

# Automatic Recognition – a Necessity or Nuisance?

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# Agenda

- I. Automatic Recognition
    - I. The Reykjavik Declaration (Nordic Council)
    - II. Bologna process
    - III. European Council recommendation
  - II. Study periods abroad
  - III. Automatic Recognition of full degrees
    - I. Bachelor (1<sup>st</sup> cycle)
    - II. Master (2<sup>nd</sup> Cycle)
  - IV. Automatic Recognition for the labour market
  - V. Questions and comments
- We will NOT focus on:
    - Automatic recognition of entrance qualifications, VET & TVET
    - PQD and the regulated labour market
    - Digitization

## Background

The core of Automatic Recognition:

- (moving from individual to) Automatic system-level recognition of comparable qualifications
  
- I. Bologna process
  - i. *Harmonization of degree structures and Quality standards*
  
- II. Since 1997 – Lisbon Recognition Convention:
  - i. *from a narrow focus on equivalence to a broader concept of recognition. To recognize qualifications that lead to broadly similar learning outcomes.*
  - ii. *Substantial difference – harmonization of recognition*

## Three central processes for AR

- I. The Reykjavik Declaration (Nordic Council)
- II. Bologna process
- III. European Council Recommendation of 2018

## The Reykjavik Declaration (Nordic Council)

- Signed by the Education Ministers of the Nordic countries (revised 2016):
  - *Higher education qualifications from the region are recognised in the other Nordic countries.*
  - *the Nordic countries work together in pursuit of the goal of adopting systems for automatic recognition of comparable qualifications in higher education in the region, as per the aims of the European Higher Education Area.*

# The Reykjavik Declaration (Nordic Council)

- Experiences:
  - NOKUT – automatic recognition since 2018
  - Automatic recognition of comparable degrees ([www.nordbalt.org](http://www.nordbalt.org))
- Key success factors (?):
  - I. Agreement to ensure equal access to higher education in the Nordic countries (1996)
  - II. Cultural affinity
  - III. Solid (mutual) international knowledge
  - IV. **High level of trust** between the countries

Trust and knowledge are crucial for AR!

## Bologna Process

- Harmonization of European higher education
  - three-cycle degree structure
  - European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)
  - Diploma Supplement
  - Qualifications framework
  - Quality assurance and standards
- EHEA Pathfinder group:
  - *higher education must be comparable across the EHEA, and all the countries must have **transparent quality assurance processes** to help outsiders **trust** their qualifications. If these basics are not in place, automatic recognition becomes difficult in practice.*

## Bologna Process

- Access vs admission
- Pathfinder group (definition):
 

*Automatic recognition of a degree leads to the automatic right of an applicant holding a qualification of a certain level **to be considered for entry to a programme of further study in the next level in any other EHEA-country (access)**.*
- Communiqués:
  - Bucharest 2012 – first surfaced
  - Yerevan 2015 AR by 2020
  - Paris 2018:
    - postponed
    - comparable qualifications
    - full Bologna implementation



## European Council Recommendation

2025 Automatic mutual recognition of a qualification:

*The Council Recommendation calls for establishing, by 2025, the steps necessary to achieve automatic mutual recognition of academic qualifications and outcomes of learning periods abroad for the **purpose of further learning** and without having to go through a separate recognition procedure.*

## European Council Recommendation

2025 Automatic mutual recognition of a qualification:

*“the right for holders of a qualification of a certain level that has been issued by one Member State to be considered for entry to a higher education programme in the next level in any other Member State, **without having to go through any separate recognition procedure**.*

*(autonomy)*

*This shall not prejudice the right of a higher education institution or the competent authorities **to set specific evaluation and admission criteria** for a specific programme. It does not prejudice the right to check if the qualification is authentic.”*

## How to get there and why we should

- Pathway for automatic recognition:
  - legal reforms on the system level
  - individual guidance and capacity building at universities.
- Why AR is good:
  - Increased transparency
  - Secure equal treatment
  - Support mobility
  - Support cooperation
  - Increased quality?

