

Automatic recognition of foreign qualifications

Building institutional capacity
in the ENIC-NARIC Networks

Erasmus+ Key Action 3, I-AR Consortium
April 2023

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Executive Summary

The majority of recognition practices in the European Higher Education Area are made by higher education institutions. Given that the task of ENIC-NARIC centres is to support implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention in their national context, their role in supporting higher education institutions is essential to achieve fair (automatic) recognition. This publication presents a compendium of good practice to ENIC-NARICs for building capacity on automatic recognition in higher education institutions.

The good practice was identified as part of the Erasmus+ Key Action 3 NARIC “Implementation of Automatic Recognition in the Networks” (“I-AR”) project. In I-AR a project team of 11 ENIC-NARICs systematically reflected on their links with higher education institutions with the purpose to implement measures to strengthen the connection in order to support automatic recognition. Additionally, the centres of the project team organized national webinars on automatic recognition. The activities were supported by a Steering Group giving strategic advice. This resulted in a meta-analysis with conclusions and recommendations relevant to the ENIC-NARIC Networks. These include the following:

- Observation that various automatic recognition models are in place and different models are used simultaneously. The ENIC-NARIC centres used various definitions for automatic recognition, all in line with the Council Recommendation of 2018. The project team stresses the importance of flexibility

for ENIC-NARIC centres to adopt and advocate models that best fits the national situation and will be most successful in achieving automatic recognition practices;

- All ENIC-NARIC centres of the project team promote and support fair (automatic) recognition through a wide set of services and channels, including: the website of the ENIC-NARIC centre (both automatic recognition and the recognition procedure), databases used by admissions officers with recognition standards, country information modules, training courses for admissions officers; targeted webinars to admissions officers, admissions officers network meetings, ad hoc consultation moments, via quality assurance (reviews) and via newsletters;
- Observation that a substantial number of admissions officers are already familiar with the concept of automatic recognition;
- Automatic recognition should be promoted in the context of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, to support its understanding and embeddedness in fair recognition practices. There is no shortcut;
- National networks of admissions officers -in liaison with ENIC-NARIC centres- are crucial for keeping national consistency of automatic recognition and recognition standards;
- Continuous information provision and staff training to higher education institutions is needed, given the staff turnover, and new developments in the education field and recognition;



- ENIC-NARICs should receive sufficient resources to support higher education institutions and other stakeholders, since this can be considered a core activity to implement the LRC in the national context;
- The peer to peer exchange in this project to reflect on each other's practices was a fruitful way to identify and implement innovations. In light of this and the overall ambition to achieve automatic recognition in the EHEA and EU, the project team calls on the NARIC Advisory Board and ENIC-Bureau to review this publication and use it as inspiration to the EB/NAB '23 - '25 workplan. In addition, it calls on the Co-Secretariats to take note of these findings in relation to the further development of initiatives in the field of automatic recognition.



1 Introduction

This report presents the meta-analysis of a series of measures taken by ENIC-NARIC centres to strengthen their link with higher education institutions (HEIs). The focus of these links have been: services, cooperation and dialogue, quality assurance, and the national legal framework.

In doing so, this report aims to offer a compendium of good practice to the entire ENIC-NARIC Networks how to support fair and automatic recognition in the national context in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

The present chapter is an introduction, to provide the background and rationale for capacity building of higher education institutions by ENIC-NARIC centres. It outlines the main objectives and the methodology and offers an overview of the content of this publication.

1.1 Rationale

The I-AR project (2020-2023) aimed to strengthen automatic recognition via a set of five initiatives. One of these focused on support to higher education institutions. The reason is that most recognition decisions in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) are made by higher education institutions, while there are still obstacles to implementing concepts that are basic for fair (automatic) recognition.

The obstacles for implementation are highlighted in the Bologna Implementation Report (2018) and include that actual recognition practices fall short of expectations with regard to transparency, consistency and fairness. One identified cause is that higher education institutions do not always follow all the required principles of good recognition practice. This is problematic since the implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention is a precondition for the implementation of automatic recognition. Additionally, the report shows that considerable effort is still required to agree on a mutual understanding of the concept of automatic recognition, and to make it a reality.

