



Recognition of
Prior Learning and
inclusion in the
light of increased
migration

Refugees' impact on Bologna reform



Swedish Council for
Higher Education



MALMÖ HÖGSKOLA



bologna
process



EUROPEAN
Higher Education Area



Erasmus+

Background to this conference

Recognition of prior learning has been a topic in the Bologna process since the ministerial meeting in Berlin 2003. "Ministers underline the important contribution of higher education in making lifelong learning a reality. They are taking steps to align their national policies to realise this goal and urge Higher Education Institutions and all concerned to enhance the possibilities for lifelong learning at higher education level including the recognition of prior learning. They emphasise that such action must be an integral part of higher education activity."

However, the Bologna Implementation Report from 2015 stated "...the recognition of non-formal and informal learning clearly remains an area where further action is needed. This applies to the recognition of prior learning as a basis for allocation of credits towards a qualification and/or exemption from some programme requirements and even more so to recognition of prior learning as basis for access to higher education programmes."

The commitments in the Yerevan Communiqué

Thus the ministers within the EHEA committed themselves in the Yerevan Communiqué in 2015:

- to remove obstacles to the recognition of prior learning for the purposes of providing access to higher education programmes and facilitating the award of qualifications on the basis of prior learning, as well as encouraging higher education institutions to improve their capacity to recognize prior learning;
- to review national qualifications frameworks, with a view to ensure that learning paths within the framework provide adequately for the recognition of prior learning (www.ehea.info).

The recommendations of the Council

Recognition of prior learning and lifelong learning is also a priority within the European Union. In December 2012 the Council of the European Union adopted a recommendation on validation of non-formal and informal learning. The recommendation states that the member states should:

1. have in place, no later than 2018 /.../ arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning which enable individuals to:

- have knowledge, skills and competences which have been acquired through non-formal and informal learning validated, including, where applicable, through open educational resources;
- obtain a full qualification, or, where applicable, part qualification, on the basis of validated non-formal and informal learning experiences /.../

2. include, as appropriate, the following elements in arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning /.../:

- Identification;
- Documentation;
- Assessment;
- Certification of the results of the assessment (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu>)

The current refugee situation

With about 1.3 million refugees coming to the EU in 2015 more than 50 % of which are in the age between 18 and 34 (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>), the issue of recognition of prior learning and alternative learning paths has become even more urgent. Many of the newly arrived are just about to start their post-secondary education or have studied at higher education institutions without being able to finalise their studies.

It is high time for action! This conference, arranged within the framework of the Bologna Working group 2 on Implementation, will therefore focus on RPL and opportunities for lifelong learning. The conference will offer opportunities for peer learning, within the EHEA, on procedures and methods for RPL. Special focus will be access and inclusion of newly arrived migrants in higher education. We aim to inspire and encourage HEIs and EHEA stakeholders to develop schemes for RPL and other initiatives. The outcome of the conference partly depends on your active contribution.

Anders Ahlstrand & Cecilia George
Conference coordinators
The Swedish Council for Higher Education



Ask questions to speakers and/or comment the conference using **#BolognaRPL**

Survey results

The survey responses regarding the conditions and challenges in working with Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) have been an asset in the planning of the conference, in particular the group discussions. The results confirm that there are challenges of a legal, economic, and procedural nature to overcome. The respondents also stressed the need for more cooperation and exchange of best practise, both nationally and internationally.

The majority of the participants indicated that there are regulations in place for RPL in their countries. However, if one excludes the Swedish responses (which constituted the majority of the responses), about 1/3 answered that there are no regulations in place and that formal documents are necessary.

Time, consistency, financing, ranking and language the biggest challenges

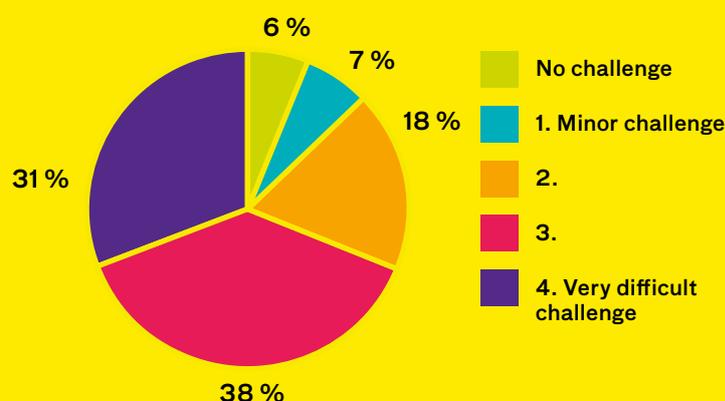
Some survey questions referred to the challenges of using RPL for access and credit transfer for both the general population and newly arrived migrants. The answers revealed that, besides language, the biggest challenges are the time-consuming process, difficulty in achieving consistency in evaluations and decisions, and financing the evaluation process. There were no substantial differences in the answers concerning RPL in general and RPL for newly arrived migrants.

