

Policy update on trends in development of quality assurance and its use in recognition policy

Professor Dr. Mile Dželalija
University of Split and Agency for Science and Higher Education

ERI SEE Seminar on removing obstacles to recognition of qualifications

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Modern Quality Assurance (QA)

- **Internal QA:**
 - On-going activity
 - Integration into regular processes
 - Self-evaluation
- **External QA:**
 - Periodic / cyclical
 - Expert / Peer-review assessment
 - Ensuring that the internal system works well
 - Strengthening of education system
- Inspection → Assessment (and Inspection)
- Quantitative → Qualitative (and Quantitative)
- Control → Support (and Control))

Qualifications Frameworks in support to QA

- Without qualifications frameworks, it is hardly possible even to **understand** qualifications systems in many countries (*“jungle of qualifications”*)
- Without understanding of qualifications systems, it is not possible to implement an effective **quality assurance** system
- Without an effective quality assurance system, there is no mutual **trust**
- Without trust, how to expect positive (assessment and) **recognition** of foreign qualifications

Qualifications Frameworks in support to QA

- **Evidence-based trust** between stakeholders (nationally and internationally) – a key element for Quality Assurance (QA)
- QA is more than “*procedures and technical approach to validation, accreditation, assessment, etc.*”
- QA encompasses the **culture of QA**, management and involvement of key stakeholders
- Key challenges are in – **understanding** and **implementation** – needed minimal number of understandable concepts → **learning outcomes**

QFs → Learning outcomes → QA

→ Trust

EQF and QF-EHEA

- **Referencing reports → EQF (& QF-EHEA)**
 - EQF criteria
 - Including Annex III
 - QF-EHEA criteria and procedures

- **Self-certification reports → QF-EHEA**
 - QF-EHEA criteria and procedures
 - Including ESG



Irish Presidency on QA in QFs, Dublin, March 2013:

1. We encourage the Commission, the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) Advisory Group and the Bologna Follow Up Group (BFUG) to look at ways of facilitating greater dialogue between the main actors in Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Higher Education (HE) on the topic of quality assurance and qualifications frameworks. **The EQF Advisory Group and the BFUG working group** on structural reforms, in cooperation with **ENQA and EQAVET**, should review and make proposals to strengthen the common principles of quality assurance to be applied across HE and VET, such as found in Annexe 3 to the EQF Recommendation.
2. Providers in the **VET and HE** sectors and their respective public authorities are urged to make their quality assurance arrangements mutually intelligible, **to share good practices across sectors and to learn** about each other's approaches to **implementing learning outcomes**.

3-11. Etc.

EQF aims

- Mobility of citizens
- To develop a framework for the recognition of qualifications, building on the achievements of the Bologna process and promoting similar action in the area of VET
- Reference to the EQF level will not affect access to the LM where professional qualifications have been recognised in accordance with Directive 2005/36/EC
- Further integration of the EU labour market
- Improve citizens' mobility and facilitate the recognition of learning outcomes
- Etc.

Specificities of the QF-EHEA

(compared to the EQF)*

- Focused only to higher education
- Additional countries involved
- Dublin descriptors – additional elements comparing to the EQF level descriptors – credit ranges
- Usage of Dublin descriptors (qualifications and/or part)
- **Quality assurance** – additional elements comparing to the Annex III of the EQF – ESG, EQAR, internationalisation, etc.
- System for Validation of non-formal and informal learning in HE – it is not clear within the QF-EHEA criteria and procedures
- **Recognition of foreign qualifications** – explicitly written interests in the QF-EHEA
- Etc.

QF-EHEA

- The **rationale** of the QF-EHEA is to provide a mechanism to relate NQFs (for HE) to each other in order to enable:
 - **International transparency** – this is the key element – ensure that qualifications can be easily read and compared
 - **International recognition of qualifications** – common understanding of the outcomes represented by qualifications (for the purpose of employment and access to continuing education)
 - **International mobility** – study abroad, joint degrees, etc.
 - Etc.

