The Changing Role of NARICs (CHARONA)

Final Report

The Changing Role of NARICs (CHARONA)
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Foreword

International qualifications are a complex reality. Recognition of international qualifications is intended to ease the complexity by way of enhancing knowledge and facilitating understanding of qualifications from different systems. The importance of recognition of qualifications has become widely acknowledged and well documented in terms of both its critical role in supporting mobility and managed migration. To this end, the ENIC-NARICs, which came into being beginning from the early 1980s but which experienced accelerated development since the late 1990s with the adoption of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, have made significant contributions to the landscape of recognition of international educations.

Over the years the networks of over 50 national centres have built up extensive experiences in dealing with international qualifications and evolving processes and procedures; both of which played a key role in the formulation of recognition policies and their practical applications. It is fair to say that, in their formation and development, the ENIC-NARICs are, on the one hand, an integral part of major policy debates and, on the other hand, are practitioners testing and implementing recognition policies to which they contribute.

A constant companion that coupled the development of ENIC-NARICs was the changing environment of international education. The Bologna Process in the recent history of European development and the wider landscape of international education have moved qualifications to the centre stage of educational thinking and policy debates. The momentum of the Copenhagen Process and the on-going modernisation of the Directive for Professional Qualifications have broadened the territories of recognition practices, moving away from the traditional, academic qualifications centred practice to increasingly complex operations.

It was the multi-faceted functions of the national centres that called into question the role of the ENIC-NARICs.

This inquiry first came about in the early months of 2011 when the then ENIC Bureau and NARIC Advisory Board recognised the pressing need to reflect on the developed different approaches to and practices of qualifications recognition across the community. It was felt that such self-examination might help the Networks to clearly identify the evolution process and the contributory factors. It was also hoped that the study might advise on the future outlook of recognition.

It is this context that shaped CHARONA. In December 2012, initiated by UK NARIC, supported by the European Commission and the ENIC-NARIC networks, this research study set out an ambitious aim to undertake a critical view to reflect on the evolution of ENIC-NARICs in the last 15 years, and more importantly, to initiate thinking on their changing role.

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Executive Summary

The past fifteen years have seen many developments in the arena of education, qualifications and recognition; it was reasonable to assume that these changes had also affected the NARICs. Therefore the Changing Role of NARICs (CHARONA) has provided an opportunity to examine the roles of the ENIC-NARIC Centres, identify any changes and provide the Centres and Network with the scope to reflect on their achievements over the past decade as well as consider their future potential.

The NARIC Network was developed as an initiative of the European Commission in 1984 with the aim of improving the recognition of academic diplomas and periods of study across the EU, EEA and Turkey. The Centres are designated by their national governments and vary in terms of their structure, activities and responsibilities depending upon their national context. They share core objectives to ensure fair and transparent recognition of qualifications which in turn facilitates mobility for citizens across Europe.

Initial research into the internal developments and evolution of the Centres and Network, alongside the impact of external factors in the arena of qualifications and education, led the project team to identify six research themes. These are:

- The role and remit of the Centres
- Their scope of work
- The Bologna Process
- Qualifications frameworks
- The professional qualifications Directives
- Managed migration policies

In researching these themes, the role of the Centres was analysed with reference to the Joint ENIC/NARIC Charter of Activities and Services, drafted in 2004 to set out the baseline for the services and activities of the Centres and Network. Given that this Charter was developed a decade ago, and the changes that have occurred since then have been extensive, this project was a chance to review how the role of NARICs had changed in comparison to the intended role set out in the Charter. It was also an opportunity to consider whether, given the findings of the project, it might be necessary to make revisions to the Charter to better reflect the role and remit of NARICs as they are today.

The research found that there is a great degree of diversity among the Centres; it can be difficult to make a general statement about the role of Centres when some are newly-formed and still looking to develop their services and activities while others have been established for many years and are involved in many more activities than originally foreseen. Nevertheless, a number of trends emerged which highlighted a number of significant changes in the role of the Centres and the Network, and differences between current practice and the intended role as described in the Charter.

NARICs were originally established with the intention of assessing higher education and the requisite access qualifications; however, most now offer recognition of a much wider range of educational levels. The range of stakeholders that Centres interact with has also broadened to include professional and vocational sector bodies, policy groups and other organisations concerned with recruitment and training.

Many Centres have taken on additional roles alongside their work as NARICs, and as a result are engaged in other EU wide networks such as Europass, Euroguidance and EQF.

Many Centres have also become involved in policy development in relation to a range of issues including higher education, internationalisation, mobility and transparency. Nevertheless, more can still be done to better engage with global recognition networks and stakeholders in the Bologna Process, quality assurance, and migration policies.

The findings signal that the Centres and Network have evolved over the course of the past fifteen years, as well as indicating that there is under-explored potential for greater involvement in a range of activities. The findings signal that there is scope to exploit the capacity of the Centres and Network in order to make full use of their expertise in the area of qualifications and recognition.

These findings led the team to make a set of recommendations which the Network and the Centres may wish to explore further.

> ➢ Ensure clear positioning of the Network and Centres so that stakeholders are fully aware of their roles and remits and the expertise they have to offer

> ➢ Increase the global presence of the Centres and Network and build stronger cooperative relationships with other recognition networks and centres both within and outside the EU

> ➢ Increase the Centres' and the Networks' involvement in policy developments particularly in relation to NQFs, EQF, quality assurance and internationalisation

> ➢ Improve relationships and close cooperation with a range of stakeholders including higher education institutions, quality assurance agencies, the Bologna Follow-Up Group, the EQF Advisory Group, and Assistance Centres and Coordinators for professional recognition.

Given the difference in the intended remit as outlined by the Charter and the current role of the Centres, it is time to consider very seriously a revision of the Charter to better reflect the role of NARICs as they operate in today's complex environment.

Project Introduction

The Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC), adopted by national representatives in April 1997 and subsequently ratified by most member states of the Council of Europe[1], provided the background for the formation of the ENIC Network, firmly establishing recognition principles of higher education qualifications in Europe.

The Bologna Process (1999) and the **Copenhagen Process** (2002) included a number of additional tools and initiatives designed to facilitate transparency and recognition. These include:

- The introduction of the three-cycle structure in higher education
- Development of national qualification frameworks and their subsequent referencing to the overarching European Qualifications Framework (EQF)
- Development of the European credit transfer system for higher education (ECTS) and the European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET)
- Introduction of the Europass portfolio of documents
- Greater emphasis on the learning outcomes approach and student-centred learning

In the field of professional recognition, **Directive 2005/36/EC** has improved the system for recognition of professional qualifications for access to regulated professions, encouraging automatic recognition of professional qualifications and simplifying administrative procedures.

The considerable achievements of the past decades highlight a continued momentum and strong political message for countries to continue removing the barriers to recognition:

- The European Commission Higher Education Strategy (2013) emphasises the need for continuous improvement of recognition for academic purposes; it encourages the Member States "*to support fair and formal recognition for competences gained abroad for internationally mobile students, researchers and staff, including a better use of transparency and comparability tools and an increased focus on learning outcomes*"[2].

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[1] The full list of countries who ratified the convention
http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/ChercheSig.asp?NT=165&CM=8&CL=ENG
[2] http://ec.europa.eu/education/higher-education/doc/com499_en.pdf, P. 6

- The Bucharest Communiqué (2012) places fair academic and professional recognition at the core of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and commits the countries to *"remove outstanding obstacles hindering effective and proper recognition …and to review national legislation to comply with the Lisbon Recognition Convention".*[3]

- In the context of migration policy, the issue of recognition features explicitly in the EC's Communication on the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (2011)[4]. The Communication recognises the work already done in this direction. It encourages further exchange of practical information on the subjects of: recruitment; recognition of non-EU qualifications; skills matching; and labour market integration of migrant workers.

Furthermore, with the development of the EHEA it has become increasingly clear that recognition cannot be limited to technical discussions on admission requirements, authenticity of documents and comparing learning outcomes. The strong emphasis on recognition in the 2012 Bucharest Communiqué of the ministers of the EHEA demonstrates a strong political commitment to remove unfair obstacles to recognition. This provides a clear message that recognition is a high priority policy area and a precondition for establishing a fully-functional EHEA.

These initiatives have had a significant impact on the work of ENIC-NARICs.

This report aims to reflect a collective understanding and evaluation of the changing role of the individual recognition Centres, and the Networks as a whole. It is believed that both the Centres and the wider community would benefit from greater clarity and consistency in the way in which their role and potential are understood both within and outside the Networks, in particular informed by the developments and changes which have taken place during the past 15 years.

Approach of the CHARONA project

From February 2012 to February 2014 the project team, led by UK NARIC, supported by the NARICs from Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway and Poland, carried out extensive research and analytical work. The purpose of this process was to enhance and develop a collective understanding of the evolving role of ENIC-NARICs in the context of the changing international education arena. The research

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[3] http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/(1)/Bucharest%20Communique%202012(2).pdf
[4] http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/news/intro/docs/1_en_act_part1_v9.pdf

was necessitated by the demand for an in-depth understanding of the key developments in recognition of international credentials and the resulting change in the role of the ENIC-NARICs. The evolving role of the Centres was reviewed against several major themes impacting on international education in general, and recognition policy and practice in particular.

Project objectives

In view of the extensive reforms and developments which have been taking place with regards to education and qualifications in the European arena in the past ten to fifteen years, the main objective of the project has been to assess the key functions performed by NARIC Centres and the Networks in light of these developments, in order to highlight the impact they have had on the roles of the Centres and Networks.

Additionally, however, a primary aim has been the review of the changes that have been occurring in light of the role envisaged for Centres and the Networks in the Joint ENIC/NARIC Charter of Activities and Services[5] adopted in June 2004. Given that the Charter has now been in force for close to ten years, it is an apt time to review whether it continues to reflect the reality in which ENIC/NARICs operate. The project has aimed to give a clear view of the reality of the work undertaken by Centres, whether differences are a result of policy developments, or internal factors such as the expansion in the scope of work or the remits of Centres. It is the intention of this project to facilitate further discussion of how the role of the NARIC Centres and Networks should develop in the years to come; therefore, the project sought to offer recommendations for actions and activities, which can be used to facilitate constructive debate on the future role of the Centres and the Networks.

It is intended that the findings of this research study can be further used to inform the revision of the Joint ENIC/NARIC Charter, should the Advisory Board, Bureau, and Network members feel that the evidence collected by the research demonstrates the need to define the functions of the Networks.

The key target audience of this report is the NARIC Network and Centres, but the impact will be far reaching. The NARIC Network can hopefully benefit from greater clarity and consistency in the way in which their role is understood both within and outside of the Network. Furthermore, with its comprehensive research, the project supports the NARIC Advisory Board and the ENIC Bureau in their task of monitoring the implementation of the ENIC/NARIC Charter and evaluating the usefulness of the

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[5] http://www.enic-naric.net/documents/Charter.en.pdf

current document. It is envisaged, additionally, that the outcomes will, by extension, benefit recognition stakeholders in both the European Community and beyond.

Research methodology and design

While there are many national and international factors affecting recognition policy and practice, the project specifically investigated the following themes:

- Changing role and remit of the Centres/Networks
- Changing scope of work of the Centres/Networks
- The Bologna Process
- National and transnational qualifications frameworks
- Professional qualifications directives
- Managed migration / immigration policies

The identification of the research themes was based on consultations within the project team and the feedback received from the ENIC-NARIC Centres during the initial stage of the project. Subsequent research activities included:

- Desktop review of the collected literature and supporting documents;
- Analysis of the detailed national profiles of the six Centres within the project team;
- Case studies and interviews with the identified Centres;
- Two network surveys and one network consultation process, further referred to as "Survey I", "Survey II" and "Survey III". Survey I, designed for Heads of Centres, was undertaken in March 2012. It was intended to collect background information on the Centres, the core functions and scope of the Centres' work, and the processes and procedures employed by the Centres. Survey II, undertaken in October 2012 sought to investigate more specifically the Centres' stances on the research themes identified by the Project Team. Survey III was conducted beginning from May 2013, designed to capture the views and opinions of the Heads of Centres on the key areas for future development moving forward.

A detailed description of the research methodologies for each theme, supplemented by the research questions, surveys and questionnaires, can be found in **Annex II.**

This report provides an account of the research findings in four chapters:

- **Chapter One** analyses the *internal* environment capturing notable operational changes and developments that the Centres and the Networks have undergone in recent years;

- **Chapter Two** outlines major *external* factors impacting on the Centres and the Networks;

- **Chapter Three** provides an in-depth analysis of each of the identified research themes and the results of the research conducted by the Project Team;

- **Chapter Four** concludes the report by providing a summary of the findings and key recommendations for future action in an order of priorities identified by the Network and the Centres.

The findings of the CHARONA project could serve multiple purposes to a wide range of audiences involved in recognition of international qualifications, including:

- Leaders of ENIC-NARIC Centres and the relevant decision makers essential to recognition reforms and developments at national level;

- Members of the ENIC Bureau and the NARIC Board elected by the Centres to represent the shared interests of the Networks at wider European and international fora;

- International and national organisations in the field of international education and recognition including the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO.

Technical parameters and terminology

The definitions adopted for the purpose of this study follow the CEDEFOP Terminology of European Education and Training Policy[6] and Glossary of Terms compiled in the European Area of Recognition Manual[7].

Key terms and concepts required for full appreciation of the issues discussed in the report are included in Annex I.

Scope and limitations

Any attempt to capture and evaluate the development of ENIC-NARICs should start from the clear appreciation of the great diversity of the Centres; the extent of which originates from the variations in the national legislation of the countries in which the Centres operate as well as economic, demographic and social conditions. At the start of the Project it became apparent that whilst a great number of the Centres have extended beyond the scope of responsibilities defined by the Joint ENIC/NARIC Charter of Activities and Services developed in 2004, others remain as emerging national information points on recognition in their national settings. The apparent differences between the Centres makes it difficult, if not impossible, to draw generic conclusions or make recommendations which can be closely adhered to by the entire Network. Nevertheless, there exists sufficient evidence to capture the progress made by the majority of Centres, hence highlighting the scope and potential of the Networks.

Another important consideration is that there are clear distinctions between the activities of the individual Centres (at the national level) and activities of the ENIC-NARIC Networks as a whole. The research team made every attempt to factor in this distinction to the research process and evaluate the developments at both Centre- and Network-level. The research questions therefore addressed each theme from both angles; for example, in the context of the migration theme, the Heads of Centres were asked to express their opinion on:

      a) The engagement of their Centres with their national immigration authorities

      b) The engagement of the Networks in global immigration discussions.

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[6] http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4064_en.pdf
[7] http://www.eurorecognition.eu/emanual/glossary/glossary.aspx

As ENIC-NARICs operate in a complex and dynamic environment, it should be emphasised that the research themes investigated in this Project do not represent an exhaustive list of factors impacting on the Centres and the Networks. The surveys and consultations with the Centres have brought to light a number of development areas which, while falling outside of the scope of the current study, may serve as a foundation for future research activities.

Although every effort was invested into collecting primary data, not all of the Centres approached by the Project Team provided responses to the surveys. Therefore, the conclusions and recommendations of the report should not be read as fully representative of the entire Network. Table 1 below provides a summary of the response rates of the 55 Heads of Centres surveyed in the research process.

Table 1. Response rate to Survey I, II, and III

Research Action	Number of respondents	% of respondents
Network Survey I	31	56%
Network Survey II	23	42%
Network Consultation (Survey III)	29	*52%*

Due to the fact that the response rate to the surveys was not 100%, it should be noted that in the course of this report, when a percentage is given it refers to the percentage of those Centres which responded to the survey in question, unless otherwise stated. For example, where the report notes that "60% of Centres have taken on additional functions" this refers to 60% of those Centres which responded to the survey, rather than 60% of all the Centres in the Network.

CHAPTER I. Internal development and evolution of the Networks and the Centres

Introduction

Great diversity and continuous evolution are the key characteristics of ENIC-NARIC Centres and Networks. This can partly be attributed to the fact that the role and activities of the Centres and the Networks were very broadly defined in their initial mandates (the European Commission's Decision establishing the programme SOCRATES II for the NARIC Network and in the Terms of Reference for the ENIC Network). Following the external review of the Networks in 2002, the Joint ENIC-NARIC Charter of Activities and Services (The Charter) was formulated and subsequently adopted by the Committee of the LRC in 2004. It became the first milestone towards defining and summarising the minimum tasks and responsibilities of the Centres and the Networks. In addition, the Charter also outlined the target groups for the services and the minimum structural needs of an ENIC-NARIC in terms of political support, equipment, human resources and funding. In the ten years since the adoption of the Charter, the ENIC-NARIC Networks as a whole and many of the constituent Centres have evolved significantly. Drawing upon the findings of **Survey I**, this Chapter provides a snapshot of the current state-of-play of the Networks and the Centres and, where possible, identifies the evolution trends and the areas where major developments have occurred.

1.1 Internal growth

The ENIC-NARIC Networks include 55 member states spanning over four continents. Diagram 1.1.1 below illustrates that 42% of the Centres employ ten or more members of staff; 22.6 % of which exceed 20 employees.

Diagram 1.1.1

How many members of staff are employed by the Centre?

19.4 % (6)

19.4 % (6)

22.6 % (7)

12.9 % (4)

25.8 % (8)

- 1-2
- 3-5
- 6-9
- 10-19
- 20+
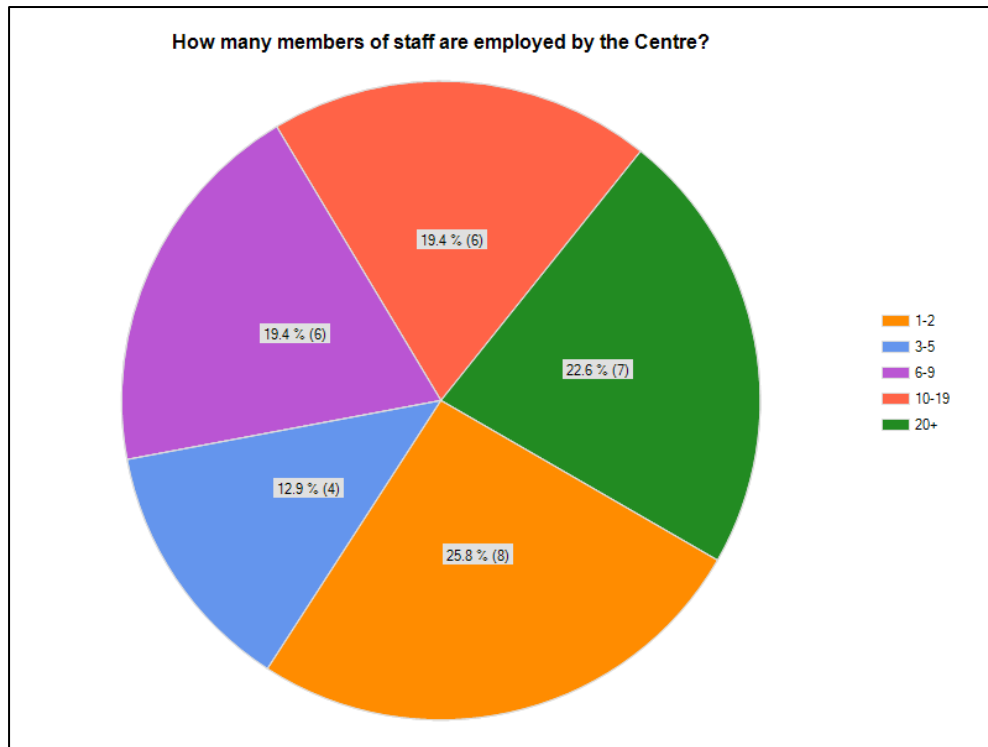
85.7% of the respondent Centres have implemented processes for recording and analysing internal statistical data (Diagram 1.1.2).

Diagram 1.1.2

Does the Centre have statistics on the number of processed enquiries?

85.7 %

14.3 %

- Yes
- No
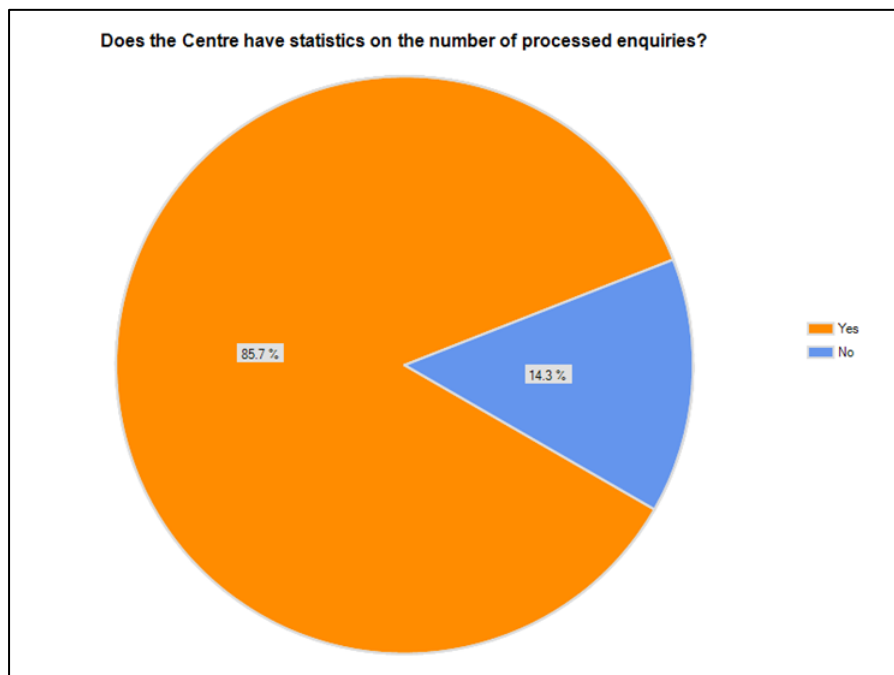
The larger number of staff employed by Centres can be largely attributed to two factors: additional roles and functions adopted by the Centres on one hand, and increasing academic and professional mobility on the other.

In the last five years enquiry numbers have been on the increase in 80.7% of the responding Centres, with 26.9% of which reporting significant growth of more than 50% in volume (Diagram 1.1.3).

Diagram 1.1.3
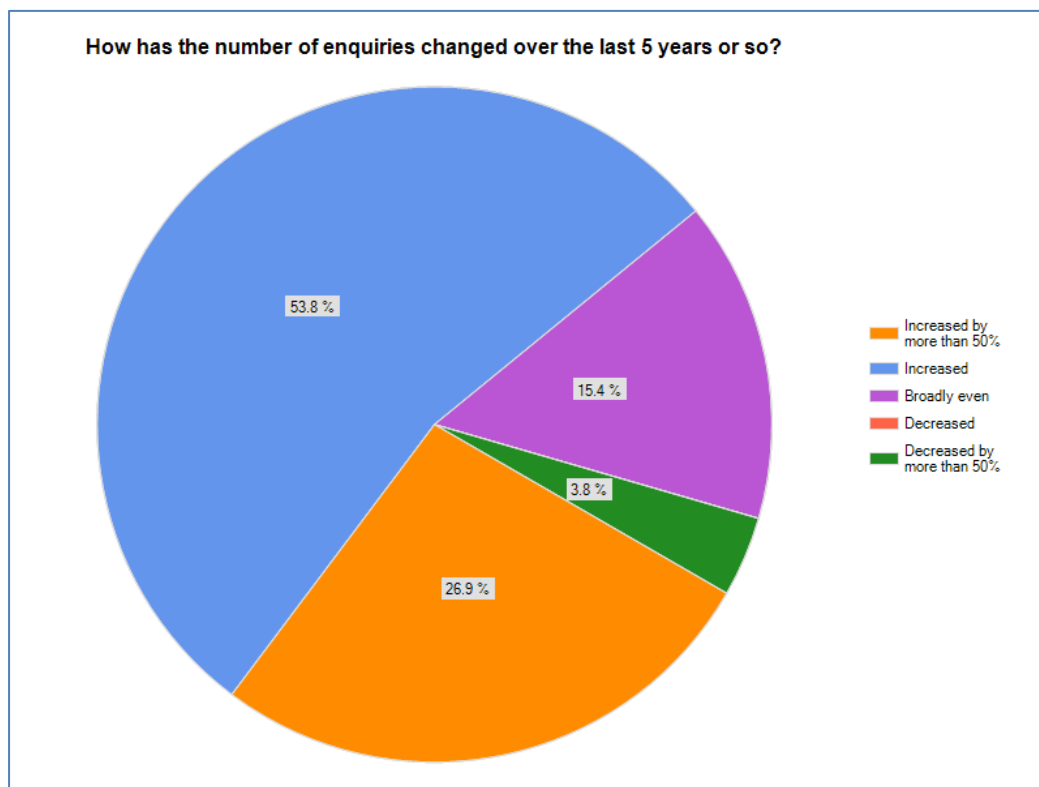
60% of Centres have either taken on additional functions or are housed within the same organisation with other related services, employing staff or working alongside staff responsible for   related functions (Diagram 1.1.4a). Diagram 4b illustrates that many of the newly adopted functions are directly linked to the European transparency tools and initiatives such as Europass, EQF, ECVET, and ReferNet (see also further observations in Chapter 3.1 *Changing Role and Remit of the Centres and the Networks)*

Diagram 1.1.4a

Are there any members of staff working on other functions housed within the same organisation?

40.0 %

60.0 %

Yes
No

Diagram 1.1.4b

What other services are housed within the same organisation as the Centre?

28.0 %
32.0 %
64.0 %
24.0 %
16.0 %
60.0 %

Europass
EQF Referencing Coordination
National Contact Point for professional qualifications
National Contact Point for ECVET
ReferNet
Other
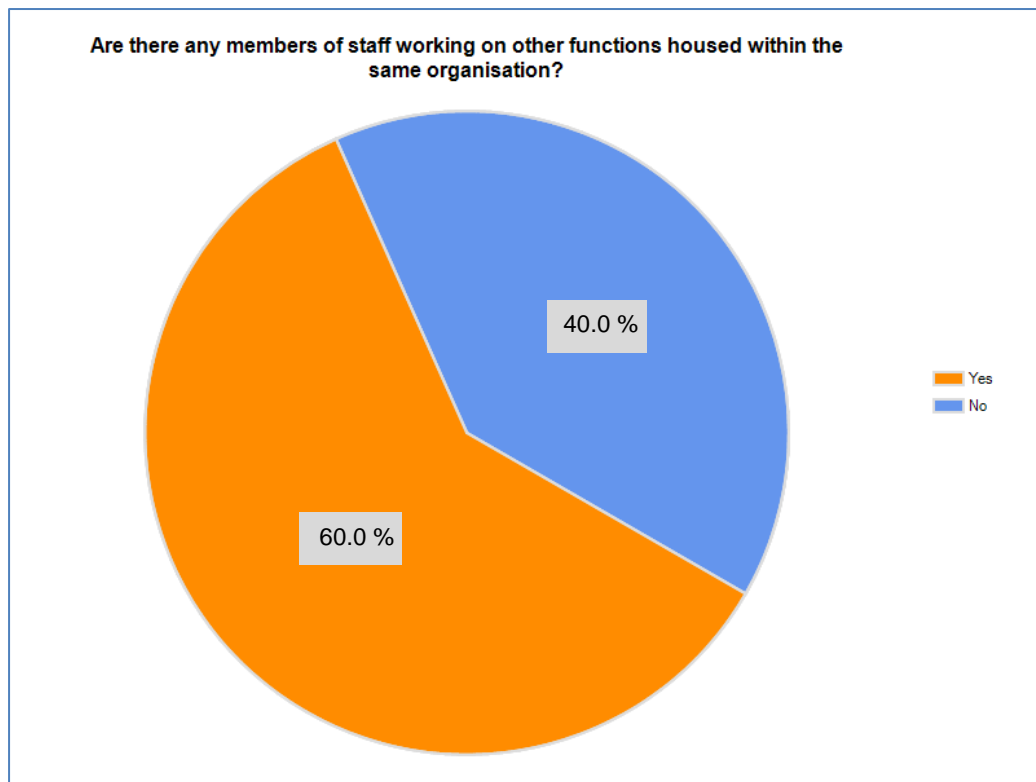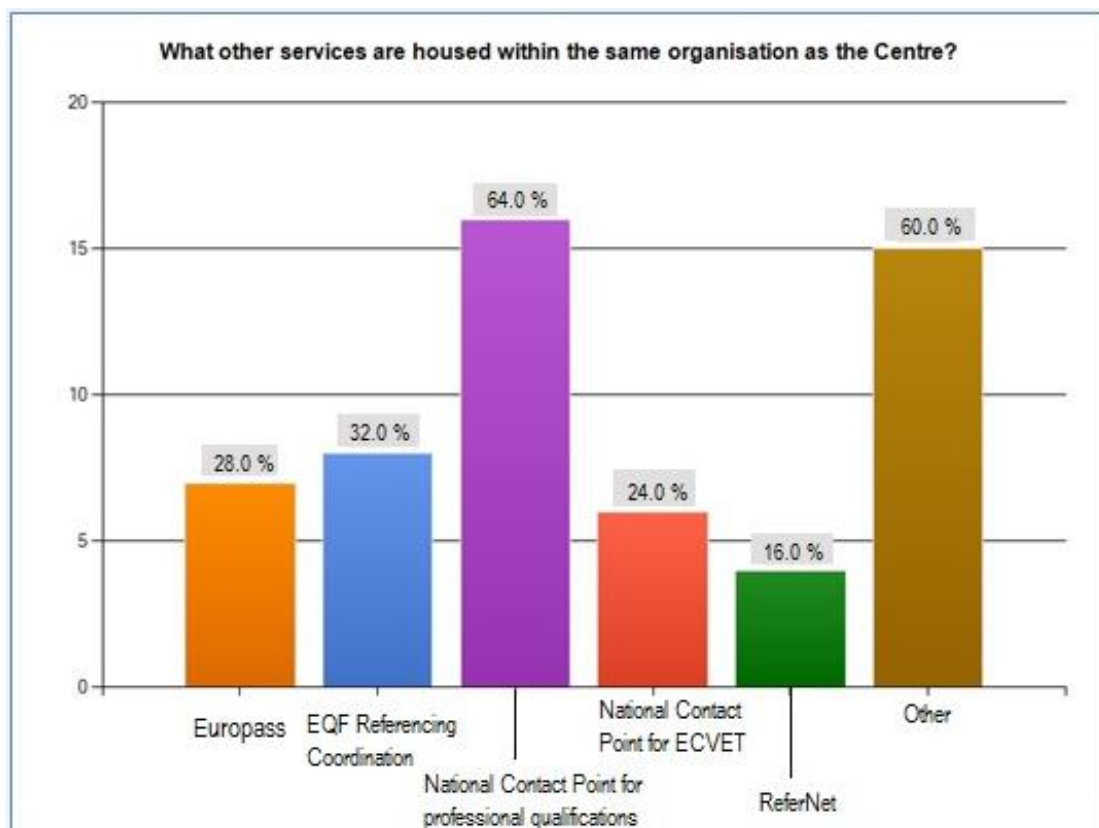
1.2 Models of operation

In 93.3% of the responding countries the function of ENIC-NARIC Centers form part of the public services (diagram 1.2.1a).

48.4% of the responding countries have amended their national legislation or adopted new laws governing qualifications recognition resulting in the establishment of the national recognition Centre (diagram 1.2.1b). In countries where no national regulations have been adopted, the Lisbon Recognition Convention is used as a primary legal basis for the Centres' operations.

Diagram 1.2.1a

What is the legal status of the Centre?

93.3 % (28)

6.7 % (2)

Public
Private

Diagram 1.2.1b

Are there any national laws that regulate the work of the Centre at the national level?

