cmrec202218-and-explanatory-report.html#:~:text=Recommendation%20CM%2FRec(2022)18%20on%20countering%20education%20fraud,prosecution%2C%20international%20cooperation%20and%20monitoring).



10 Conclusion

As the above analysis shows, even though there are some new concepts and features introduced in the GC, a closer comparison with the LRC, its subsidiary texts and the work done in the EHEA/ENIC-NARIC communities over the last couple of decades reveal that there are no significant new practices or processes that need to be introduced when implementing the GC in countries that have ratified and are in compliance with the LRC. The only noteworthy change is that the same principles for recognition need to be applied to a new set of countries.

From our knowledge of the recognition practices in the ENIC-NARIC community, most offices already apply the principles of LRC to recognition irrespective of what the country of origin for the qualification is. This is also highlighted in the *Revised Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications* from 2010, where the State Parties of the LRC are advised *that the principles and practices described in this Recommendation can, however, also be equally well applied to the recognition of qualifications issued in other countries or under transnational education arrangements, to the recognition of joint degrees and to the recognition of qualifications in countries other than those party to the Lisbon Recognition Convention*. Therefore, the actual changes that have to be introduced in the recognition processes of the individual countries might be even smaller than what this analysis suggests.



11 Epilogue

With the entry into force of the GC, the intergovernmental cooperation will also be established. While in terms of their content the GC and LRC seem complementary, a question mark remains with regard how the GC governing bodies such as the Bureau will relate to the LRC governing bodies.

This is especially important since governments need to ratify the GC in order to have a seat at the table in shaping the future of the GC. A UNESCO poll after the adoption of the GC showed great interest from ENIC-NARIC centres to join the GC, yet the ratification process is different from one country to the other. This means that some countries will already have a seat at the first intergovernmental meeting while others will have to wait until completion of their ratification procedure.

Over the last decades, the ENIC-NARIC Networks' centres have developed a high level of trust within their Networks, and established a well-functioning structure for information exchange, capacity building and development of good practice.

Therefore, one advice to UNESCO, but also to the individual ENIC-NARIC centres that are participating in the GC, is to ensure that the GC implementation will be an asset and complementary to the well-functioning structures already in place.

Another observation from the project team when reviewing the LRC against the GC is that while the LRC is in principle still up to date, the specific topics highlighted may eventually need a refresher or update to keep the LRC even more in line with current themes in higher education and international recognition.

UNESCO's information provision (i.e., documents and webinars) on the convention have been very helpful, providing reliable information provision and transparency. Many ENIC-NARICs have information to share and are keen to share their experiences and learn from other regions.

The ENIC-NARIC Networks (i.e., via the ENIC Bureau and NARIC Advisory Board) should actively explore and seek out cooperation with other regions, to achieve further interregional collaboration for the benefit of fair recognition, which is supported under the GC. The project team welcomes UNESCO's support in facilitating this.



Colophon

I-AR Consortium

ASSOCIAZIONE CIMEA - CIMEA, Italy

ASSOCIATION EUROPEENNE DE L'UNIVERSITE - EUA

AUSTRIAN FEDERAL MINISTRY OF EDUCATION,
SCIENCE AND RESEARCH (BMBWF) - ENIC NARIC
AUSTRIA, AUSTRIA

EDUCATION AND YOUTH BOARD - Education and
Youth Board - HARNO, Estonia

EUROPEAN STUDENTS' UNION - ESU

FRANCE EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL - FEI, France

INFORMATION AND IMAGE CENTER - ENIC
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STICHTING NUFFIC - Nuffic, The Netherlands

VLAAMSE GEMEENSCHAP - ENIC-NARIC Flemish
Community, Belgium

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IN HIGH EDUCATION - SKVC, Lithuania

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EUROPEAN CONSORTIUM FOR ACCREDITATION
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QUALITY ASSURANCE AUTHORITY OF IRELAND
QUALITY AND QUALIFICATIONS - QQI, Ireland

UDDANNELSES- OG FORSKNINGSSTYRELSEN -
DANISH AGENCY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION AND
SCIENCE - ENIC-NARIC Denmark

Design

Osage



Nuffic Kortenaerkade 11
2518 AX The Hague
PO Box 29777 2502 LT The Hague
T +31 (0)70 4260 260 www.nuffic.nl



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