# Automatic Recognition

- I. Automatic Recognition of study periods abroad (exchange etc.)
- II. Automatic Recognition of full degrees
  - i. Bachelor (1<sup>st</sup> cycle)
  - ii. Master (2<sup>nd</sup> Cycle)
- III. Automatic Recognition for the labour market

## Automatic Recognition of study periods abroad (exchange etc.)

- ECTS = ECTS

*“the right to have the learning outcomes of a learning period recognised, **as agreed beforehand in a learning agreement** and confirmed in the Transcript of Records, in line with the ECTS.*

The golden rule of inter-institutional recognition (ECTS Users` s Guide):

*all credits gained during the period of study abroad ..– **as agreed in the learning agreement..** - should be transferred without delay and **counted towards the students` degree** without any additional work or assessment of the student.”*

## Automatic Recognition of full degrees - Bachelor (1<sup>st</sup> Cycle)

- Pathfinder group (Yerevan): A bachelor is a bachelor is a bachelor?
- *Bologna Automatic recognition of a degree leads to the **automatic right of an applicant** holding a qualification of a certain level to **be considered for entry** to a programme of further study in the next level in any other **EHEA-country (access)**.*

## Automatic Recognition of full degrees - Master (2<sup>nd</sup> Cycle)

- The Council Recommendation:
- *...by 2025, ... AR of academic qualifications and outcomes of learning periods abroad for the purpose of further learning and **without having to go through a separate recognition procedure.***
- Access to PhD?
- E-mail sent to NOKUT:
  - *....Det er nylig vedtatt ved XXXXXXXXX (navn på lærested) at søkere til ph.d. program som har utenlandsk utdanning må ha ... **NOKUT-godkjenning** ifbm. søknaden.*

## Automatic Recognition for the labour market

Paris communique (2018):

- *In order to further develop mobility and recognition across the EHEA, we will work to ensure that **comparable higher education qualifications** obtained in one EHEA country are automatically recognised on the same basis in the others, for the purpose of accessing further studies **and the labour market.***
- Examples:
  - NOKUT`s AR for Nordic qualifications
  - Include EEA or EHEA countries



## So.. – is it a Necessity or Nuisance?

- Still a way to go
- From substantial differences to comparable degrees?
- Trusting and identifying others` quality standards
- Quality assurance transparency and information
- Implementation of Bologna instruments
- Legal aspects – identify & remove legal barriers
- Increased involvement of HEIs:
  - To prevent alienation
  - To secure the quality of AR

## Tools, resources and handbooks

- EAR HEI manual: <http://eurorecognition.eu/Manual/EAR%20HEI.pdf>
- Nordic Baltic Admission Manual – comparison of Qualifications: [www.nordbalt.org](http://www.nordbalt.org)
- Reykjavik Declaration:  
<https://www.norden.org/en/node/4773>
- Pathfinder group:  
[http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/2015\\_Yerevan/72/3/EHEA\\_Pathfinder\\_Group\\_on\\_Automatic\\_Recognition\\_January\\_2015\\_613723.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/2015_Yerevan/72/3/EHEA_Pathfinder_Group_on_Automatic_Recognition_January_2015_613723.pdf)
- Nordic agreements: <https://norrpic.org/tools/nordic-agreements>
- Automatic recognition in the Nordic Region – NORRIC (forthcoming)
- Council recommendation on promoting mutual recognition: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52018DC0270>
- ECTS Users` Guide: [https://ec.europa.eu/education/ects/users-guide/docs/ects-users-guide\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/education/ects/users-guide/docs/ects-users-guide_en.pdf)
- Nordic agreement on access to higher education (1996):  
<https://www.norden.org/en/declaration/agreement-concluded-denmark-finland-iceland-norway-and-sweden-admission-higher>

Thank you!

Questions and comments?

- *Do you believe that AR is a reality by 2025?*