51.6 % (16)

48.4 % (15)

Yes
No
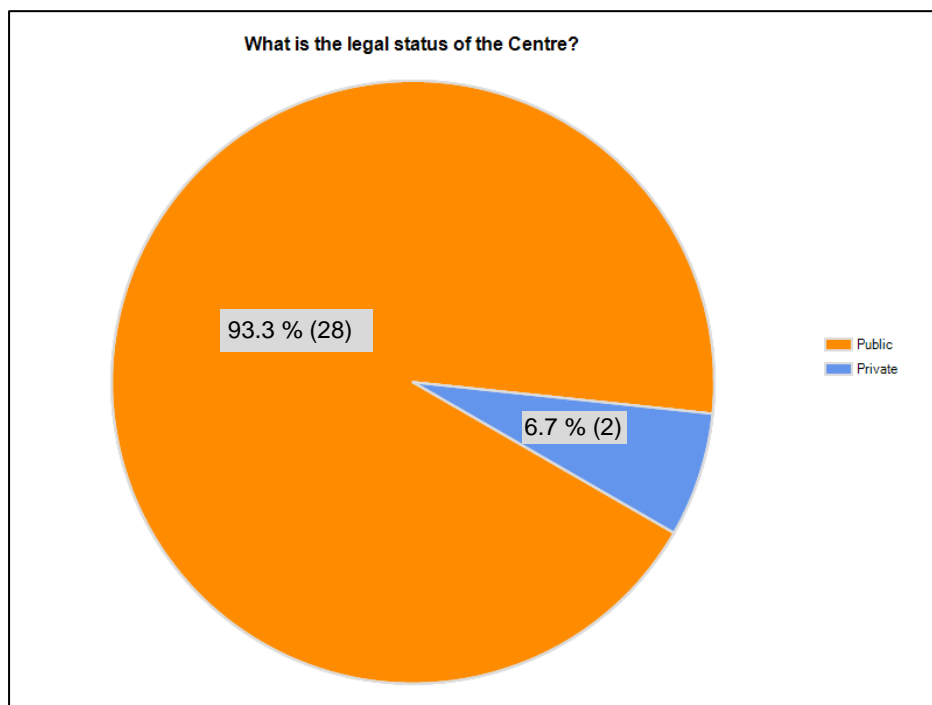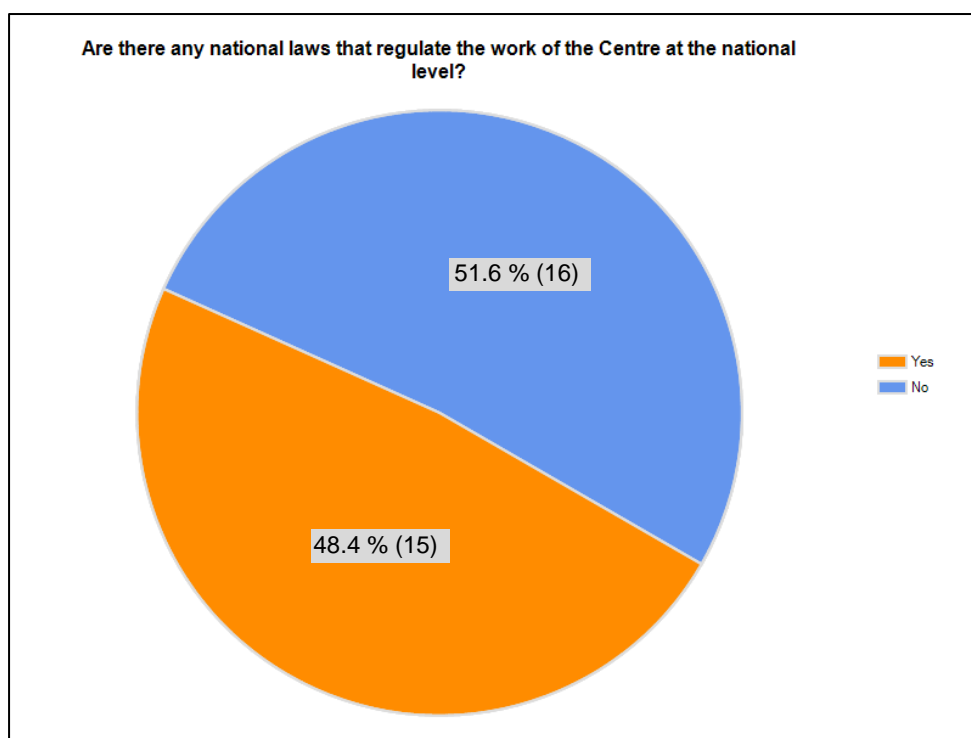
Whilst 85.7% of the Centres are publically funded, with 55% providing initial advice and guidance free of charge, over 44% of the Centres charge an administrative fee for issuing an official recognition statement (Diagrams 1.2.2a and 1.2.2b).

In some countries a fee is charged per application regardless of the number of submitted qualifications, while other Centres charge a fee per each qualification. Some Centres apply further price variations based on the academic level of qualifications and the applicant's country of origin; e.g. lower fees for applicants from developing countries.

Diagram 1.2.2a

How are the services of your centre financed?

- 85.7 % (24) — Public funds
- 3.6 % (1) — Private funds
- 14.3 % (4) — Both

Diagram 1.2.2b

Are there any fees charged for the services of the Centre?

- 55.2 % (16) — No
- 44.8 % (13) — Yes
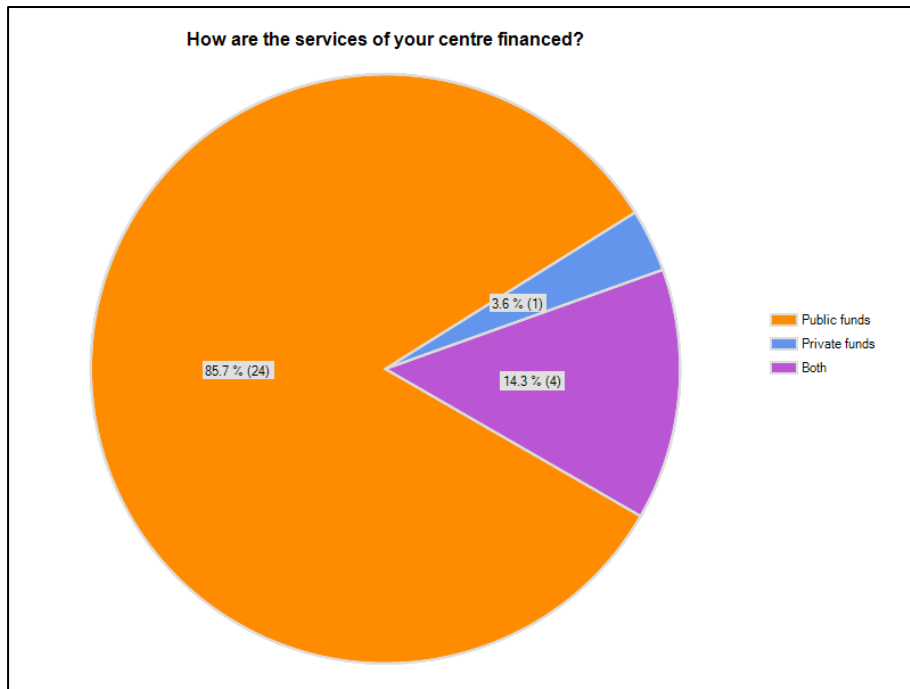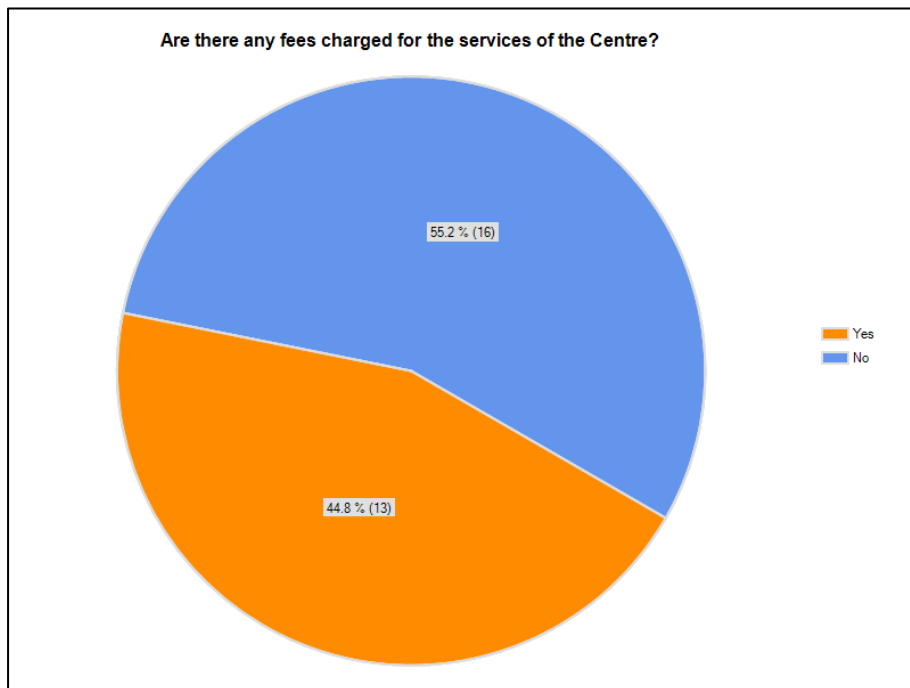
1.3 Types of services and status of advice

Many Centres have diversified their offerings by developing new products and services, based on the demand and the national context. Some of the existing service classifications are summarised in Table 1.3.1 below. The table demonstrates that Centres have sought to ensure that the services they offer are tailored to national requirements as well responding to policy developments such as increased support for student and worker mobility in Europe.

Table 1.3.1. Types of services offered by ENIC-NARICs

Based on the status of advice	- legally-binding statements - advisory statements
Based on the depth and breadth of information provided	- concise statements - comprehensive reports
Based on the turnaround time	- regular service - fast-track service
Based on the format and presentation	- verbal advice - e-mail advice - access to information databases - statement of comparability - certificate of comparability
Based on the purpose of enquiry	- advice for purposes of professional employment - advice for purposes of further study[8]
Based on the target audience	- advice for individuals - advice for organisations

With regard to the status of advice, diagram 1.3.1 illustrates that there is a fairly even divide between the Centres issuing legally-binding versus advisory types of statements. It is not uncommon for the Centres to issue both types of advice

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[8] this can be further subdivided based on the level of education that the applicant is planning to access

depending on the purpose of enquiry and the target audience. Some Centres use advisory statements as an alternative recognition tool, when substantial differences in course content, duration or other evaluation criteria are observed.

Diagram 1.3.1

What is the status of the recognition statements?

Legend:
- Legally-binding
- Advisory
- Other (please specify)

51.6 % (16)
45.2 % (14)
3.2 % (1)
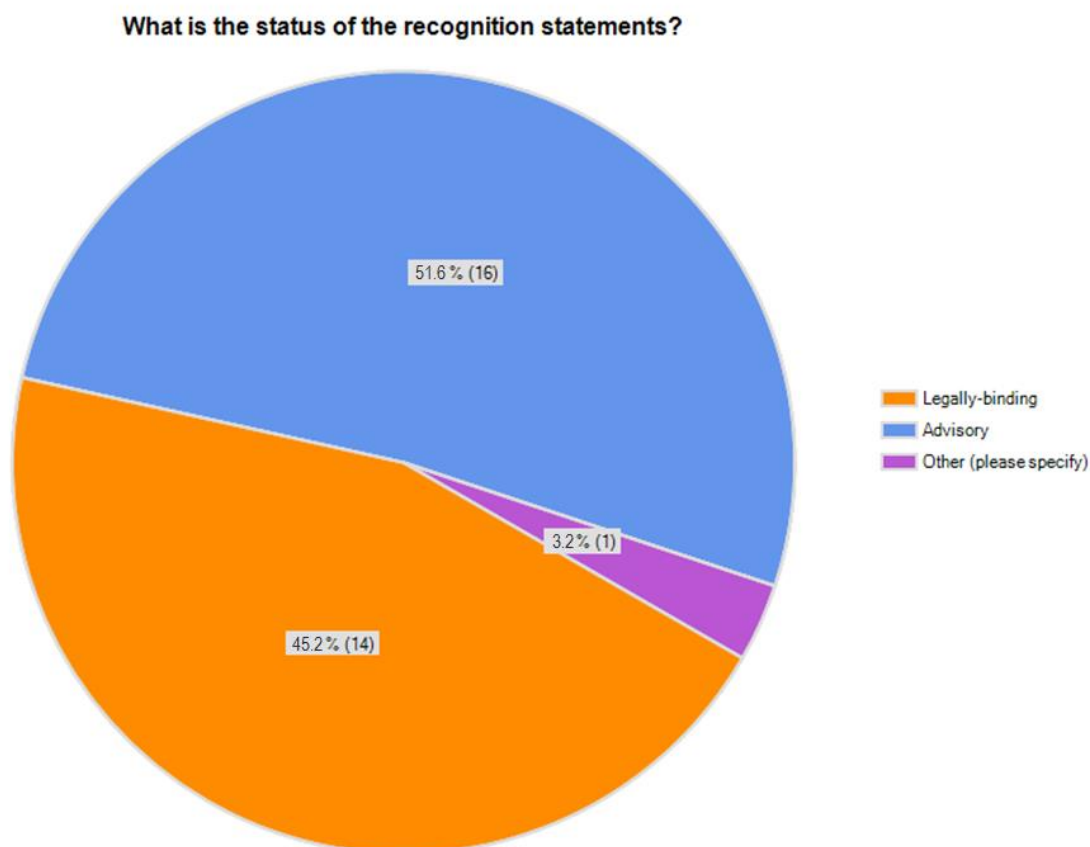
1.4 Quality of information and service

Diagram 1.4.1 shows that in 77.4% of respondent countries the ENIC-NARIC Centre has been performed by the same organisation in the past 20 years, which can be viewed as a positive trend contributing to the continuity and accumulation of intellectual resources and expertise within the competent organisations.

Half of the respondents have implemented internal and/or external quality assurance mechanisms. These vary widely across the Networks, with the following cited most frequently: a) ISO 9001:2008 certification; b) internal Code of Practice; c) external reviews by the competent agencies or experts.

Diagram 1.4.1a

Has the remit of the Centre always been performed by the same institution (s) or has it changed during the last 20 years?

- The same institution: 77.4 %
- Different institutions: 22.6 %

Diagram 1.4.1b

Are there any internal and/or external quality assurance mechanisms in place for the Centre's services?

- Yes: 50.0 % (14)
- No: 50.0 % (14)
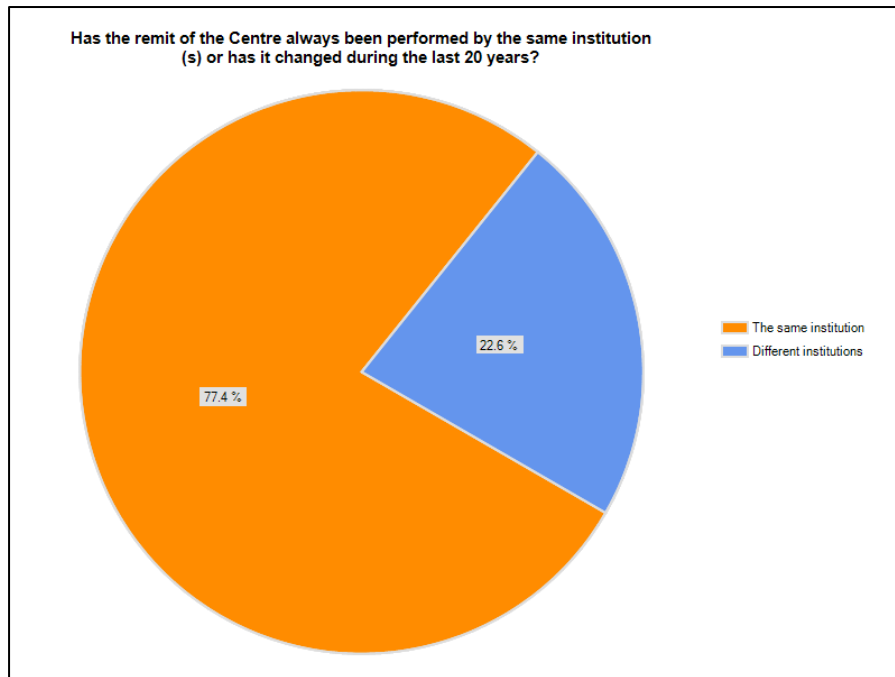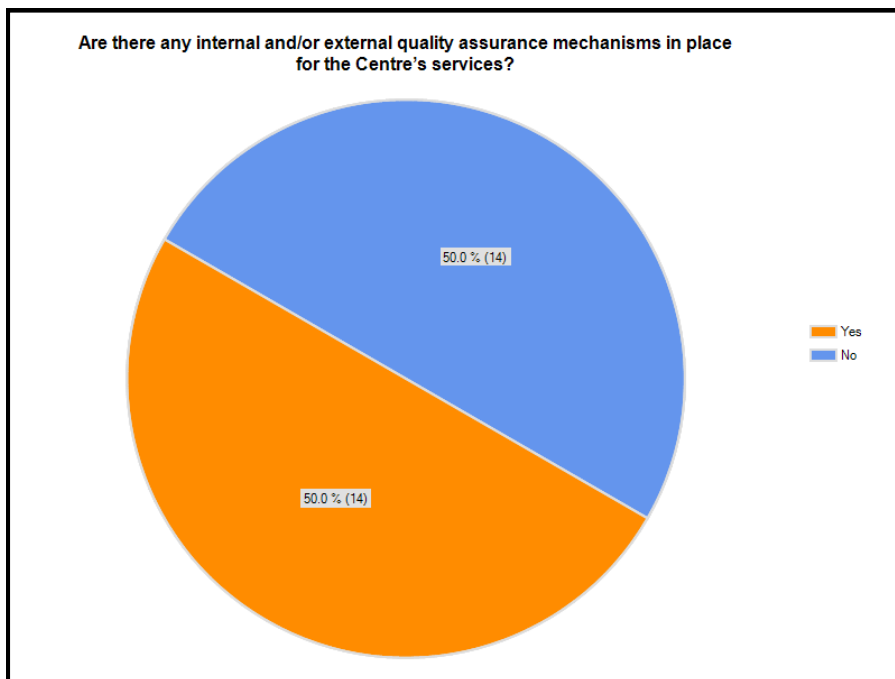
Since 2007, with the financial support from the European Commission, the NARIC Network has delivered a number of projects aimed at improving the overall quality the Networks. NARIC projects covered a wide range of actions including:

➢ Developing and maintaining a dedicated Network website and a mailing list;

- ➢ Documenting and sharing good practice in recognition through manuals, on-line training courses and workshops;
- ➢ Researching and establishing good recognition practices in challenging areas such as substantial differences, recognition of non-formal and informal learning, learning outcomes approach in recognition;
- ➢ Supporting individual Centres through tailored capacity building activities.

Over the years, the EC funded projects have become increasingly ambitious, striving to deliver sustainable quality products which can benefit both the Networks and the wider recognition community. The *European Area of Recognition (EAR) manual*[9] is one such project, which has been further reinforced by the *Bucharest Ministerial Communiqué (2012)* which has endorsed the manual as a recommended *"set of guidelines for recognition of foreign qualifications and a compendium of good practices".*

1.5 Emerging themes for further research

The findings of Survey I demonstrate that the Centres and the Networks have experienced a range of internal reforms and developments in the past 15 years in both capacities and functions. In this context, the following areas had been selected as research themes with the view to examining the changing *role of the Centres:*

- ➢ **Changing Role and Remit of Centres and the Network**

This research theme examines how the remit of the Centres and the Network has changed, specifically outlining the newly adopted functions and responsibilities.

- ➢ **Changing Scope of Work**

This research theme examines the changes in the scope of work, with a particular focus on the education sectors, the target audiences of the services, and the level of engagement with the key national and international stakeholders.

The research findings can be found in Chapters 3.1 – 3.2 of this report.

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[9] http://eurorecognition.eu/manual/ [accessed January 2014]

CHAPTER II. External developments impacting on the Networks and the Centres

Introduction

ENIC-NARICs operate in a complex and rapidly changing international environment where a range of external factors determine both their day-to-day performance and their strategic aims and objectives. Continuous success of the Networks relies on strategic planning informed by a systematic analysis of the external environment, critical evaluation of its impact and effective forecasting of the future trends.

The diversity of the external influences impacting on ENIC-NARICs makes this an extremely complex exercise. To ensure a comprehensive and structured approach, it is useful to classify the external factors into separate groups. For the purpose of this project we have, identified two broad categories of external influences:

- Macro-environment - major external factors that influence an organisation's decision making, performance and strategies and lie beyond an organisation's control; and
- Micro-environment - factors or elements in an organisation's immediate area of operation that affect its performance and decision-making and to an extent, can be influenced by an organisation.

Whilst an in-depth analysis of all macro- and micro-factors lies beyond the scope of the current project, this Chapter will provide a broad overview of identified external influences alongside a rationale for their selection as key themes for further research.

2.1 Macro-environment

In the past decade, a number of political, economic, social and technological (PEST) factors have influenced organisations worldwide. ENIC-NARICs, being a part of a complex and interdependent mechanism, are not an exception.

Given the nature of the Centres' work, external political developments have major, far-reaching implications for ENIC-NARICs. The enlargement of the EU, with the accession of 13 new member states since 2004, has had a remarkable impact on the work of the Centres. The introduction of various tools and initiatives such as Bologna, Copenhagen, Professional Recognition directive 2005/36 have influenced the evolution of the ENIC-NARICs broadening their remit to raise awareness and enforce these initiatives at member state level. An additional political factor which continues to impact with the activities of the Centres is that of immigration policies. These policies vary widely and are adjusted according to political shifts, skills shortages,

economic prosperity or downturn of the country in question. Centres tend to have little or no influence on the development of immigration policy and yet it can have a considerable impact on the work of the Centres as recognition of skills and qualifications remains a key tool for the application of visas and the transfer of skills and qualifications from one country to another.

The **economic environment**, and particularly the major economic downturn and global recession of 2009/2010, has also had wide-ranging implications for the Centres. Cuts in public sector spending, rising unemployment and fierce competition for job vacancies has resulted in increased mobility as workers seek opportunities abroad. High unemployment figures combined with skills shortages in some sectors have encouraged many adults to return to formal education seeking to upgrade their qualifications or re-qualify in new sectors. These factors have prompted an increased need for recognition advice in order to facilitate mobility for work or study. The sharp growth in enquiries reported by some Centres can be partly attributed to increased mobility of individuals. More recently, the impact of the Eurozone crisis has become evident, with many Centres reporting sharp growth in enquiries from the countries that have been most affected.[10]

While economic and political factors have traditionally been the key drivers behind international, the importance of **social drivers** has become increasingly notable; people value opportunities for living and studying internationally to broaden their skills and experiences. As short-term "international experience" mobility becomes more wide-spread, there will be an additional emphasis on the vital role played by the Centres and the Networks as those with foreign qualifications seek out recognition services in order to validate these experiences as well as facilitate further opportunities.

Finally, the fast changing world of **information and communication technologies** has played a major role in shaping the Centres' services and operational models. As suggested by their very title, the core function of ENIC-NARICs lies in efficient provision of information, which places effective use of information technologies at the core of the Centres' success. 25 Centres out of the 31 respondents provided positive responses to the question *"Does your Centre have its own website?"* confirming that the majority of ENIC-NARICs have embraced technological changes and

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[10] The Eurozone crisis refers in this context to the economic crisis on-going since late 2009. The crisis has particularly impacted upon national debt and deficits, and unemployment, with unemployment levels in Spain and Greece reaching over 25% in 2013.

developed the capacity to publish information on-line; however, others have yet to do so, which indicates an area for development for particular Centres to engage with technology to facilitate their processes and practice.

In addition to the use of current tools to support the Centres in their works, technology is also changing the nature of the qualifications which the Centres evaluate. The growth in distance learning opportunities and online provision including Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) has a significant impact on Centres as they move to respond to the rapid evolution in educational provision globally. This requires Centres to develop their services to address these new types of qualification.

Diagram 2.1.1

Does the Centre have its own website?

86.2 % (25)   17.2 % (5)

Yes
No
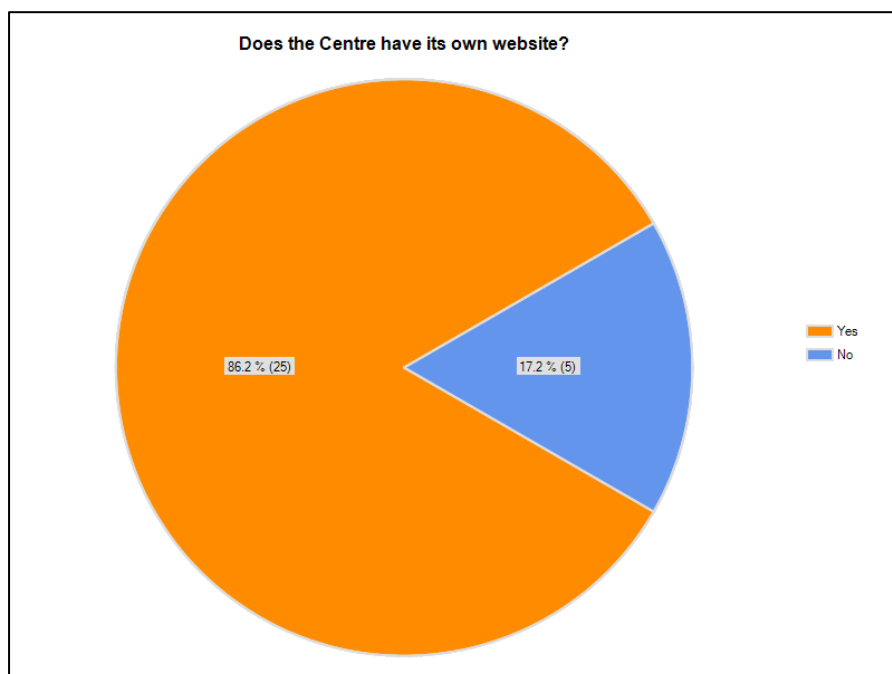
Progressive development of information technologies combined with widely-available access to the Internet opens up a whole range of innovative approaches to data collection, processing, storage and dissemination of information. By effectively exploiting the opportunities offered by IT, ENIC-NARICs can achieve significant improvements in quality, efficiency and accessibility of their services. Examples of advanced application of information technologies by some of the Centres include:

- ➢ Development and maintenance of comprehensive online knowledge bases;
- ➢ Electronic application and payment systems;
- ➢ Online platforms for tracking enquiry progress;
- ➢ Provision of on-line training;
- ➢ Introduction of a paperless enquiry service.

The recent emergence of social media provides an additional powerful communication tool for engaging with external audiences. This can include widening the audience that can be reached, as well as allowing ENIC-NARICs to communicate more quickly and share relevant information in a concise and widely-disseminated format.

2.2 Micro-environment

In addition to wider PEST factors discussed above, the past decades have seen a number of significant developments in the immediate environment surrounding recognition in general and ENIC-NARICs in particular.

In their responses to Survey I, the Centres confirm the influence of various recognition policies and reforms on their operations and indicate those with the greatest level of impact.

Diagram 2.2.1
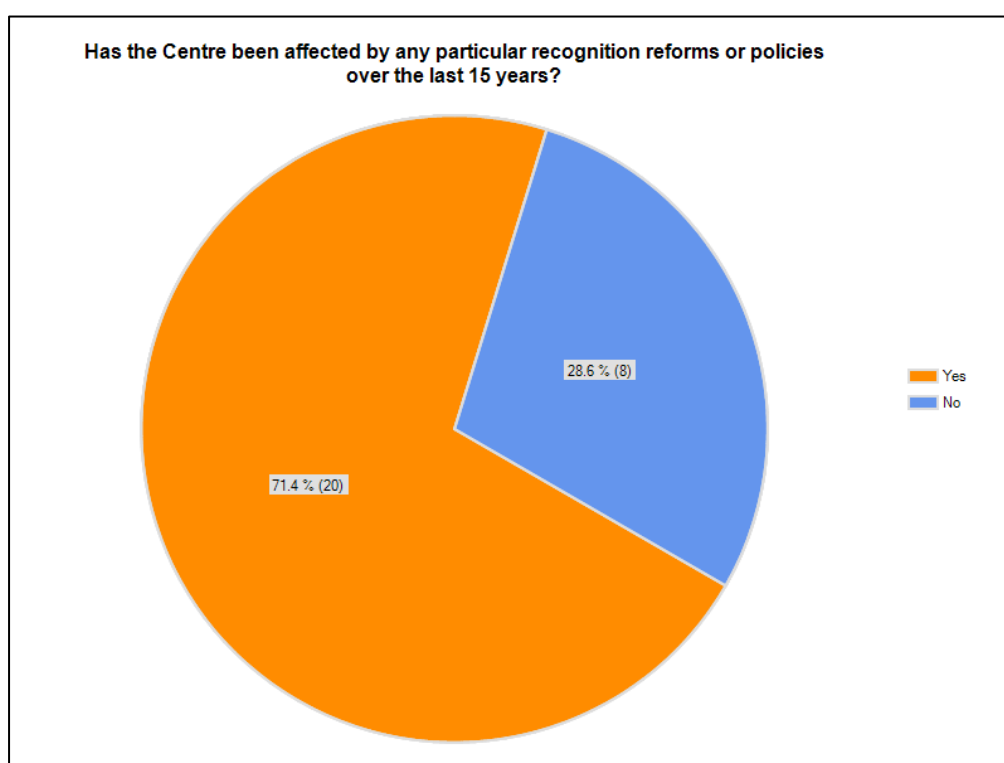
Table 2.2.1: Sample responses to the question "Has the centre been affected by recognition reforms or policies over the last 15 years?"

Since 2007/2008, a new system for recognition was implemented encompassing several countries/degrees, which affected the work of Centre with a substantial increasing of requests for information about procedures, not only from HEIs, but also graduates. - Organisation of several information sessions.
Signature and ratification of the LRC: revision of the legal framework; - Bologna reforms, in particular the three-cycle structure: revision of the legal framework; - QF and LO developments: possible revision of the legal framework.
1. New national degree structure according to the Bologna principles - development of the concept 2. Development of Diploma Supplement for national HEIs and guidelines manual for HEIs 3. Comparison and recognition of pre-Bologna qualifications (including recognition of qualifications of former Soviet Union) - the main concept and comparison is worked out in the

office
4. National higher education qualifications framework
5. The policy for principles to establish a foreign educational institution in the country
6. The Centre is the institution developed all national legislation on assessment and academic recognition of foreign qualifications;
7. The principles and procedure for assessment and academic recognition of foreign qualifications are developed by the Centre since 1997
Recognition of Foreign School Certificates - ("nostrification") - until 2005   The Act on Recognition and Assessment of Education - from 2005 to 2011   The Act on Assessment and Recognition of Education - from December 2011 on
- All the changes and new policies appearing in the European context.   - All the policies introduced in professional recognition (Directive 2005/36/CE, etc.)   - Our national legislation on recognition.
The recognition procedures have constantly reshaped taking into consideration the national system of education. After the […] EU accession our Centre promoted a easier procedure for the recognition and equivalence of the diplomas issued in the EU member states
a. The Framework Law on Higher Education in [... Centre country name…], it defined competencies of the Centre for Information and Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education.   b. the Decision on Adopting of Fundamentals of the Qualifications Framework […]. This Framework made relationship between degrees previously awarded and degrees after introducing of the Bologna Process. A detailed relationship between them will be later defined and worked out with amending of existing laws and developing of elements of the Qualifications Framework in [… Centre country name…].
1. Development and implementation of the National Qualifications Framework   2. Verified compatibility of the Framework to Bologna   3. EQF referencing

Commonalities among these answers show that the Centres have felt the impact of changes on both national and wider European levels, demonstrating, as initially anticipated, their susceptibility to policy developments.

Many respondents refer to the **national reforms and developments** such as:

➢ Introduction or amendment of the national legislation on recognition;

➢ Changes in national legislation on immigration;

➢ Centralisation or, in some cases, de-centralisation of the recognition function at national level;

➢ Changing approaches to quality assurance of higher education institutions with increased emphasis on rigorous and fair admission process;

➢ Introduction of new national degree structures and development of the national qualification frameworks;

Additionally, several pan-European and wider international developments feature in many responses. These include:

➢ Signing and ratifying the Lisbon Recognition Convention;

➢ Bologna Process and introduction of the European Higher Education Area;

➢ Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications;

➢ Introduction of the over-arching qualification frameworks such as the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (the EQF) and the Bologna Framework.

2.3 Emerging research themes

In the context of this project, the ultimate goal was to explore those external influences that lie in close proximity to ENIC-NARICs. Whilst it is important for the Centres and the Networks to be aware of their wider macro-environment, little can be done to change or influence PEST factors; therefore the connections   can be described as a predominantly one-way relationship, where a combination of political, economic, social and technological factors influence ENIC-NARICs and shape their services (Diagram 2.3.1a).

Diagram 2.3.1a
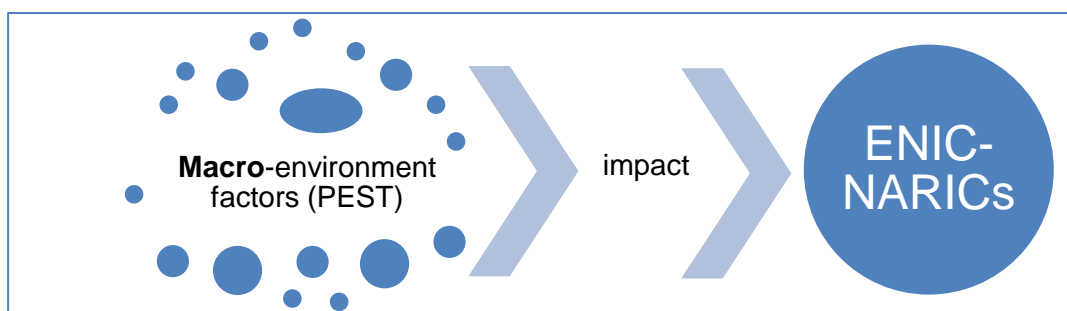
In the context of the micro-environment, the relationship between the external factors and ENIC-NARICs tends to be two-way (Diagram 10b). On the one hand, ENIC-NARICs continually review and adjust services to meet the changing demand in recognition and effectively accommodate its needs; they also actively contribute to major reforms and developments in international recognition. To this end, the Networks and the Centres have remained proactive, playing a key role in policy changes.