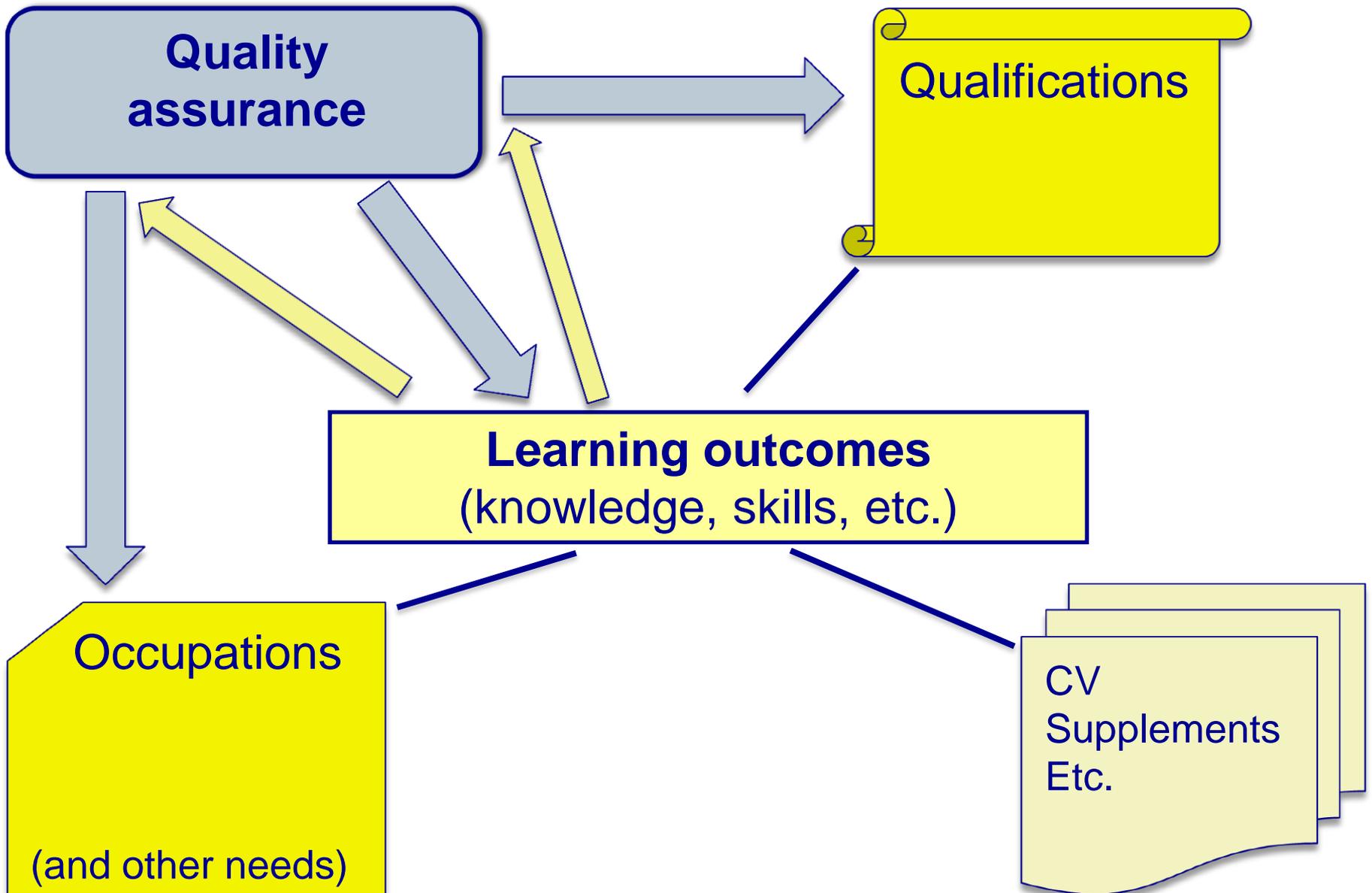
Quality assurance should include

- Clear and measurable objectives and standards
- Guidelines (including stakeholder involvement)
- Appropriate resources
- Evaluation methods, self-assessment and external review
- Feedback mechanism and improvement
- Widely accessible evaluation results

Quality Assurance principles

- Underpin all levels
- Integral part of awarding institutions
- Initial and regular evaluation of institutions, programmes or internal QA (by external QA body)
- External QA body – should be regularly reviewed
- QA includes context, input, process and output dimensions, with emphasis to
 - **Learning outcomes** (and evidence) (← here QFs give support)

