

Bridging the Gaps: Rethinking Recognition to Ensure Equal Opportunities for Refugees

Date and time: 3 December 2024, 09:00 – 16:00

Place: Norway House / Maison de la Norvège, [Rue Archimède 17, Brussels](#)

Concept note

Today, there are more than 120 million refugees and forcibly displaced persons in the world. According to the [UNHCR](#), only 7 per cent of refugees have access to higher education, far below the global average higher education enrolment at 42 per cent. At the same time, the number of refugees in Europe stands at 22.5 million. Many of them have qualifications and skills that can be put into use in host countries if assessed by competent recognition authorities such as ENIC-NARIC centres.

Through the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC), the European countries have committed to develop procedures for assessing refugees' qualifications, even when documentation is lacking. But how should higher education institutions and ENIC-NARIC centres go about to assess and recognize the qualifications of refugees' who are not able to provide documentation of their studies?

The [2019 LRC monitoring report](#) showed that 70 per cent of European countries did not have any formal procedures in place for recognition of refugees' qualifications. The [2022 monitoring report](#) reaffirmed that many countries are lagging behind with implementing procedures, despite the development of tools and initiatives, such as Erasmus+ projects [Toolkit](#), [REACT](#) and [ARENA](#).

Building on these, [EQUAL](#) has addressed the legal, procedural and technical barriers preventing refugees from admission to higher education or from finding work because they are unable to document their qualifications. The project has supported NARIC centres in establishing sustainable recognition procedures that align with national legislation and admission practices at higher education institutions.

Through the dissemination of the results of the project, this conference aims to engage higher education stakeholders in a broader discussion on how to improve refugees' access to further studies and work through the fair recognition of their qualifications, and how the results from EQUAL can be scaled up at national and international level.

Draft agenda (v. 09/10/2024)

Start	End	Activity	Who
09:00	09:30	Coffee and registration	
09:30	09:35	Welcome and practicalities	Dag Hovdhaugen , Executive Director, HK-dir Moderator: Andreas Snildal , Policy Director, HK-dir
09:35	09:50	Introduction to the EQUAL project	Helén Sophie Haugen , Head of Department, HK-dir
09:50	10:10	Keynote 1: Effects of improving recognition and validation of skills and qualifications of refugees and displaced persons in Europe	Thomas Liebig , Senior Administrator, International Migration Division, OECD
10:10	10:30	Keynote 2: Recognition of refugees' qualifications from a global and African perspective	Peter J. Wells , Head of Education at UNESCO Regional Office for Southern Africa
10:30	10:40	Q&A	
10:40	11:00	Coffee break	
11:00	11:10	Launch of EQUAL e-learning course	Florian Gorqaj & Kjersti Jensen , Senior Advisors, HK-dir
11:10	12:00	Development of new policies and assessment procedures for recognition of qualifications held by refugees missing documentation.	Aurelija Valeikiene , Deputy Director, SKVC (Lithuanian ENIC-NARIC) Hanna Reczulska Director of Department, NAWA (Polish ENIC-NARIC) Gianina Chirazi , Director, CNRED (Romanian ENIC-NARIC)
12:00	13:00	Lunch	
13:00	13:30	Sharing of best practice from higher education institutions	Prof. Maria Drakaki , Director of the Institute for the Management of Refugee Flows and



			<p>Crises, International Hellenic University, Greece</p> <p>Adriana Bortolotti, Manager of International students admission unit, University of Brescia, Italy</p> <p>Ceren Genç, Team Leader for International Student Admissions, Utrecht University, the Netherlands</p>
13:30	14:00	<p>Perspectives from stakeholder organizations in higher education.</p> <p>2 presentations (15 min.)</p>	<p>Helen Peterbauer, Policy Analyst, European Universities Association</p> <p>Iris Kimizoglu, President, European Students Union</p>
14:00	14:20	Coffee break	
14:20	14:50	<p>The way forward – which mechanisms, projects and tools are available for supporting recognition of refugees' qualifications in Europe, and what is needed to improve the implementation of Article VII of the Lisbon Recognition Convention?</p> <p>2 presentations (15 min.)</p>	<p>Villano Qiriaz, Head of the Education Department, Council of Europe</p> <p>Chiara Finocchietti, President of ENIC Bureau</p>
14:50	15:20	Panel discussion. How to maintain and develop knowledge and practice?	Panel: Peterbauer, Kimizoglu, Qiriaz and Finocchietti
15:20	15:45	Mini workshop	Group work
15:45	16:00	Plenary discussion and concluding remarks	