Diagram 2.31b
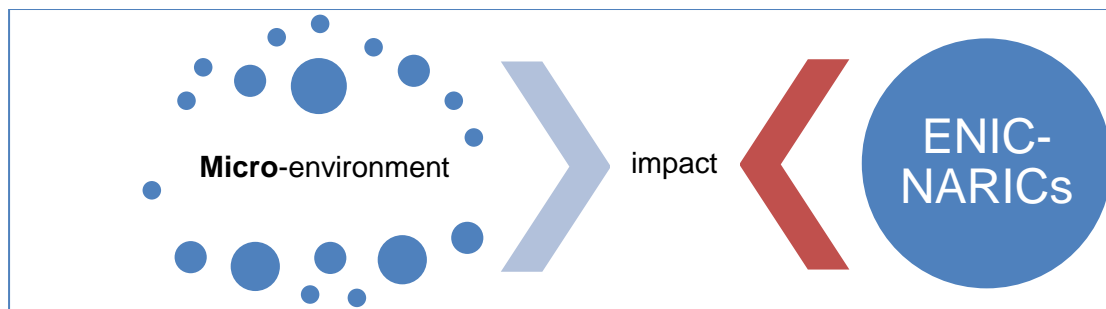
In this context, the following research themes were developed.

➤ **Bologna Process**

The theme analyses the Bologna Process and its impact on the work of the individual Centres and the Network. The research explores two perspectives:

1) What role have the Centres played in the implementation of the Bologna Process?

2) How have the Centres been affected by the Bologna Process?

➤ **National Qualifications Frameworks / Transnational Qualifications Frameworks**

The theme analyses national and transnational qualifications frameworks and their impact on the work of the individual Centres and the Networks. The research explores two perspectives:

1) What role do the Centres/Network play in developing, implementing and promoting the frameworks?

2) How have the Centres/Networks been affected by the frameworks?

➤ **Professional Qualifications Directives**

The theme will analyse the Professional Qualifications Directives and their impact on the work of the individual Centres and the Network. The research explores two perspectives:

1) What role do the Centres play in supporting compliance with the Directives?

2) How have the Centres/Network been affected by the Directives?

➤ **Managed migration / immigration policies**

The theme analyses immigration policies and their impact on the work of the individual Centres and the Network. The research explores two perspectives:

1) What role do the Centres/Network play in enabling compliance with the immigration policies?

2) How have the Centres/Network been affected by the migration trends and immigration policies?

The research findings can be found in chapters 3.3 – 3.6 of the report.

CHAPTER III. Research Findings

Introduction

This chapter of the report is based on the research analyses completed by the core project team and consists of the following sections, which analyses in depth the six chosen themes related to the changes affecting NARICs in the past 15 years:

- Changing Role and Remit of the Centres and the Network
- Changing Scope of Work
- Bologna Process and its implications
- National and Transnational qualifications frameworks
- Professional Qualifications Directives
- Managed Migration/Immigration Policies

3.1 Changing Role and Remit of the Centres and the Network

This section seeks to analyse the changes to the roles and remits of the Centres and the Network. It will examine the intended remit of the Centres and Network as defined in the ENIC-NARIC Charter, and then compare this to the information which this study has obtained regarding the current activities and roles. This in turn can lead to important conclusions regarding the future potential of the Centres and Network.

3.1.1 The originally intended remit for the Network and Centres

The remit of the ENIC-NARIC Centres and Networks was defined for the first time in the ENIC/NARIC Charter, adopted by the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee on 9th July 2004 in Strasbourg.

The survey responses demonstrate how the role of the Centres and the networks have been influenced by policy developments in higher education, the new functions and responsibilities introduced by the changes.

3.1.1.1 Intended remit of the ENIC-NARIC Centres

The original remit of the ENIC-NARIC Centres is presented in diagram 3.1.1. The Centres serve as a main information point on the recognition of higher education qualifications and access qualifications. As such, they provide information about national and international legislation on recognition, recognition procedures, qualifications and education systems etc. The Centres also issue advice or formal decisions regarding the recognition of foreign qualifications. At a national level, the Centres cooperate in recognition matters with other national information centres, higher education institutions (and their networks) and - in the EU and EFTA countries - with the National Coordinator and the competent authorities for professional recognition of the regulated professions.

Diagram 3.1.1 Intended remit of the ENIC-NARIC Centres
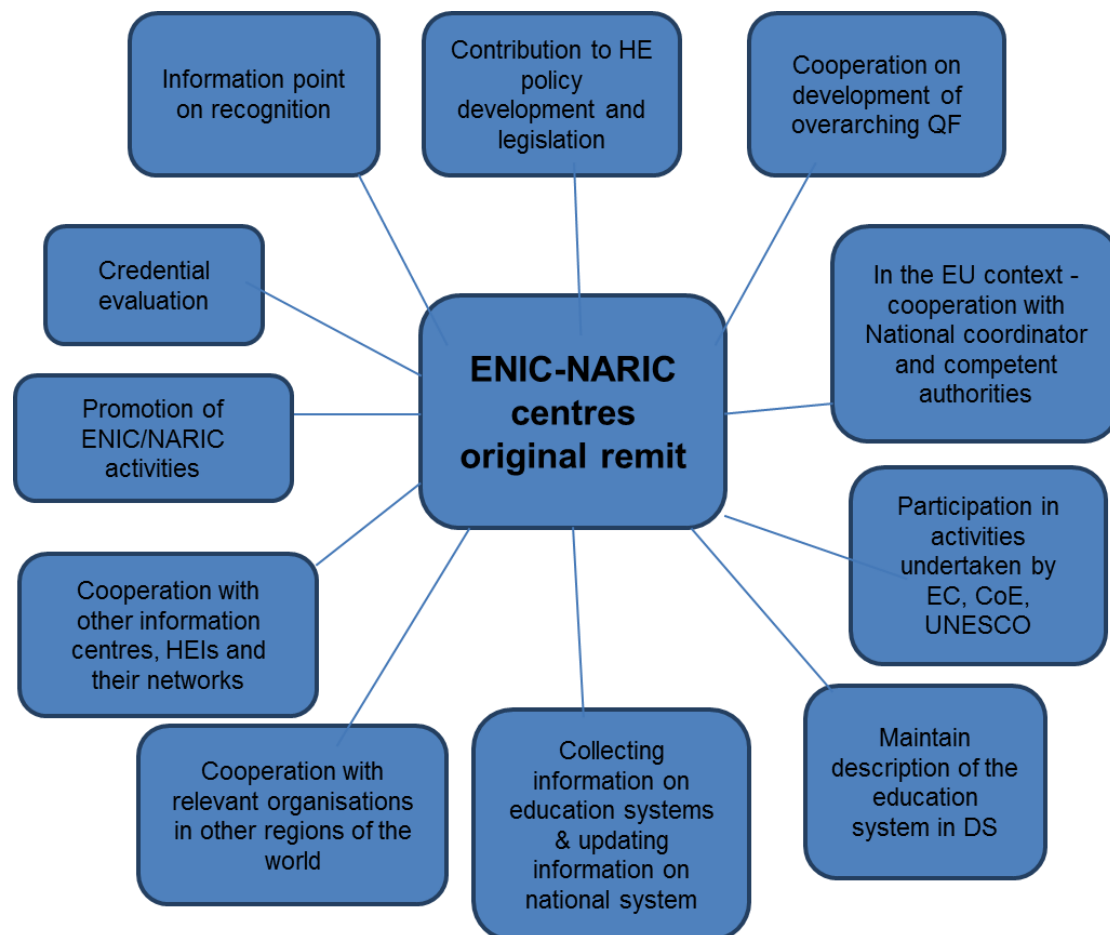
The Centres contribute to higher education policy development and legislation at the national, European and international level. Within the framework of the ENIC-NARIC Networks, the Centres contribute to the development of overarching qualifications frameworks for the European Higher Education Area and the further development of

national education systems. When authorised by a national authority, the ENIC-NARIC Centres elaborate and update descriptions of education systems included in the Diploma Supplement.

The Centres participate in activities undertaken by the European Commission, Council of Europe, UNESCO and other international organisations as well as develop cooperation with relevant organizations working in the field of recognition in other regions around the world.

Furthermore, Centres promote the activities of the Network and refer to the membership of the ENIC-NARIC Networks in all publications, correspondence and websites, utilising the ENIC-NARIC logo.

ENIC-NARIC Centres also fulfill tasks entrusted to them by their national authorities, for example, promotion of the Europass portfolio of documents, acting as an EQF Referencing Coordination point, and activities such as Eurydice and ReferNet.

3.1.1.2 The Intended Remit of the ENIC-NARIC Networks

The intended remit of the ENIC-NARIC Networks is presented in diagram 3.1.2. Originally the ENIC-NARIC Networks were to provide a forum for exchange of information about national qualification and education systems, recognition criteria and procedures as well as enabling debate on the development of policy facilitating recognition.

Diagram 3.1.2 Intended remit of the ENIC-NARIC Networks
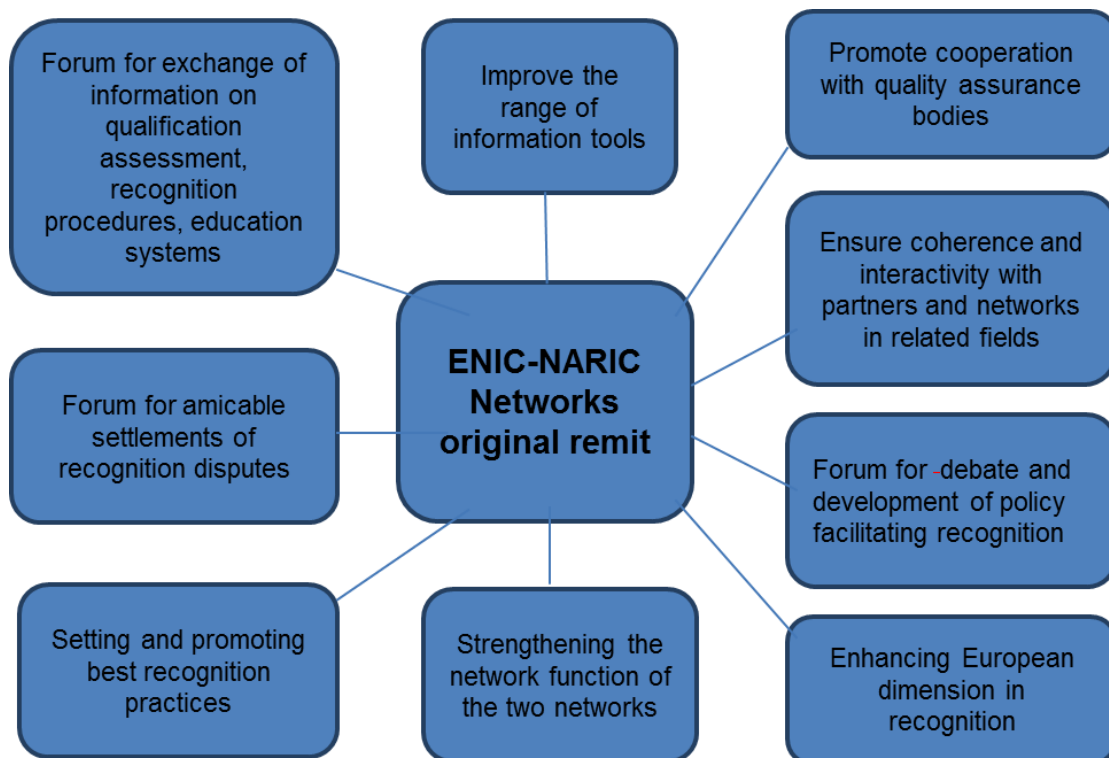
Within their remit the Networks set and promote best recognition practices, develop methodologies of recognition of foreign qualifications in line with the criteria and procedures defined in the Lisbon Recognition Convention, and promote a range of recognition tools for the national Centres.

The ENIC-NARIC Networks also provide national Centres with guidelines on the structure and organisation of the information they offer to the target groups. They develop and implement common dissemination strategies regarding provision of information about recognition-related issues.

Moreover, the Networks and their functions are further strengthened through contact between the national Centres and capacity building exercises.

The ENIC-NARIC Networks provide a forum for the debate and development of polices promoting and facilitating recognition of qualifications in the European Region. Furthermore, they promote cooperation with quality assurance agencies and their networks and with other partners and networks in the fields of recognition, employment education and training.[11]

3.1.2 Internationalisation and mobility

In the past two decades higher education has become increasingly international and accordingly internationalisation has become a key element of the higher education policies. Internationalisation is commonly defined in higher education as "the process of developing a multilateral and multicultural learning and research environment through, for example, redesigning curricula, engaging non-local staff, encouraging students to study abroad and attracting overseas students."[12] Internationalisation may take different forms, for example:

- Physical mobility across borders of students and academic staff. In the case of student mobility, this can include credit mobility or degree mobility;
- Transnational education, cross-border education;
- Joint programmes; including international elements in the curriculum.

Qualification recognition is an important element of internationalisation, as fair and objective recognition of the period of studies (credits) and qualifications is a prerequisite for ensuring successful international mobility.

3.1.3 Primary Research and Analysis: Survey analysis

The survey results indicate that 94% of the ENIC-NARIC Centres serve as the main information point regarding recognition of higher education and access to higher education qualifications. The remaining 6% explained that they are either a federal state with one centre for each province / region (but they are the main information

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[11]   Joint ENIC/NARIC Charter of Activities and Services, adopted on 9 June 2004; http://www.enic-naric.net/documents/Charter.en.pdf
[12]   Analytic Quality Glossary, Quality Research International; http://www.qualityresearchinternational.com/glossary/internationalisation.htm

point in the region), or that they mainly provide information on recognition of higher education qualifications for the non-regulated labour market.

The ENIC-NARIC Centres not only provide information on the recognition of foreign qualifications but use different tools to promote good practice in recognition, national and international regulations, teach evaluation skills. More than half the Centres organise workshops and training (58%), conferences and events (52%) or provide research and consultancy services (58%). Nearly half (42%) of the Centres responding to the survey offer on-line databases and publications and 10% provide other services

The ENIC-NARIC Centres are actively engaged in sharing good recognition practice and exchanging information regarding assessment of qualifications and education systems both at a national and international level. It was noted that 70% of the responding Centres organise workshops and training events (both face-to-face and on-line) on recognition practices. It was found that 68% of Centres organise and participate in relevant conferences, furthermore some Centres organise an annual conference for national stakeholders. A total of 65% of respondents participate in various national projects (aimed at national stakeholders) and international projects involving several of the ENIC-NARIC Centres. In addition, 58% produce publications on topics related to recognition, for example, recommendations for decision-making bodies at universities, newsletters, web-portal for HEIs, e-flyers on recognition.

It was observed that 81% of the ENIC-NARIC Centres who responded provide assessment services and issue recognition statements. In their assessment ENIC-NARIC Centres adhere to the evaluation criteria based directly on the Lisbon Recognition Convention, subsidiary texts and the EAR Manual[13]. Some of the Centres have their own codes of good practice. In most cases (approximately 70%) the evaluation criteria are published and available on the Centre's website. Most ENIC-NARIC Centres who responded (77%) handle qualifications from outside the Lisbon Recognition Convention area in the same way as qualifications from countries party to the Convention.

The majority (71%) of the respondents reported that ENIC-NARIC Centres are not the only institutions offering recognition services in their countries. In these cases,

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[13]   European Area of Recognition Manual; available at http://www.eurorecognition.eu/

recognition services are also provided by higher education institutions, competent authorities for professional qualifications, or most frequently by vocational education institutions. In the national context, the majority (90%) of the ENIC-NARIC Centres liaise with other information centres, higher education institutions, their networks, quality assurance bodies, SOLVIT centre, Eurydice and other relevant bodies. The cooperation is based on exchange of information in matters related to recognition. Centres also actively contribute to various initiatives at a national level, for example, referencing of national qualifications frameworks.

A significant majority (81%) of ENIC-NARIC Centres contribute to higher education policy development and legislation at regional, national, international level. They produce drafts of new legislation themselves, comment on drafts prepared by other bodies, provide information on education systems as background for the national reform, initiate revision of the legislation, as advisors they are members of various national working groups preparing the new legislation for higher education. The Centres also participate in the negotiation of bilateral agreements. In many cases the Centres are involved in the development of national higher education policies, for example, in the implementation of the transparency documents such as DS, ECTS and the development of qualification frameworks. In addition, the Centres are active in relevant international working groups (for example the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) working groups) and committees.

The survey found that 87% of the Centres cooperate with other stakeholders at an international level, working closely with other ENIC-NARIC Centres, with European Commission, Council of Europe, UNESCO, other international organisations, HEIs in other countries, quality assurance and accreditation agencies, professional bodies and other stakeholders. The German-speaking Centres have regular meetings to discuss recognition related matters, as do the Centres from Nordic countries. A minority (35%) of the Centres are involved in the recognition networks outside Europe. The most often mentioned networks are: the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), the Asia Pacific Academic Recognition Network (APARNET), the Mediterranean Recognition Information Centres (MERIC), and Asia-Pacific countries.

The organisations where the ENIC-NARIC Centres are housed also offer other services important for promoting mobility such as National Contact Points for professional qualifications in 52% of cases and the EQF Referencing Coordination in 32% of Centres. Europass is coordinated by 23% of ENIC-NARIC Centres, 19%

manage the National Contact Point for ECVET (19%) and 13% hold the ReferNet contract. Approximately half (48%) of the Centres report that other services are provided alongside the core functions, including, for example, EURODESK, EURYDICE, Bologna coordination for universities and external quality assurance. More than half (58%) of the respondents declare that a number of staff are engaged in more than one national   function housed within the organisation.

3.1.4 Case study: Denmark

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Provision of information and credential evaluation

The Danish ENIC/NARIC Centre provides information to citizens on their rights regarding recognition and serves as the main information point on the recognition of higher education and higher education access qualifications at national level as well as well as information on VET qualifications.

It provides information, advice or formal decision on the recognition of qualifications on the basis of their assessment by applying existing criteria and procedures developed by the networks, as well as new criteria for assessment of qualifications described in terms of workload, level, learning outcomes, competences and profile.

The Centre issues binding decisions on recognition of foreign qualifications in a number of cases:
- The decision on admission by a publicly recognised educational institution.
- The decision on admission by an unemployment fund.
- The decision by an authority on an appointment.
- The decision by an authority on access to a regulated profession (subject to subsection
-The decision by a trade committee (*fagligt udvalg*) or by the Council for Agricultural Education on a reduction in the length of study.

The Centre evaluated its recognition procedures and principles by comparing them with those specified in the European Area of Recognition manual (EAR manual). The Centre has constructed a website with all the relevant information concerning recognition from application forms, guidelines for documentation, principles and procedures of recognition, general standards of assessments of qualifications from a number of countries and actual recognition decisions.

The Centre collects and regularly updates information on:
- Education systems
- Qualifications awarded in different countries and their comparability to the qualifications in the home country
- Legislation on recognition
- Information on officially recognised and accredited institutions
- Admission requirements.

A country manual of approximately 24 countries is posted on the Centre's website with information on general recognition standards. The Centre publishes assessments on it's website in a public database.

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Other services housed by the Danish Centre

➢ The Centre is secretariat to an independent appeals board on credit transfer decisions for foreign educational qualifications.
➢ It is the National Contact Point and Coordinator for the EU Directive on professional recognition. It is also the competent authority for recognition of foreign teachers according to the EU directive on professional recognition.
➢ The Danish Centre acts as National Coordination Point for the EQF and is responsible for the website www.nqf.dk The Centre is part of the national steering group on the Danish Qualifications Framework for Lifelong learning and has been actively involved in the self-certification report for the EHEA framework and the self-referencing report for the EQF.
➢ Danish Eurydice office and the Europass, Euroguidance and Eurodesk office are situated in other offices within the Agency.

Contribution to policy developments and legislation

The Danish Centre contributes to higher education policy development and legislation at regional, national and European level. Situated within the Danish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Higher Education the Centre is actively involved in developing national policy by disseminating its expertise in foreign educational systems and promoting good international practice for possible implementation in the Danish system. The Danish Centre is a member of the national BFUG group and was involved in drafting the ministerial communiqué of the Bologna Ministers for the meeting in Bucharest.

3.1.5 Comparative analysis

The research analyses have identified the following most influential factors on the ENIC-NARIC Centres and the Networks in recent years:

- Internationalisation in higher education

- The Lisbon Recognition Convention and regional Conventions

- the Bologna Process

- The adoption of the Directive 2005/36/EC and its current modernisation process

- The implementation of qualifications frameworks

- 60% of ENIC-NARIC Centres have assumed additional functions outside of their original remit which are managed alongside the core recognition services, for example, National Contact Points for professional qualifications, EQF National Coordination Points or the National Europass Centre. In other cases the ENIC-NARICs have established relationships with other bodies responsible for the new functions at a national level.

Table 3.1.1: Prescribed vs current role of Centres

ENIC-NARIC prescribed activities and services	Differences identified between prescribed and actual activities and services
Serve as the main information point on the recognition of higher education and higher education access qualifications at national level;	Centres deal with areas beyond higher education and access qualifications
Cooperate in related matters with other information Centres, higher education institutions, their networks and other relevant actors in the national context;	Centres engage with a wide range of stakeholders
In the EU-context, and as far as NARICs have competence in professional recognition matters, cooperate with the National Coordinator and the competent authorities for the professional recognition of the regulated professions (EU Directives);	Many Centres act as professional recognition National Contact Points, or competent authorities for specific professions. .
Contribute to higher education policy development and legislation at regional, national and European level	Centres contribute to policy development though: • advising on legislation • advising on agreements • preparing draft legislation This demonstrates a high degree of involvement in policy development
Develop cooperation with relevant organisations in countries in other regions of the world working in the field of recognition	Relatively few respondents reported that their Centres are involved in cooperation with the recognition bodies/networks outside Europe

Compared with the intended remit described in the Charter which focuses specifically on facilitating the recognition of foreign qualifications, the ENIC-NARICs now play a far broader role in promoting internationalisation and mobility as well as introducing and promoting good recognition practice based on the Lisbon Recognition Convention. ENIC-NARICs not only provide information on recognition, but also use different activities to promote the knowledge of recognition, good recognition practice, assessment criteria and procedures among various stakeholders at the national and international level. Within the ENIC-NARIC Network, the Centres actively contribute to the development of recognition policy at a national and international level and undertake projects to enhance recognition practice.

3.1.6 Survey III

Survey III builds on the key findings from previous research. The aim of the survey was to gather opinions and suggestions from the Centres on how the changing scope of work could be better reflected by the Centres and on their future cooperation with higher education institutions.

More specifically, the Heads of Centres were asked to express their opinion on the following questions:

1. (…) According to the findings of CHARONA Surveys I and II, ENIC-NARIC Network(s) already contribute to the internationalisation agenda through knowledge sharing and promotion of recognition. In your opinion, is there scope for greater involvement of your centre and the network(s) in general in developing and implementing internationalisation strategies? If yes, what contribution can we offer?

2. The findings of CHARONA Survey I demonstrate that 87% of the ENIC-NARICs cooperate actively with a wide range of stakeholders at the national and European levels, however only 35% are involved in cooperation with the recognition bodies/networks outside Europe. In your opinion, should cross regional/global cooperation be facilitated and how can this be achieved?

3. The findings of CHARONA Surveys I and II demonstrate that 81% of the centres contribute to national legislation and policy development through, for example, participation in the relevant working groups. In your opinion, are there areas within both national and international legislation and policy development, where your centre and/or the network(s) could be more involved? If yes, please specify the possible areas for involvement?

A total of 31 out of 55 Centres answered the survey. Tables 3.1.2, 3.1.3 and 3.1.4 present the sample responses to the survey.

Table 3.1.2 In your opinion, is there scope for greater involvement of your Centre and the Network(s) in general in developing and implementing internationalisation strategies? If yes, what contribution can we offer?

Since this NARIC centre is embedded in the Ministry of Education, there is absolute involvement in internationalisation strategies.
In our opinion there is scope for greater involvement for the network namely by through the cooperation with other networks for instance MERIC, ANICs (Asia-Pacific Convention). This could also include each individual centre.

(…) we regard our involvement as sufficient. The Centre does not play a political role.
Yes, with a stronger cooperation with higher education policy makers and institutions. The network can contribute to these strategies by a wider communication on our role and activities, but also by promoting the LRC and good practices in recognition.
There is a scope for greater involvement of ENIC/NARIC centers in developing internationalization strategies through involvement of ENIC/NARIC representatives in the working groups that are dealing with this aspect. Given their huge experience and knowledge on the education systems worldwide, their expertise would be helpful in shaping these strategic documents on internationalization.
Systematic dissemination of the principles of LRC and its subsidiary documents among all stakeholders, European networks, institutions and HEIs for better understanding, especially in the process of implementing by HEIs of enhanced mechanisms for international student mobility, joint programmes, inclusion of international elements in the curriculum, etc.
Knowledge sharing and promoting good practice in recognition would be the main contribution to internationalisation and mobility. The expertise of the ENIC/NARICs in recognition can be used: - for creating internationalisation policies in higher education at the national level - to support transnational and joint programmes.

Table 3.1.3 In your opinion, should cross regional/global cooperation be facilitated and how can this be achieved?

It is important to make it effective to involve decision makers and international organisations working in cooperation with different regions of the world (UNESCO). The MERIC network was an interesting attempt of cooperation between networks and it should be revived and given as example for cooperation with other parts of the world.
(…) According to our experience the best way is to have good contacts to the relevant and competent people/institutions in other countries. Also regular meetings will contribute to facilitate cooperation.
We should use international organisations and consortia, like UNESCO, ASEM etc. Formally, the Bureau of the LRC Committee is important especially on policy level. Raise the ENIC/NARIC visibility as a network. (…).
The cooperation is very important and can be facilitated by developing specific set of goals; solid evidence of the potential benefits is crucial in order to gain political support. Experience and expertise of ENIC/NARIC Networks should be utilised when developing similar networks in other regions. This could be achieved by having representatives from other regions involved in ENIC/NARIC conferences and events and vice versa.
We should have close connections to the new Asian network - the ANICS. Also the ASEM work and the ongoing proposal of a possible global convention can be instruments to strengthen coopreration. Cooperation can be coordinated through the convention Committees to secure that the LRC and ENIC-NARIC cooperation is not jeopardised, for instance by opening up the mailing list to far too many users.

Yes, it should be facilitated. Tools to achieve it are: - international projects involving partners from other regions - study visits - cooperation with other recognition networks or other international organizations dealing with recognition, e.g. their representatives participate in the annual ENIC/NARIC meetings and vice versa.
This should be facilitated at the network level, that is: the ENIC/NARIC network should continue to collaborate with networks of other regional conventions/regions.

Table 3.1.4 In your opinion, are there areas within both national and international legislation and policy development, where your Centre and/or the Network(s) could be more involved?

Policy development in higher education could be an area for involvement both for the network and our center. This could also enhance a stronger cooperation with higher education institutions, quite weak for the moment.
(…)a greater involvement in the field of professional recognition would be most desirable.
No, we are very much involved in all related to recognition, transparency in general and qualifications frameworks.
The Centre is already involved in legislation and policy development; however the role can be enhanced further by taking more PROACTIVE approach as opposed to reacting to the decisions made at higher levels. Specific areas of interest include EQF referencing and subsequent application of it, quality assurance, immigration policy.
There are two areas that our centre feels it could be more involved with. They are : NQF and Quality assurance. We already give a lot of suggestions to policy makers and strategy and method developers, but sometimes our expertise and knowledge isn't heard enough. It is important to achieve greater coherence between recognition, quality assurance and qualifications frameworks. Contribution is possible through providing representatives of ENIC-NARIC centres in the working groups in a different areas of work.
In quality assurance concerning academic recognition policies and practices of the HEIs in their functions as competent recognition authorities.
Already heavily involved in these areas but our Centre and Network need to be more actively involved in QA policy/developments. It is apparent that other Centres need to be more involved in Framework developments in their respective countries.

Analysis of the responses led to the identification of three key observations as follows:

➢ ENIC-NARIC Centres and Networks already play an important role in internationalisation through knowledge sharing and promotion of recognition. The current involvement differs from Centre to Centre, with 24% of Centres feeling that their involvement is sufficient (for example those that are already

more involved in internationalisation activities) while 48% reported that they saw scope for increased activity.

➢ The majority of Centres agree that there is scope for greater involvement in developing and implementing internationalisation strategies through cooperation with higher education policy makers and institutions, and involvement in working groups dealing with internationalisation. Many views also expressed indicated that Centres should be more involved in cooperation with relevant recognition networks and organisations in other parts of the world.

➢ The respondents agree that in light of increasing mobility that cross –regional / global cooperation should be facilitated and it should be undertaken at two levels: a) strategic and b) operational. At the strategic level, the involvement of policy makers and international organisations operating in different regions of the world is necessary. Good examples of such initiatives are the MERIC Network and ASEM. At an operational level it could be achieved through good contacts with representatives of the recognition networks and organisations in other parts of the world, participation in annual meetings and study visits. It is suggested that the Lisbon Convention Committee and ENIC Bureau/ NARIC Advisory Board could play important roles.

The vast majority (86%) of ENIC-NARIC Centres already contribute both to policy developments and legislation at a national and international level. Regarding greater involvement in this area, the opinions of Centres are divided and range from "it would be most desirable" to "no". Nonetheless, the majority indicated areas where the Centres and Networks could be more involved. These included: quality assurance in higher education, qualifications frameworks and the recognition of professional qualifications. Greater involvement in quality assurance of recognition procedures at higher education institutions would also be welcomed. It was also suggested that the Centres and the Networks should take a more proactive approach rather than simply react to actions taken by policy makers.

3.2 Changing scope of work

Introduction

Several years have passed since the adoption of the Charter and the environment in which the ENIC-NARIC Centres and Networks operate has changed substantially. This section seeks to examine the Centres' scope of work and how it has evolved in recent years.

It also describes the target audiences of the services provided by ENIC-NARIC Centres, and how the range of qualifications that can be assessed, have changed over the years.

The first document in which the minimum services to be provided by the ENIC-NARIC Centres and Network was outlined is the Joint ENIC/NARIC Charter of Activities and Services, adopted on 9 June 2004 by the Committee of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region. The Charter indicates the minimum tasks and activities to be provided by a national ENIC-NARIC Centre as well as the target groups of these services; and the tasks and activities of the ENIC and NARIC Networks and their responsibilities under the Bologna Process.[14] The Charter also defined the target audiences of the services offered by ENIC-NARIC Centres and the Networks, and the education sectors to be covered.

3.2.1 The originally intended service users and the originally intended scope of qualifications / education sectors covered

The principal tasks and services to be provided by ENIC-NARIC Centres are information provision and credential evaluation. These are described by the following paragraphs of the Charter as follows:

➢ "Provide adequate, reliable and authenticated information (…) on qualifications, education systems and recognition procedures (…)".

➢ "Provide to citizens information on their rights regarding recognition".

➢ "Serve as a main information point (…)"

➢ "Provide information, advice or formal decision on the recognition of qualifications (…)"[15].

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[14] Joint ENIC/NARIC Charter of Activities and Services, adopted on 9 June 2004; http://www.enic-naric.net/documents/Charter.en.pdf

[15] Joint ENIC/NARIC Charter of Activities and Services, adopted on 9 June 2004

The ENIC-NARIC Centres can offer a more diverse range of services, many of which are determined by national regulations.

The target audiences of the services provided by the ENIC-NARIC Centres are broadly defined by the Charter, stating that the services are targeted at "(…) individual holders of qualifications, higher education institutions, employers, professional organisations, public authorities, ENIC-NARIC partners and other interested parties"[16]. In other words, the services offered by ENIC-NARICs are intended for every person and institution seeking information about recognition of foreign qualifications, education systems, a recognition procedure or interested in obtaining a recognition statement.

The originally intended scope of qualifications evaluated by the ENIC-NARIC Centres includes higher education qualifications and qualifications giving access to higher education. The ENIC/NARIC Charter states that a national ENIC-NARIC Centre "serves as the main information point on the recognition of higher education and higher education access qualifications at national level"[17].

3.2.2 Primary Research and Analysis: Survey Analysis

3.2.2.1 Survey I

The main target audiences of the services offered by ENIC-NARIC Centres are individual holders of qualifications and public authorities. There are, however, Centres that do not provide services to individual holders of qualifications.

In their answers respondents stressed that all the target groups have a high relevance, as illustrated in Diagram 3.2.1.

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[16] ibid
[17] ibid

Diagram 3.2.1 Responses to the question "Who are the target audiences for the services offered by your centre?"

Who are the target audiences for the services offered by your centre?
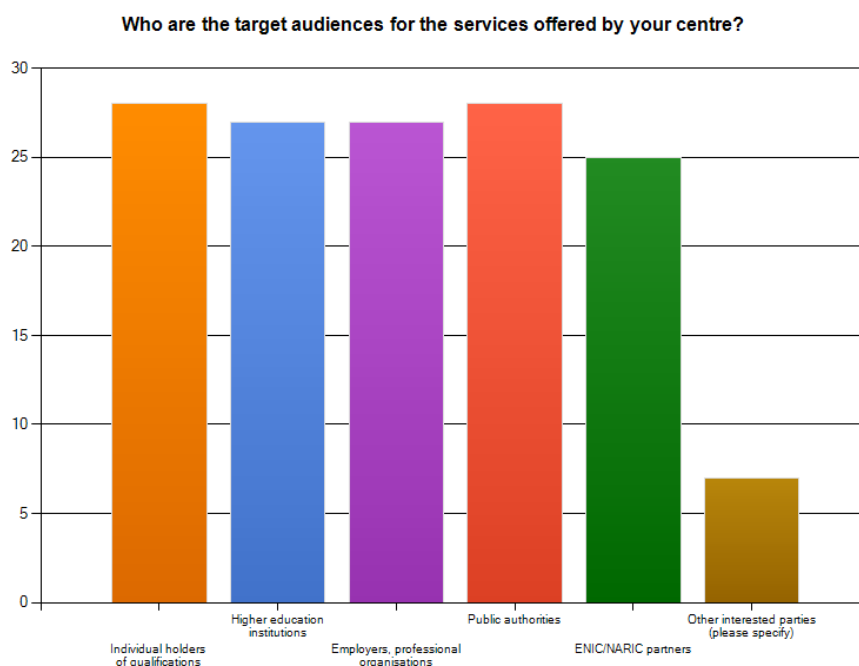
It was highlighted by 22% of respondents that the services offered by the ENIC-NARIC Centres are differentiated depending on the target audience. This can be best illustrated by the sample answers provided by the Centres:

➢ "Individual holders, HEIs and employers can apply for a recognition decision. As ENIC-NARIC Centre we provide information on national qualifications to other ENIC-NARIC Centres."