Additionally, various Erasmus+ KA3 NARIC and EHEA projects and discussions at European and national level show that:

- implementation of automatic recognition regimes benefits from further guidance to ensure efficient and consistent implementation of automatic recognition across the EU/EHEA in view of the deadline of 2025;
- there is a need to strengthen information provision and the national recognition infrastructures (= the way recognition is organized nationally) to ensure ENIC-NARICs can fulfill their task to support implementation of the LRC (in order to achieve automatic recognition);
- there is a need for national awareness campaigns on automatic recognition for higher education institutions.



More recent, the third Monitoring Report of the Lisbon Recognition Convention published in 2022 also has various recommendations on automatic recognition, including:

- full and fair implementation of all the LRC principles is the fundamental basis for any automatic recognition procedure (...)
- countries should ensure that automatic recognition is implemented nationally since that means that national HEIs are also covered by automatic recognition.

1.2 Goal

Building on the abovementioned findings, one of the goals of the I-AR project was for ENIC-NARIC centres to support implementation of automatic recognition through capacity building in higher education institutions. The three specific goals were to:

1. Strengthen the link between ENIC-NARIC and HEIs;
2. Improve information provision on fair and automatic recognition;
3. Organize national seminars for higher education institutions to promote a common understanding of automatic recognition.

The project committed to conduct a meta-analysis of the main findings to inspire other centres of the ENIC-NARIC Networks and information (inter)national policy makers in recognition, which resulted in this publication.

1.3 Methodology

To achieve these goals, two types of activities were carried out by the ENIC-NARICs of Austria, Estonia, Flanders, France, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland and Ukraine:

1. Each centre systematically mapped their centre's existing links with higher education institutions, in order to identify areas for improvement in the communication. Additionally, the ENIC-NARIC centres mapped their information provision on automatic recognition. These analyses lead to the development of a roadmap (using the template in annex 1 and 2), in which each centre described:
 - the current situation;
 - the desired situation;
 - all actions to achieve the desired situation.

This roadmap was peer reviewed in the project team and alterations were made based on shared experience. Next, all actions that could be implemented in the lifetime of the project were implemented.



2. To achieve a common understanding of the concept of automatic recognition and support its implementation, the ENIC-NARIC centres organized a national seminar. The target group were mainly higher education institutions.

All seminars had common “core content”, being to promote one concept of automatic recognition. Yet, the other content was geared to the specificities of the discussions on national level. All agendas were peer reviewed before being published.

After implementation of both activities, a meta-analysis of the outcomes was conducted, where project team members identified the good practice that could be inspirational to other ENIC-NARIC centres wishing to strengthen (automatic) recognition in their national context.

This publication presents the outcomes of the meta-analyses to be able to inspire other ENIC-NARIC centres.

1.4 Content

This first chapter introduces the project and its approach. The subsequent three chapters focus on the outcomes of the analysis of strengthening the link between ENIC-NARIC and HEIs, as well as information provision to HEIs. Chapter 3 presents the outcomes of the “Information seminars on automatic recognition”). Chapter 4 focusses on conclusions and recommendations. Additionally, chapter 5 provides more general information about the I-AR project. Annex 1 and 2 contain the templates used for strengthening the link between ENIC-NARIC and HEIs, and for improving information provision.



2 Information provision and strengthening links with HEIs

As detailed under “methodology,” the ENIC-NARIC centres completed a roadmap (annex 1) with the purpose to map and improve the current situation regarding:

- information provision on automatic recognition to higher education institutions;
- linkages between their center and higher education institutions in their national context;

This chapter highlights the good practice identified in these areas, based on a meta-analysis of the roadmaps.

During the meta-analysis, it appeared there was close to a uniform overlap with the responses on information provision on automatic recognition, and how ENIC-NARICs are in connection with higher education institutions. Therefore, this chapter’s first paragraph focusses on the general findings on information provision on automatic recognition by ENIC-NARIC centres, while the specific examples are merged with the next paragraph (2.2), detailing the good practices in strengthening links with higher education institutions.