The non-Swedish respondents also indicated that student ranking is a challenge. The Swedish respondents on the other hand answered more frequently than the non-Swedish that financing the process is a challenge. One comment that reflects a typical response on the survey is the following: “the admission process of refugees and the testing of the qualifications is a time consuming process and in order to consistently make the same decisions it requires lots of coordination on the part of the deans of study of individual fields of study for example.”

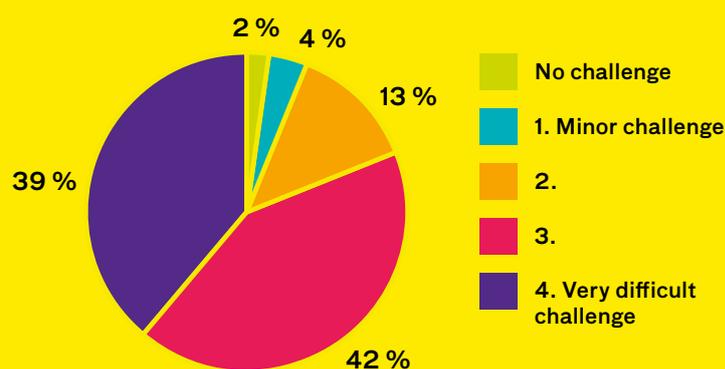
Wish for guidelines and exchange of experience

When asked what should be done at both national and international levels, the most common survey answer was that national guidelines should be developed. At the international level, the most common suggestion was that there should be more exchange of experience across borders. Others express the need for common guidelines. The answers indicate that the guidelines that already exist are insufficient or not very well known*. One respondent suggested that there should be a “subsidiary text of the Lisbon Recognition Convention on the use of RPL in recognition” while another respondent allowed himself to be visionary and suggested procedures that would support that “RPL decisions are accepted and recognized across the EHEA”.

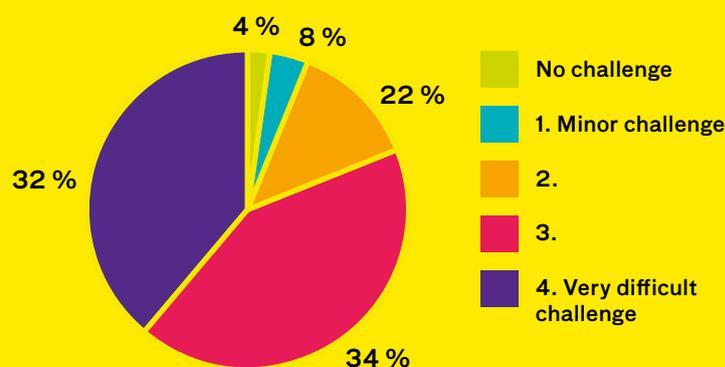
Consistency in evaluations and decisions as a challenge in working with RPL for access to Higher Education, for newly arrived migrants



Time consuming process as a challenge in working with RPL for access to Higher Education, for newly arrived migrants



Language as a challenge in working with RPL for access to Higher Education, for newly arrived migrants



* The EAR-manual:
<http://ear.enic-naric.net/emanual/>

European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning: www.cedefop.europa.eu

Programme

June 12

- 11:00** **Registration (until 12:30)**
- 11:30** **Lunch**
- 12:30** **Welcome**
Kerstin Tham, Vice-Chancellor, Malmö University
Ulf Melin, Director General, Swedish Council for higher Education
Tobias Smedberg, moderator
- 12:45** **Introduction to the conference theme**
- 12:55** **Setting the scene – Recognition of Prior Learning, inclusion and alternative study paths in the Bologna Implementation Report**
David Crosier, Higher Education Coordinator, Eurydice, EACEA
- 13:20** **The refugee situation – a Bologna reform stress test? European stakeholders view on the current situation and the future**
Michael Gaebel, Director, Higher Education Policy Unit, EUA
Blazhe Todorovski, Vice-President, ESU
Mette Mørk Andersen, Policy Officer, European Commission
Michal Karpíšek, Secretary General, EURASHE
- 14:40** **Coffee break**
- 15:10** **Policies for Recognition of Prior Learning**
- Resolution on admission to higher education for refugees in Germany, reform to recognise prior learning**
Miriam Wiederhold, Head of Section, Sekretariat der Kultusministerkonferenz, KMK, Germany
- The Swedish National strategy for validation**
Elin Landell, Director, The National Delegation for Validation, Sweden
- The EAR manual – Best practice according to the Lisbon Recognition Convention**
Kristina Sutkutė, Information and Assessment Officer, Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC), ENIC-NARIC Lithuania
- The French national system for Recognition of Prior Learning**
Eliane Kotler, Professor, Université Nice Sophia Antipolis, France
- 16:30** **Alternative routes into Higher Education for refugees – experiences of Kiron Open Higher Education**
Florian Rampelt, Director of Education, Kiron