➢ "We issue a recognition document to individuals…We give a recognition advice to public authorities…We inform our partners on the HE system."

➢ "(…) Formal applications i.e. on our application form are only required from individuals requesting recognition. We provide advice to other stakeholders as requested, mainly by email or over the phone."

The survey results show that the scope of educational sectors covered by the ENIC-NARIC Centres is much broader than that described in the ENIC/NARIC Charter and ranges from primary education to PhD. However, it is noted that not all Centres cover the full range of qualifications.

The majority (67%) of the ENIC-NARIC Centres extended their expertise and cover educational sectors beyond higher education and access qualifications. It is interesting that the majority of these Centres cover more than one sector, e.g. vocational and post-secondary. Some Centres also cover primary education.

A third of ENIC-NARIC Centres deal only with secondary education qualifications (in some cases only with regard to access to higher education) and higher education qualifications. There is also a small minority of Centres (6%) that do not deal with higher education qualifications.

As expected the qualifications most frequently dealt with by the ENIC-NARIC Centres are higher education and secondary education awards.

As a result the ENIC-NARIC Centres focus most of all on academic recognition. However, more than half are also involved in professional recognition, acting as competent authorities for regulated professions (e.g. teachers). The range of qualifications assessed can be best illustrated by the sample answers presented in table 3.2.1.

Table 3.2.1 Sample answers to the question: What education sectors are covered by your Centre?

All sectors including professional recognition of foreign teachers.
We do assessment and recognition of secondary education qualifications, and also conversion of grades. We also assess higher education qualifications (except for doctor's degrees).
Our Centre covers recognition of academic qualifications and school leaving certificates from primary school to PhD (tertiary level education).
In terms of information all the above mentioned. In terms of academic recognition our unit deals with University level qualifications and in terms of professional recognition under Directive 2005/36/CE our unit deals with the recognition of various teaching professions, Psychologists and Biologists.
Secondary only with regard to access to higher education; post-secondary with regard to recognition for further studies.
For the first two, i.e. secondary, vocational and post-secondary education we only provide information on the credentials and how and by whom they can be recognised. We are not responsible for formal recognition. The same applies for professional qualifications covered by the EU directive.

Diagram 3.2.2 "What education sectors are covered by your Centre?"

What education sectors are covered by your Centre?
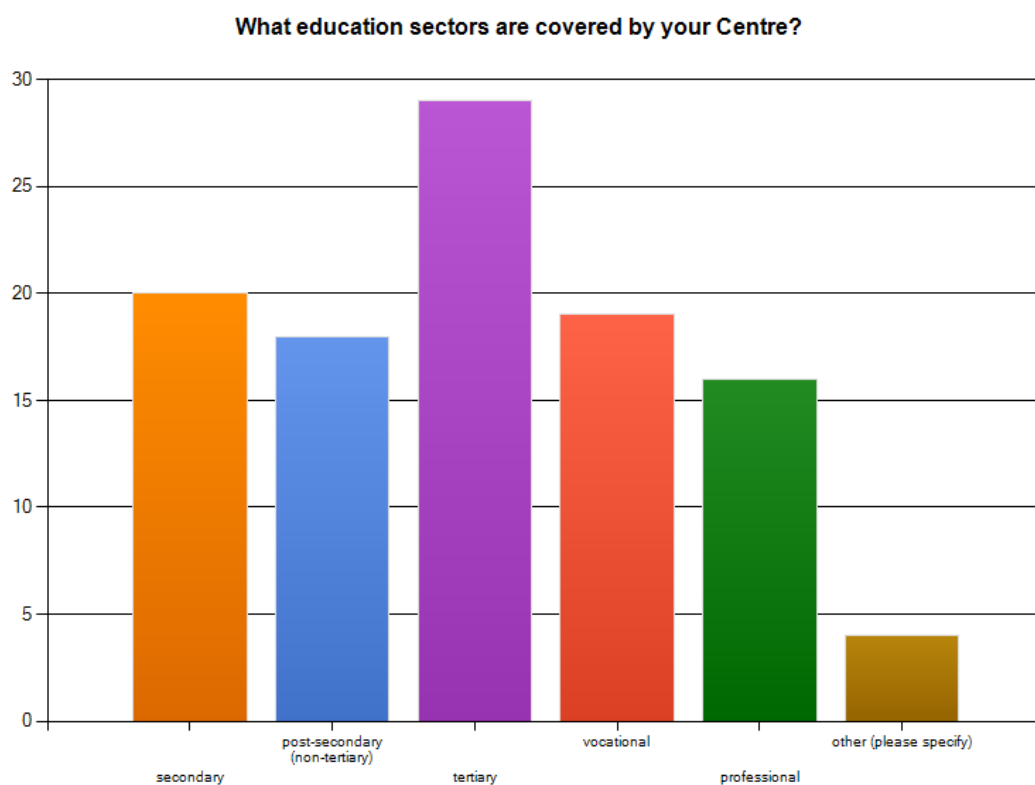
3.2.2.2 Survey II

The most popular tools used by ENIC-NARIC Centres to inform higher education institutions on recognition issues are seminars, conferences and websites. More than half of the respondents declare that they organise workshops/training. Slightly fewer Centres hold regular meetings with representatives of higher education institutions. Less popular are newsletters and the ListServ. Almost one third of the respondents use other information tools, among which are telephone hotlines for admission officers, a fast track recognition service for universities to have foreign degrees assessed for the purpose of being admitted, numerous information and advisory groups, responding to individual questions from HEIs, personal contact, publications.

Diagram 3.2.3 Responses to the question "What tools are used by your centre to inform HEIs about recognition issues?"

What tools are used by your centre to inform HEIs about recognition issues?
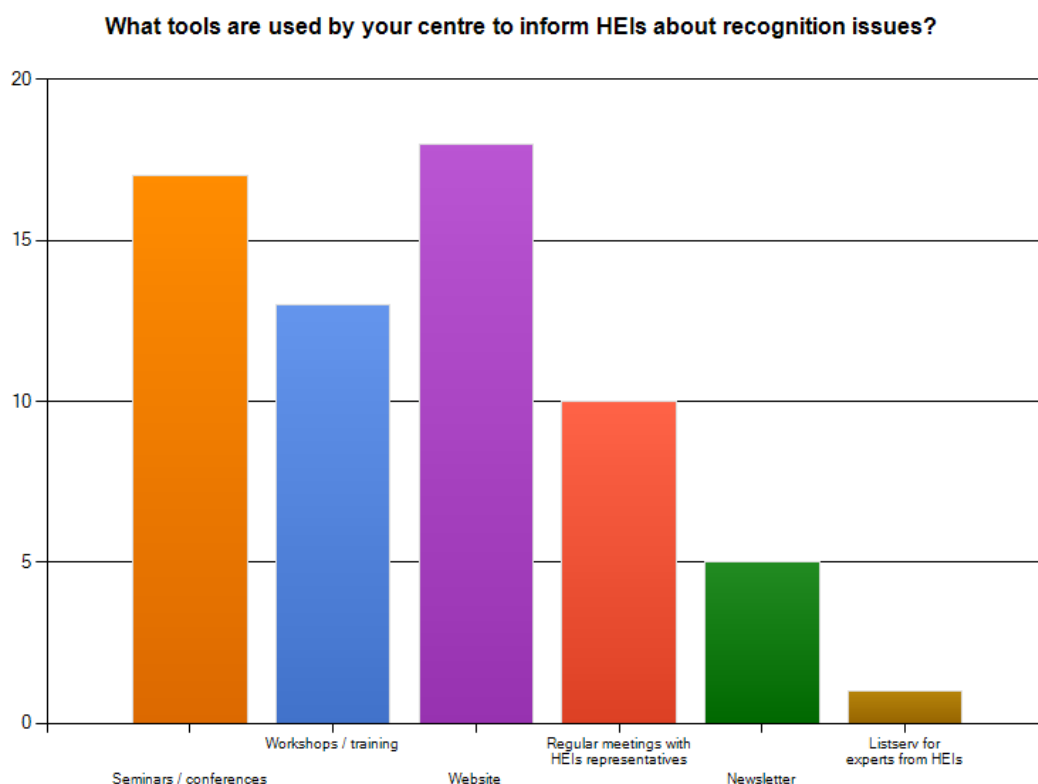
Personal contacts and good relationships with HEIs' staff (admission officers) were referred to most frequently by the responding ENIC-NARIC Centres as a strong point of their cooperation with HEIs. In some countries consultations with ENIC-NARIC Centres are actually part of the admission process. Other points raised include the exchange of information and expertise in different forms via seminars, conferences and trainings organized by the Centres. Responding efficiently to difficult questions within reasonable timeframes was another identified strength.

Weaknesses in current service provision were also identified including insufficient cooperation and communication between ENIC-NARIC Centres and HEIs; low feedback on problems at the institutional level, etc. The distinction between academic recognition and recognition for the labour market is often misunderstood. Furthermore, HEIs are not always aware of the key aspects of the service provided by ENIC-NARIC Centres.

Respondents also indicated that there are no common institutional principles and procedures for recognition and the recognition is often a case-law based practice in reality. Staff turnover at institutional level also has implications, affecting continuity

and consistency of information. In some countries, respondents indicated that HEIs are autonomous and make their own decisions. In the case of some ENIC-NARICs, the lack of resources is deemed to be a weakness; this can include lack of staff or sufficient funding to carry out research and information development activities in line with the Centres' perceived requirements.

Only one respondent indicated that they could not identify any weaknesses.

To improve the relationship between ENIC-NARIC Centres and HEIs, it is felt that there needs to be greater communication and exchange of information. This may take the form of seminars, conferences, workshops and training as well as more regular meetings with HEIs. It was also mentioned that newsletters and a listserv for recognition experts from HEIs would be beneficial. One Centre suggested that "it might help if awareness of good practice in recognition would be more wide-spread in HEI's (outside of the admissions office). The development of the EAR-HEI manual might be helpful in this respect". It was stressed by one Centre that higher education institutions should identify ENIC-NARIC Centres as the key partners in the recognition process and that this would strengthen the relationship.

Responding Centres also indicated that the relationship could be strengthened by improving communication with HEIs and organisations affiliated to HEIs. There should be an "ongoing communication [between the networks and HEIs] to create awareness and communication to instill the value of the work of the networks as a useful tool and resource to support the objectives of HEIs." The visibility of the Network could also be increased. Conferences, seminars, the newsletter of ENIC-NARIC Network for HEIs, creation of practical tools, like an EAR-HEI Manual, were mentioned as useful measures to enhance cooperation between the Networks and HEIs. It was also suggested that the role of the Networks could be strengthened "through the cooperation between the individual Centres and HEIs in their countries" and by "linking ENIC-NARIC Networks to HEIs' networks". Establishing regional networks was also mentioned as a potential solution.

3.2.3 Case study: United Kingdom

UK NARIC is the UK's National Agency responsible for providing information and opinion on academic, vocational and professional qualifications from across the world. As the National Agency, managed on behalf of the UK Government, UK NARIC provide the **only official source of information** on international education and training systems and qualifications and skills attained outside the UK. It is a

private organisation.

The education sectors covered by the UK NARIC are the following: secondary, postsecondary, tertiary, vocational and professional qualifications.

Target audiences and services

The main responsibility of UK NARIC is to provide the information, advice and expert opinion in the respect of general, vocational and professional qualifications to a wider range of users. The services provided by UK NARIC are targeted at both individuals and institutional clients such as: higher education institutions, career organizations, government departments, professional bodies and commercial organizations. Regarding institutional clients these are both national and overseas.

The service provision has been structured and developed to serve individuals seeking recognition in the UK as well as organizations and stakeholders involved in the recognition process.

The following services are offered to individuals coming into the UK:
- Statement of Comparability (providing information on the comparable level of the foreign qualifications to UK standards);
- Statement of Comparability with Translation Waiver (no need for individuals to submit certified translations of their documentation). This is only offered in languages spoken fluently by UK NARIC credential evaluators)
- Career Path Reports (provides an applicant with an in-depth description of their qualifications and advice on the comparable UK level, but it also provides recommendations for future study and/or professional development in the UK)
- Fast Track Service (premium service for individuals or companies who require UK NARIC to provide a Statement of Comparability in a maximum of 24 /48 hours)
- English Language Assessment

National and overseas institutional clients (organizations) of UK NARIC can subscribe to a membership service providing access to a number of different services including:
- Access to the UK NARIC database
- Training and workshops in credential evaluation and specific education systems
- Fraud checks
- Enquiry service

The UK NARIC online database, the Crown Copyright publication International Comparison, allows its members easy and instant access to the bank of information of foreign qualifications, education systems and institutions for over 190 education systems. The opportunity to further explore key content areas is delivered through face-to-face training, seminars, training sessions, conferences and events. Members can take advantage of the enquiry service provided by the team of credential evaluators to seek further information and advice on specific qualifications.

3.2.4 Comparative Analysis

The target audiences of ENIC-NARIC services were described in the Charter in general terms, as "(…) individual holders of foreign qualifications, higher education institutions, employers, professional organisations, public authorities and other parties" and thus cover all individuals and bodies interested in recognition. The survey results showed that:

- Firstly, there are various groups of service users and different groups of users may look for different services;
- Secondly, with the increasing mobility several new target groups seeking ENIC-NARICs services, among them there are migration offices and recruitment agencies;
- Thirdly, ENIC-NARIC Centres develop their services so that they best serve needs of various target audiences.
- According to the Charter, an ENIC-NARIC Centre is the main information point on the recognition of higher education and higher education access qualifications. The survey results showed that the range of qualifications currently covered by the Centres is much broader and includes all types of qualifications from primary school to doctorate. As indicated in the Charter, ENIC-NARIC Centres mainly focus on academic recognition of foreign credentials but quite a large percentage of Centres are also involved in professional recognition. Some Centres also differentiate their services according to the qualification, for example, they provide recognition statements on higher education qualifications and general information on other types of qualifications.

Table 3.2.2: Prescribed versus current role of Centres / Networks

ENIC-NARIC prescribed activities and services	Differences identified between prescribed and actual activities and services
Serve as the main information point on the recognition of higher education and higher education access qualifications at national level;	The scope of work for the majority of centres has moved beyond a strict focus on higher education and higher education access qualifications
Cooperate in related matters with other information centres, higher education institutions, their networks and other relevant actors in the national context;	Centres are engaging with a very broad range of national and international stakeholders

In the EU-context, and as far as NARICs have competence in professional recognition matters, cooperate with the National Coordinator and the competent authorities for the professional recognition of the regulated professions (EU Directives); •	Centres now have a broader role in relation to professional recognition; they may act as contact points for professional recognition, or as competent authorities.
other tasks as decided through national regulations	The "other tasks" carried out by NARICs are numerous and varied

3.2.5 Survey III

Survey III built upon the key findings from the previous research focusing on the following areas:

1. The expertise of the ENIC-NARIC Network(s) is often associated with higher education. The findings of CHARONA Surveys I and II show that the Centres have widened their scope of work:

    • 58% have taken on additional functions (e.g. National Contact Point for Professional Directives, National Europass Centre etc.);

    • 67% have extended their expertise and cover education sectors beyond higher education and access qualifications.

    In your opinion, how can your Centre and the Networks best reflect the changing scope of work when presenting themselves to external audiences?

2. Recognition continues to occupy a central role in education policy development, as evidenced by the Bucharest Ministerial Communiqué which endorses the EAR manual and encourages higher education institutions to improve institutional recognition procedures.

    In your opinion, could your Centre and the Network(s) play a greater role in facilitating and promoting good practice in institutional recognition procedures? If yes, please provide examples of how efficient collaboration with HEIs could be facilitated?

31 out of 55 Centres answered the survey. Tables 3.2.3 and 3.2.4 present the sample responses to the survey.

Table 3.2.3. In your opinion, how can your Centre and the Networks best reflect the changing scope of work when presenting themselves to external audiences?

The scope of work changes according to changes in society. A greater mobility implies a diversification of tasks and expertise, thus we could present the network as a network capable of adapting its scope of work according to external demands.
Be being co-operative and active and showing strong expertise.
Centre and network can explain their role on web pages and also on national seminars and international conferences.
Clear message to all relevant stakeholders about the widening scope of work through: •review of ENIC/NARIC Charter to reflect wider scope of work and new services / expertise offered by the networks; • effective communication and dissemination strategies and assuring that national government and decision-makers are aware of possibilities and expertise of the centres; • ENIC/NARIC could become a central point for the range of initiatives, instead of being yet another one of multiple agencies dealing in a disjoint manner with essentially related issues; •capacity building activities and exchange of experience between centres on possibilities for widening the scope of work and effectively positioning themselves to national/international stakeholders.
Centres can hold seminars, have information at websites, write information material about the remit and scope of their work, about the link between recognition and qualifications framework. The networks should/could be represented in the EQF AG. Subgroups within the network for centres working as Europass centres and reference points could be established. Since the LRC is a convention concerning higher education it is hard to use the LRC for further cooperation in recognition of VET qualifications. Maybe there could be a Copenhagen process network among the NARICS?
The simple answer is clear effective communication on what the centre actually does. Attention needs to be given to this issue on our respective websites in particular. This will help in highlighting our work to national and international stakeholders. Of course, the Secretariats of the Network has an important role in promoting/communicating the extended remit in general of the Network.
(…) On the general ENIC/NARIC website information could be provided to indeed introduce the idea that many centres accumulate competences on various topics, thus, there is a potential to seek advice on variety of issues (…).

Table 3.2.4. In your opinion, could your Centre and the Network(s) play a greater role in facilitating and promoting good practice in institutional recognition procedures? If yes, please provide examples of how efficient collaboration with HEIs could be facilitated?

Our centre could: - regular working meetings with HEIs on specific questions by them; presentation of good practices; - dissemination of the relevant projects of the networks; - Dissemination of new legislation (national and international) on higher education and academic/professional recognition.
(…) We haven't given priority to formal seminars and educational activities during the last years. Here is room for improvement.
HEIs and ENIC/NARIC centres should have regular meetings so as to exchange views on recognition, and novelties in HE fields. Due to lack of this communication, we are faced sometimes with the situation that both HEIs and centers are not familiarized with the novelties in legislative framework or procedures.
The centre and ENIC/NARIC Networks should have a more important role in facilitating in promoting good practice in institutional recognition procedures. The latest EAR Manual is an example how networks can contribute to good practice in

institutional recognition procedures. (…)
First of all, by holding workshops and consulting for the recognition people from HEIs.
ENIC/NARIC centres could play a greater role. The following activities can help facilitate collaboration with HEIs at the national level: - organizing workshops, seminars for employees of higher education institutions, - regular meetings with admission officers, - translation of EAR-HEI Manual into national languages. At the network level collaboration can be facilitating by: - cooperation with international university networks, - projects involving both ENIC/NARIC centres and HEIs/HEIS' organizations, - better promotion of ENIC/NARIC network activities.
As a network: capacity building among admission officers and HEIs. Develop manuals (EAR HEI). Contacts with umbrella organizations (EUA/IUA). As national centre: training, projects, seminars, WSs *[workshops]* among HEI; making part of regular network meetings of the HEIs + organizing special information days for HEIs. Providing easily accessible country modules and general recognition statements. Developing automatic recognition recommendations for HEIs (Data base).
(…), this could be done through tools that were developed in the past. Since many of those tools were developed within the European context, for a European audience, there is definitely a need to make them all relevant to our own context outside the European region. This could be done by adapting tools previously developed. For future collaboration, we should try to include stakeholders from various regions and various sectors (both ENIC-NARIC Centres and HEI representatives).

Analysis of all responses resulted in identification of the following key points:

➢ In order to best reflect the changing scope of work, the Networks should have effective communication / dissemination strategies and use different channels and activities to inform various audiences about it, such as:

- o Website (ENIC-NARIC website and websites of individual Centres)
- o National and international seminars, conferences etc
- o Cooperation with relevant stakeholders.

Secretariats of the Networks should play a key role in these communication strategies. The extended scope of work of ENIC-NARIC Networks should be reflected in the ENIC/NARIC Charter (revision of the ENIC/NARIC Charter).

➢ Regarding cooperation with higher education institutions the ENIC-NARIC Networks can play a more important role in facilitating and promoting good practice in institutional recognition procedures. The cooperation should take place at two levels. As ENIC-NARIC Networks the networks should cooperate with umbrella organisations of higher education institutions from various geographical regions (e.g. European Universities Association (EUA)), promote good practice in recognition (EAR – HEI Manual was mentioned as a good example). As an individual Centre, the ENIC-NARIC should have regular contact with higher education institutions and use various tools to promote good practice in recognition: workshops, seminars, databases etc.

3.3 Bologna Process

Introduction

The Bologna Process is aimed at creating a European higher education area based on the undisputed mobility of students, academic staff and graduates. International mobility can be a reality when it is supported by fair recognition of periods of study (credits) and qualifications. This is also a reason why - from the very beginning - recognition has always played an important role in the Bologna Process.

From the outset, the ENIC-NARIC Networks have supported the creation of the European higher education area and actively contributed to the Bologna Process.

This chapter will demonstrate the role of the ENIC-NARIC Networks in the Bologna Process and suggest ways in which it could be developed further.

3.3.1 Background analysis

The Bologna Process is a direct result of the [Bologna Declaration](#), which was signed in the Italian city of Bologna on 19 June 1999 by ministers in charge of higher education from 29 European countries. Today, the Process unites [47 countries](#) - all party to the [European Cultural Convention](#) and committed to the goals of the European Higher Education Area. An important characteristic of the Bologna Process - and key to its success - is that it also involves European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO, as well as representatives of higher education institutions, students, staff, employers and quality assurance agencies.

The overarching aim of the Bologna Process is to create a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) based on international cooperation and academic exchange that is beneficial to students and staff both from Europe and other parts of the world and to facilitate compatibility among the diverse European higher education systems.

The EHEA aims to:

> ➢ Facilitate mobility of students, graduates and higher education staff;

> ➢ Prepare students for their future careers and for life as active citizens in democratic societies, and support their personal development;

> Offer broad access to high-quality higher education, based on democratic principles and academic freedom[18].

3.3.2 Recognition in the Bologna Process

Prior to the Bologna Process the importance of fair recognition was widely acknowledged, most notably by the adoption of the Lisbon Recognition Convention in 1997.

However, one of the main aims set in the Bologna Declaration is to facilitate international mobility of students, academic staff and graduates. Since recognition plays an important role in international mobility, it was mentioned in all communiqués (see table 3.3.1) of the ministers responsible for higher education in the countries participating in the Bologna Process. The ENIC-NARIC's role in fulfilling the goals of the Bologna Process is crucial, given its expertise and experience in the field of recognition.

Table 3.3.1 Recognition in the communiqués

Prague communiqué (2001)
*"Ministers strongly encouraged universities and other higher education institutions to take full advantage of existing national legislation and European tools aimed at facilitating academic and professional recognition of course units, degrees and other awards, so that citizens can effectively use their qualifications, competencies and skills throughout the European Higher Education Area. **Ministers called upon existing organisations and networks such as NARIC and ENIC to promote, at institutional, national and European level, simple, efficient and fair recognition** reflecting the underlying diversity of qualifications."*   *"Ministers (…) encouraged closer cooperation between recognition and quality assurance networks."[19]*
Berlin Communiqué (2003)
"Ministers underline the importance of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, which should be ratified by all countries participating in the Bologna Process, and call on the ENIC and NARIC networks along with the competent National Authorities to further the implementation of the Convention."   *"(…) They appeal to institutions and employers to make full use of the Diploma Supplement, so as to take advantage of the improved transparency and flexibility of the higher education degree systems, for **fostering employability and facilitating academic recognition for further studies**[20]."*
Bergen communiqué (2005)
"We note that 36 of the 45 participating countries have now ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention. We urge those that have not already done so to ratify the

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[18] http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/about/

[19] Communiqué of the meeting of European Ministers in charge of Higher Education in Prague on May 19th 2001; www.ehea.info

[20] Berlin. Recognition of degrees: Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees. www.ehea.info

Convention without delay. We commit ourselves to ensuring the full implementation of its principles, and to incorporating them in national legislation as appropriate. **We call on all participating countries to address recognition problems identified by the ENIC/NARIC networks.** *We will draw up national action plans to improve the quality of the process associated with the recognition of foreign qualifications. (…) We express support for the subsidiary texts to the Lisbon Recognition Convention and call upon all national authorities and other stakeholders to recognise joint degrees awarded in two or more countries in the EHEA."*
"We recognise that mobility of students and staff among all participating countries remains one of the key objectives of the Bologna Process. (…) **We urge institutions and students to make full use of mobility programmes, advocating full recognition of study periods abroad within such programmes.[21]"**

London Communiqué (2007)
*"**Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential** components of the EHEA, both internally and in a global context. (…)."*
*"There has been progress in the implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC), ECTS and diploma supplements, but **the range of national and institutional approaches to recognition needs to be more coherent**. To improve recognition practices, we therefore ask the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) to arrange for the ENIC/NARIC networks to analyse our national action plans and spread good practice."*
"Only in a small number of EHEA countries could the recognition of prior learning for access and credits be said to be well developed. Working in cooperation with ENIC/NARIC, we invite BFUG to develop proposals for improving the recognition of prior learning."
"We call on HEIs, ENIC/NARIC centres and other competent recognition authorities within the EHEA to assess qualifications from other parts of the world with the same open mind with which they would expect European qualifications to be assessed elsewhere, and to base this recognition on the principles of the LRC"[22].

Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve communiqué (2009)
*"(…) Moreover, **the Bologna Process has promoted the Diploma Supplement and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System to further increase transparency and recognition."***
"(…) Successful policies for lifelong learning will include basic principles and procedures for recognition of prior learning on the basis of learning outcomes regardless of whether the knowledge, skills and competences were acquired through formal, non-formal, or informal learning paths. (…)
"(…) Moreover, mobility policies shall be based on a range of practical measures pertaining to the funding of mobility, recognition, available infrastructure, visa and work permit regulations. (…)" "These transparency tools need to relate closely to the principles of the Bologna Process, in particular quality assurance and recognition, which will remain our priority (…)"

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[21] Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Bergen, 19-20 May 2005, www.ehae.info
[22] London Communiqué. Towards the European Higher Education Area: responding to challenges in a globalised world. www.ehea.info

> *"In particular the BFUG is asked (…) to follow-up on the recommendations of analysis of the national action plans on recognition.[23]"*

> **Bucharest communiqué (2012)**
> *"Fair academic and professional recognition, including recognition of non-formal and informal learning, is at the core of the EHEA. (…) We are determined to remove outstanding obstacles hindering effective and proper recognition and are willing to **work together towards the automatic recognition of comparable academic degrees**, building on the tools of the Bologna framework, as a long-term goal of the EHEA. We therefore commit to reviewing our national legislation to comply with the Lisbon Recognition Convention. **We welcome the European Area of Recognition (EAR) Manual and recommend its use as a set of guidelines for recognition of foreign qualifications** and a compendium of good practices, as well as encourage higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies to assess institutional recognition procedures in internal and external quality assurance".*
> *"Review national legislation to fully comply with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and promote the use of the EAR-manual to advance recognition practices."*
> *"Support the work of a pathfinder group of countries exploring ways to achieve the automatic academic recognition of comparable degrees"*
>
> *"encourage higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies to assess institutional recognition procedures in internal and external quality assurance."[24]*

3.3.3 ENIC-NARIC Networks and the Bologna Process

From the beginning the ENIC-NARIC Networks declared their willingness to contribute to the creation of the EHEA. To this end, the Networks came together to outline how the recognition of qualifications may be improved, initially with the aim of helping to make the EHEA a reality by 2010. At their annual meetings in 1999 and 2003, the ENIC-NARIC Networks adopted statements outlining their contributions, and in 2001 they adopted a report on Recognition Issues in the Bologna Process[25].

The ENIC-NARIC Networks have made important contributions to the European dimension of the Bologna Process. The Networks elaborated and discussed the subsidiary text later on adopted by the Lisbon Recognition Convention:

➢ Recommendation on International Access Qualifications (adopted in 1999);

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[23] Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve, 28-29 April 2009. www.ehea.info

[24] Making the Most of our Potential: Consolidating the European higher Education Area, Bucharest Communiqué. www.ehea.info

[25] Strasbourg statement on Recognition Issues In the European Higher Education Area. Contributions by ENIC/NARIC Networks to the Bologna Process. Adopted by the ENIC and NARIC Networks in their annual joint meeting, Strasbourg, 8 June 2004; www.enic-naric.net

➢ Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications and Explanatory Memorandum (adopted in 2001 and revised in 2010);

➢ Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education (adopted in 2001 and revised in 2007);

➢ Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees (adopted in 2004);

➢ Recommendations on the Use of Qualifications Frameworks in the Recognition of Foreign Qualifications (adopted in 2013).

The ENIC-NARIC Networks, in their annual joint meeting in Strasbourg in June 2004, adopted the Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Information on Recognition.

Representatives of the ENIC-NARIC Centres also participated in many working parties dealing with recognition issues. In these working parties participants included representatives of Centres as well as individuals from the ENIC Bureau or NARIC Advisory Board as representatives of the Networks. These include:

➢ ENIC/NARIC Working Party on recognition issues in the Bologna Process.

➢ ENIC/NARIC Working Group on Substantial Differences.

➢ Working party set up by the BFUG to "analyse National Action Plans for recognition and to spread good practice"[26].

➢ ENIC/NARIC Working Group on "Global dimension of Recognition".

➢ EHEA Working Group on recognition[27].

ENIC-NARIC representatives are also involved in the three new EHEA Working Groups: the Pathfinder Group, the Working Group on Transparency Tools and the working group on structural reforms. ENIC-NARIC Centres contribute to the Bologna

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[26] REPORT ON THE ANALYSIS OF THE 2007 NATIONAL ACTION PLANS FOR RECOGNITION; Andrejs Rauhvargers, DGIV/EDU/HE (2008) 9, Strasbourg, 5 June 2008, Orig. Eng.
[27] Final report available on:
http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/(1)/Recognition%20WG%20Report.pdf

Process also by undertaking various national and international projects[28]. The national projects were usually aimed at promoting the Lisbon Recognition Convention, recognition tools (Diploma Supplement, ECTS, Qualification Framework) among the national stakeholders. The international projects (involving a minimum of three centres) are aimed more at finding out how various recognition tools (e.g. Diploma Supplement, Qualification Frameworks) work in future, how the centres deal with difficult recognition issues (e.g. research on substantial differences, recognition of prior learning), capacity building, codifying standards and guidelines on all aspects of the international recognition of qualifications (European Area of Recognition[29]). In April 2012, the manual was included as a recommendation in the EHEA's Bucharest Ministerial Communiqué 2012.

Evaluating the progress of the Bologna Process is key point of discussion at the annual ENIC-NARIC meeting. Chair of the Bologna Follow-Up Group is always invited to present the latest development in the European Higher Education Area.

3.3.4 Primary Research and Analysis: Survey analysis

A survey was sent to the Heads of the Centres of the ENICs and the NARICs to receive information regarding the actual roles of the Centres. 31 Centres out of 55 (56%) answered to the survey.

The majority (87%) of the Centres are located in the countries involved in the Bologna Process. The remaining 13% of countries have their representatives in the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG). The majority of the Centres responding to the survey are involved in the work of these groups. The Centres are also involved in various working groups established at national or international level. There are, however, Centres that are not involved in the national Bologna groups although such groups exist in their countries and their countries participate in the Bologna Process.

Sample answers to the question regarding Centres' involvement in the Bologna Follow-Up group at national level are presented in the table below.

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[28] Information about the completed and on-going NARIC projects is available on the website: http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/naric_en.htm
[29] The manual is available on the website: www.eurorecognition.eu

Table 3.3.2 sample answer to the question: Is there a Bologna Follow-Up group at national level in your country? If yes, is your Centre involved in it and how?