2.1 Information provision on automatic recognition: models and definitions

In order to evaluate the improvement of information provision on automatic recognition, the ENIC NARIC centres considered the following four questions:

1. What definition (and models) of automatic recognition are used?
2. What channels are used to promote automatic recognition? (i.e. dedicated space website, meetings with HEIs, etc.). What is the nature and frequency? Do you receive feedback/ reactions from HEIs?

The findings are summarized in this paragraph.

2.1.1 Automatic Recognition. Definition and models

The ENIC-NARIC centres used various definitions for automatic recognition, all in line with the Council Recommendation of 2018. The exact definitions used also depended on the models used. For example, for legally binding the Benelux and Reykjavik definitions used.



In line with findings in earlier projects and studies, the ENIC NARIC's of the project team were found to use all four identified models for automatic recognition in the national context:

The overall majority combines different models of automatic recognition, resulting in a wide "coverage" of countries falling under an automatic recognition regime. This often even includes countries outside the Lisbon Recognition Convention treaty countries.

The four models of automatic recognition

In the EHEA, four different models of automatic recognition can be distinguished*). These models can co-exist and can be used simultaneously in the national context. There is no "better" model, only the model(s) that best fit the specific national context:

I. Legal bilateral and multilateral agreements

Prior to the 2015 Yerevan communiqué legally binding bilateral and multilateral agreements on the automatic recognition of qualifications came into use. Especially neighbouring countries took the initiative to come to formal agreements on the reciprocal automatic recognition of qualifications. Bilateral agreements exist between countries with legally binding recognition decisions as well as countries where recognition decisions are advisory. Currently we count a

number of bi- and multilateral agreements within all regions of the EHEA. An example is the Benelux – Baltic treaty on automatic recognition (2021).

II. A legally binding unilateral list of degrees

This model is not based on a bi- or multilateral agreement, as countries can decide unilaterally which qualifications from which countries to include. In Portugal, where a country list was introduced in 2007, a commission including representatives from the Ministry of Higher Education and higher education institutions was established to decide on the qualifications and countries qualifying for automatic recognition.

III. Non-legal bilateral and multilateral agreements

These are "soft" agreements between countries on the mutual recognition of qualifications. The Pathfinder Group on Automatic Recognition (2015) recommended regional cooperation within recognition as a steppingstone towards the final achievement of automatic recognition within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). In response to this recommendation the Nordic-Baltic countries jointly developed an admission manual.



IV. 'De facto' automatic recognition

In this model, automatic recognition -following the criteria of the Council Recommendation- is simply applied in practice, without referring to legally binding and formal procedures. Often there are guidelines in place and the ENIC-NARIC makes these available to higher education institutions and others via the website, databases, and other channels.

Source: Nuffic, [A short path to automatic recognition. 4 models](#), 2020.

2.1.2 Channels to support automatic recognition

The project shows that ENIC-NARIC centres use a wide variety of channels to promote automatic recognition, many of which are via the usual channels to connect with higher education institutions. The latter also signals embeddedness of the concept of automatic recognition as part of the overall recognition procedure:

- Website of the ENIC-NARIC centre (both automatic recognition and the recognition procedure);
- Databases used by admissions officers;
- Country information modules;
- Training courses for admissions officers;
- Targeted webinars to admissions officers;
- Admissions officers network meetings;
- Ad hoc consultation moments;
- Via quality assurance (reviews);
- Newsletters and digests.

Most centres have, or are moving towards, structural contact with their higher education institutions as this is seen as a key area to streamline recognition in the national context. The frequency varied, also depending on the channel used and the need in the context. In addition, information on automatic recognition is included on the website, often together with higher education institutions (which can refer their students to this page).

2.2 Strengthen links with higher education institutions

ENIC-NARICs are tasked under the LRC to promote its principles and implementation in the national context. Therefore, connections between the ENIC-NARIC centre and higher education institutions fit for this purpose are considered beneficial for organizing fair and smooth recognition in the national context.

This paragraph lists the good practice examples, which should be read as a selection from the initiatives implemented.