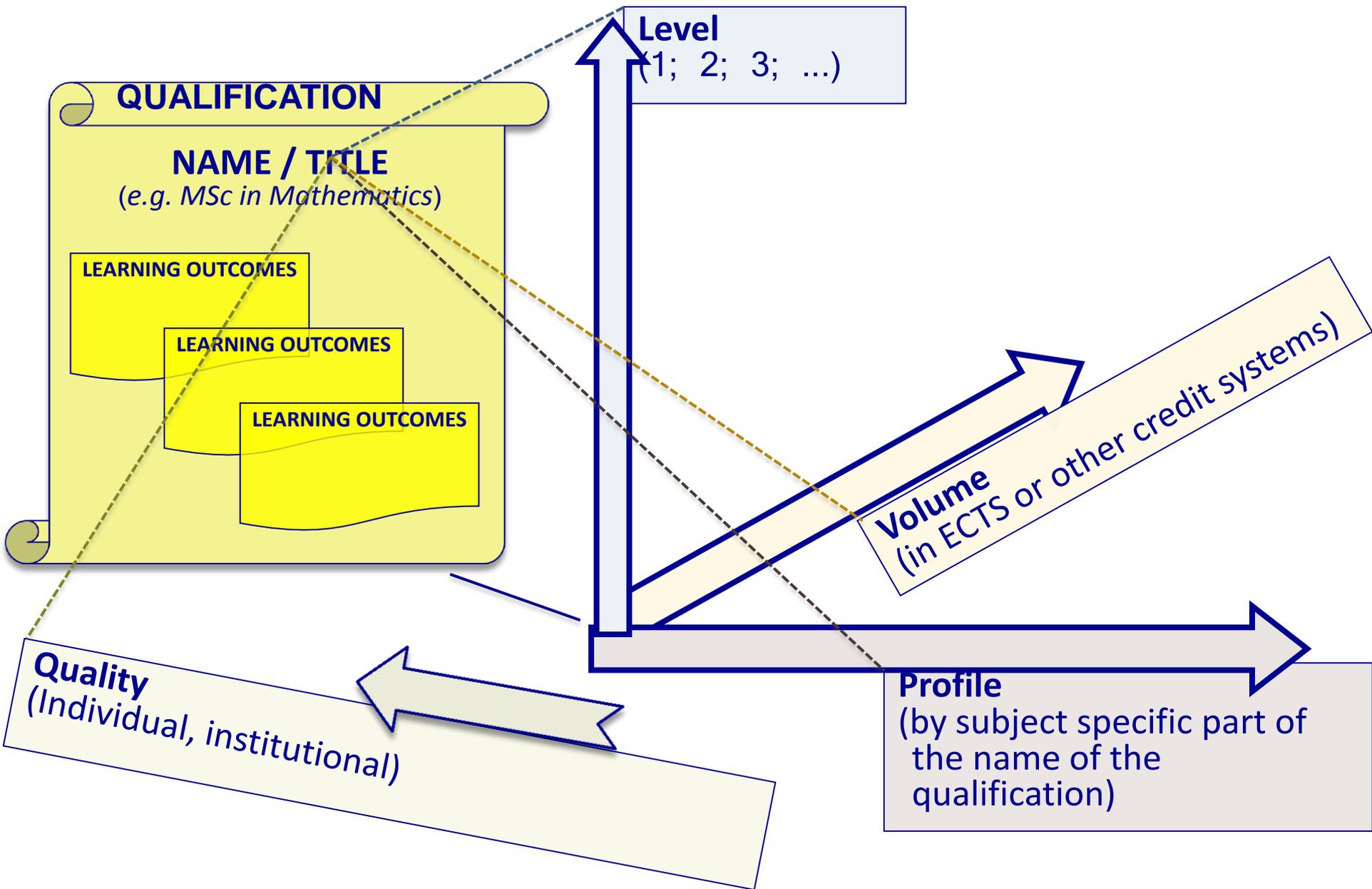
Learning outcomes in use to support QA



Criteria and Procedures for the assessment of foreign qualifications

- Within the Lisbon Recognition Convention
- Procedures and criteria for the assessment of foreign qualifications – transparent, coherent, reliable
- If not fully recognised – alternative or partial recognition should be considered, where possible
- Translation – limited to key documents; title in origin
- Assessment criteria:
 - Status of the institution and/or programme
 - Assessment of individual qualifications – use past practice
 - Use NQFs, EQF, QF-EHEA, etc., similar qualifications
 - **Level** is not the only characteristic – (**profile, volume, quality, learning outcomes**)
 - What is the similar qualifications in the country
 - Old qualifications – similar procedure, experience to take
- Etc.

Recognition of qualifications ?



Using transparency tools and instruments – QFs

- ENIC Network should develop a common understanding on how to use NQF, EQF, QF-EHEA or other overarching QFs for the purpose of facilitating the fair recognition of qualifications and should identify the opportunities and challenges they present
 - NQFs and overarching QFs should be used to make it easier for competent recognition authorities to assess foreign qualifications
 - QFs should be used while considering 5 key elements in recognition (i.e., components and characteristics):
 - **Learning outcomes**
 - **Level**
 - **Volume** (workload)
 - **Profile** (QFs provide limited information on profile)
 - **Quality** (individual and institutional)

CoE/UNESCO: NQF and Recognition

- **Learning outcomes:**
 - Description of LO in Diploma supplement or other documents is useful for recognition purposes (**assessment?**)
- **Level:**
 - If a NQF has been self-certified or referenced, there is, as a general rule, no need for the competent recognition authority to investigate the level of qualifications further (**is there?**)
 - In the case that qualifications have been referenced/self-certified towards the same level in overarching QFs, they should be seen as broadly compatible (**Not clear**)
- **Quality:**
 - If a NQF has been self-certified or referenced, there is an assumption that the individual qualifications in the NQF by the competent authority are quality assured. Therefore as a general rule there is no need for the recognition authority to investigate the quality of the qualification (**is it?**)
- **Workload:**
 - normally expressed in ECTS or other credits