We work closely with the […]'s national contact point of BFUG; we also serve as members of two Bologna WGs for and on behalf of the […].
Yes, our centre is part of the national BFUG
Director of the Centre is a member of the group.
There is a National Delegate that it reports to the Directorate General of Higher Education where NARIC is located.
The Bologna Experts group used to play the role of a BFUG at the level of the […]. However, due to the many projects led by the Bologna Experts and the need to have a more formal group dealing with the policy-making aspects of the Bologna Process, a BFUG for the […]will be established in September 2012.
Yes, a member of the follow-up group.
It is an informal group and the centre has a representative in it.
There is a National Delegate that reports to the Directorate General of Higher Education where NARIC is located.
There is a Bologna group on the national level and the Center is in involved in it.
We are associated to the work of the national team of Bologna experts (active participation to regular meetings, expertise on recognition matters).
Yes, the head of office is a member in this group.
Head of the Centre is a member of the National Bologna Committee.
Our center is represented in the BFUG.
The centre is involved through a colleague at the agency who is a member of the group. The centre is asked for comments/suggestions etc as necessary.
Our centre is not involved.
Centre for Information and Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education doesn't participate in the Bologna Follow-Up Group.

ENIC-NARIC Centres contribute to fair recognition of qualifications and therefore support mobility in various ways. One of them is by providing reliable information about recognition procedures, education systems, citizens' rights regarding recognition, and qualifications as well as by providing recognition statements to holders of foreign degrees. The vast majority (94%) of ENIC-NARIC Centres serve as the main information point regarding recognition of higher education and higher education access qualifications.

The majority (81%) of the ENIC-NARIC Centres provide assessment services and issue recognition statements. In their assessment, ENIC-NARIC Centres adhere to the evaluation criteria based directly on the Lisbon Recognition Convention, subsidiary texts, and EAR Manual. Some of the Centres also have their own codes of good practice. In most cases (approximately 70%) the assessment criteria are published and available on the Centre's website. Most ENIC-NARIC Centres (77%) handle qualifications from outside Lisbon Recognition Convention area in the same way as qualifications from countries party to the Convention.

The ENIC-NARIC Centres are actively engaged in sharing good recognition practice and exchange information regarding assessment of qualifications and education systems both at national and international level. 70% of the responding Centres declare that they organise workshops and training events (both face-to-face and on-line) on recognition. 68% of Centres organise and participate in relevant conferences, some Centres organise an annual conference for national stakeholders. 65% of respondents participate in various national projects (aimed at national stakeholders) and international projects involving several of the ENIC-NARIC. 58% produce publications on topics related to recognition, for example, recommendations for decision making bodies at universities, newsletters, web-portal for HEIs, e-flyers

3.3.5 Case study: The Netherlands

Nuffic is the designated NARIC/ENIC in the Netherlands. The Netherlands NARIC/ENIC aims to collect and make available information on higher education in other countries in order to improve transparency and to facilitate international credential evaluation. The Dutch NARIC/ENIC receives its funding from the Ministry of Education (MoE). The MoE is in charge of the policy and legislation on recognition. Upon request the Dutch NARIC/ENIC can advise the ministry.

<u>**Key clients**</u>
In the Netherlands, NARIC/ENIC is an advisory body. Its key clients in the domestic market include:
  ➢ Higher education institutions

  ➢ The competent authorities for regulated professions

  ➢ Individual applicants

<u>**Services**</u>
Our services can broadly be grouped into the following categories:
  • Collecting, ordering, and making available information about higher education in other countries, and making suggestions for evaluating foreign diplomas in terms of the Dutch system. This information enables clients to make their own credential evaluations. Examples are:

    o country modules which contain general information about the education system of a specific country. It also provides information about the main qualifications issued in a specific country, as well as the evaluation of these qualifications in the Netherlands.
    o the Nuffic Newsletter. In numerous issues, attention has been paid to the Lisbon recognition convention and its application.
    o annual information day for national admission officer networks

(research universities and universities of applied sciences).

A recent initiative is the development of a 'diploma wizard', which is an e-tool enabling higher education institutions to make their own evaluations based on Nuffic's database of previous evaluations.

- Credential evaluation. Foreign study programmes are analysed using prescribed formats and compared with Dutch programmes. The format is based on the Lisbon recognition convention criteria. The evaluation is issued to the client as a recommendation. It has no official status and does not give any rights.
- Diploma descriptions. A diploma description is a recommendation on the evaluation of a Dutch higher education programme in other countries.

- Consultancy & projects. On request, The Netherlands NARIC/ENIC provides training sessions for its clients. The training teaches participants to independently produce credential evaluations based on the Lisbon recognition convention. Further the Dutch NARIC/ENIC conducts projects and consultancy on recognition and foreign higher education systems, both in the Netherlands and in other countries.

- Advise on student grant portability. Since 1 September 2007 Dutch students can use their government grants for studies overseas. Students need to meet eligibility criteria after which the Dutch NARIC/ENIC checks whether the study is recognized in the destination country and whether the content and level of the programme abroad is similar to a programme in The Netherlands for which the student receives a grant.

Nuffic's representatives participated in many of the working groups dedicated to recognition, for example:
- ENIC/NARIC Working Party on recognition issues in the Bologna Process.

- ENIC/NARIC Working Group on "Global dimension of Recognition".

- EHEA Working Group on recognition

Nuffic is a project co-ordinator of many projects aimed at facilitating recognition. The latest examples are:

- European Area of Recognition, *European Area of Recognition 2*

- European Area of Recognition – Higher Education Institutions

- Evaluation and Assessment of the Role of NARICs

3.3.6 Comparative Analysis

The ENIC/NARIC Charter does not directly reference the role of an individual Centre in the Bologna Process. However, the tasks listed in the Charter definitely support the Bologna Process. ENIC-NARIC Centres not only provide information regarding recognition (i.e. legislation, procedures) and information useful for making recognition decision (i.e. information on education system, qualifications) - as it is indicated in the Charter - but they also promote the knowledge of recognition (Lisbon Recognition Convention, new recognition tools developed in the framework of the Bologna Process etc.) among the national stakeholders. To achieve this, they organize various seminars, workshop and conferences. The Centres also undertake various project activities to deal with recognition issues or to improve recognition at the national level.

To facilitate mobility most of the ENIC-NARIC Centres provide credential evaluation services and issue recognition statements to holders of foreign qualifications. As outlined above, in evaluating foreign credentials, most of the Centres do not differentiate between credentials coming from countries inside and from outside the Lisbon Recognition Convention Area and use the same evaluation criteria in both cases.

The ENIC-NARIC Centres also cooperate with other stakeholders at the national and international level. They are either directly involved in the activities of the national Bologna group (Bologna experts) or closely cooperate with the group on the relevant Bologna issues. The representatives of the Centres are also involved in relevant working parties or project activities aimed at finding solutions to various recognition issues.

As indicated in the ENIC/NARIC Charter the Centres contribute to the policy development and creation of legislation at the national and international level. They take over new functions- also in the framework of the Bologna Process – and this is not reflected in the Charter.

The ENIC-NARIC Networks are – as indicated in the Charter – the perfect forum for exchanging information on the developments in the Centres' national systems,

developments in the education systems of the third countries, discussing the potential influence of changes on recognition and exchanging good practices. .

From the beginning the ENIC-NARIC Networks supported the Bologna Process and contributed to its development. They have established working groups within the network or have participated in the working groups established by the BFUG that deal with different issues regarding recognition. The Networks are actively involved in the process of elaborating and discussing the new subsidiary texts to the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

Table 3.3.3: Prescribed versus current role of Centres / Network

ENIC-NARIC prescribed activities and services	Differences identified between prescribed and actual activities and services
Promote cooperation with quality assurance bodies and networks, in particular ENQA in order to establish a common framework, share information and increase mutual trust between education systems	Centres cooperate with a number of groups related to the Bologna Process as well, such as: • The Bologna Follow-Up Group • The EQF Referencing Group • National Bologna Experts Group.
Provide a forum for the debate and development of policies that promote and facilitate the recognition of qualifications in the European Region;	Interaction of the centres and Networks with the BFUG and other referencing or working groups is not mentioned in the Charter
Enhance the European dimension in recognition in the Lifelong Learning context of the European Higher Education Area	Centres engage in a variety of activities supporting the Bologna Process: • Working Groups • Training Provision • Research and consultancy • Advice and guidance • Information / conference presentations / days

3.3.7 Survey III

Survey III builds on the key findings from previous research. The aim of the survey was to gather opinions and suggestions from the Centres on how the changing scope of work can be better reflected by the Centres and Networks, and on their future cooperation with higher education institutions.

More specifically, the Heads of Centres were asked to express their opinion on the following questions:

1. The Bucharest Ministerial Communiqué calls for greater coherence between recognition, quality assurance and qualification frameworks. While there are evident links between the recognition and the quality assurance functions, the findings of CHARONA Surveys show a lack of demonstrable cooperation. **In your opinion, how can the collaboration between quality assurance and recognition be structured or facilitated?**

2. Recognition has been and remains a central element of the EHEA. The findings of CHARONA Surveys demonstrate, that ENIC-NARIC Networks have so far played an important role in the Bologna Process by developing and implementing good practices in recognition, taking part in the Bologna Follow-up Groups and the Pathfinder Groups amongst others. **In your opinion, how can your Centre and the Network(s) in general continue to best fulfill their role and contribute towards the future objectives and priorities of the EHEA?**

Tables 3.3.4 and 3.3.5 present the sample responses to the survey.

Table 3.3.4 sample answers to question: In your opinion, how can the collaboration between quality assurance and recognition be structured or facilitated?

If organizations responsible for quality assurance are different than those in recognition, representative from both organization should be working together. This has to happen at the strategic policy development, implementation and promotion stages within the process.
Quality Assurance and Recognition are two important subjects in higher education. There should always be a collaboration between them. A detailed information/presentation by experts should be given in ENIC/NARIC Meetings.
Centers need easy access to information on the accreditation of higher education institutions and programs, especially in historical view. This should be the main subject of cooperation today.

Table 3.3.5 sample answers to question: In your opinion, how can your Centre and the Network(s) in general continue to best fulfill their role and contribute towards the future objectives and priorities of the EHEA?

By continuing to develop and implement good practices in recognition and working groups gathering different stakeholders involved in the EHEA.

• Improving institutional recognition through cooperation with HEIs and QA agencies • Continuous involvement in BFUG and Pathfinder group • Continuing investment into staff-development and learning to accommodate greater emphasis on learning outcomes into recognition procedures • Disseminating and supporting the application of EQF and other transparency tools developed within the EHEA.
By participation in joint expert working groups, as speakers in events etc.
Closer cooperation with other networks, HEIs and stakeholders for developing and implementing enhanced and sound transnational joint programmes, international and cross-border mobility programmes and agreements in accordance with LRC principles and good practices which could practically contribute to the objectives and priorities of the EHEA
It is desirable to ensure active involvement and participation in the working group meetings, trainings and events of the EHEA. (…)
By participating in BFUG-working groups as centre and by making room for a ENIC-NARIC member in BFUG WG - by constantly feeding recognition problems into competent national authorities
Activities aimed at improving institutional recognition: - knowledge sharing - credential evaluation - promoting good recognition practice (EAR manual) - closer cooperation with HEIs - cooperation with quality assurance and accreditation agencies on how institutional recognition practices should be reflected in quality assurance.
In our opinion, national representatives in these groups should be staff of the national ENIC/NARIC and also the network should be formally represented in these groups [on recognition].
I think a major consideration is how to keep recognition practices as up-to-date as possible so that they reflect the flexible and mobile learning pathways that are becoming more common as the EHEA progresses. (…)

Careful analysis of all responses resulted in the identification of the following key points:

➢ There is no doubt that recognition bodies and quality assurance bodies should cooperate. This should be a strategic policy development. Presentation of issues regarding quality assurance in higher education should be a part of ENIC-NARIC meetings.

➢ ENIC-NARIC Centres and the networks have made a significant contribution to the Bologna Process from the beginning. In the future the networks and Centres should continue their valuable work and facilitate recognition on a

daily basis (provision of information, credential evaluation) as well as develop and implement good recognition practices. They should also focus on cooperation with relevant stakeholders, particularly with higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies with regard to recognition practices at institutions and how they could be reflected in the quality assurance. It was also stressed that the Networks should be more involved in policy-making in the field of recognition. It is suggested that they should be more involved in the activities of the BFUG and BFUG working groups.

3.4 National and Transnational qualifications frameworks

Introduction

This section considers the role of national and transnational qualifications frameworks and how they have impacted, and been effected by, the work of individual Centres and the Network. The premise for choosing to investigate the impact of qualifications frameworks is based on their relatively new introduction to the context of the work of Centres. Although some Centres' national context has meant they are familiar with and practice recognition alongside well-established qualifications frameworks, this is not true for all. This study therefore seeks to establish the impact of national qualifications frameworks at each stage of their development: from their inception, through to their initiation and finally their implementation.

In terms of analysing such change on a transnational level, the establishment of a transnational framework, specifically the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), provides a useful backdrop. The concept of the EQF has been in development since 2002 in response to requests from the European member states, social partners and other stakeholders for a common reference to increase the transparency of qualifications. Finally introduced in 2008, it has provided impetus for change in the practices of Centres. Most noticeably, it has led many countries to develop and/or review their own qualifications frameworks in order to comply with the EQF. Although countries are not obliged to reference their qualifications frameworks against it, the process is encouraged with a view to improving mobility across the Network. Therefore this study seeks to analyse the impact of transnational frameworks with a focus on the example of the EQF, which, given its recent introduction, has the benefit of demonstrating its impact at all stages from inception, to initiation, to implementation.

3.4.1 Background Research and Analysis

Qualifications Frameworks

Qualifications frameworks "can be used as a tool to support different policy goals, including the reform of qualifications and qualifications systems, improving relevance, transparency and the coherence between qualifications or promoting lifelong learning objectives such as access, progress and the transfer of learning and opening up new

pathways"[30]. They achieve this by providing a structure for classifying qualifications in terms of the level they pertain to within the context of other national or sectoral qualifications. As such, they are currently receiving a great deal of attention from governments and stakeholders across the globe. In 2004 only a handful of countries had qualifications frameworks, and by 2010 there were more than 50 countries around the world with frameworks, and at least 20 more countries considering the decision to develop one[31]. The development of qualifications frameworks around the world can be seen as a positive move towards transparency across education and training systems to the benefit of users and providers within and outside national boundaries.

It is important to remember that the development of qualifications frameworks is a political process. To this end, it would be inappropriate to understand them as neutral, technical instruments[32] because their very development engages a range of different political views in dialogue with the common agenda to allow people to do more with their qualifications (through improved transparency, currency and portability) and remove barriers to education, training and learning. These motives cannot be disassociated from the development of qualifications frameworks.

Transnational Qualifications Frameworks

In line with the aims of qualifications frameworks, a central motivation for developing transnational qualifications frameworks lies in the desire to ensure that different aspects of national qualifications are useful and consistent with one another, and that those aspects are recognised and respected beyond national boundaries[33]. There is also an expectation that qualifications framework development will contribute to mobility and the recognition of qualifications[34].

A commonality across all forms of transnational qualifications frameworks is that they transcend national boundaries, however it should be recognised that they may do so

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[30] European Training Foundation (2011), *Transnational Qualifications Frameworks*, European Training Foundation, pp.9-10

[31] European Qualifications Framework (2010), *Added Value of National Qualifications Frameworks in Implementing the EQF*, European Union.

[32] European Training Foundation (2010), *PLA Transnational Qualifications Frameworks: an International Perspective*, Brussels, 13th December 2010, presentation available online from: http://ec.europa.eu/education/eu-australia/doc/peer/deij2.pdf

[33] Zamorano et al. (2011), *Final Report: An exploration of the use and potential use of the European Qualifications Framework in qualifications recognition procedures of four ENIC-NARIC Centres*, Severes, October 15th 2011

[34] European Training Foundation (2010), *PLA Transnational Qualifications Frameworks: an International Perspective*, Brussels, 13th December 2010, presentation available online from: http://ec.europa.eu/education/eu-australia/doc/peer/deij2.pdf

in different ways. A *transnational framework of common qualifications* integrates national qualifications frameworks and systems based on common qualifications and common quality assurance policies. *Meta-frameworks*, however, comprise a framework of frameworks and link national systems and common principles of quality assurance whilst allowing for different national (or sectoral) approaches.

This research focuses on meta-frameworks because, as noted, they recognise differences across national systems and allow these to persist even within the context of an overarching transnational framework. This has potentially complex implications for recognition centres because it allows them to retain (where present) their national qualifications frameworks whilst simultaneously having the opportunity to reference qualifications against a meta-framework.

Development of Qualifications Frameworks in Europe

The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is an example of a meta-framework in practice: a transnational qualifications framework that references existing national frameworks against a single, overarching qualifications framework thereby linking national qualifications systems and common approaches to quality assurance. The alignment or referencing is "based on trust and subject to review by international experts"[35].

The EQF was developed in response to requests from member states of the European Union, the social partners and other stakeholders for "a common reference to increase the transparency of qualifications"[36]. It was conceived to apply to all types of education, training and qualifications: from school education, to academic, vocational and professional. This system emphasises learning outcomes of education courses, and encourages lifelong learning by seeking to validate alongside formal learning, non-formal and informal learning. Currently twenty EU member states have presented their national reports referencing their frameworks to the EQF[37].

Finally adopted in 2008 after six years of debate, the EQF consists of four core elements:

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[35] Zamorano et al. (2011), *Final Report: An exploration of the use and potential use of the European Qualifications Framework in qualifications recognition procedures of four ENIC-NARIC Centres*, Severes, October 15th 2011, p.62

[36] European Training Foundation (2011), *Transnational Qualifications Frameworks*, European Training Foundation, p.4

[37] *European Qualifications Framework*, available online from: http://ec.europa.eu/eqf/compare/select_en.htm#comparison

- Vision and objectives;

- A set of common descriptors, defined in terms of learning outcomes, and located in a structure of eight levels (see Appendix 1 for a breakdown of EQF levels);

- Definitions of key concepts;

- A set of common principles and procedures on quality assurance[38].

The European Parliament Council's *Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning*, (henceforth referred to as 'the Recommendation') formally asked member states to reference the levels of their qualifications to this central European reference point in a transparent way, through national qualifications frameworks where appropriate. Importantly, countries were asked to use learning outcomes in describing qualifications and to designate national coordination points to oversee the relationship between their respective national system and the EQF. The philosophical basis for shifting to a learning outcomes approach of defining and describing qualifications is to try and unify approaches across Europe and thereby make comparison and cooperation between countries and institutions possible. It is important to recognise in the development and implementation of the EQF, quality assurance forms the basis for mutual trust internationally. In line with this, several pan-European arrangements have been made (including the European Quality Assurance Framework for Vocational Education and Training, the work of Cedefop on the examination of European experiences in quality assurance and certifications, and sub-groups of the EQF dedicated specifically to quality assurance issues[39]) to help mitigate potential over-reliance of the EQF on national quality assurance processes.

Core responsibility for implementation of the EQF at European level lies with the European Commission. The Commission is supported by three implementation structures:

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[38] European Parliament Council, *Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning*, Official Journal of the European Union, C111/1 (henceforth referred to as 'the Recommendation')

[39] European Training Foundation (2011), *Transnational Qualifications Frameworks*, European Training Foundation, p.24

- The EQF Advisory Group (the main coordination body which oversees and coordinates implementation of the EQF);

- National Coordination Points (responsible for the practicalities of referencing to the EQF and ensuring country-specific issues are raised); and

- Support/Working Groups (focussing on specific themes and active in ensuring systematic exchange of experiences within the EQF environment).

Although the EQF has gained wide acceptance throughout Europe, its influences and impact are yet to be fully determined. National qualifications frameworks are still in development in many countries meaning that they have not yet been integrated to the EQF. Consequently there is, currently, little evidence of the impact on employers, providers and learners. Despite lack of evidence, many have postulated the potential positive and negative impacts of the meta-framework. Positive implications pertain to the improved coherence and coordination across presently disparate European education systems, and therefore closer alignment and facilitation of the Bologna higher education framework. Potential negative implications have been highlighted with regard to the EQF's ability to form linkages between higher education and vocational education and training as well as linkages to the labour market, additional bureaucracy, and the dangers of adapting to an extreme form of outcomes (which overlook teaching inputs and learning conditions). Challenges for the European Commission therefore lie in ensuring the value of traditional offerings in education is maintained, ensuring that a critical mass of countries remains engaged with the process, and directly linking learning outcomes to the needs of the labour market and employers.

Relationship between Qualifications Frameworks and the Centres

Conceptually, the link between qualifications frameworks and the recognition function of Centres is tight, as both are aimed at increasing transparency and mobility. Despite this alignment of goals, it must be recognised that the two concepts and their associated functions are not mutually exclusive – that is to say, qualifications frameworks are important information tools for Centres but do not result in automatic recognition, and similarly Centres are useful information tools for qualifications frameworks but do not automatically enable their implementation.

According to Zamorano et al. (2011), "cooperation between recognition and qualification framework responsible authorities is crucial". Having conducted in-depth case studies on four Centres in Europe, they claim that in order to be aware of and in a position to respond to changes in national qualification developments and the

consequential impacts on national and international frameworks, Centres should be in constant dialogue with the bodies that develop and reference qualification frameworks. Further to this, they contend that due to the Centres' expertise as well as their strategic importance for recognition and mobility, they should be consulted in the development and referencing of frameworks.

In evaluating international qualifications it is important to recognise that national and transnational frameworks are neither the primary nor only source of information used by Centres to make credential evaluation decisions. There is also no evidence of any formal obligation for Centres to publish the associated national or transnational framework level in their credential evaluation statements[40]. This suggests that the actual, tangible outcomes of a credential evaluation have not been affected by the introduction and development of qualifications frameworks.

However, there is some evidence that qualifications frameworks, including transnational qualifications frameworks, may be influencing existing recognition methodologies, and therefore the underlying philosophies of recognition practices. For example, the introduction of the EQF has contributed to the shift in focus of credential evaluation away from more traditional methodologies considering the duration of qualifications towards the consideration of less easily definable but potentially more valuable aspects of qualifications such as learning outcomes. This has affected the practices of many, though not all, European countries.

In addition, recognition practices have been identified as mechanisms for promoting the transparency of a person's skills, the currency of their qualification(s), and the portability of qualifications. All of these notions rely on trust that a qualification has been appropriately evaluated so that it can be recognised, valued and applied within another context to the one it originated from. All of these notions also underpin qualifications frameworks, demonstrating once more the inextricable relationship between Centres and qualifications frameworks in the context of a common goal to achieve greater mobility.

The subsidiary text to the LRC "The Recommendation on the Use of Qualification Frameworks in the Recognition of Foreign Qualifications" and its explanatory

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[40] NUFFIC (2012), *European Area of Recognition Manual: Practical guidelines for fair recognition of qualifications*, available online from: http://www.eurorecognition.eu/Manual/EAR_manual_v_1.0.pdf

memorandum[41] adopted by the LRC Committee in June 2013 provide a sound conceptual basis for the use of qualifications frameworks in recognition.

The Recommendation reiterates that self-certified and referenced frameworks can assist ENIC-NARICs in:

- Establishing the level of a foreign qualification in the country of origin and identifying the compatible level in a receiving country (by applying the outcomes of referencing to over-arching frameworks);
- Providing fair assessment based on the learning outcomes (by using the learning outcomes provided in the national and over-arching frameworks as a generic point of reference);
- Investigating quality of foreign qualifications (by waiving the need for further quality checks when qualifications are included in the framework by the competent authorities and, therefore, quality assured)
- Gathering information on workload (by referring to credits attached to qualifications).

Furthermore, the explanatory memorandum encourages ENIC-NARICs and other competent recognition authorities to "*develop the use of qualifications frameworks in recognition further*" by staying *"involved in the development processes for National Qualifications Frameworks as well as in, where called for, the referencing and self-certification processes".*

Having gained a thorough understanding of the issues surrounding qualifications frameworks, the next section now considers raw data from CHARONA Network surveys in order to further investigate the current relationship between ENIC-NARICs and national and transnational frameworks.

3.4.2 Primary Research and Analysis: Survey Analysis

3.4.2.1 Survey I

In Survey I, one of the most revealing response sets was the answers provided to the question **"Has the Centre been affected by recognition reforms or policies over the last 15 years?".** 71.4% of respondents claimed that their Centre had been affected by policy changes, specifically citing the development of qualifications

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[41] http://www.enic-naric.net/documents/DGIIEDUHE_2013_15_Rev_01_FINAL_-_Explanatory_memorandum_on_LRC_Supplementary_Text_on_the_Use_of_QFs_ENGLISH.pdf

frameworks on both national and international levels. This is supported by the fact that 83.3% respondents reported the presence of an EQF referencing group within their country. It should be noted that although the survey asked Centres to assert the presence of both policy changes and EQF referencing groups, it did not go beyond this to investigate how these factors had affected the work of the Centres.

3.4.2.2 Survey II

In addition to the initial CHARONA survey, a more in-depth survey was sent to the Heads of Centres in October 2012. This sought to more specifically investigate the Centres' position on qualifications frameworks (a full list of survey questions is provided in the methodology, Annex II). Of the 55 surveys sent, 21 survey responses were received[42], representing a 38.2% response rate. The limited number of responses does not enable complex statistical analysis. Instead the focus of analysis shall be on the qualitative information provided.

Before doing so, however, it is useful to highlight that 61.9% respondents reported having a national qualifications framework, and 57.1% reported that they had referenced, or were in the process of referencing, qualifications to the EQF. Interestingly, there were three instances in which Centres reported not having an national qualifications framework in place but referencing qualifications to the EQF, and four instances where Centres reported that they had an established national qualifications framework but did not reference this to the EQF. The latter situation could be attributed to the Centre's geographic location falling outside EU, but the former demonstrates the complex relationship between the establishments of the two types of qualifications frameworks.

As illustrated by sample responses in table X, the role of the Centres in development of their national qualifications frameworks varies considerably and can be broadly categorises as follows:

- No involvement
- Involvement as an observer
- Active involvement as a key stakeholder in the process

Table 3.4.1.   How would you summarise the role of your Centre in relation to the NQF? (i.e. did your Centre assist with the development of an NQF / will your Centre be involved in developing an NQF?)

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[42] This was the total number of responses received once duplicates had been excluded from the dataset

.. the service (in which the NARIC is integrated) is actively participating in the development of the NQF and is for example in charge of coordinating the position of the HE sector.
Representative of ENIC was in the Working group that was in charge with development of NQF.
Our recognition service is centred on the NFQ with all statements making reference to the NFQ and using the architecture of the NFQ to make determinations on learning outcomes and comparability.
Our centre did participate in some of the feedback meetings, and provided input through surveys. Our influence on the end result was very limited.
The centre has been directly involved in the design and construction of the […] NQF and is member of the national coordination group on NQF
…we take part in some meetings concerning this subject, but our Centre is not responsible for the development of the NQF
During the referencing phase of the NQF to the EQF, our Center has been associated to this work as observer.
We don't have formal role in developing the NQF.
Very central […] very much involved in preparing the legal basis.

Similar diversity in involvement is observed in relation to the EQF referencing process (Diagram 3.4.1).

Diagram 3.4.1

If your country's national qualifications have been referenced to the EQF, was your Centre involved in the referencing of national qualifications to the EQF?

- 40.0 %
- 25.0 %
- 35.0 %

Legend: Yes, No, Not applicable
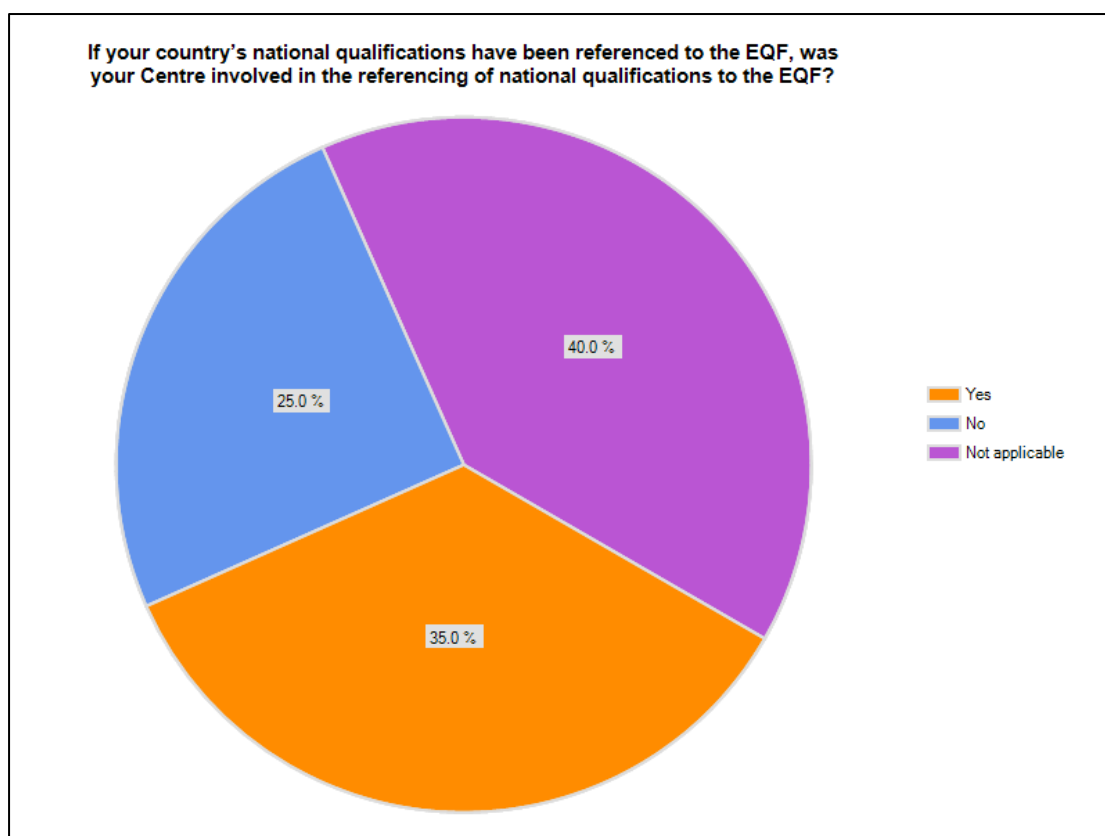
Based on the assumption that the implementation of the EQF can affect the work of the Centres on two levels – policy level and operational level – the Centres were asked to share their experiences to that regard. Majority of the respondents reported no significant impact on policy level, however from the operational point of view, some Centres report certain changes in their practices. One example of such change is the inclusion of the EQF level in the recognition statement, when applicable.

Among the Centres who had neither framework, responses showed an appreciation for the potential benefits of frameworks and expressed and intention to work towards EQF referencing. For example, when asked "***If your country's qualifications have not been referenced to the EQF, do you intend to recognise national qualifications in the context of the EQF?***" some responses were:

- "when possible. EQF is one transparency tool"

- "it is intended that we will recognise national qualifications in the context of the EQF"

- "the referencing of national qualifications frameworks to EQF's is another transparency tool which gives clear indications on the level of foreign qualifications"

This demonstrates the clear message that Centres have received regarding the positive impacts of the EQF.

3.4.3 Case Studies

From analysis of the survey, and the preceding analysis of the literature, it was clear that the degree of implementation of qualifications frameworks on both national and transnational levels varied significantly across different countries. It was therefore decided that in order to gain a broad overview of the impact of frameworks on Centres and conversely the impact of Centres on framework developments across the Network, case studies should be selected to demonstrate these factors at varying stages of implementation. This meant that one case study where the Centre had full experience of creating a national framework and referencing this to the EQF was chosen, and to show the other end of the spectrum, the second case study would illustrate the case of a Centre whose national framework was in development and therefore yet to be referenced to the EQF.

3.4.3.1 Case Study: Ireland

Case study of a Centre operating under established qualifications frameworks

<u>**Structure**</u>

In Ireland, the Qualifications Recognition Service (QRS) is based within the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI), a government agency responsible for developing and maintaining the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). The remit of the Centre[43] is to:

- Provide academic recognition of foreign qualifications;
- Assess school, vocational and higher education qualifications;
- Compare a foreign qualification to a qualification placed at a certain level on the NFQ, where possible;
- Provide information on the Irish education and training system.

<u>**Current status and history behind national and transnational qualifications frameworks**</u>

The NFQ was proposed in 1999 and introduced in 2003. It was developed completely from scratch by the Irish, for the Irish context and involved a flexible approach to reflect the dynamic nature of qualifications and the frameworks used to contextualise them whilst remaining sensitive to their original values and objectives.

The NFQ has been defined as the "single, nationally and internationally accepted entity, through which all learning achievements may be measured and related to each other in a coherent way and which defines the relationship between all education and training awards". The NFQ incorporates awards made for all types of learning and assigns them within in a system of 10 levels based on standards of

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[43] Qualifications Recognition Service (2012), http://www.qualrec.ie/about-us-directions-whatwedo.html

knowledge, skill and competence (learning outcomes). In addition to the 10-level structure, the NFQ also incorporates different types of award: major awards which are the principal class of awards made at each level; minor awards for partial completion of the outcomes for a major award; supplemental awards for learning that is additional to major award; and special purpose awards for relatively narrow or purpose-specific achievement.

With regard to referencing the NFQ to the EQF, NQAI acted as the National Coordination Point (NCP) for Ireland and represented the country on the EQF Advisory Group. As the NCP, NQAI's responsibilities pertained to referencing levels of qualifications within the national education system to the EQF, ensuring the that a transparent method was used in doing so, providing access to information and guidance for stakeholders, and promoting the participation of relevant stakeholders.

Perspectives on qualifications frameworks

The education landscape prior to the introduction of the NFQ was incoherent, with a number of different bodies operating in the same environment, and with no ability to compare and little ability to understand qualifications. This caused barriers to progression for learners and a lack of transparency and coherence for stakeholders, especially for those learners and stakeholders in the vocational education and training (VET) sector.