The following four aspects of the connection between ENIC-NARICs and higher education institutions were considered:

- Services offered by ENIC-NARICs (i.e. databases and websites with information);



- Organizing/facilitating dialogue (i.e. admissions networks, training, and counselling);
- Support the quality assurance of institutional recognition procedures;
- Supporting HEIs in interpreting the legal framework.

It is important to note that the role, remit, and mandate of an ENIC-NARIC determine what type of links are possible between ENIC-NARIC centre and higher education institutions. For example, some centres are geared solely to information provision of the higher education system and the promotion of the LRC in the national context, while other centres make evaluation. Therefore, the selection below is mostly to be read as an inspiration of what is most appropriate and feasible for a centre's national situation.

2.2.1 Services

Collectively deliver a wide variety of services to higher education institutions. To ensure support of the implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention principles, it is important these services are relevant and fit for purpose. These needs evolve over time, due to policy changes, volume of applicants and the changing landscape of education (i.e. micro credentials, digital student data).

The services below address specific needs these ENIC-NARIC centres currently experience in offering services to higher education institutions. Many focus on automatic and automated recognition.

- Introduce chatbot service for frequently asked inquiries, providing fast and consistent answers to the public

In France, the ENIC-NARIC office receives increasing amounts of inquiries for information from individuals. These inquiries should be dealt with in a timely manner, but responding in person to inquiries has become too resource intensive. Therefore, a chatbot was introduced, to provide instant answers to "simple" questions. This is a win - win in terms of efficiency (and consistency) for individuals inquiring as well as for the staff.

- Issue automated and electronic recognition statements

In Poland, individual recognition statements are still issued based on paper procedure. The Kwalifikator database allows to download a general recognition statement. The ideal situation is automatized recognition statements-related tasks via to an electronic system and chatbot. During I-AR a start has been made with building the new SYRENA database.



- Integrate databases, and including information on automatic recognition for easy access

The Norwegian ENIC-NARIC (HK-dir) offers different advisory services to a variety of stakeholders. These include the “Turbo assessment” service for HEI PhD admissions and employers, which provides a brief assessment of the scope and level of the foreign higher education within 5 working days.

Another service offered is the “Country database,” which provides information on educational systems and HK-dir’s recognition practices for a number of countries. Information on automatic recognition of qualifications has been added to the country profiles in the database. The database is open and free of charge, and widely used by HEIs.

In the I-AR project, HK-dir identified the need to improve its country database and integrate this with the NUCAS (Norwegian Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) database. Work on this will commence in autumn of 2023.

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2.2.2 Organizing and facilitating dialogue

A structural dialogue on recognition can be another way ENIC-NARIC centres and higher education institutions to connect.

This dialogue can take different forms. Examples are meetings bringing institutions together, training (in person or webinars), and establishing admissions officers’ networks.

Based on mutual trust and exchange, a dialogue support centres to tailor their services and information provision to the specific needs of their higher education institution. All in all, it directly contributes to a culture of quality around recognition in the national context.



- Organize a bi-annual event for the national recognition community, tailored to needs HEIs

In Belgium, Flemish Community, a bi-annual event is organized for intermediary organisations, admission officers and external experts for course-by-course comparison. The event includes workshops and training sessions on legislation, projects and specific countries. Following identified areas for improvement, the event was optimized by also including consultation moments between the higher education institutions and the ENIC-NARIC centre on challenges/issues and suggest solutions.

- Establish a network of recognition professionals in higher education institutions to discuss recognition, and develop and share good practice

Via the recent established Ukrainian Recognition Network (UaReNet) various workshops on recognition were held. Currently, this activity is temporarily suspended due to the security situation. However, digests, webinars and profiles of education systems are convenient ways for disseminating information via the UaReNet. This resulted in the following implemented activities during the project:

1. New digest dedicated to the legislation changes, automatic recognition, national qualification networks etc. was published on the ENIC Ukraine;

2. Information on the procedure for recognition, verification of Ukrainian documents, education systems of Ukraine is constantly updated;
3. New country profiles are developed and will be added on the ENIC Ukraine website till the end of March 2023.

