

ROADMAP

Roadmaps aim to inform citizens and stakeholders about the Commission's work in order to allow them to provide feedback and to participate effectively in future consultation activities. Citizens and stakeholders are in particular invited to provide views on the Commission's understanding of the problem and possible solutions and to make available any relevant information that they may have.

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| TITLE OF THE INITIATIVE | Promoting automatic mutual recognition of diplomas and study periods abroad |
| LEAD DG – RESPONSIBLE UNIT | DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR EDUCATION, YOUTH, SPORT AND CULTURE, Unit B1 (and B2) |
| LIKELY TYPE OF INITIATIVE | Council Recommendation |
| INDICATIVE PLANNING | Q2 2018 |
| ADDITIONAL INFORMATION | https://ec.europa.eu/commission/publications/eu-leaders-meeting-education-culture_en |

This Roadmap is provided for information purposes only and its content might change. It does not prejudice the final decision of the Commission on whether this initiative will be pursued or on its final content. All elements of the initiative described by the Roadmap, including its timing, are subject to change.

A. Context, Problem definition and Subsidiarity Check

Context

In its [Communication on Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture](#), the Commission proposes the creation of a European Education Area, in which people can move freely to study and carry out research and which will contribute both to improved opportunities for individuals, as well as an improved capacity to meet skills and competences needs. One of the actions proposed as a means of achieving this is a Council Recommendation on promoting the automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education qualifications and study periods within the EU. Subsequently, the European Council Conclusions of 14 December invited the Commission, Council and Member States to take forward this work in promoting cooperation on mutual recognition of qualifications by Spring 2018. This proposal will be published in May, as part of an education package of measures to develop the European Education Area.

Problem the initiative aims to tackle

Learning mobility fosters competences and experiences which are crucial for active participation in society and the labour market. However, the lack of mutual recognition of qualifications and study periods abroad is hampering mobility between EU Member States for the purposes of learning. To date, the only legal text in this area is the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC), of the Council of Europe and UNESCO, which has been in force for 20 years and has been ratified by 53 countries. The LRC covers both school leaving and higher education qualifications. Mutual recognition of higher education qualifications within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is also one of the fundamental goals of the Bologna Process and EHEA Ministers have committed to automatic recognition of comparable academic degrees. However, while implementation is monitored, tangible progress continues to be slow or non-existent.

Progress has been made at higher education level; one of the examples is the new Benelux Decision on automatic recognition between the three Member States signed on 25 January 2018. However, there is still inconsistency and a lack of transparency at EU level and beyond. One of the reasons for this is that decisions on recognition are often left to the discretion of the higher education institution, to which the student is applying, with varying institutional practices and a lack of uniformity in criteria.

Mutual recognition processes at secondary education level, both of school-leaving qualifications and study periods abroad, are underdeveloped. This is having a negative impact on mobility at Bachelor level, and also at secondary education level. Children of migrant workers may have difficulties accessing education in a new country of residence, also acting as a brake on labour mobility of their parents. Some Member States have opened access to higher education for holders of school-leaving qualifications in vocational education and training, which adds to the challenge of cross-border recognition of school leaving qualifications for access to higher education. If the future Erasmus+ programme aims to expand pupil mobility at secondary level, recognition issues will become even more important. However, the example of the agreement among the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) on automatic recognition on qualifications giving access to higher education shows that cooperation at secondary education level is feasible.

It is considered that, acting at EU level, Member States have the capacity and ambition to go further, and be more specific, in resolving the remaining challenges to full automatic recognition.

Basis for EU intervention (legal basis and subsidiarity check)

The initiative is in conformity with Articles 165 and 166 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). Article 165(2) calls for EU action to encourage the mobility of students and teachers, by encouraging the academic recognition of qualifications and periods of study. The initiative does not propose any extension of EU regulatory power or binding commitments on Member States.

The added value of action at EU level lies in the ability of the EU to:

- facilitate the exchange and sharing of expertise and knowledge between organisations in different countries to improve the consistency and transparency of recognition procedures; and
- develop initiatives that build on existing legal frameworks and agreements, but which are more ambitious and more targeted in resolving remaining challenges to full automatic recognition.

B. What does the initiative aim to achieve and how

The objective of the proposed Council Recommendation is to support Member States in putting in place procedures that will result in improved mobility by ensuring full automatic mutual recognition of qualifications and study periods within the EU. At secondary school level, this will include starting a cooperation process among Member States to achieve this.

Specifically, it is envisaged that the text will include commitments on clarifying the responsibilities for recognition of qualifications and of study periods abroad in higher and in school education; focusing on learning outcomes rather than formal checks; identifying and removing barriers to the automatic recognition of qualifications and study periods abroad; provision of consistent information to stakeholders; reduction of costs; mutual learning and exchange of best practice and other measures.

The proposal envisages a step-by-step approach to achieving full automatic recognition between Member States, which will provide support to Member States in sharing good practice and information, and in developing policies at both national and EU levels. As the commitments Member States will make are of a voluntary nature and each Member State decides the approach to take in working towards automatic recognition, the measure is considered proportionate.

C. Better regulation

Consultation of citizens and stakeholders

The Commission has organised a targeted consultation of Member States and stakeholders, consisting of both online surveys and consultative meetings. In addition, the Commission consulted the network of National Academic Recognition Centres (NARIC), which manage the implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention in the European Union, European Economic Area and Turkey, and the European Network of National Information Centres on academic recognition and mobility (ENIC), which includes all parties to the Lisbon Recognition Convention. Both consultations, which were carried out online, were/are to be followed by dedicated meetings: of the NARICs on 2 February, Directors General for Higher Education 20-21 February, Member States and stakeholders on 23 February, and Directors General for Schools on 12/13 March.

The outcomes of the consultations will be included in a staff working document accompanying the proposal.

Evidence base and data collection

In addition to the consultations, key evidence includes: [Bologna Implementation Report](#) (2015, and the upcoming 2018 report); report by Council of Europe and UNESCO on [monitoring the impact of the Lisbon Recognition Convention](#) (2016); report by the EHEA [Pathfinder Group on Automatic Recognition](#) (2015); surveys by the European Students' Union and the Erasmus Student Network (2013) report of a Commission seminar on the recognition of qualifications, involving Directorates General Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (EMPL), Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (GROW), Migration and Home Affairs (HOME), Health and Food Safety (SANTE) and Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (EAC) (2015); outcomes of a peer learning activity of Member States, which examined how qualification frameworks can support recognition of qualifications (2016); and a Commission study on [obstacles to the recognition of skills and qualifications](#) (May 2016).

This initiative is not accompanied by an impact assessment. As it is a Recommendation and the proposed activities are of a voluntary nature, impacts cannot be clearly identified ex-ante.