The impact of the NFQ has been experienced mainly in its ability to act as a single tool encompassing all qualifications. As frameworks go, it is relatively unique in its ambition to encompass the full spectrum of education and training, including academic, professional, international *and* sectoral qualifications. In doing so, it has contributed to improved communication of qualifications across the country and the various sectors, as evidenced by the 2008 "Framework Implementation and Impact Study"[44].

The Irish perception of national qualifications frameworks is, based on its own experience, largely positive in achieving greater transparency and understanding of qualifications, and thereby providing qualifications with a sense of context and meaning. With regard to meta-frameworks, however, caution was advised in relation to potential over-reliance on immature frameworks which may be superficially referenced to a meta-framework without first having properly reflected the distinction between in-country qualifications levels. If this occurs, then the translation of qualifications levels from one country to another through the meta-framework may become inaccurate and the meaning of the meta-framework levels then compromised. As a result, the trust across individual qualifications frameworks and the meta-framework becomes diminished.

The role of the Centre in framework development

NQAI had a statutory role to create and implement the Irish qualifications framework. The recognition body sits within the qualifications authority which is quite a unique, interdependent relationship, and means that the two functions are inextricably linked. This is evidenced in the remits of the two bodies, which are aligned in their objectives to improve the quality and quantity of information on qualifications available to those

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[44]NQAI (2008), *Framework Implementation and Impact Study,* available online from:
http://www.nqai.ie/framework_study.html

who need and want it.

At the time of initial development of the framework back in 1999 to 2003, the Centre did not exist and therefore could not have a role in the development of the NFQ. If the NFQ were to be implemented when the Centre was in existence, however, there is a strong feeling that the Centre would be heavily involved and consulted in the process. With regard to the later referencing to the EQF, the Centre was closely involved and there was a strong sense that the Irish representative was promoting the interests of both bodies. The process of implementing the EQF was one of pragmatism, transparency and consultation and involved negotiation and debate with a variety of stakeholders

Implications for the Centres

Although benefits of the implementation of a national qualifications framework have already been experienced in the improved communication, transparency, meaningfulness, and comparability of qualifications, it was identified that reaping the potential benefits of an ideological shift in perceptions of qualifications would be a longer-term prospect.

The learning outcomes approach to qualifications and recognition requires a cultural shift in the perception of qualifications, involving deepening the implementation of the NFQ ideology among all stakeholders. Addressing this challenge would reduce the potential risk of developing superficial frameworks.

Underpinning each of the benefits of qualifications frameworks are the concepts of improved confidence and trust between various stakeholders in qualifications and their associated quality assurance processes. Therefore, to ensure that mutual trust between different qualifications within countries (and equally to ensure mutual trust between countries) is achieved, qualifications frameworks need to be meaningful. This requires them to be robust, mature, and developed in accordance with the existing national education system. This has been the case for the NFQ, but on a wider scale the EQF must be cautious of normative activities around qualifications frameworks.

In terms of recognition practices, the introduction of frameworks has not impacted greatly on the work of the Centre. The NFQ is referenced in recognition procedures in some instances. Steps have been made towards referencing the EQF levels on Irish certificates, but as yet there is no formal process for this. However, providing their authenticity and accuracy, frameworks are recognised in Ireland as a useful starting point for informing recognition practices and decisions.

3.4.3.2 Case Study: Finland

Case study of a Centre operating with qualifications frameworks in development

Structure

In Finland, responsibility for the recognition of qualifications lies with the Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE) who make decisions concerning: comparability of the level of higher education qualifications with a Finnish higher education degree of a certain level; decisions on the eligibility conferred by foreign qualifications for civil service posts in Finland; and the eligibility for professions regulated in Finland. The decision as to a foreign qualifications' eligibility to entitle the practise of a profession or the use of a specific title is at the discretion of field-specific authorities, whilst granting the right to study based on a foreign qualification is at the discretion of individual institutions.

Current status and history behind national and transnational qualifications frameworks

In Finland, the development of a national qualifications framework followed the development of the EQF, and used this meta-framework as its basis. In line with the EQF, "the qualifications, syllabi and other extensive competence entities of the Finnish national education system are classified into eight levels"[45]. Initially intended to cover only academic qualifications, the development of a Finnish qualifications framework has undergone a process of consultative review and refinement and has consequently incorporated other learning as well as traditional academic qualifications. Having submitted a legislative proposal on a National Framework for Qualifications and Other Learning (NFQ) to the Finnish Parliament on 3rd May 2012, it is intended that this national framework be adopted from early 2013.

Appointed by the national Ministry of Education and Culture, the FNBE is the National Coordination Point for the EQF. In this role, the FNBE supports and guides the relationship between the national qualification system and the EQF.

Perspectives on qualifications frameworks

In the context of Finland, the qualifications system has always been clear and well understood, and the education system widely accessible. The motivations for developing a national framework and then linking this to a European framework were therefore not prompted by a specific need for clarification, but rather by a desire to respond and be involved in the EQF recommendation and to work towards greater European-wide recognition.

The perception of qualifications frameworks in Finland is predominantly positive. Based on the Finnish experience, frameworks are considered as a tool to contribute towards transparency that take into account a wide range of perspectives and issues before any move towards implementation is made.

The role of the Centre in framework development

The NBE, and the Centre housed within it, was appointed the task of developing a

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[45] Finnish National Board of Education (2012), *Qualifications Frameworks*, web page available from: http://www.oph.fi/english/mobility/recognition/qualifications_frameworks (last accessed 1st November 2012)

national framework (in collaboration with one other organisation) by the Ministry of Education.

The Centre was heavily involved and its input highly valued throughout the process of developing the national framework and considering how it would be referenced to the European meta-framework. The process of achieving this involved much consultation with a wide range of stakeholders in order to ensure the context and motivation for a framework was fully understood. In the Finnish context, however, it is important to realise that ultimately the decision on qualifications frameworks lies with the Government, and the role of the Centre will only ever be to act as a point of advice and expertise. In this sense then, the involvement of the Centre represented the maximum possible level of involvement.

This level of involvement not only applied to the development of the NFQ, but also to the development of the EQF. Although the NFQ was developed subsequently to the EQF, Finland ensured that its voice was heard throughout the EQF development process by taking the consultation period very seriously and contributing to the recommendations. Engagement at this stage meant that final EQF was developed in a manner which would ease the future referencing of Finnish qualifications to it. The development of the NFQ has used the EQF as a basis, but has created very new and different level descriptors and has involved a lot of time and resource to ensure Finnish qualification levels are fit for purpose. In doing so, Finland shows that its proposed qualifications framework is not a superficial reaction to European reform, but rather a considered and careful response to aid its credibility across Europe.

Implications of the Centres

Recognition practices within the Finnish Centre have not changed and recognition cases are still reviewed on a case by case basis. However, it is understood that potential positive impacts of both an EQF and an NFQ might be realised in the increased availability of reliable information through which to make assessments and evaluations.

3.4.4 Comparative Analysis

Having conducted a thorough investigation into the role of Centres in the context of national and transnational frameworks, it is now within the interests of meeting the research's overarching objective (to investigate the changing role of Centres) to compare these with the roles of Centres as prescribed in the ENIC-NARIC Charter in order to identify whether the current role matches the intended role.

Eight elements of the Joint ENIC-NARIC Charter of Activities and Services (2004) relate to national and transnational frameworks. Table 3.4.2 outlines these areas and gives an assessment as to whether the current role of Centres, as determined through in-depth investigation into their operations, does not meet, meets, or exceeds expectations.

Table 3.4.2: Prescribed versus current role of Centres / Networks

ENIC-NARIC prescribed activities and services	Differences identified between prescribed and actual activities and services
Co-operate within the ENIC and NARIC Networks on the development of an overarching framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area and accordingly contribute at a national level to the further development of the education systems; […]	Centres showed efforts to engage across the Network in the development of the EQF: • Participating in advisory groups • Acting as National Co-ordination Points
Exchange information on the assessment of the qualifications and on the national qualifications system; […]	Centres engage strongly with other Centres across the Network. The ENIC-NARIC website and email communication list facilitates this, adding to the body of knowledge on the assessment of qualifications and national qualifications systems across Europe.
Benchmarking, setting and promoting best practices, development of methodologies on recognition in line with the criteria and procedures defined in the Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon Recognition Convention) ; […]	Centres are or are in the process of implementing a learning outcomes approach to qualification recognition.
Promote cooperation and quality assurance bodies and networks, in particular ENQA in order to establish a common framework, share information and increase mutual trust between education systems; […]	The close cooperation of recognition centres with quality assurance bodies was recognised as important and many centres actively engage with the national agency responsible for quality assurance.
Provide a forum for the debate and development of policies that promote and facilitate the recognition of qualifications in the European Region; […]	Centres proactively engage with stakeholders in the process of developing national qualifications frameworks and participate in debates around such policy. They also participate in projects to identify best practice and to lay down guidelines for recognition.
Enhance the European dimension in recognition in the Lifelong Learning context of the European Higher Education Area	Centres have gone above and beyond the expectations of this activity by actively seeking to ensure all forms of qualifications were integrated into their recognition processes

Analysis, based on evidence gained through secondary research into literature and initial survey responses and primary research into the attitudes and experiences of Centres in the context of qualifications frameworks, shows that the current role of Centres goes above and beyond the role outlined in the Charter. This suggests that, at least in the context of qualifications framework development, Centres have evolved beyond their initial remit and have become a recognised and established voice of expertise within national and international environments. This implies that a review of the Charter might be timely to potentially extend the role of Centres, particularly in the fields of enhancing lifelong learning and engaging in debate, to ensure the continued development of the Centres.

3.4.5 Survey III

Building on the key messages from the previous research, Survey III completed the research exercise by gathering the views and opinions of the Centres on the future engagement and cooperation between ENIC-NARICs and the over-arching qualification frameworks (using the EQF as an example of such framework). More specifically, the Heads of Centres were asked to express their opinion on the following question:

The development of national qualifications frameworks and their referencing to the meta-frameworks (e.g. the EQF) is an on-going dual process. The findings of CHARONA Surveys I and II demonstrate various degrees of involvement of the ENIC-NARICs in the dual process. In your opinion, what steps should be taken to ensure the coherence and interaction between the work of ENIC-NARICs and the application of the EQF (and other transnational qualifications frameworks, where applicable).

31 out of 55 Centres shared the same position, the sample of responses is presented in the table below:

Table 3.4.3: Sample responses to the question about the future interaction between ENIC-NARICs and the EQF.

To ensure coherence and interaction all the existing national qualifications frameworks should be published on the ENIC/NARIC website in order to establish the conditions for application.
…participate in each other's work both on national and international level (policy and

practice)
… it is about awareness that the EQF could/should play an important role in recognition. The ENIC/NARICs nationally also sit on a broad and deep knowledge about foreign systems. This should make it apparent that coherence and interaction is necessary.
Once the referencing process has been completed, the Centres could adopt an important role in facilitating application of the EQF in their national context and providing information and support as and when required, EQF is a transparency tool and NARICs are in an ideal position to ensure that this tool fulfils its intended purpose.
Our centre is both ENIC-NARIC and NCP + participates in standing coordination committee of the NQF. NARICs should be part of referencing process + future updating of referencing reports. The networks should be part of the EQF AG and national correspondents to the EHEA framework.
…the purpose of such Frameworks are to increase transparency. Thus, the real value (and success/failure?) of such tools is in how they facilitate recognition on a practical level. Trust can be instilled in such Frameworks in my opinion if individuals who are experienced in recognition 'endorse' their usefulness. So, the Network needs to be actively involved in such developments. Again, the Secretariat and individual centres need to be communicating this need effectively.
The ENIC/NARICs have an integral role in both NQFs and referencing to meta-frameworks. The relevant ENIC/NARIC should, if at all possible, be an active member in the referencing process and on the board (or equivalent) of the NQF. Recognition and mobility are now seen as primary objectives of NQFs, which is a significant development from 15 years ago. Given this, ENIC/NARICs need to be active in this space to ensure appropriate advice is provided to NQF authorities.
ENIC/NARICs should be partners in developing the NQRs. In the phase of execution, each qualification should, before be definitively registered in the NQRs, pass the ENIC/NARIC for its opinion, especially because of its high experience with international comparison of qualifications.

Careful analysis of all responses resulted in the formulation of the following key points:

➢ Due to their extensive experience in the evaluation of international qualifications, ENIC-NARICs can offer valuable expertise during a) the initial referencing process and b) maintenance and updating of the referencing reports. Thus, to ensure coherent interaction between the Centres and the EQF, they should be actively engaged in the EQF referencing process and the subsequent maintenance process.

➢ With the EQF being a relatively new tool, its success will rely on coordinated dissemination and availability of technical support and specialist advice to its potential users. Importantly, to ensure success, the dissemination activities

should take into account of the national context. ENIC-NARICs are well-established Centres for information on recognition, enjoying a high level of visibility and trust among their national stakeholders, which places them in a strategically important position as advocates and supporters of the EQF. Initial thoughts were shared on potential dissemination channels such as inclusion of the relevant information on the joint ENIC-NARIC website and the national websites. Further work could be done by the Networks to ensure proactive dissemination of information on the EQF.

3.5 Professional Qualifications Directives

Introduction

The main focus of this analysis is on the impact of the Professional Qualifications Directive (Directive 2005/36/EC) as it covers the broadest range of professions.

This section of the report seeks to analyse the impact of the Professional Qualifications Directive 2005/36/EC on the work of Centres and the Network. It will uncover how or if the Centres and Network support compliance with the Directives and how they have been affected by this legislation since 2005.

3.5.1 Background Research and Analysis

Directive 2005/36/EC (the Directive)

Directive 2005/36/EC currently provides recognition for professionals seeking permanent and temporary mobility in another Member State, including those seeking recognition in order to establish themselves on an employed or self-employed basis.

The Directive applies to nationals of all Member States, as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, including those with dual nationality and those who have held nationality in the past. As Switzerland is not a Member State, it has specific rules for recognition.[46] Third country nationals who are related to EU citizens and long-term residents can apply for recognition under the Directive in some cases, as well as third-country nationals with refugee status in a Member State.

In order to apply for recognition under the Directive, the professional must have obtained their qualification within the EEA and Switzerland, or it must have been recognised by the EEA or Switzerland.

Individuals can apply for recognition under the Directive if their profession is regulated in the host Member State. If a profession is not regulated in the host Member State, the individual is not required to apply for recognition and may practise without it. Professions may not exist as individual entities in some Member States as

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[46] European Commission, *The European Commission User Guide: Directive 2005/36/EC: Everything you need to know about the recognition of professional qualifications: 66 questions, 66 answers.* [pdf] p.9. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/qualifications/docs/guide/users_guide_en.pdf [accessed October 2012].

they fall under the remit of other professions, so partial access may be granted. Individuals working or training in a Member State for a profession that is not recognised but who wish to practise their profession in another Member State may be required to provide evidence that they have been practicing for two years in their home state.

Professions can be recognised in three ways:

1. Automatic recognition is provided for the sectoral professions where the minimum training standards have been agreed within the Member States[47]
2. All other regulated professions can be recognised under the general system, which is laid out in Chapter I of Title III of Directive 2005/36/EC[48]
3. For identified professional activities, within the commerce, craft or industry sector, recognition is on the basis of professional experience.

To date there are 4967 separate entries for regulated professions or professional titles within the EU regulated professions database.[49] Competent authorities and others responsible for the recognition of professional qualifications use this database for information on professions. However, the interpretation of Directive 2005/36/EC varies from country to country in line with their individual national laws and regulations, so not all professions receive automatic mutual recognition. Mutual recognition is usually dependent upon the type of profession and whether the individual wants to become established on a temporary or permanent basis.

All Member States have had to incorporate the Directive 2005/36/EC into national law. Prior to the introduction of Directive 2005/36/EC, there were three other Directives concerning the mobility of professionals. Directive 2005/36/EC sought to consolidate all of the aforementioned Directives, but it too has been amended on a number of occasions, including the amendments in respect of the accession of Bulgaria and Romania. Amendments to annexes, such as adding new qualifications, are proposed to the Commission by the Member State through official notification.

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[47] The seven professions, sometimes referred to as 'sectoral professions', are architect, dentist, doctor, midwife, nurse, pharmacist and veterinary surgeon.

[48] Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications. Available at: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2005/l_255/l_25520050930en00220142.pdf p.15 [accessed October 2012]

[49] European Commission, *The EU Single Market Regulated Professions Database – Generic Names of Professions* <available at: http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/qualifications/regprof/index.cfm?action=professions [accessed February 2014]

Once approved, the Commission will publish the amendment to the Commission's professional qualifications website and the official journal of the European Europe. Amendments to the Directive itself undergo a lengthy period of consultation with Member States before being published in official journals and communicated via the National Coordinators.

Following several years of negotiation regarding possible revisions, Directive 2005/36/EC was amended in November 2013 to include a number of updated provisions. These updates were enacted via Directive 2013/55/EC, updating and not replacing the 2005/36/EC.[50] Transposition should be completed by Member States no later than 18 January 2016.

National Contact Points

The National Contact Points have been nominated in each country to guide individuals through the process of obtaining recognition of their professional qualifications by providing the contact details of the appropriate Competent Authority, as well as clarifying the regulations surrounding their profession.

Individuals may contact the NCP for information on how to gain recognition for their qualifications, or can contact the single point of contact - online portals established to provide information and advice regarding recognition and starting businesses or working in that country.[51] All NCPs must provide information on how the Directive is applied in their Member State, with regard to the rules that have been enforced and the process of recognition.

According to the amendments to Directive through 2013/55/EC, the NCPs will in future be referred to as "Assistance Centres" to distinguish them from Points of Single Contact for the Services Directive and to avoid any potential overlap between the two. The Assistance Centres should maintain duties substantially unchanged from the current role of NCPs; they should continue to provide advice and assistance to citizens, liaise with competent authorities and assistance centres elsewhere in Europe, and may assist with the issuance of the 'professional card' as needed.

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[50] http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:354:0132:0170:en:PDF [accessed January 2014]
[51] European Commission, *Points of Single Contact* <available at: http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/eu-go/index_en.htm> [accessed October 2012]

National Coordinators

The appointment of a National Coordinator is also mandatory under the Directive. National Coordinators are responsible for ensuring that the regulations within Directive 2005/36/EC are applied in a fair and uniform manner and that all information pertinent to this is available and collated. The Group of Coordinators assists with the recognition of professional qualifications. They are appointed by national governments and attend the Group of Coordinators meetings to discuss any issues or changes. The Group of Coordinators role is threefold:

•   Facilitate a good working relationship between national authorities and the Commission

•   Monitor policies concerning qualifications leading to regulated professions

•   Exchange good practice examples for the recognition of qualification.

Primarily the National Coordinator can ensure that any issues raised by their NCP and competent bodies are presented at the meetings and in turn they can communicate any overarching or particular implementation issues discussed at the Group of Coordinators meetings.

Relationship between the Directive 2005/36/EC and the ENIC-NARICs

Conceptually, there are many commonalities between the aims and objectives of ENIC-NARICs and the Professional Qualifications Directive. Both aim to support recognition of qualifications and facilitate access to the labour market, however, despite the alignment of goals, the scope and the underlying principles of their operations are very different.

ENIC-NARICs provide information on comparability of international qualifications to their national education system based on the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention *regardless of the country of origin or the field of study*. In many cases their advice takes form of non-legally binding statements that serve as a generic guidance to inform holders of international qualifications or organisations/individuals dealing with international qualifications.

On the other hand, the recognition function provided under the Directive 2005/36/EC is legally binding and covers specifically the regulated professions based on qualifications and training completed in the EU, EEA and Switzerland. The remit to grant recognition based on the Directive is shared between the relevant Competent Authorities for the regulated professions. Additionally, the NCPs have been

nominated in each country to guide individuals through the process of obtaining recognition of their professional qualifications by providing the contact details of the appropriate Competent Authority, as well as clarifying the regulations surrounding their profession.

In spite of the apparent differences in the scope and nature of recognition procedures conducted by ENIC-NARICs and the Competent Authorities, there are areas where their activities can overlap and effective cooperation and communication would be deemed beneficial. For example, using their expertise in international education, ENIC-NARICs can support the Competent Authorities by sharing their information on the education systems and qualifications, which may often be part and parcel of professional recognition. The link between the work of National Contact Points and ENIC-NARICs is even more apparent, as essentially both aim to signpost and guide holders of international qualifications, with NCPs specialising in one particular area of professional recognition under the provisions of the Directive, and NARICs offering academic comparability for a wide range of qualifications. We can therefore conclude that their services are closely aligned but not mutually exclusive and there are many benefits that can be drawn from effective cooperation between NCPs and NARICs.

3.5.2 Primary Research and Analysis: Survey Analysis

The survey questions were designed to investigate the current relationship between ENIC-NARICs and stakeholders in professional qualification regime.

3.5.2.1 SURVEY I

The responses to the question *"…does your centre cooperate with the National Coordinator and the competent authorities for the professional recognition of the regulated professions (EU Directives)?"* confirm the initial assumption that the Centres have succeeded in establishing cooperation with the national stakeholders involved in professional recognition under the Directive (Diagram 3.5.1). All of the respondents from the EU gave a positive answer; the four negative responses came from the Centres outside the EU.

Diagram 3.5.1
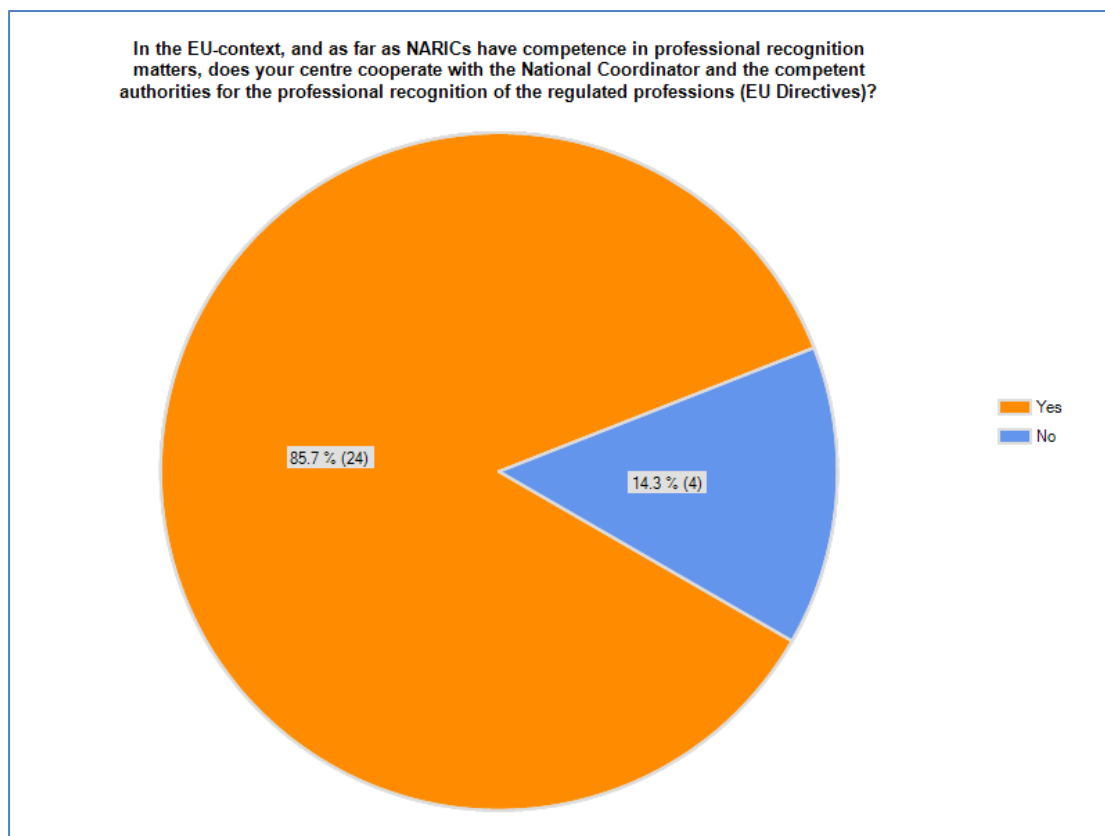
The responses also provide valuable insights into the emerging forms and models of cooperation, which vary subject to the national context and the remit of the Centre (Table 3.5.1):

Table 3.5.1 In the EU-context, and as far as NARICs have competence in professional recognition matters, does your centre cooperate with the National Coordinator and the competent authorities for professional recognition of the regulated professions (EU Directives)?

"*In some cases, we have arrangements in place whereby individuals must seek academic recognition from us first prior to making an application to the relevant professional body*"
"*We keep close contacts providing expertise for the competent authorities for legal matters and education systems information*"
We are not charged with professional recognition tasks, but we provide information and advice.
"*We are the competent authority for several professions*"
This is part of our work as National Contact Point
We are also national contact point for professional qualifications + competent authority for recognition of teacher qualifications
Regular meetings with the National Coordinator and the competent authorities.
ENIC member is a part of working groups dealing with professional recognition of the regulated profession

Based on the received responses, the functions that the Centres have adopted under the impact of the Directive can be broadly summarised as follows:

1. Providing information and guidance to the Competent Authorities and National Coordinators;
2. Adopting the role of the National Contact Point;
3. Adopting the role of a competent authority for certain professions; participating in meetings and working groups dealing with professional recognition of relevant regulated professions.

In terms of distribution of the above functions across the Network, the responses demonstrate that majority of the Centres have adopted Function 1 - Providing information for the Competent Authorities and National Coordinators.

18 Centres have adopted Function 2 - serving as the National Contact Point, which is a logical development for the Centres bearing in mind the close alignment of the aims and objectives of NARICs and the NCPs. Table 3.5.2 indicates the location of the NCPs and confirms that over half of the NCPs are located within NARICs (those highlighted in blue).

Table 3.5.2: Location of NCPs

EU Country/Community	Location of NCP
Austria	Federal Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth
Croatia	Agency for Science and Higher Education
Belgium	NARIC-Flanders / Naric of the Federation Wallonia Brussels
Bulgaria	National Centre for Information and Documentation
Cyprus	National Contact Point for the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications
Czech Republic	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Department for EU Affairs
Denmark	Danish Agency for Universities and Internationalisation
Estonia	Estonian ENIC/NARIC
Finland	Finnish National Board of Education [ENIC-NARIC Finland]
France	Centre ENIC-NARIC France
Germany	Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology
Greece	Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs, Directorate for European Union Affairs
Hungary	Hungarian Equivalence and Information Centre, Educational Authority

Ireland	Qualifications Section - Department of Education and Science Block
Italy	Department of European Policies
Latvia	Academic Information Centre (Latvian ENIC/NARIC)
Lithuania	Ministry of Economy
Luxembourg	Ministry of Culture, Higher Education and Research
Malta	Malta Qualification Recognition Information Centre (Malta QRIC)
Netherlands	Nuffic
Poland	Department of Higher Education Organisation and Supervision
Portugal	Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity
Romania	Direction for Equivalence and Recognition of Diplomas
Slovakia	Centre for the Recognition of Diplomas, Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic
Slovenia	Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs
Spain	Spanish NARIC
Sweden	Swedish Council for Higher Education [ENIC-NARIC Sweden]
United Kingdom	UK NARIC
EEA Countries and Switzerland	**Location of NCP**
Iceland	Ministry of Education, Science and Culture
Liechtenstein	Ministry of Education
Norway	NOKUT – Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education
Switzerland	Federal Office for Professional Training and Technology

Two of the Centres reported a wider scope of responsibilities in relation to the Directive, having taken on the role of a Competent Authority for some professions with the associated tasks; however both centres are housed within large public organisations.

3.5.2.2 SURVEY II

In addition to the initial Survey I, a more in-depth survey was sent to the Heads of Centres in October 2012. This sought to more specifically investigate the

relationships between different stakeholders involved in recognition in general and professional recognition in particular.

Of the 55 surveys sent, 21 survey responses were received[52], representing a 38.2% response rate.

If an organisation other than yours holds responsibility for recognition of professional qualifications, do you receive requests from professional bodies?

70% of respondents answered with a "yes" also specifying the types of information that they provide to professional bodies. These include further details on qualifications, the nature of another country's education system and the status of an awarding body. In many cases, it seems that the links between many of the professional bodies and the ENIC-NARIC Centres are strong as they frequently work in partnership to assist with recognition. Additionally, many of the Centres stated that they often provide information on professional qualifications that have been awarded outside of the EU.

Has your Centre changed its practices in light of the introduction of the Professional Qualifications Directive 2005/36/EC?

Many of the Centres have not changed their practices significantly as they were already working along the similar principles under the previous Directives and consequently only had to make slight changes. Others reported closer cooperation with the relevant competent authorities and the NCPs.

Since the introduction of the Professional Qualifications Directives, have there been any notable changes in the number of applications for Recognition Statements from EEA applicants who hold professional qualifications?

Whilst just over half of all Centres did not believe there were any notable changes in the number of applications for Recognition Statements, a large number of Centres did not have data available on the number of applications from individuals holding professional qualifications.

3.5.3 Case Studies

To demonstrate how the interaction between the Centre and the relevant professional recognition stakeholders is managed in practice, two case studies have been selected for further analysis.

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[52] This was the total number of responses received once duplicates had been excluded from the dataset

3.5.3.1 Case Study: The Netherlands

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<u>Role of Nuffic in professional recognition under the Directive</u>

In the Netherlands, the relevant ministries and professional bodies are responsible for the recognition of professional qualifications.

Nuffic serves as the National Contact Point for Directive 2005/36/EC. Nuffic also served as the NCP for the previous Directive 89/48/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications. Following the introduction of Directive 2005/36/EC the NCP has made minor changes to its practice with respect to some of the new features of the Directive. Nuffic are in a position as the NCP to provide informed advice to the competent bodies with a view to assisting the recognition process. In addition, an evaluation service has been established by Nuffic to assess international qualifications on behalf of two professional bodies, the Ministry of Health (for medical professions) and the Ministry of Education (mainly for teaching professions).

Nuffic make use of newsletters, seminars and conferences to facilitate partnership and cooperation with their stakeholders, including representatives of the larger competent authorities on professional recognition. While their key target audience is HEIs, Nuffic also reports good working relationships with the stakeholders in the field of professional recognition. In addition to individual information requests, Nuffic are also in a position to provide training and seminars on good practice in recognition.

Reflecting on their function in professional recognition, Nuffic suggested that the NARIC network and good practice developed by the Centres could have played a more prominent role in supporting professional recognition procedures and the NCP network. Moving forward, the sharing of best practices and increasing input from the NARIC Network could, in Nuffic's view, help to increase effectiveness and strengthen the role and function of both Networks.

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3.5.3.2 Case Study: UK

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<u>Role of UK NARIC in professional recognition under the Directive</u>

Since 2008 UK NARIC houses the NCP for the United Kingdom and employs dedicated personnel who provides signposting and guidance on the recognition of professional qualifications to individuals and competent authorities. UK NCP can also provide a Certificate of Experience for EU citizens who have trained and gained work experience in the UK and are seeking recognition under the system for recognising experience in trade or craft professions. Professionals can then use this Certificate of Experience as evidence if they then wish to practise in another Member State where the profession is regulated.

Being housed within the same organisation, UK NARIC and the NCP share the same website, thus helping to "demystify" different types of recognition services and effectively guiding the potential users towards the most suitable service.

The work of the NCP is further facilitated through the unlimited access to UK NARIC databases, which source valuable information on international education systems

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and the comparable academic level of qualifications, also indicating the rights available to the holder in the country of issuance where appropriate. In addition to the NCP, many Competent Authorities use UK NARIC's online *International Comparisons* database for information on education systems, recognised institutions and qualifications. Close cooperation with professional organisations has also led to the development of several bespoke databases which aim to fill the information gaps in specific occupational fields. Professional bodies also regularly attend UK NARIC's training events or request bespoke seminars.

Reflecting on the usefulness of close cooperation, the NCP also pointed out obvious benefits for the visibility of their service. Many applicants are referred to the NCP by colleagues working for UK NARIC, as initial recognition requests often come to NARIC. Additionally, access to UK NARIC's dissemination channels such as e.g. newsletters, blogs and social media and events, enable the NCP to increase its visibility among its potential target audiences.

3.5.4 Comparative Analysis

Having conducted a thorough investigation into the role of Centres in the context of the Directive, it is intended to compare the current practices with the roles of Centres as prescribed in the ENIC-NARIC Charter in order to identify whether the current role matches the intended role.

Four elements of the Joint ENIC-NARIC Charter of Activities and Services relate to the Directive. Table 3.5.3 outlines these areas and gives an assessment as to whether the current role of Centres, as determined through in-depth investigation into their operations, does not meet, meets, or exceeds expectations.