- Create a national network of recognition professionals to organize dialogue and provide training

The Italian ENIC-NARIC (CIMEA) established the APICE Network in 2022. APICE is a national network of experts in the evaluation and academic recognition of qualifications. Its aim is to enhance professionalism of its members, protecting their interests and looking after their permanent professional training (<https://www.apice-italia.it/EN/pagina-homepage>).

APICE provides training courses for Italian HEIs (both for single institutions and for groups of admission officers/ staff/academic staff). It organized the second edition of the specialisation course for credential valuers (in 2022) in collaboration with CIMEA and the Università Europea di Roma, leading to the issuing of a micro-credential certified by CIMEA and APICE.



- Develop and offer professional training to starting evaluators in higher education institutions, and evaluate the training to meet needs

In Poland, the ENIC-NARIC centre recently offers a training for young evaluators from higher education institutions, the ELEMENTARZ EWALUATORA. It was identified in the roadmap as good practice to evaluate the previous edition and update it to meet needs. This included preparing updated materials, technical tools, and the launch for the updated course.

- Using training course and webinars to integrate new developments (i.e.. automatic recognition)

In Lithuania the introduction programme has been updated with a separate topic on automatic recognition. Following discussions with HEIs, it was decided to integrate automatic recognition into two modules of the introductory course: the module dealing with the LRC and 5 elements of a qualification, and the module dealing with recognition processes within higher education institutions. Additionally, the implementation of automatic recognition will continue to be supported with communicating and discussing its main concepts with HEIs. The use of lists of automatic recognition qualifications will be supported with seminars on how to use the lists and with additional information on the systems of education.

- Organize dialogue and offer training on demand

In Austria, the ENIC-NARIC organizes regular dialogue with admissions officers. Based on this dialogue, the centre provides training to admissions officers on demand.

2.3 Quality assurance: monitoring and support implementation ESG 1.4

Standard 1.4 of the “Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area” (ESG) states that

“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”.

The guidelines state that appropriate recognition procedures shall be in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention. This makes ESG 1.4 an important tool for implementation of institutional recognition practices in line with the LRC. While implementation of the ESG is a task in the realm of quality



assurance, providing information to higher education institution about the LRC compliant recognition practices is a task typically for the ENIC-NARIC centres.

In addition, organizing an element of quality assurance in the national cooperation on recognition, is another way to ensure systematic reflection on the implementation of the LRC and identify areas for improvement.

- Develop a publication for higher education institutions on ESG 1.4 to support compliance

The Italian ENIC-NARIC centre provides practical advice to improve self-assessment procedures or recognition procedures in higher education. Ideally, the implementation of ESG standard 1.4 would be improved.

To improve the implementation of ESG standard 1.4, a working group was established to develop a publication supporting implementation within the EU cofounded project [TPG-LRC CoRE](#). As part of the project, the group defined the outline of objective, structure and content of the publication, and also launched a survey to explore whether higher education institutions (HEIs) consider their recognition processes and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms compliant with the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) ESG 1.4

- Provide instructions to higher education institutions how to publish recognition procedures on their website, and organize webinars on ESG standard 1.4 to support compliance

In Ukraine, the ENIC-NARIC shared instructions with HEIs what information about the procedure should be published on their website. Secondly, two webinars for HEIs were held addressing compliance with the “Standards and guidelines for **quality assurance** in the European Higher Education Area” (ESG) standard 1.4, which deals with admissions and recognition as part of the quality assurance procedure.

- Quality assurance of recognition in the national context, moving towards qualitative monitoring of recognition processes

The Lithuanian ENIC-NARIC conducts annual reviews of recognition activities of higher education institutions. This involves provision of statistical information, qualitative information of recognition processes, analysis of the information, feedback and discussion with HEIs, and an annual overview of the whole recognition system presented to the Ministry and other stakeholders.

This annual review helps to identify the main trends, issues and positive developments within the system, which then can be tackled by HEIs with an activity plan.



The system, which started during transition from a centralised to a decentralised recognition system, is gradually taking on a qualitative and supporting role rather than overseeing character and should be further developed in this direction with special focus on automatic recognition processes and legal framework.