- 16:50 My way into Swedish Higher Education**
Fiona Winders, former student Malmö University
Selma Music, former student, University of Borås and University of Gothenburg
- 17:20 End of day 1**
- 19:00 Conference dinner**
Restaurant Niagara, Malmö University

June 13

- 9:00 Global challenges and the importance of Recognition of Prior Learning and alternative study paths**
Pam Fredman, President of IAU, International Association of Universities and Rector of University of Gothenburg
- 9:20 What can Higher Education Institutions learn from the Vocational Education sector?**
Jens Bjornavold, Senior Expert, Cedefop
- 9:50 Coffee break**
- 10:20 Recognition of Prior Learning in practice – Four examples**
- Example from Malmö University**
Mia Andersson, Study and Career Adviser, Malmö University
- TestAS, a test for access to Higher Education**
Hanna Reuther, Director, Higher Education Policy Unit,
Goethe-University Frankfurt/Main
- The Scottish policy for RPL in practice**
Ruth Whittaker, Director of Academic Quality and Development,
Glasgow Caledonian University
- Toolkit for admission of refugees without documents**
Katrien Bardoel, Senior Policy Officer, Nuffic, The Netherlands
- 11:40 Group discussions**
- 13:00 Lessons learned – what is the next step forward?**
Cecilia Christersson, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Malmö University
Liva Vikmane, Vice-President, ESU
- 13:30 Wrap-up and Lunch**

Speakers



Blazhe Todorovski, Vice President of the European Students' Union. Blazhe's main working areas are connected with Quality of Higher Education, with the main focus on Quality Assurance of Higher Education.



Liva Vikmane, Vice President in ESU. Liva is working with public responsibility in higher education, focusing on governance and public funding, as well as internationalisation and mobility.



Cecilia Christersson, Pro vice-chancellor with responsibilities for global engagement and challenge based learning. She is chairing the national committee for refugee issues within SUHF.



Mette Mørk Andersen, Policy Officer in the European Commission in the field of higher education, more specifically on issues related to academic recognition, the Bologna Process and the social dimension.



David Crosier
David leads the work on higher education within Eurydice, the European Union's education information network, since 2008.



Mia Andersson, Master in Social Work. Mia is a Study and Career Guidance Counselor at Malmö University and specializes in assessment and recognition of prior learning.



Eliane Kotler, Professor at the Faculty of Arts of Nice. Eliane is involved in the preparation of the incoming Bologna ministry conference (Paris 2018) and member of the board at the Hcéres (French evaluation agency).



Michael Gaebel, Director of the Higher Education Policy Unit, focusing on higher education learning and teaching, including the Bologna Process, lifelong learning, e-learning and internationalisation.



Elin Landell, Head of the secretariat of The National Delegation for Validation. Elin is an economist with a background from policy work on structural adjustment and skills formation for several Ministries.



Michal Karpíšek, Secretary General of EURASHE, focusing on diversification of tertiary education, the mission of professional higher education, its partnership with the world of work and quality assurance.



Fiona Winders, Development coordinator for the City of Malmö. Fiona is a former chair of the city's culture committee and has recently worked with ground-breaking initiatives for inclusion in a Malmö community.



Miriam Wiederhold, Head of Section in the Central Office for Foreign Education in the Secretariat of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs in Germany.



Florian Rampelt, Director of Education at Kiron. Florian leads the joint R&D project INTEGRAL² that tests digital education with a focus on access to higher education for refugees.



Pam Fredman, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Gothenburg, Professor of Neurochemistry. Pam has held several leading positions and is currently the head of the University.



Hanna Reuther, Dipl.-Psych., MBA and director at the International Office of Goethe University. In Summer 2015 she initiated the "Academic Welcome Program for highly qualified refugees" at Goethe University.



Ruth Whitaker, Director of Academic Quality and Development at Glasgow Caledonian University. Ruth's role includes leading and engaging in policy and strategy development and implementation.