Table 3.5.3: Prescribed versus current role of Centres / Networks

ENIC-NARIC prescribed activities and services	Differences identified between prescribed and actual activities and services
Provide adequate, reliable and authenticated information to […] employers, ***professional organisations,*** public authorities, ENIC-NARIC partners and other interested parties;	Professional organisations are common users of NARIC services; additionally, Centres also mention provision of seminars and workshops on good practice in recognition.
In the EU-context, and as far as NARICs have competence in professional recognition matters, cooperate with the National Coordinator and the competent authorities for the professional recognition of the regulated professions (EU Directives)	In the cases where the NCPs sit outside NARICs, the Centres report good levels of cooperation with the above stakeholders; in a number of cases, NARICs also act as NCPs or competent authorities
Provide to citizens information on their rights	Centres provide information regarding professional recognition and signposting to relevant authorities.

regarding recognition;	
Provide the ENICs and NARICs with guidelines on the structure and the organization of the information they offer to relevant target groups, in particular: higher education institutions and bodies, public authorities, quality assurance agencies, employers, **professional organizations** and individual holders of qualifications;	While professional organisations and competent authorities have been identified as a target audience for NARIC services, the models of communication between NARICs, NCPs and national competent authorities can vary across the countries.

Based on the evidence gained through secondary and primary research, the current role of Centres largely meets the expectations outlined in the Charter. In several cases the remit has been extended to serve as a competent authority for certain professions; however such extension of the remit is subject to the national policy and cannot be representative of the whole Network. Another notable development that has occurred during the period covered by the research, and is not explicitly mentioned in the Charter, is the adoption of the new role as an NCP and/or establishment of close working relationships with the national NCPs, if they are housed within other organisations. The above development calls into question the types of information exchanges that take place between the NCPs and NARICs and the effectiveness of their cooperation.

3.5.5 Survey III

To gain further insight into cooperation between the NCPs and NARICs, Survey III completed this research process by asking the Centres to share their opinions on the following question:

The findings of CHARONA Surveys I and II demonstrate close links between the work of the ENIC/NARIC Centres and the National Contact Points for professional qualifications under Directive 2005/36/EC. In fact, 50% of the existing NCPs are housed within the same organisation as the national ENIC/NARIC Centre. In spite of this, the level and nature of cooperation vary from country to country. In your opinion, could both Networks benefit from a guidance document consolidating good practices and recommendations for cooperation between the National ENIC/NARIC Centre and the NCP?

31 out of 55 Centres shared their position with the majority agreeing that such a guidance document could indeed be useful; the sample of responses is presented in the table below:

Table 3.5.4: Sample responses to the question on cooperation between NARICs and the NCPs.

Yes, such guidance document would be appropriate for those countries where, unlike us, the National ENIC/NARIC Centre and the NCP are located at different bodies or organizations.
I fully agree that a guidance document should be disseminated among the centres because as you stated not all the centres house NCPs (this is the case of our centre) and I think that the synergy between professional and academic recognition is very strong and it would be very important to foster the links between the NCPs and the centres.
Yes, both Networks could benefit from such document and it could help in a future work of the NCP of countries which haven't still applied provisions of this Directive.
Possibly, especially for countries where the NCP (future Assistance Centre) is not positioned within the ENIC-NARIC centre.
Difficult to say, as in our country both is located in one centre, but ,probably, yes.
Yes, we think such guidance document would be useful for creating common ground for assessment of qualifications for academic and professional purposes.
Yes, we believe that could help. However, the most important point is how the single state organizes its centers and their cooperation. Very important is the matching between the qualifications according to 2005/36 and to EHEA. Maybe that a stronger legal link could take place.
Why not? A set of recommendations, like the ones included in the EAR manuals, could be developed for the cooperation plus the actual professional recognition as well.
The scope of work is different, as is the European legislation behind the Networks. Might be room for synergy, but sometimes for the sake of better recognition those roles should be kept separate...

Careful analysis of all responses resulted in the formulation of the following key points:

- ➢ ENIC-NARIC Centres should seek to cooperate with NCPs (Assistance Centres) for professional recognition in order to ensure coordinated provision of information and mutual support for topics of shared interest.
- ➢ ENIC-NARIC Centres should continue to fully support the work of National Coordinators for professional recognition

➢ Based upon the desire to promote good practice, it may be beneficial to develop guidance on best practice in recognition to support the interaction of ENIC-NARICs with professional recognition stakeholders.

3.6 Managed migration / immigration policies

Introduction

Migration is a significant component of economic development and a top policy priority for most developed and developing countries. Underlying this priority, however, are complications provided by "…extraordinarily diverse global foreign credential recognition requirements" (UNESCO, 2008, p.6). In the face of 21st Century migration movements, foreign credential evaluation has emerged as a priority global issue in recognising people with different qualifications, professions, skills (including language communication) and experiences.

This chapter aims to explore whether and how individual ENIC-NARIC Centres, and the Network as a whole, have been affected by migration trends, analysing the extent to which their current practices have been shaped by the immigration policies and trends. It will also consider the role or potential role of individual Centres and the Networks as a whole in supporting national managed migration systems and contributing to the global discussions on issues related to recognition in the context of migration.

3.6.1 Background Research and Analysis

Migration in the 21st Century

According to the overall definition from the International Organisation for Migration[53], migration is *"The movement of a person or a group of persons, either across an international border, or within a State. It is a population movement, encompassing any kind of movement of people, whatever its length, composition and causes; it includes migration of refugees, displaced persons, economic migrants, and persons moving for other purposes, including family reunification".*

Aside from the myriad of causes, which is an area of research in its own right, there are two forms of migration movement: Emigration and Immigration. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) defines emigration as the act of departing or exiting from one State with a view to settling in another, whilst immigration is the process by which non-nationals move into a country for the purpose of settlement.

It is the increasing awareness of emigration that has conventionally caused much concern about "brain drain", the situation describing how low-income countries are

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[53] International Organisation for Migration, 2011. *Key Migration Terms.* [Accessed 10th October 2012]

disproportionately affected by highly skilled individuals moving to rich countries[54]. Conversely, since the positive effects of international migration and economic growth have been identified in recent times, a new phenomenon has emerged called "brain waste", the process in which the talent of skilled immigrants is being overlooked[55].

The study by the IOM concludes that "*in many Member States there is a considerable gap between the employment levels of third-country nationals and EU nationals […] when employed, immigrants – especially third-country nationals – are much more likely to be in occupations whose skills requirements are lower than their educational attainment and/or professional qualifications, compared with their native counterparts.*"

To address the above (and many other) issues surrounding migration, countries increasingly implement systems for managing migration which enable them to pro-actively coordinate key operational areas of migration.

Migration Statistics

When considering the impact of immigrant populations on host countries, an understanding of regional and historical migration flows is necessary. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) (2009)[56] published estimated numbers of migrants by region and country. Using raw data downloaded from the UN DESA database, the estimated number of migrants between 1990 and 2010 in Africa, Asia, Europe, Oceania, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America and the World is displayed in Diagram 3.6.1.

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[54] The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2012. *Migration and the Brain Drain Phenomenon* [accessed 25th October 2012].
[55] Yildiz, N.,World Education Services (WES), 2010. *Reducing Brain Waste: Skilled Immigrants and the Recognition of Foreign Credentials in the United States* [accessed 25th October 2012].
[56] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2009. *International Migrant Stock: The 2008 Revision* [accessed 10th October 2012].

Diagram 3.6.1: Estimated number of international migrants expressed as a percentage of the total population for each region (1990-2010)
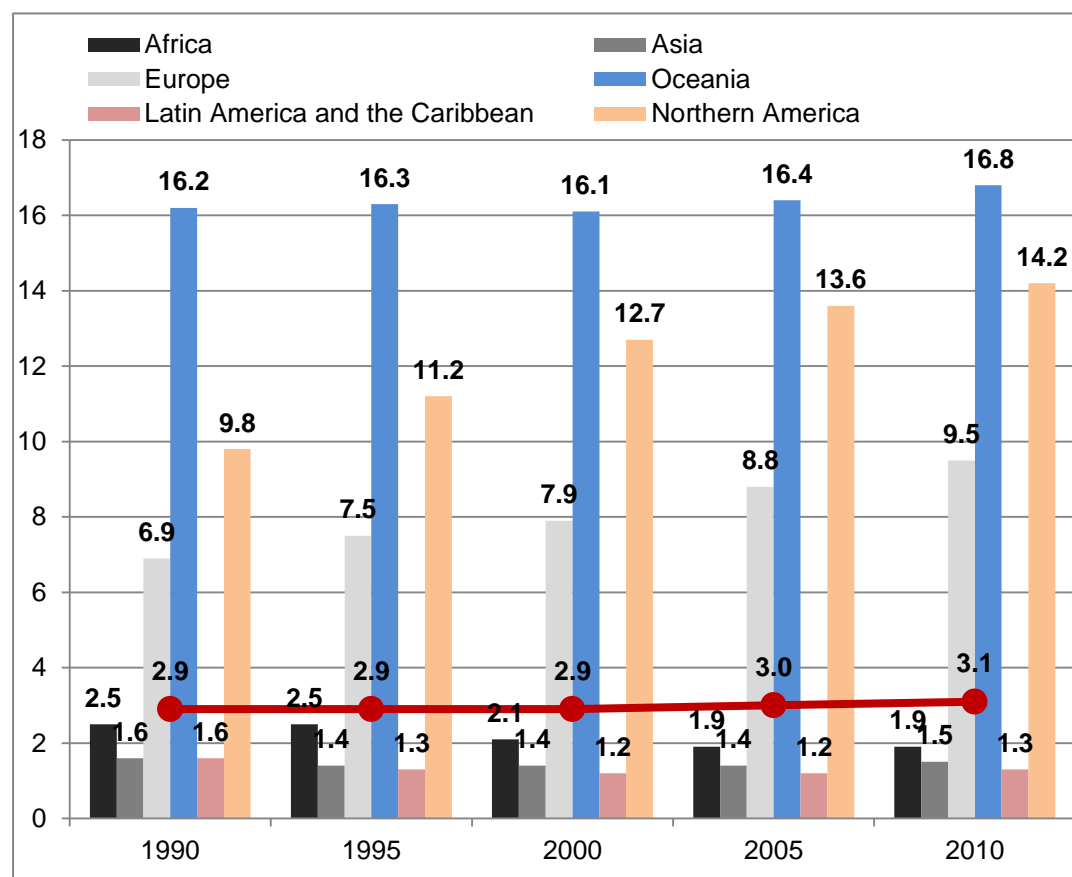
Over the 20 year period displayed in Figure 2 the overall estimated number of international world migrants remained relatively stable - between 2.9% and 3.1%.

Africa, Asia, Latin American and the Caribbean saw less than a 1.0% fluctuation in the numbers. In comparison, Europe and North America experienced a steady increase in the estimated number of international migrants.

Focusing specifically on Europe, the increase in migrants between 1990-2010 could be explained by the Migration Policy Institute's (2012) observation of a '…*unique policy environment that has knit 27 European countries together with regards to the management of outer borders and other immigration-related topics'.*

European Migration Policy

Traditionally, national immigration systems have acted independently within the European Union. However, in 2007 the European Commission communication, *Towards a Common Immigration Policy* introduced the vision of a Europe-wide common policy on immigration. In June 2008 a communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - *A Common Immigration Policy for*

Europe: Principles, actions and tools – laid out 10 common principles for implementation of a balanced, comprehensive and common policy whilst contributing to the EU's economic development[57]. Summarised, these 10 common principles Centre on three themes of prosperity, solidarity and security in which the European immigration policy will be formulated[58]:

1. <u>Prosperity: the contribution of legal immigration to the socio-economic development of the EU</u>

2. <u>Solidarity: coordination between EU countries and cooperation with non-EU countries</u>

3. <u>Security: effective fight against illegal immigration</u>

The European common policy on immigration looks set to introduce a managed system for the entire European Union with the introduction of the European Blue Card system[59]. This system attempts to addresses the complexities caused by the unique policy environment described earlier.

Managed migration requires a basis in legislation alongside credibility in international law and human rights instruments[60]. Managers and practitioners should have an understanding of the intricacies of migration, including the linkages between internal and external foreign policies. Twelve principles for orderly migration management as cited by the IOM include:

1. Passport and Visa Systems

2. Immigration Systems

3. Border Management Systems

4. International Carrier Responsibilities

5. Refugee Protection

6. Integration of Migrants

7. Migration and Citizenship

8. Determination of Migrant Status and Appeals Systems

9. Return Migration

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[57] European Commission, 2012. *Immigration* [accessed 16th October 2012].
[58] Europa, 2011. *A common immigration policy for Europe* [accessed 16th October 2012].
[59] European Union, 2012. *EU Blue Card System* [accessed 2nd November 2012].
[60] International Organisation for Migration, *Managing Migration*, 2012 [accessed 11th October 2012]

10. Management of Operational Data

11. Migration Intelligence Systems

12. Irregular Migration

Relationship between Migration and the Centres/Networks

Conceptually, efficient and fair recognition practices can play an important role in all three themes of European immigration policy; table 3.6.1 lists the ten underpinning policy principles, some of which are clearly linked to recognition.

Table 3.6.1 Underpinning policy principles for immigration policy

Prosperity - the contribution of legal immigration to the socio-economic development of the EU
Clear rules and a level playing field;   **Matching skills and needs**; and   **Integration is the key to successful immigration**.
Solidarity - coordination between EU countries and cooperation with non-EU countries
Transparency, trust and cooperation;   **Efficient and coherent use of available means**; and   Partnership with non-EU countries.
Security: effective fight against illegal immigration
A visa policy that serves the interests of Europe and its partners;   Integrated border management;   Stepping up the fight against illegal immigration and zero tolerance for trafficking in human beings;   Effective and sustainable return policies

Experiences of some EU countries already operating managed migration systems further demonstrate the usefulness of cooperation between recognition stakeholders and the national immigration authorities in enabling and supporting some of the steps

of this complex process. The framework for such cooperation will be further explored in this Chapter by analysing case studies of the UK and Denmark.

Recognition practices have been identified as mechanisms for promoting the transparency of a person's skills, the currency of their qualification(s), and the portability of qualifications. By doing so, recognition can also play a role in solving the problem of unemployment and brain-waste among migrant workers. While this phenomenon can be caused by many factors including language barriers, cross-cultural differences and over-saturation of the labour market, in some cases effective recognition (or lack of such) can also play a vital role in enabling immigrants to integrate in the labour market and fulfil their potential.

Finally, the records and data collected and maintained by the national recognition stakeholders over the years, could be used to identify trends and tendencies in global migration, thus informing wider data analysis and research in this field.

Having gained an understanding of some issues surrounding immigration, the next section now considers raw data from CHARONA Network surveys in order to further investigate the current relationship between ENIC-NARICs and immigration issues/stakeholders.

3.6.2 Primary Research and Analysis: Survey Analysis

SURVEY I

In Survey I, one of the most revealing response sets was the answers provided to the question "***Who are the target audiences for the services offered by your centre?".***

Diagram 3.6.2: Target audiences of the centres

Who are the target audiences for the services offered by your centre?
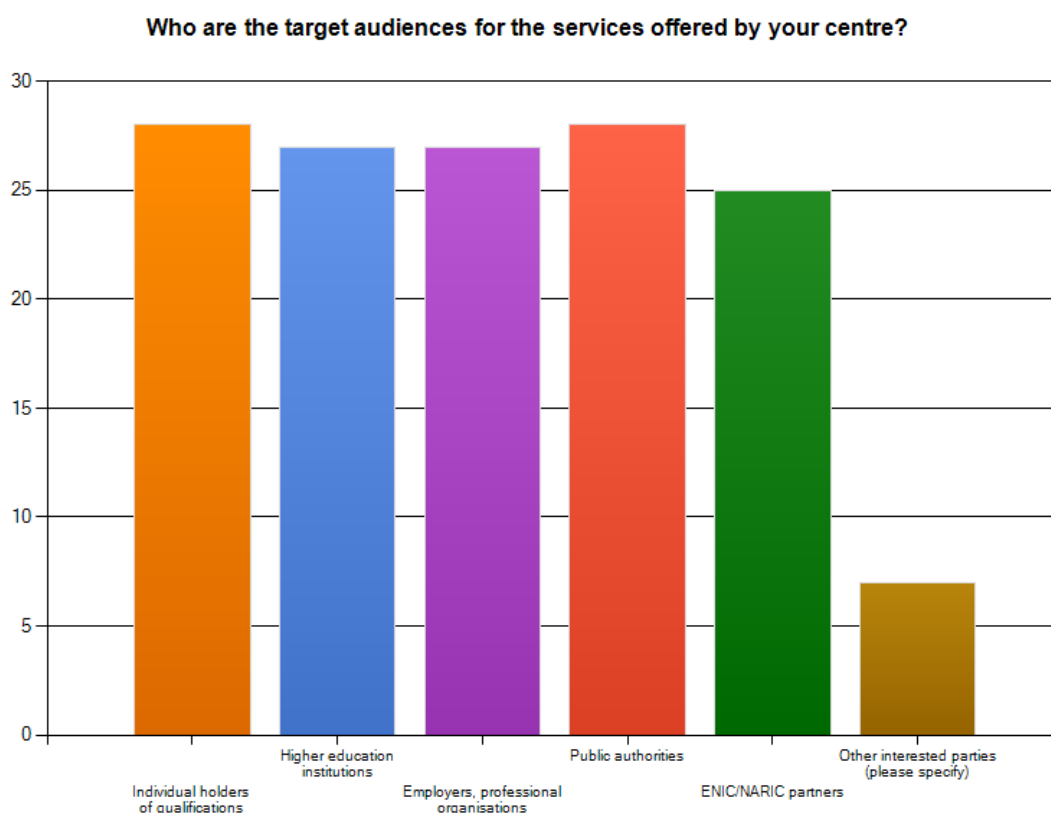
The chart and accompanying responses demonstrate that the Centres provide advice to all of the identified target groups i.e. Individuals, HEIs, employers and professional organisations, public authorities and other ENIC-NARICs. However, in further clarification of their responses, only two Centres explicitly mentioned the national immigration authorities as a target audience.

SURVEY II

In addition to the initial CHARONA survey, a more in-depth survey was sent to the Heads of Centres in October 2012. This sought to more specifically investigate the Centres' position on the Managed Migration/ Immigration Policy theme.

Of the 55 surveys sent, 21 survey responses were received[61], representing a 38.2% response rate. The limited number of responses does not enable complex statistical analysis. Instead the focus of analysis shall be on the qualitative information provided.

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[61] This was the total number of responses received once duplicates had been excluded from the dataset

Does your Centre play a role in shaping and enabling compliance with national immigration policy?

The majority (71.4%) of survey respondents answering Question 1 do not consider their Centre to play a direct role in shaping and enabling compliance with national immigration policy. Two main reasons were offered by these Centres:

   i.   Immigration policy falls within the remit and responsibilities of their government ministry

   ii. Their Centre is not experienced enough to incorporate immigration policy within its current operation.

Some Centres reported a supporting role within the immigration policy. Their function is to source information for an online self-assessment tool for the immigration authorities/individuals to use; provide assessments of skilled migrants in points based immigration systems; and provide guidance to immigration authorities on an ad-hoc basis.

Other reasons for Centre's acknowledging their role in national immigration policy included assisting higher education institution recruitment; however, the respondents were not sure whether this is directly linked to their Centre's role in national immigration policy.

Is your role in shaping and enabling compliance with national immigration policy one of guidance or legally binding? Please specify.

Over 50% of the Centres surveyed in Question 2 said that this question did not apply to them because their Centre has had no prior involvement with national immigration policy. Three main reasons were offered by the Centres:

   i.   National immigration policy hasn't been developed yet

   ii. The Centre's assessments have not been used for immigration purposes before

   iii. The Centre does not currently have enough experience to incorporate immigration policy into their current operations.

Around 28% of Centres said their role was one of guidance, while 9.5% said their role was legally binding. Under the auspices of guidance, reasons varied but included working with their country's police authorities, providing recommendations and assessments to the immigration authorities (for incorporation into an applicant points-based system), influencing legislation and implementing measures for the integration of immigrants.

Where most of the Centres provide guidance to immigration authorities, the immigration authority itself makes the final legally binding decision on the applicant. One Centre that responded to the survey was specifically designated by its country's Ministry so that it could implement measures for the integration of migrants. Another Centre's involvement was to influence legislation where the integration of migrants forms a key component of legislation.

Two Centres identified their role in immigration policy as legally binding for visa requirements. A further two Centres identified their role as 'Other', which, although helps facilitate visa requirements, does not directly link their Centre to national immigration policy.

What impact (if any) has national immigration policy had or continues to have on your Centre? Please specify.

Four out of the 21 survey Centres (19%) thought that immigration policy had a large impact on their Centre. For one Centre, their national immigration policy has doubled the number of recognition decisions since it began. Other Centres, for example, have had to cooperate with immigration policies for specific purposes, such as in the construction industry after major environmental disasters or in the fraud testing and selection of students for access to higher education.

Two of the four Centres that thought immigration policy had a large impact were in Northern Europe. The other two Centres were in Western Europe and Oceania. Several Centres within Northern Europe and Western Europe are citing both small and large impacts within the same European region however. The large impact cited by Centres in Northern and Western Europe could be as a result of their active involvement in immigration processes, whether this be providing compulsory international qualification assessments to immigration authorities or checking the authenticity of documents.

Over 60% of the survey Centres thought that immigration policy had a small impact on their Centre. Centres defined small impacts as those requiring additional verification processing not otherwise affecting regular services. These Centres were fairly evenly distributed across the regions of Europe (Eastern Europe 30.8%, Northern Europe 23.1%, Southern Europe 23.1% and Western Europe 23.1%).

What do you perceive as the role of the Network in shaping and enabling international immigration policy? Please specify.

The main theme running through the survey responses to this question is a Network whose role is to support and integrate migrants in the labour market and educational

systems. This is assumed from the survey responses that refer to country-specific databases linked to labour market employment agencies or common tools to evaluate professional qualifications. In support of this, one Centre believes that perspectives today have been too heavily shaped on the higher education system. Another Centre believes the Network should be an instrument to help immigrants and not policymakers, and thus in their opinion should move away from involvement in national immigration policy.

3.6.3 Case Studies

From analysis of the survey, and the preceding analysis of the literature, it is clear that the degree of engagement of the Centres with national immigration authorities varies significantly across different countries and often depends on the external factors such as immigration numbers and availability of managed migration system.

It was therefore decided that in order to gain a broad overview of the potential for interaction between the Centres and the immigration authorities, case studies should be selected to describe the existing models. The examples of the UK and Denmark have been used as both Centres have considerable experience of successfully collaborating with the national immigration stakeholders.

3.6.3.1 Case Study: Denmark

In response to the general Network Survey II questionnaire, the Danish Agency for Universities and Internationalisation agreed to answer a set of further questions as a case study to examine the role of Danish NARIC in shaping and enabling immigration policy.

To what extent was your Centre involved or consulted by the Danish Immigration authorities in the establishment of the Greencard scheme?

The Danish NARIC has been involved in the development of the Danish Greencard scheme from the beginning, and their input has been instrumental in influencing the latest legislation passed since its implementation in 2007. The Danish NARIC continue to have regular involvement with the Danish Immigration authorities for various reasons including the day-to-day processing of applications and best practice regarding the recognition of qualifications from the most frequent applicant countries.

The cooperation between Danish NARIC and the Danish Immigration Authority is set to continue in the future where recently Danish NARIC have put forward an idea to an intra-ministerial committee on migrant integration. In principle this idea would legally bind all counsellors/integration officers to refer migrants for an assessment of their qualifications (for employment or education purposes) if they have completed education programmes in their home countries (or elsewhere) at an early stage in the

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integration process.

What changes to Danish immigration policy has your Centre influenced and why were those changes necessary?

Using their expertise in evaluating educational qualifications, Danish NARIC assisted the Danish Immigration authorities in constructing the system for awarding points to different educational levels.

Describe the process involved from initial application through to the submission of your Centre's assessment to the Danish Immigration authority. Is this a separate function from other assessments?

Danish NARIC's processing and assessment of applications does not involve direct contact with the applicant. The Danish Immigration Authority ensure that all the required documentation is available to Danish NARIC electronically, who then assess the qualifications and digitally returns the assessment back to the immigration authorities who award appropriate points for the educational level obtained. This process is kept separate to Danish NARIC's regular assessments where they deal directly with the applicant and have responsibility for verifying authenticity of documentation themselves.

The Danish Immigration Authority maintains overarching responsibility for the number of points awarded (including additional points for language skills and experience). This results in an initial filtering of the applicants for immigration purposes, which ensures that only those able to gain enough points will be passed to Danish NARIC for evaluation. Assessments issued by Danish NARIC for the purposes of awarding points towards the Greencard scheme are never issued directly to the applicant.

How has the doubling of recognition decisions (as a result of the Greencard scheme) impacted your Centre?

Since the introduction of the Greencard scheme, Danish NARIC has expanded its human resources and moved offices to accommodate the doubling of recognition decisions and increases in cases of fraudulent documents. Whilst three more credential evaluators have been employed by Danish NARIC in the long-term, ten temporary staff were employed at the beginning of the scheme in order to cope with the initial influx in demand. Danish NARIC's continued workflow, however, is dependent on the resources and ability of the Danish Immigration Authority to scan and forward on applications. Danish NARIC also employed another quality coordinator to ensure standards of assessing international qualifications are maintained.

Explain why you think the role of the ENIC/NARIC Network in shaping and enabling immigration policy is "integration to labour market policy and assisting immigrants with access to further education" in particular?

According to Danish NARIC, the role of the Network in shaping and enabling immigration policy is the *"integration to labour market policy and assisting immigrants*

with access to further education". This is based on Danish NARIC's first-hand experience of immigrants who have come through the Greencard scheme but still have difficulty finding employment in the current economic environment.

The debate surrounding the Greencard scheme in this economic/ employment landscape is clear from Danish NARIC's response. They envisage a shortage of highly skilled professionals in time to come. Interestingly, the ageing population is still one of a number of debates in the EHEA and so countries like Denmark are keen to attract highly skilled professionals to fill this gap.

Expertise in credential evaluation and authenticity of qualifications is only available via the ENIC/NARIC Network and so this role is essential in the face of 21st Century migration flows.

When analysing the case study provided by Danish NARIC as an example of a Centre within a managed migration system, it is evident that Danish NARIC have been directly involved in the creation, implementation and management of the Danish national immigration policy. Introduction of the Danish Greencard scheme had initially impacted the resources of Danish NARIC although this impact was also felt by the Danish Immigration Authority. Both entities have now reached the stage where they manage the process collectively. Continual monitoring of the ebb and flow of migrants from countries where the most evaluations come from is fundamental for deciding whether changes in policy need to be made and is achieved through excellent communication between Danish NARIC and the policymakers (Danish Immigration Authority).

3.6.3.2 Case Study: UK

In response to the general Network Survey II questionnaire, UK NARIC agreed to answer a set of further questions as a second case study examining the role of the Centre in shaping and enabling national immigration policy within a managed migration system.

What is the points-based calculator and why was it implemented?

In 2008 the UK Border Agency (UKBA) introduced a points-based system for immigration purposes. The points-based system was designed to manage economic migration and to enable better informed decisions through the Migration Advisory Committee. Five 'Tiers' were created under which individuals could apply and score different points according to their age, qualifications, previous earnings, UK experience, English language, funds and whether they had a sponsor.

Published online by the UKBA, the points-based calculator helps individual's wishing to come to the UK calculate how many points they may be awarded for their qualifications and the likelihood they would be accepted to work or study in the UK.

How does the points-based calculator work on a day-to-day basis?

Individual's wishing to come to the UK can assess their eligibility using the points-based calculator to identify the points awarded to their specific qualifications. If an

individual is unable to find their qualification using the points-based calculator for immigration purposes, they can apply directly to UK NARIC for a Statement of Comparability. If a Statement of Comparability can be issued, it will be sent directly to the individual who can make reference to it in support of their immigration application to the UKBA.

How has the points-based calculator impacted UK NARIC?

In addition to UK NARIC's regular assessment services for members and individuals (which includes assessments for immigration or non-immigration purposes), UK NARIC developed a bespoke database to aid the initial set-up of the UKBA's points-based calculator. The database was developed according to the policy requirements of the UKBA's points-based system.

UK NARIC updates the UKBA's database three times a year to ensure the qualification and institution information remains up-to-date and that it reflects developments or changes to UK NARIC's own database of recognised qualifications. This contractual obligation, however, limits the number of times UK NARIC can update their own systems to three times a year.

Describe UK NARIC's relationship with the UK Border Agency and to what extent does UK NARIC influence national immigration policy?

In implementing the UK's national immigration policy, the UKBA approached UK NARIC for advice and expert opinion on qualifications worldwide, which led to UK NARIC being initially involved in determining how many points should be awarded to each level of qualification within the five-tier points-based system.

Although UK NARIC does not formally influence national immigration policy, UK NARIC continually feeds into the policy development process by meeting regularly with UKBA case workers to discuss issues or changes required in the provision of information for the points-based calculator.

UK NARIC also provides an enquiry service whereby UKBA case officers can ask questions regarding the recognition of qualifications. This is facilitated by an online interface between UK NARIC and the UKBA that includes a noticeboard and question-and-answer section, to aid communication and cooperation between the two organisations.

In answer to the survey question asking how much impact immigration policy has had on your centre, you said the impact was "large" and that UK NARIC has seen a considerable drop in individual applications from outside the EU over the last few years.

UK NARIC mentioned three reasons for a drop in individual applications from outside the EU:

  i.   There is no obligation for individuals outside the UK to require a UK NARIC Statement of Comparability in submitting their application to the UKBA.
  ii.   Individuals from the EU can migrate freely to the UK and do not need a UK NARIC Statement of Comparability for immigration purposes.
  iii.   Many individuals apply for a UK NARIC Statement of Comparability once

they have entered the UK to support their applications for licensure, employment or further study.

Explain why you think the role of the ENIC/NARIC Network in shaping and enabling immigration policy is "playing a bigger part in advising on trends or types of qualifications received from certain countries" in particular?

According to UK NARIC, the role of the Network in shaping and enabling immigration policy is "*playing a bigger part in advising on trends or types of qualifications received from certain countries*" because this will ensure that all Centres have greater insight into the skills and competencies of individuals coming from each country.

3.6.4 Comparative Analysis

Having conducted a thorough investigation into the role of Centres in the context of immigration/managed migration systems, it is now within the interests of meeting the research's overarching objective (to investigate the changing role of Centres) to compare these with the roles of Centres as prescribed in the ENIC-NARIC Charter in order to identify whether the current role matches the intended role.

While the Charter does not explicitly mention migration or national immigration stakeholders, the following elements of the Charter may be interpreted as alluding to the above in broader terms.

Table 3.6.2: Prescribed versus current role of Centres / Networks

ENIC-NARIC prescribed activities and services	Differences identified between prescribed and actual activities and services
Provide adequate, reliable and authenticated information […] to individual holders of qualifications, higher education institutions, employers, professional organisations, **public authorities**, ENIC/NARIC partners **and other interested parties**;	Centres operating in countries with established managed migration systems are often heavily involved in providing information to the national immigration authorities.
Cooperate in related matters with other information centres, higher education institutions, their networks **and other relevant actors** in the national context;	In the countries with established managed migration systems, the Centres tend to work very closely with their national immigration authorities. This cooperation is currently not explicitly reflected in the Charter.
Ensure coherence and interactivity with other partners and networks **in related fields**: recognition, quality assurance,	It appears that immigration has not been commonly viewed as one of the 'related fields' in which centres should seek to cooperate. Many mutual benefits can be achieved from coherent interaction between the Centres and national

accreditation, education and training, employment	and global stakeholders engaged in immigration research, policy and practice.

The evidence gathered through secondary and primary research demonstrates that several Centres have been playing an important role in supporting and enabling their national managed migration systems through establishing mutually-beneficial and strategic cooperation with the relevant immigration authorities. In spite of several examples of very successful cooperation, across the board such cooperation appears to be an exception rather than a rule. There can be multiple external reasons for this, including for example, low numbers of immigrants or lack of streamlined national actions to control and manage immigration. However, to some extent lack of cooperation and engagement may also be attributed to the fact that the theme of immigration does not explicitly feature in the Charter. This implies that a review of the Charter to include greater emphasis on this field could encourage both the Centres and the immigration authorities to explore opportunities for closer cooperation, thus ensuring that the potential of the Networks/Centres is utilised in enabling and supporting mechanisms for managing migration. This is particularly relevant in the context of the recent actions towards the *Common Immigration Policy for Europe.*

3.6.5 Survey III

Building on the key messages from the previous research, Survey III completed the research exercise by gathering the views and opinions of the Centres on the potential for future engagement and cooperation with the immigration stakeholders at both national and global level. More specifically, the Heads of Centres were asked to express their opinion on the following questions:

Question 1: "In spite of immigrants being one of the main users of the services offered by the ENIC/NARICs, over 70% of respondents to CHARONA Survey II indicated that they have no involvement in the development of their national immigration policy. In your opinion, is there a need to formulate and develop closer cooperation between the ENIC/NARIC Centres and the national immigration authorities?"