- Cooperation with the quality assurance agency to support institutional recognition practices

The ENIC-NARIC centre in Poland identified it would be beneficial for higher education institutions to have more knowledge and awareness how recognition issues are included in assessment by the national QA agency. The action taken was to reach out to establish closer cooperation with the QA agency. Gaining insight into the scope of recognition issues involved in quality assurance and process of assessment helps to identify how the ENIC-NARIC centre could support to support LRC compliant recognition practices.

- Organize quality control in the collaboration with stakeholders

In The Netherlands, the ENIC-NARIC established a good connection with the national quality assurance agency and admissions officers, but the centre identified that the Plan Do Check Act cycle could be introduced in its cooperation to bring in an element of quality control in the relation.

- Organize quality assurance via data sharing

In Norway, the ENIC-NARIC centre and higher education institutions coordinate their practices on the recognition of foreign higher education. Recognition decisions are registered in Gaus - a joint register for the recognition of foreign education (<https://www.fellesstudentsystem.no/FS-produkt/kaus/kaus-eng.html>), ensuring consistency of decisions. Furthermore, a workshop has been held with SIKT (the Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research) on Vitnemålsportalen in January 2023, to improve the export of recognition decisions to GAUS and include HK-dir's recognition decisions in the National Diploma Registry.



2.4 Supporting HEIs in interpreting legal framework/introducing administrative practices

An important task for the ENIC-NARIC is to inform their higher education institutions about new developments, such as changes in the legal framework. In practice, the strategies used, is a mix of initiatives outlined in 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 above, which is reflected in the examples below.

- Continuous information provision to higher education institutions on legal framework in cooperation with stakeholders

NOKUT provides information to HEIs on the (inter) national legal framework for academic recognition upon request and cooperates with the Directorate of Higher Education and Skills on promoting good recognition practices in line with LRC at higher education institutions. The ideal situation is to continue to inform about good practices in line with LRC and the Global Recognition Convention, which entered into force March 2023. An example is the webinar with HK-Dir on mobility and recognition in study programmes governed by National Framework Plans, December 2022, organized as part of follow-up of government white paper on academic mobility.

- Information on legislation via webinars, website and digest

In Ukraine, trainings, and workshops, proved to be a successful strategy in the past to inform about the (inter) national legal framework on recognition. Due to the security situation, webinars are currently used instead to inform about new legislation. Additionally, a consultation line for higher education institutions is available on a regular basis. Information about recognition procedure, changes in national legislation, country profiles etc. are shared via a digest and are constantly updated on the website.

- Information on legislation via website, databases, training and gatherings

In Poland, information on recognition legislation including all legal texts, are published on the website of the ENIC NARIC centre (NAWA). In the Kwalifikator database and country profiles there is information on how given types of degrees are recognised in Poland (with concrete article from the legislation). The interpretation of legislation (i.e., information how to apply in practice the legislation) is part of all training and conferences organised by NAWA.



- Using annual review meetings with higher education institutions to discuss legal changes

In Lithuania, the general legal framework and administrative practices are discussed with HEIs during the annual reviews, allowing peer discussions among HEIs. Automatic recognition has been included in the annual reviews as a topic, allowing peer discussions among HEIs on implementation and sharing of best practices. In addition, a separate seminar has been organized to discuss the main concepts of automatic recognition.

- Providing guidelines and standards at national level

In Italy, the “Procedures for entry, residency and enrolment of international students and the respective recognition of qualifications for higher education courses in Italy” guide the policies of Italian HEIs concerning the implementation of the principles of automatic recognition and, more broadly, regarding the admission of international students to their courses. The Procedures incorporated the Council Recommendation of 26 November 2018.

Moreover, in 2021, UNI (Italian Standardisation Body) and CIMEA have defined the guidelines of the Credential Evaluator. The standards, collected in the new UNI/PdR 120:2021 Reference Document includes automatic recognition in the set of knowledge required.



3 Information seminars on automatic recognition

This chapter summarizes the experiences of the national seminars organized in Estonia, France, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, The Netherlands, Poland and Norway.

The seminars aimed to diminish the conceptual confusion of automatic recognition as outlined in the Bologna Stocktaking report. Instead, the seminar's purpose was to contribute to a shared understanding of automatic recognition, and to bring implementation on national level forward.

