



**Event:** HERE Seminar *“Recognition: Implications for cross-border access to higher education and mobility”*

**Dates:** 10 - 11 June 2019

**Place:** Technical University of Moldova, Chisinau, Moldova

**Participants:** National Higher Education Reform Experts from the Partner Countries, representatives of the NEOs, leading EU Universities, EU and Partner Countries experts in higher education.

**Ukrainian participants:**

1. Vadym Zakharchenko, Vice-Rector on Research and Pedagogical Work, National University “Odessa Maritime Academy”, HERE-Ukraine team member;
2. Veronika Tkachenko, National Erasmus+ Office in Ukraine

Programmes and materials are available at: <https://supporthere.org/moldova2019>

## Description and main information

### Workshop goal

The workshop was devoted to the issue of recognition, the relevance of which has grown substantially over the recent years, since a learning mobility in the European Higher Education Area is a guarantee of professional mobility and economic growth.

In fact, the seminar at the Technical University of Moldova was the first event for the National Higher Education Reform Experts (HERE), which offered a comprehensive consideration of the recognition in all its aspects.

The workshop was designed for participants with an initial level of understanding of the topic as well as for participants who already have experience in recognition mechanisms.

The purpose of the workshop was to consider various aspects of recognition, in particular: recognition of qualifications, including discussion of examples, cases and challenges.

### Workshop programme

The workshop was attended by 54 experts from 19 countries.

The workshop programme included 6 plenary sessions and 3 parallel sessions for two thematic working groups each.

The plenary sessions addressed the following issues:

- Review of regional conventions on recognition and future global convention;
- automatic recognition of academic qualifications - experience in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA);
- recognition of professional qualifications;
- Recognition of ECTS credits earned during periods of study abroad;
- student vision of the issue of recognition;
- recognition of prior learning outcomes: digital approaches and new types of confirmations new types of credentials.

The review of regional recognition conventions provided an analysis of the status of implementation of existing regional conventions, in particular the Lisbon Convention (approved in 1999), the Convention for

Asia and the Pacific (2018), the Convention for the African Countries (2014), the Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in the Arab Countries (1978), the Convention on Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (1974), the Recognition Convention for the Mediterranean (1993). The basic principles of recognition within these conventions were discussed by the participants.

It was noted that recognition should be based on a comparison of learning outcomes, but not on their full equivalence. Fair approaches in recognition are extremely important. It was also noted that fair recognition is not so much a matter of legal principles but more about inter-institutional culture and awareness, and it should be introduced as a university policy.

Within the framework of the session on automatic recognition, an overview of the basic principles of automatic recognition in the EHEA were presented and discussed, in particular: four models of automatic recognition. Also, the experience of automatic recognition process in Portugal was presented.

The issues of automatic recognition were discussed in two parallel working groups. In the group for participants with an initial level of understanding of recognition issues, the basic principles of automatic recognition were discussed. For participants who are already experienced in usage of recognition mechanisms, it was proposed to discuss them for further development and improvement.

Within the framework of the session on recognition of professional qualifications, the issues of legal basis for the recognition of professional qualifications were discussed. In particular, mutual agreements within the framework of free trade agreements, as well as the introduction of transnational competence-based training programmes. Also, the experience of the University of Southampton (United Kingdom) and the University of Ain Shams (Egypt) were presented.

Discussions of various recognition aspects of professional qualifications were continued in the parallel working groups.

The first group discussed the current needs and challenges in Partner Countries and their possible solutions.

The second group discussed the existing practices for recognition of professional qualifications in Partner Countries and in various fields. As part of this discussion, Prof. Vadym Zakharchenko presented the information on professional certification graduates of Ukrainian higher education institutions in the field of maritime navigation. The working group discussed the possible mechanisms for professional recognition of graduates. Also, challenges on recognition for graduates in those countries where the qualification level of a specialist has been removed in the higher education system.

During the session on credit recognition, the experience of the University of Ghent (Belgium) in recognition of credits obtained while studying abroad was presented. Particular attention was paid to the conversion of grades based on the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System. Also, within the framework of this session, the experience of the North Caucasus University (Russia) and Technical University of Moldova was presented and discussed.

Within the framework of the session devoted to student vision of the issue of recognition, the report of the representative of the Union of European Students was presented and discussed. The results of the study on recognition among 43 national student unions were presented. Particular attention was drawn to the existing barriers:

- *in terms of recognition of qualifications and credits*: excessive complexity and insufficient transparency of procedures, difficulty while recognizing credits obtained within mobility programmes;
- *in the part of automatic recognition*: inconsistent implementation of the Bologna instruments in the EHEA countries, lack of trust between EHEA countries, lack of education ministerial support;
- *in recognition of previous education outcomes*: lack of trust, limited information;
- *in terms of recognizing periods of mobility*: the possibility of non-recognition of credits, inflexible study programs.

Within the framework of the session on the recognition of the learning outcomes, the review of the provisions of the main EHEA documents, which should be the basis for the implementation of the principle of recognition of learning outcomes, in particular, the Lisbon Convention on Recognition, Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), ECTS User Guide, were discussed. It was noted that the main issues of recognition of previously obtained learning outcomes are as follows: how to measure the relevance (validity) of learning outcomes (experience) over a time period?; what minimum and maximum amount of credits can be recalculated?; how to ensure the equality of all applicants for recognition?; who should record recognized credits and within which organizational and legal structure?

The question of recognition of the previous training results was also communicated in two parallel working groups which worked directly after the session. The first group discussed the possible mechanisms for such recognition, and the second one communicated the issue of digital approaches and new types of confirmations new types of credentials.

In addition to participating in plenary sessions and discussions in working groups, the representatives of the Ukrainian delegation took part in informal discussions with the representatives of European higher education institutions and HERE teams (SPHERE).

The learning outcomes of the workshop are as follows:

1. Awareness of today's priorities and activities in the field of recognition of qualifications.
2. Understanding the place of recognition in the context of the national and institutional policies of internationalization.
3. Awareness of the needs of relevant personnel development at the system and institutional level.
4. Assessment and consideration of existing differences between the national regulations and international good practices for recognition in order to identify potential future technical assistance missions and other support measures for HERE team.

### **Conclusions and recommendations for Ukraine:**

1. The issue of recognition is multifaceted and includes the aspects such as recognition of academic and professional qualifications, recognition of academic qualifications in the labour market, recognition of credits and periods of study, recognition of the results of previous training, etc. Each of these aspects requires a particular attention and should be implemented at systematic and institutional levels.
2. At present, the principles and instruments of recognition developed in the EHEA have not been fully implemented. The urgent need for the higher education system in Ukraine is development of mechanisms and good practice of institutional recognition of qualifications, as well as recognition of credits and periods of study. A particular attention should be paid to the practice of assessment learning outcomes for recognition, in particular - to recognize the results of non-formal and informal learning.
3. Issues of academic staff training on issues of recognition, formation of institutional policy and recognition culture are relevant for Ukrainian higher education institutions.
4. It is beneficially important to disseminate the materials of the workshop among the HERE-Ukraine team members, the MESU Bologna Process Working Group in Ukraine, and also among institutions of higher education.

Vadym Zakharchenko

Veronika Tkachenko