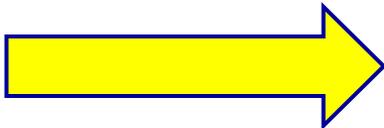
Using QFs in recognition of foreign qualifications

- QFs are important information and transparency instruments in the recognition process
 - QFs can be used to facilitate access to the labour market
 - NQFs facilitate recognition especially when they have been linked in a transparent and comparative way – through self-certification and referencing – to QF-EHEA and EQF
 - NQF alone does not lead to “*automatic recognition*”, the classification of qualifications within the NQF and their relation to overarching QFs gives important information to facilitate the recognition processes
 - Etc.
- **Quality of NQFs ?**

Self-certification: Criteria and procedures

Fulfilment of QF-EHEA (more than simple technical fulfilment)
(*and EQF (10 criteria)*):

- **Criteria (7)**, and
- **Procedures (6)**



Mutual trust

Quality assurance in NQFs (practice in Europe)

- Most reports described, but not focused to standards and functions of bodies, and some countries without evidences for the statements about QA
- Most countries express link to ESG
- Most of countries have a national agency for quality assurance
 - ENQA members, but not all countries
 - (Not all) Registered in EQAR (21 countries; 18 with self-certification)
- Some countries use agencies from other countries
- There are examples of non-transparency of titles
- Etc.

Findings – in general (practice in Europe)

- There are evidence on fulfilment of most of QF-EHEA criteria and procedures represented by all countries, within the self-certification reports (e.g., C-1,P-1)
- There are no evidence on fulfilment of some of criteria and procedures in some reports (e.g., C-3)
- There are different understanding of some criteria and procedures (C-4,5)
- Some of criteria and procedures in most of reports are written as – “... *will be done after the acceptance of this report* ...” (e.g., C-6,7; P-4,5,6)
- In some reports, there are evidence on **non**-fulfilment of some criteria and procedures (C-2,5)
- Not all NQF-HEs have been developed by following 11 steps proposed within the QF-EHEA
- Etc.

→ **Not fully transparent**

Needs for improvement

- Concepts and terms (learning outcomes, qualifications, etc.)
 - Development and implementation of learning outcomes and credit system(s)
 - Development and implementation of Quality assurance system (standards, body and their functions, guidelines)
 - Levelling of qualifications and transparency of titles
 - Understanding and implementation of the system for VNFIL
 - Fail to discuss the linkages between different self-certification criteria and procedures (descriptors; LO; levelling; QA). For example, how QA supports the shift to LO, descriptors, credits, and levelling of qualifications
 - Development and implementation of the system for Recognition of foreign qualifications (use of NQFs, self-certification and referencing)
 - Etc.
- Peer Learning Activities, joint projects, etc.**

Discussion; Questions and answers



Thank you!

mdzelalija@gmail.com

mile@pmfst.hr

Criteria for fast-track recognition vs standard recognition procedures

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Recognition of foreign qualifications?

- The meaning of the recognition?
 - What is the outcome of the recognition of a foreign qualification?
 - Does this process make basic characteristics of a qualification **understandable** to all key users?
 - If yes, which characteristics we “*translate*” to local?
 - Level?
 - Volume?
 - Profile?
 - Type of the qualification?
 - Title (generic part, subject specific part)?
 - Quality?
 - How? What? Etc.?

Automatic recognition

- What are characteristics of “automatic recognition”?
 - Result of the process known in advance for all users?
 - Criteria are clear and known?
 - Data-base of inputs (foreign qualifications) and results (status of the recognition) visible/known to all users?
 - Procedure?
- What does mean recognition?
 - Procedure?
 - Which characteristics we “translate” to local?
 - Level?
 - Volume?
 - Profile?
 - Quality? – How? What? Etc?

Automatic recognition

- Automatic – is it a “*fast-track*” process?

Automatic recognition in practice

- Countries are afraid to accept it
 - But: automatic recognition exists – for
 - Nurses, midwives, doctors, dental, pharmacists, architects and veterinary surgeons.
- Also, in some cases for general systems: teachers, translators, etc.
- Knowledge of languages and professional academic titles
- Regional cooperations (Benelux, Nordic and Baltic; Germany-speaking; etc.)
- Level 6 and 7 (EQF); The first and second cycles
 - Issues (ECTS; QA; NQFs; ESG, EQAR, etc.)

What are benefits of automatic recognition?

- Students
- Foreign HEIs
- National HEIs
- Stakeholders (labour market, etc.)

Discussion; Questions and answers



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