Katrien Bardoel, Senior policy officer at the International Recognition Department of Nuffic. Katrien is responsible for European projects on recognition of foreign qualifications within the EHEA.



Selma Music, Master in educational work, lecturer of faculty of librarianship info, education and IT including the Swedish school of library and information science.



Kristina Sutkute, Information and assessment officer at the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (Lithuania). Kristina has participated in the development of many international tools.



Ulf Melin Director General of the Swedish Council for Higher Education. Former Director General of the International Programme Office for Education and Training and The Committee on Educations of the Swedish Parliament.

Academic recognition Approval of courses, qualifications, or diplomas from one (domestic or foreign) higher education institution by another for the purpose of student admission to further studies.

Access Certain qualifications convey the holder with the right to access specific qualifications/courses/programmes at a particular education level within the education system in which the qualification was taken. For instance a first cycle degree usually provides access to second cycle studies.

Background Paper (refugees) In cases where refugees, persons in a refugee-like situation or others for good reason cannot document the qualifications they claim, competent recognition authorities are encouraged to create and use a "background paper" giving an overview of the qualifications or periods of study claimed with all available documents and supporting evidence.

The Bologna Process The Bologna Process launched with the Bologna Declaration, of 1999, is meant to ensure more comparable, compatible, coherent and attractive systems of higher education in Europe. Implemented in 48 states, which define the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)

Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) The executive structure supporting the Bologna Process in-between the Ministerial Conferences.

Competence The ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development. Some competences are subject-area related (specific to a field of study), others are generic (common to any degree course).

EAR-manual Best practice based on the Lisbon Recognition Convention. It aims to provide guidance and clarity on recognition practices across Europe and beyond.

EHEA The European Higher Education Area. See The Bologna Process.

European Qualifications Framework (EQF) A translation device to make national qualifications more readable across Europe, promoting mobility between countries and facilitating their lifelong learning. The NQF of a country relates to the EQF.

Flexible learning paths A flexible learning path refers to any situation in which the graduate has obtained a qualification in a way that is not the standard learning path followed by the mainstream student. The flexibility of the learning path may be:

- access and admission to the programme not based on the standard requirements in terms of entrance qualifications
- exemptions of part of the programme based on a previous obtained qualification or period of study;

- exemptions of part of the programme, or the whole programme, based on non-formal or informal learning;
- credit transfer during the programme.
- distance learning.

Learning outcome Statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand and be able to do after successful completion of a process of learning.

Life-long learning All learning activity undertaken throughout life, which results in improving knowledge, knowhow, skills, competences and/or qualifications.

Lisbon Recognition Convention The key legal instrument for recognition of qualifications across UNESCO's Europe and North America Region. It aims to ensure that holders of a qualification from a signatory country can have that qualification recognised in another.

National Qualifications Framework (NQF) An instrument for the development and classification of qualifications (e.g. at national or sectoral level) according to a set of criteria (e.g. using descriptors) applicable to specified levels of learning outcomes. See EQF.

Non-traditional learning Non-traditional learning encompasses all skills, knowledge and competences acquired outside the traditional classroom setting, through other types of learning activities in a non-formal context and may lead to a set of relevant learning outcomes comparable to learning outcomes achieved the traditional way. It may be considered the overarching term for various forms of learning including informal and non-formal learning.

Qualification Any degree, diploma or other certificate issued by a competent authority attesting the successful completion of a recognised programme of study.

Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) The QF – EHEA is an overarching framework for qualifications in the European higher education area, comprising three cycles, generic descriptors for each cycle (Dublin Descriptors) based on learning outcomes and competences, and credit ranges in the first and second cycles. QF EHEA is also known as the Bologna Qualifications Framework.

Recognition of Prior Learning The validation of learning outcomes, whether from formal education or non-formal or informal learning, acquired before requesting validation.

Transfer of credits The process of having credits awarded in one context (programme, institution) recognised in another formal context for the purpose of obtaining a qualification.

Workload Indication of the time students typically need to complete all learning activities (such as lectures, seminars, projects, practical work, self-study and examinations) required to achieve the expected learning outcomes.

The Swedish Council for Higher Education is a government agency tasked with providing support to the education sector through a number of various activities. The council is located in Stockholm and Visby.

UHR's activities include:

- coordinating admission to higher education,
- providing information and support to those interested in studying at the higher education level,
- producing the Swedish Scholastic Aptitude Test (Högskoleprovet),
- widening participation and preventing discrimination in higher education,
- recognising and evaluating foreign educational qualifications,
- facilitating international exchanges,
- managing and developing IT systems.

www.uhr.se/en



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