The seminar agendas all contained a common general part, based on a shared definition and materials, to promote the same concept of automatic recognition. For instance, a set of video presentations was developed and used to promote a common understanding. In addition, the agendas were tailored to address the specific state of implementation of automatic recognition in the national context. The seminars were held between December 2022 and March 2023.

After the seminar, each project partner reported on the following main findings, by answering the following questions:

- What aspects of automatic recognition were well understood/implemented?
- What areas generated discussion and may benefit from further clarification and support to support automatic recognition in higher education institutions?

- Do you think there is currently a common understanding of automatic recognition among your HEIs? If not, what would contribute to achieve a common understanding of the concept?
- Beyond a common understanding of automatic recognition, do HEIs require other support to implement automatic recognition (by your centre or other?)
- Any other observations?

Findings

General

- All seminars were well attended by the stakeholders and received positive feedback from attendees. In all cases, the seminars lead to lively discussions on the implementation of automatic recognition with admissions officers. This allowed to clarify any misconceptions, if any. All in all, the seminars contributed to broaden the view of automatic recognition and promote a common understanding. All partners reported that the basic principles and criteria of automatic recognition were well understood after the seminar by the attending admissions officers.
- The understanding of automatic recognition is largely shaped by the automatic recognition model(s) used in the national context. For example, in countries where legal models were applied, the legal model of automatic recognition was



well understood, while de facto models -that could also be applied- were less known. The other way around, it was reported that admissions officers in countries with a strong de facto tradition, were less interested in legal models. In addition, the extent of exposure to (good practice) in automatic recognition, was a factor in understanding;

- Additionally, the extent of comprehension was shaped by the practical implementation and good practices shared with higher education institutions. For instance, it was reported that admissions officers were more familiar with automatic recognition of access qualifications than higher education qualifications, due to participation in a focus group of the Erasmus+ q-Entry project (dealing with this topic).
- Both ENIC-NARIC centres and higher education institutions see value in a structured dialogue via webinars and training, if not yet in place.

Areas of discussion and needs

- The translation of automatic recognition principles into practice lead to many questions and discussion. The criteria for applying automatic recognition in practice lead to comparison of the pros and cons of different models, the preferred model depending on the national context. Detailed step by step explanations on issues of different models of automatic recognition implementation were very well appreciated by the audience;

- It was also identified by admissions officers that automatic recognition in fact is only a very small part in the recognition and admissions process, and other parts (i.e. authenticity checks) are more time intensive;
- To understand automatic recognition, a basic understanding of the Lisbon Recognition Convention is required;
- The entire national recognition infrastructure benefits from a closer dialogue between the ENIC-NARICs and admissions officers (and other stakeholders), which would also make it easier to share national developments and good practices developed on European level. Not all good practice developed in the ENIC-NARIC Networks was known to admissions officers, while the information was welcomed when shared;
- Publication of information on automatic recognition on the website, including resources, would be useful for institutions in their own training as well as a source of referral for applicants;
- In one case, the seminar identified a gap in competency for school leaving certificates, as it was identified no national body is responsible for their recognition, creating an obstacle for fair (automatic) recognition. In this case legal change is preferred.



4 Conclusions & Recommendations

The following conclusions and recommendations were formulated by the project team:

- The ENIC-NARIC centres used various definitions for automatic recognition, all in line with the Council Recommendation of 2018;
- Observation that various automatic recognition models are in place. The ENIC-NARIC centres made use of at least one of the four models of automatic recognition, many using more than one model simultaneously. This is in line with earlier findings that different models of automatic recognition are successfully applied in practice;
- The project team stresses the importance of flexibility for ENIC-NARICs to adopt and advocate for the model that is most fitting for their national situation and most successful in achieving automatic recognition practices;
- There are various ways for ENIC-NARICs to link with higher education institutions, via services, information and outreach through active dialogue and training. All ENIC-NARIC centres of the project team were found to promote and support fair (automatic) recognition through a wide set of services and channels, including: the website of the ENIC-NARIC centre (both automatic recognition and the recognition procedure), databases used by admissions officers with recognition standards, country information modules, training courses for admissions officers; targeted webinars to admissions officers, admissions officers network meetings, ad hoc consultation moments, via quality assurance (reviews) and via newsletters;
- Observation that a substantial number of admissions officers were already familiar with the concept of automatic recognition. The extent of familiarity depended on the model used and linkages between the ENIC-NARIC centre and higher education institutions;
- Automatic recognition should be promoted in the context of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, to support its understanding and embeddedness in fair recognition practices. There is no shortcut;
- National networks of admissions officers -in liaison with ENIC-NARIC centres- are crucial for keeping national consistency of automatic recognition and recognition standards. There are different models to organize this (i.e., self-organized by institutions or coordinated from the ENIC-NARIC office). There is a great willingness among higher education institutions to collaborate with ENIC-NARIC centres to support their institutional recognition practices and engage in dialogue;
- Continuous information provision and staff training to higher education institutions is needed, given the staff turnover, and new developments in the education field and recognition. Additionally, credential evaluation is a profession which needs support from the ENIC-NARIC as national expertise centre in recognition. Webinars and also admissions officers' networks are an efficient way to reach out to higher education institutions;



- ENIC-NARICs should receive sufficient resources to support higher education institutions and other stakeholders, since this can be considered a core activity to implement the LRC in the national context;
- While respecting the different roles and remits of ENIC NARIC centres, the project team calls on the ENIC Bureau and NARIC Advisory Board, as well as the Co-Secretariats, to continue to facilitate a dialogue in the Networks on good practice in centres support to higher education institutions, given the role of ENIC-NARIC centres in implementing the Lisbon Recognition Convention in the national context. To this end the project team calls on the NARIC Advisory Board and ENIC-Bureau to review the conclusions and recommendations, as inspiration to the EB/NAB '23 - '25 workplan. In addition, it calls on the Co-Secretariats to take note of these findings in relation to the further development of initiatives in the field of automatic recognition.



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 in policy development in recognition on a European and a national level.

The activities of the I-AR project include:

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

- National level
 - Provide national guidance through improved AR regimes in ENIC-NARIC offices.
- Institutional level
 - Build capacity for HEIs by strengthening the link between ENIC-NARICs 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 European University Association (EUA), European Student Union (ESU) and the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA).



Annex 1. Roadmap links to HEIs

Identified Areas for improvement of information provision on AR to HEIs	Description current situation	Description ideal situation	Actions to achieve ideal situation		State of Play - March			
What actions could you take to improve information provision on AR?			General actions required (bullets)	Step by step plan, incl. timeline	Actions implemented	Preliminary result of the Action	Good practice/ lessons learned	Remaining Actions (after project lifetime)
1. Services								
2. Dialogue (ie admissions networks) and sharing know-how. This includes: "training" and "counselling";								
3. Quality assurance (ie feedback, support implementation ESG 1.4 etc)								
4. Supporting HEIs in interpreting legal framework/introducing administrative practices?								
5. Other								



Annex 2. Roadmap info provision HEIs

Identified Areas for improvement of information provision on AR to HEIs	Discription current situation	Description ideal situation	Actions to achieve ideal situation		State of Play - March			
What actions could you take to improve information provision on AR?			General actions required (bullets)	Step by step plan, incl. timeline	Actions implemented	Preliminary result of the Action	Good practice/ lessons learned	Remaining Actions (after project lifetime)
NB: for describing the ideal situation, take feedback received from HEIs into account								
1. What definition (and model?) of automatic recognition is used?								
2. What channels are used to promote? (i.e. dedicated space website, meetings with HEIs)								
3. What is the nature and frequency?								
4. Do you receive feedback/ reactions from HEIs?								
5. Other								



Colophon

I-AR Consortium

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ASSOCIATION EUROPEENNE DE L'UNIVERSITE - EUA

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WISSENSCHAFT UND FORSCHUNG - BMBWF, 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 UKRAINE

STICHTING NUFFIC - Nuffic, The Netherlands

VLAAMSE GEMEENSCHAP - ENIC-NARIC Flemish
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