25 Centres shared their position on this question. The analysis of responses revealed the following key messages, presented in Table 3.6.2 and supported by examples of the actual responses:

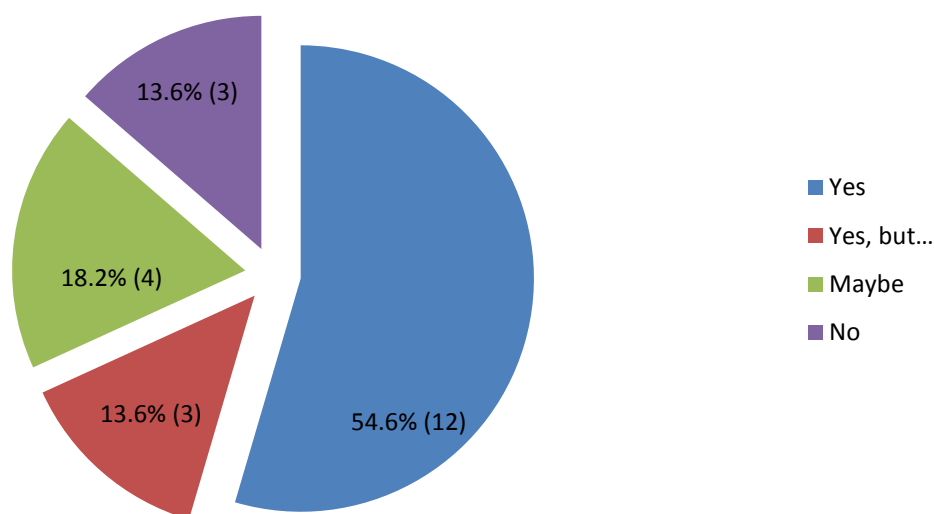**Table 3.6.3 Responses to Survey III Question on immigration**

No	*"not necessarily"*
	"in our opinion, there is no need"
	"I think no. We are informing regularly national immigration authorities, if we have

	some specific countries diplomas recognition problems."
Yes	*"Yes, it is. In our country it is visible that some initiatives in the framework of immigration policy have had a big influence on the involvement of ENIC/NARIC. E.g. information on residence permit and of recognition should be linked."*
	"Yes we should be aware of and consulted on migration policy in as far as recognition is involved, for instance to prevent the use of ranking systems in the selection/point system for a residence permit. In the case of refugees: With our expertise we could develop instruments for alternative recognition if qualifications went missing."
	"Yes, as evidenced by the experience of our Centre, there is definite scope and great benefits stemming from close cooperation between NARIC and the national immigration authorities."
	"Yes, and other authorities concerning immigrants and integration."
	"yes, the [...] ENIC has been involved in consultation for recent immigration policy reform and implementation of new requirements for skilled workers and international students; this collaboration is extremely important, as issues of credential recognition and the status of educational institutions allowed to enrol international students are closely tied to new requirements set by immigration authorities. Similar trends are seen in other countries as well."
Yes, but…	*"Yes but there is a clear and important distinction between assisting in development of national immigration policy and improving cooperation with national immigration authorities. I think it is high risk to suggest ENIC/NARICs become more actively engage in directing national immigration policy, but we do have a role in supporting the national immigration authorities in their recognition activities."*
	"There is perhaps not a need to formulate a cooperation paper but a need to communicate the expertise of our centres in countries which have work and residence schemes for attracting highly qualified migrants. Our centres could feed into strategies for attracting highly qualified migrants through our knowledge of foreign educational systems."
	"Yes, but we only play a passive role. When competent authorities for national immigration need information about foreign qualifications or foreign institutions they may ask us for advice."
Maybe	*"…our Centre has not been extensively involved in immigration policy up to the present date, but that is a question/issue that is worth exploring further."*
	"Closer cooperation should exist, but we don't consider it is so important for ENIC/NARIC Centres."
	"I think there could be more cooperation in this area. We have no real cooperation and don't find this an issue necessarily. All individuals, irrespective of immigrant status can access our service for free. I question what we want to specifically achieve through closer cooperation? Perhaps this is more relevant to some countries than others?"

The distribution of opinions across all respondents is demonstrated in the chart below:

Diagram 3.6.3

Is there a need to...develop closer cooperation between the ENIC/NARIC Centres and the national immigration authorities?

Question 2: "In your opinion, could the information and expertise held by the Networks be useful to discussions on global migration issues and how?"

As could be expected, the responses followed a similar pattern:

**Table 3.6.4 Responses to Survey III Question 2 on migration issues**

No	*"The centre does not perform the role of a political actor and is not expected to do so."*
Yes	*"There is no doubt that ENIC/NARIC expertise and perspectives could be valuable in helping inform immigration- and migration-related policies given the experience the Centers have with academic and professional mobility. Those perspectives might be lacking in the policy discussions undertaken by ministries of trade, immigration / internal security and labour."*
	"Yes. Absolutely. Trends in migration might possibly be detected based on applications received by Centres. In addition, data held by centres could possibly identify the flow of qualified labour"
	"Yes. Very much so. The shared practices of the national agencies will be a very valuable source of information for countries which will further develop types of global migration where quality assurance of qualifications are an integrated element"
	"The information held by the ENIC-NARICs and the Network could provide a valuable source of information about different educational systems, different qualifications, comparison between qualifications, which is always linked to recognition of the qualifications and ultimately work and employment, based on these qualifications. One example in practice is already using the expertise of ENIC-NARIC centre in the process of issuing an EU Blue Card, where we can see how education, work permits, living permits and the expertise of the ENIC-NARIC centre can be interlinked."

Yes, but…	*"Yes, but maybe on a national basis as described in the previous question and not as a network since migration is very delicate policy area in most Countries"* *"Recognition is important, but still minor factor in global migration. It is important that those in charge of migration issues are aware of recognition expertise in each country"*
Maybe	*"Yes maybe. In so that we have a lot of knowledge about a large group of the migrants and collected information on this should be of interest for policy- and decision-makers."* *"Possibly, with information on the geographical structure of qualifications and holders, the structure of field/ majors of qualifications and the trends available."*

The distribution of opinions across all respondents is demonstrated in the chart below:

Diagram 3.6.4

In your opinion, could the information and expertise held by the Networks be useful to discussions on global migration issues and how?

- 5.5% (1)
- 22.2% (4)
- 16.7% (3)
- 55.6% (10)

Legend:
- Yes
- Yes, but…
- Maybe
- No
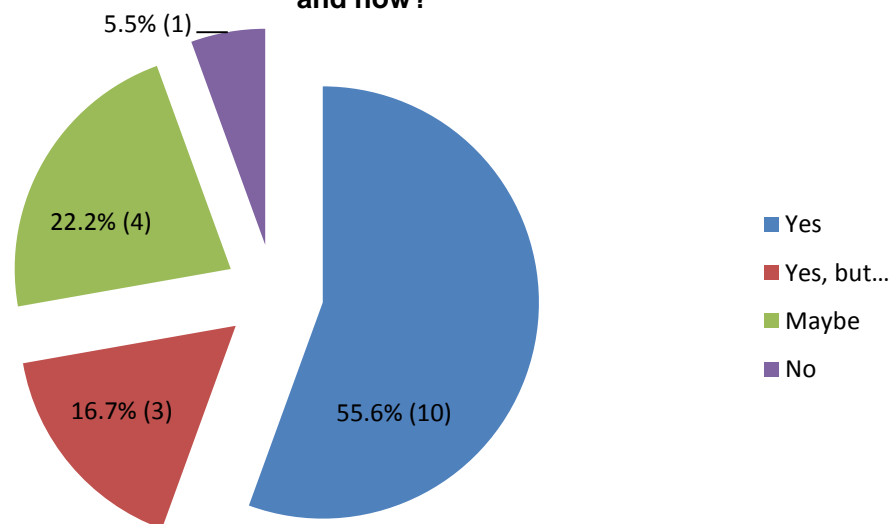
As demonstrated by both sets of responses to Survey III, over 50% of all respondents believe that there are tangible benefits to be gained from developing cooperation with immigration stakeholders and engaging into wider global discussions on immigration issues. These include:

➢ Supporting national immigration authorities through streamlined and coordinated provision of the information required for decision-and policy-making;

➢ Exporting successful cooperation models to other countries;

➢ Supporting and enabling effective integration of immigrants;

➤ Using the data held by the Centres to study and analyse migration trends and labour flows

The responses further emphasise that the national immigration policy is a highly delicate field and the contributions of the Centres should be limited to that of information provision and support only; there is a risk that active engagement in devising immigration policies could compromise the fair principles of recognition in favour of the national agendas.

Another observation emerging from the responses is that the level of Centres' involvement in immigration issues is often down to the national regulations and the Centres are not in the position to trigger the change and improve cooperation without the support from the relevant national policy-makers.

CHAPTER IV. Conclusions and recommendations

The project has produced a set of revealing and thought-provoking observations and findings that can:

- ✓ contribute to policy development of recognition by addressing the role of ENIC-NARICs in the context of initiatives and instruments relating to recognition and mobility;

- ✓ enhance the quality and effectiveness of ENIC-NARICs and unearth opportunities for optimum utilisation of their potential by amending the current practices in relation to the joint ENIC/NARIC Charter;

- ✓ continue to develop and disseminate information on education systems and increase awareness of recognition procedures at national level;

- ✓ continue to promote cooperation of all Network members and contribute towards greater interactivity and synergies with other networks.

This Chapter will conclude the report by providing the key conclusions stemming from the research and formulating recommendations for future actions.

The Changing Role of NARICs research study started off by taking a snapshot of the current state-of-play of the Networks and the Centres and identifying key **internal** evolution trends and areas where major developments have occurred.

While internal diversity remains a key characteristic of the Networks, several common tendencies have been reported by many Centres. This leads to the conclusion that, in spite of their individuality and uniqueness, the Centres form an integral part of a large and complex entity.

During the past few decades, the majority of the Centres have expanded in order to meet the growing demand for recognition services. Many Centres have diversified their service offerings by developing a portfolio of services customised to the needs of different target audiences within their national context.

Fairness, quality and consistency have been one of the primary focus areas for ENIC-NARICs during the past years; it has generated and inspired multiple projects and activities at both Centre- and Network-level, thus contributing to enhanced expertise and professionalism of the Centres and their staff. Over several decades of

continuous service, the Centres and the Networks have succeeded in establishing themselves as leading recognition stakeholders setting out and promoting good practice in recognition.

Having reviewed the internal evolution, the study moved on to analysing the external context in which the Centres and Networks operate. This stage identified the most pertinent developments affecting (and affected by) the Centres. The changing dynamics at European level have seen the introduction of initiatives such as the Bologna Process and the EQF, as well as specific EU Directives related to professional recognition. Additionally, external factors such as changes in migration patterns can have an impact on the work being done by individual Centres.

A review of the key findings of the research is presented in Table 5.1:

Table 5.1: Findings of the CHARONA project

Research themes connected to the findings	Findings
Chapter 3.1: Role and Remit Chapter 3.2: Scope of work	NARICs have broadened their focus to include sectors beyond higher education; most now cover all ranges of education from primary and VET through to professional qualifications
Chapter 3.1: Role and Remit Chapter 3.2: Scope of work Chapter 3.3: Bologna Process Chapter 3.4: Professional Qualifications Directives Chapter 3.5: National and Transnational qualifications frameworks Chapter 3.6: Managed Migration	The range of stakeholders engaged with continues to broaden compared to the original expectations; Centres cooperate with a wide range of bodies such as professional associations, VET stakeholders, education policy groups etc.
Chapter 3.1: Role and Remit Chapter 3.2: Scope of work Chapter 3.4: Professional Qualifications Directives Chapter 3.: National and Transnational qualifications frameworks	Many Centres have taken on additional roles such as NCPs for Professional Recognition, Europass Centres, and Eurydice/Euroguidance
Chapter 3.1: Role and Remit Chapter 3.3: Bologna Process Chapter 3.4: Professional Qualifications Directives Chapter 3.5: National and Transnational qualifications frameworks Chapter 3.6: Managed Migration	Many Centres are heavily involved in policy development including in relation to higher education policy; internationalisation agendas; mobility and qualifications transparency
Chapter 3.1: Role and Remit Chapter 3.5: National and	The majority of Centres have not developed consistent cooperation with

Transnational qualifications frameworks	centres and networks outside their own region
Chapter 3.1: Role and Remit Chapter 3.3: Bologna Process Chapter 3.5: National and Transnational qualifications frameworks	Centres also highlighted the possibility of improving cooperation with quality assurance bodies and networks, and with stakeholders in the Bologna Process
Chapter 3.1: Role and Remit Chapter 3.3: Bologna Process Chapter 3.5: National and Transnational qualifications frameworks	Centres engage actively with stakeholders in the process of developing national qualifications frameworks and participate in debates around such policy.
Chapter 3.1: Role and Remit Chapter 3.6: Managed Migration	The responses demonstrate that the Centres operating in countries with established managed migration systems are often heavily involved in providing information to the national immigration authorities
Chapter 3.1: Role and Remit Chapter 3.6: Managed Migration	The findings of the research demonstrate that many mutual benefits can be achieved from coherent and strategic interaction between the Centres and national and global stakeholders engaged in immigration research, policy and practice.

These findings have therefore led to the formulation of a number of key recommendations.

Chapters 3.1-3.2 analysed the changes in the **role, remit and scope of work of ENIC/NARICs.** During the past decade the interest in recognition and the demand for recognition services have been growing alongside the increasing academic and professional mobility in Europe and beyond. The implications of this growth for ENIC-NARICs have been considerable and have resulted in changes to the roles and remits of the Centres. The recommendations stemming from the findings related to these themes are:

> *Clear positioning of the Networks and Centres, and communication of the wider scope of work undertaken by Centres to external audiences.*
>
> *This can be initially undertaken, for example, by updating the Networks' and Centres' websites with clear information and by disseminating clear information at events and through publications.*

> *This recommendation would be better accomplished through an update of the Joint ENIC-NARIC Charter.*

> ***Increase the Networks' and Centres' global presence*** *by supporting and engaging with networks in other regions, for example. ASEM, MERIC, and APARNET, while ensuring strong political vision and support for these engagement activities.*

> **Fully exploit ENIC-NARICs' capacity to support internationalisation**;   explore opportunities for greater engagement at both "grass-roots" and policy level

> **Increase involvement in policy development** in relation to:
> - quality assurance and recognition at HEIs
> - development and application of NQFs and EQF
> - institutional and national internationalisation strategies
> - Creation of standards/guidelines for the Centres and Networks (similar to ENQA) on quality assurance processes, self-evaluation and peer reviews
>
> Networks should seek to act as one body (similar to ENQA) with relation to involvement in policy development

The **Bologna Process** has played, and continues to play, a major role in shaping the higher education landscape in Europe and beyond. ENIC-NARICs have supported the implementation in a variety of ways. In the future the Centres can continue to contribute; the following recommendations can support contribution to the future of the EHEA:

> *Continue to grow and nurture close working relationships with Higher Education Institutions and other education providers*

This could be accomplished both at a Network and at a Centre level through conferences and events, targeted information sessions on topics such as joint degrees and quality assurance, published information and guidance documents, as well as one-to-one meetings as needed.

> *Take concrete steps to improve cooperation with quality assurance agencies at Network and national levels*

This could be achieved via the Networks engaging which supra-national organisations such as ENQA. Having established productive relationships at this level, individual Centres may then wish to hold one-to-one meetings with their own national quality assurance agencies on the emerging topics of discussion.

Consider petitioning the Chairs and Vice-Chair of the Bologna Follow Up Group (BFUG), via the Secretariat, for the Networks to be represented on the Group as a consultative member

Chapter 3.4 analysed the **cooperation and interaction between national/transnational qualifications frameworks and ENIC-NARICs**.

Apart from being one of the key users of the qualifications frameworks, the Centres can also play an important role in supporting, promoting and disseminating their use among other relevant stakeholder groups. The following recommendations have been formulated to support and promote mutually beneficial interaction and synergy between ENIC-NARICs and the national/transnational frameworks:

- *Ensure coherent interaction between the Centres and the EQF*
- *engage in EQF referencing process and the subsequent maintenance process; establish efficient ways for disseminating the EQF to national stakeholders*
- *provide support and specialist advice to potential users of the EQF as and when required.*

To ensure continued cooperation and synergy between both initiatives, the Networks should consider requesting formal representation on the EQF Referencing Group and individual Centres which are not currently EQF Contact Points should ensure close cooperation with the Contact Points in their own countries.

Chapter 3.5 analysed the **impact of the Professional Recognition Directives on the work of ENIC-NARICs**.

While it is within the remit to cooperate with Coordinators, the findings of the research demonstrate that professional recognition is a complex area of recognition policy involving multiple actors. While many are already involved, with a number of Centres playing the dual role of NARIC and NCP for professional recognition, Centres may find it beneficial to further develop their engagement with the actors within the system of professional recognition. Additionally, given a desire to develop and promote best practice in recognition, it may be advisable to turn attention to the area of professional recognition and utilise the experience of the ENIC-NARICs in recognition to promote best practice in this area as well.

Therefore the following recommendation emerges:

Develop a guidance document consolidating good practices and recommendations for cooperation between the national ENIC/NARIC Centres and the NCPs for professional qualifications under Directive 2005/36/EC in order to promote best practice in professional recognition

> *Centres should seek to actively cooperate with the National Coordinator and the National Contact Point (Assistance Centre) on a national level*

Finally, chapter 3.6 looked at **the role of the Networks with relation to managed migration/immigration.** While this proved to have important links to the work of Centres, issues surrounding migration/immigration can be sensitive. It is therefore important for this issue to be addressed carefully, with consideration to the national context in which Centres operate.   The following recommendations have been developed based upon the research into this theme:

> *Consider links between the work of the Centres and the Blue Card Directive, and potential areas where the Centres could offer professional expertise*

> *Consider an increased presence by Centres in national/international immigration discussions e.g. supporting national immigration authorities by sourcing intelligence on international qualifications.*

The Changing Role of NARICs (CHARONA) project has been a challenging and enlightening exercise, highlighting the depth of experience, as well as the diversity, possessed by the NARIC Centres and the Network. With extensive expertise in recognition, the Centres and Network have enormous potential to support activities and develop their own capacities in light of changing circumstances. It is hoped that this study, and the resulting recommendations, will stimulate a period of examination of the opportunities, and challenges, facing the Centres and the Network. It is also hoped that with the evidence of this study, and the recommendations and conclusions, to guide discussions that the ENIC-NARIC Networks and their member Centres will seek to build upon the many successes of the past 15 years to move forward with new endeavours, and with renewed confidence in what the Networks and Centres can offer.

Annex I. Terms and Definitions

The ENIC Network (European Network of Information Centres)

- established in 1994 by the Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES who jointly provide the Secretariat for the Network. The Network is made up of the national information centres of the States party to the European Cultural Convention or the UNESCO Europe Region. An ENIC is a body set up by the national authorities; while the size and specific competence of ENICs may vary, their purpose, as defined in their mandate, is "*to facilitate co-operation between national information centres on academic mobility and recognition in the European Region*".

The NARIC Network (National Academic Recognition Information Centres)

- established in 1984 by the European Commission, the network comprises the Member States of the European Union (EU) countries, the European Economic Area (EEA) countries and Turkey. The NARICs were designated by the Ministries of Education in the respective countries. The status and functions of individual NARICs may differ, however their scope of activities, as defined in their mandate, is to "*collect and disseminate authenticated information, which is necessary for the purpose of academic recognition, also bearing in mind synergies with professional recognition of diplomas*".

Joint ENIC/NARIC Charter of Activities and Services

- adopted in 2004, the Charter seeks to elaborate on minimum services to be provided by every national ENIC/NARIC centre and outlines the minimum structural needs of an ENIC/NARIC in terms of political support, equipment, human resources and funding. The Charter defines:
  - Tasks and activities of a national ENIC/NARIC centre
  - Tasks and activities of the ENIC and NARIC Networks
  - Resources and Expertise

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. Academic recognition can also be sought for an academic career at a second institution and in some cases for access to other employment activities on the labour market (academic recognition for

professional purposes). As regards the European Higher Education Area, three main levels of recognition can be considered, as well as the instruments attached to them (as suggested by the Lisbon Convention and the Bologna Declaration): (i) recognition of qualifications, including prior learning and professional experience, allowing entry or re-entry into higher education; (ii) recognition of short study periods in relation to student mobility, having as the main instrument the ECTS (European Credit Transfer System); (iii) recognition of full degrees, having as the main instrument the Diploma Supplement.

Bologna Process

- The commitment by 47 countries, all party to the European Cultural Convention, to reform their higher education systems in order to create convergence at the European level. The main focus is on the introduction of the three cycle system (bachelor/master/doctorate); strengthened quality assurance; and easier recognition of qualifications and periods of study. The process was launched in 1999 through the Bologna Declaration.

Credential evaluation

- Comparing and assessing foreign qualifications.

European Higher Education Area (EHEA)

- The area comprising of the 47 signatory states to the Bologna Process, formally launched in 2010.

European qualification framework for lifelong learning (EQF)

- A reference tool for the description and comparison of qualification levels in qualifications systems developed at national, international or sectoral level.

Professional recognition - de facto

- Refers to situations of unregulated recognition for professional purposes, such as where no national legal authorisation to practice a particular profession exists or is required.

Professional recognition - de jure

- Refers to the recognition of the right to work in a specific country in a regulated profession (e.g. medical doctor) in the European Union or European Economic Area. These situations are subject to the European Union Directive 2005/36/EC whereby if a citizen is a fully qualified professional in one

Member State, he or she has a right to exercise that profession and be recognised as a professional in another Member State.

Qualification framework

- 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.

  ..

Annex II. Research Methodology

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Research Theme: Changing Role and Remit of Centres and the Network

The theme will analyse and describe how the remit of the centres and the network has changed, specifically outlining the newly adopted functions and responsibilities of the centres.

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The aim of Theme 1 is to show how the role of the centres and the Network has been influenced (expanded) because of policy developments in higher education. What new functions and responsibilities the changes have made and how it influenced the Network.

Research questions

   a) describe the originally intended remit for the network/centres
   b) describe functions for which centres are responsible (also above and beyond original remit)
   c) describe changes in the status of guidance and advice
   d) describe policy contributions of the centres and the network
   e) describe the role of the centres/Network in promoting internationalisation and mobility
   f) describe the role of the centres and the network in introducing and promoting the Lisbon Recognition Convention to stakeholders
   g) provide analysis of how the remit has evolved in comparison with the intended remit described in the Charter
   h) propose areas for development and boosting the remit

The research methodology will include desk-top research, data collection (survey, interview), case study/ies and comparative analysis.

The first phase of research will comprise of comprehensive review of literature (secondary sources). The aims of this phase are:

   • to describe the initial remit of the centres and Network [question a]
   • to provide background for further in-depth research [questions b – f]

The second phase of research will comprise of data collecting and analysis. The research methodologies should allow analysis ofof the changing role both from the perspective of ENIC-NARIC centres and the whole Network.

Firstly, the analysis of the selected secondary sources, the responses to the survey (ENIC-NARIC Network survey) sent to 55 centres on 5th April 2012 and the country profiles submitted by the 5 project partners will provide information about the current remit of the individual centres, all functions they are responsible for, their legal status, also their policy contribution and contribution to promoting internationalisation and mobility. [questions a) – f) regarding the role of centres role]. Providing the mentioned

sources will not be sufficient to answer questions d)-f) a short questionnaire will be sent to the centres.

Secondly, the analysis of secondary sources and the results of the interview with show the changing role of the whole Network. The aim of the third phase of the research is to show the changing role of the Network as a whole. The interview will concentrate on questions a), d), e), f) and include range of relevant stakeholders like EC, CoE, UNESCO, LRC Presidents, ENIC Presidents, NARIC co-ordinators… If possible or necessary, in addition, an on-line discussion via blog will be organised. [questions a), b), d), e), f)]

Results of the second phase will help to identify one or two Centres on which a more detailed case study/ies will be conducted.

In the final phase outcomes of phases will be summarised and an analysis of how the remit has evolved in comparison with the intended remit described in the Charter.

Methodological approaches – summary
1. Literature review - questions a), b), c), d), e), f)
2. Analysis of initial ENIC-NARIC survey – questions b), c), d), e), f)
3. Interview – questions d), e), f)
4. Case study – questions d), e), f)

Research Theme: Changing Scope of Work

The theme will analyse and describe how the scope of work has changed, specifically the education sectors covered by recognition services; our involvement with the relevant stakeholders such as HEIs, employers, professional bodies.

The aim of Theme 2 is to analyse how the original scope of work and involvement with the relevant stakeholders described in the Charter has changed. Particular attention will be paid to the cooperation between the Centres/Network and HEIs.

Research questions

a) describe the originally intended scope of qualifications/education sectors covered by the centres
b) describe the originally intended service users and the changes/developments in those accessing the services
c) describe the relationships with HEIs
d) provide analysis of how has the scope of work has evolved in comparison with the intended scope described in the Charter
e) propose areas for development and further widening of the scope of work

In Theme 2 it is necessary to answer the following questions:

- what was the original scope of work, who were the originally intended clients and how this changed

- what is the relationship between the centres and HEIs and what role centres and the Network play

The research methodology will include analysis of the secondary sources, collecting and analysis of the data (ENIC-NARIC survey, specific survey/s regarding the relationship with HEIs), case studies and comparative analysis.

The research will start with a comprehensive literature review in order to describe the original scope of work and the originally intended service users (as described in the ENIC-NARIC Charter). The aim of this research phase is to prepare the background for more explanatory research. [questions a) and b), c)]

Next phase will be the analysis of the results of the ENIC-NARIC survey and the 5 country profiles submitted by project partners. This should answer the questions a) and b): what is the actual scope of work, what education and qualification sector they cover, who are the most important clients of the centres and how the actual situation is different from what is described in the Charter. Analysis of the survey and country profiles will also give information regarding the relationship with HEIs (e.g. dissemination of information). [questions a), b), c)]

Since the relationship between the centres/Network and HEIs is particularly important nowadays, a short questionnaire regarding the everyday cooperation between HEIs and centres will be drafted and sent to selected centres (different regions, legal and

staff situation…). Aim of the survey will be to find out how the individual centres cooperate with HEIs. [question b)]

To describe the relationship between the Network as a whole and the most popular service users (among them HEIs) separate survey should be drafted and carried out among the relevant stakeholders.

Basing on the results of the previous phases one or two centres will be selected for more in-depth case study.

The next phase will be an analysis of how has the scope of work has evolved in comparison with the intended scope described in the Charter. Basing on the findings of the analysis suggestions for propose areas for development and further widening of the scope of work

Methodological approaches – summary
1. Literature review - questions a), b), c),
2. Analysis of initial ENIC-NARIC survey – questions a), b) c)
3. Survey analysis b), c)
4. Case study – questions b), c)

Research Theme: Bologna Process

The theme will analyse Bologna Process and its impact on the work of the individual Centres and the Network. The research will include two perspectives: 1) What role have the Centres played in the implementation of Bologna Process 2) How have the Centres been affected by the Bologna Process

The aim of Theme 3 is to show how the Centres and the Network were impacted by the Bologna Process, how they supported it and to make suggestions for potential areas for development and boosting the role of the Network..

Research questions

a) describe the impact of the Bologna Process on the recognition practices of individual centres
b) describe the impact of Bologna Process on the Network as a whole
c) describe the role of individual centres in supporting the Bologna Process
d) describe the role of the Network in supporting the Bologna Process
e) provide comparative analysis of the current roles and those described in the Charter
f) propose potential areas for development and boosting the role of the Network

To answer the research questions it is necessary to:

- define the Bologna Process and the role of recognition in the process

- describe the mandate and responsibilities of the centres and the Network under the Bologna process as indicated in the Charter

- identify what was the impact of Bologna Process on the Centres and Network

- identify how the Centres and the Network supported the Bologna Process

To answer the questions various research methodologies will be applied: literature review, collecting and analysing of data (survey, 5 country profiles, comparative analysis.

First stage of research will be literature review. It should help to define the Bologna Process and the role of recognition in it, to describe the original mandate and responsibilities indicated in the Charter. Literature review also gives background for further in-depth research. [questions a) – d)]

Second stage will be to analyse the results of the initial ENIC-NARIC survey and the 5 country profiles. This stage will give information regarding the impact of the Bologna Process on the individual centre and their role / place in the process on the

national level as well as information how the individual centres support Bologna Process. [questions a) and c)]

Third stage will be organising a focus group and an on-line discussion regarding the impact of the Bologna Process on the Network and the role of the Network in the process. The participants of the focus group will comprise representatives of the Network as well as representatives of various stakeholders involved in the Bologna Process, e.g. BFUG, ESU, EC, ENQA. [questions b) and c)]

Outcomes of the previous research stages will help to identify one or two centres for a case study.

Final stage of the research will be a comparative analysis of the current roles and those described in the ENIC-NARIC Charter. Results of the analysis should be a recommendation how to strengthen the role of the Centres and the Network in the Bologna Process.

Methodological approaches – summary
1. Literature review - questions a), b), c), d)
2. Analysis of initial ENIC-NARIC survey – questions a), c)
3. Focus group and on-line discussion – questions b), d)
4. Case study – questions a), c)

Research Theme: National Qualifications Frameworks / Transnational Qualifications Frameworks

The aim of Theme 4 was to analyse national and transnational qualifications frameworks and their impact on the work of the individual Centres and the Network from two different perspectives:

1. What role have the Centres played in developing, implementing and promoting the frameworks?
2. How have the Centres and the wider Network been affected by national and transnational frameworks?

Research Questions

In achieving this, six specific research questions (or objectives) were developed to provide focus to the project's development. These were to:

a) Describe the impact of frameworks on the recognition practices of individual Centres
b) Describe the impact of frameworks on the Network as a whole
c) Describe the role of individual Centres in developing and supporting the frameworks on a national level
d) Describe the role of the Network in supporting the frameworks internationally
e) Provide comparative analysis of the current roles and those described in the Charter
f) Propose potential areas for development and boosting the role of the Network

The next section outlines the bespoke method designed to address each of these research questions and thereby provide an overall analysis of the impact that national and transnational qualifications frameworks have had on the work of the individual Centres and the Network, and vice versa.

Research Methodology

In order to answer the specific aims of Theme 4 in line with the overall project aim of re-assessing the role of Centres in view of policy developments in education during the last 15 years, investigation demands clearly establishing the following information:

- Defining national and transnational qualifications frameworks
- Defining the connection between national and transnational qualifications frameworks and the work of Centres
- Identifying changes to national and transnational qualifications frameworks over the last 15 years
- Where change has occurred, how have Centres and the work they do been involved?
- Where change has occurred, how have Centres and the work they do been impacted?

In order to define national and transnational qualifications frameworks and their connection with the work of the Centres, the first phase of research comprised a literature review.

In order to investigate changes to qualifications frameworks, the second phase of research was designed to be more exploratory. This comprised analysis of the 31 responses received to the initial survey (sent to the 55 Centres) to gain a broad overview from the perspective of the Centres of the inward effects of national and transnational qualifications frameworks on Centres' policies and day-to-day operations, and the outward influences of their work on qualifications frameworks. Analysis of responses to specific survey questions (shown in Table 1) enabled this level of understanding and consequently helped address research questions a and c[62]:

Table 1: Questions from the initial survey

Question number	Questions from the initial survey
13	Does your Centre serve as the main information point on the recognition of higher education and higher education access qualifications at national level in your country?
15	Are there any national laws that regulate the work of the Centre at the national level?
20	What other services are housed within the same organisation as the Centre?
23	Does your Centre contribute to higher education policy development and legislation at regional, national and European level?
26	Does your Centre participate in publications, surveys, comparative studies and other research activities undertaken by the European Commission, Council of

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[62] For reference. the research questions were defined as:
  a) Describe the impact of frameworks on the recognition practices of individual Centres
  b) Describe the impact of frameworks on the Network as a whole
  c) Describe the role of individual Centres in developing and supporting the frameworks on a national level
  d) Describe the role of the Network in supporting the frameworks internationally
  e) Provide comparative analysis of the current roles and those described in the Charter
  f) Propose potential areas for development and boosting the role of the Network

	Europe, UNESCO and other international organizations?
28	What underpins the recognition procedures of the Centre?
30	Does your Centre cooperate with other stakeholders in term of recognition at international level?
31	Are there other relevant recognition services at a national level that sit outside of your organisation?
33	Has the Centre been affected by any particular recognition reforms or policies over the last 15 years?
34	Is there an EQF (European Qualifications Framework) referencing group in your country?
56	Is there clear information available to the users of the Centre's services on what the applied credential evaluation criteria are?
57	Does your Centre handle qualifications from outside the Lisbon Recognition Convention area differently?

One of the aims of Theme 4 was to investigate the implications of national and transnational frameworks from two perspectives – how they impact the Centres and how the Centres impact them. In line with this, the third phase of research considered more than one perspective by including a range of Centres in a survey (see Table 2 for survey questions). Specifically, stakeholders involved in the creation and implementation of transnational frameworks were targeted in order to investigate the extent to which they considered the Centres in the implementation of new frameworks. This third stage of research facilitated a description of the impact of the frameworks on the Network as a whole (research question b[63]), as well as the role of the Network in supporting the frameworks internationally (research question d). Importantly, it should be noted that due to the remit of this study which focused mainly on the European network of recognition Centres, the research predominantly used the practical example of the EQF to investigate the impact of transnational qualifications frameworks on the work of Centres and the Network. Therefore, and in order to allow for an applied rather than hypothetical analysis, survey and case study questions specifically referenced the EQF.

Table 2: Survey questions to investigate Theme 4

Question	Answer option, and follow-up question
SECTION 1: Questions on national qualifications frameworks	
1) Does your country have a national qualifications framework (NQF)?	Yes □ When was the national framework established? Please give details. No □ Are there plans to establish an NQF in your country? Please give details.

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[63] For reference. the research questions were defined as:
   a) Describe the impact of frameworks on the recognition practices of individual Centres
   b) Describe the impact of frameworks on the Network as a whole
   c) Describe the role of individual Centres in developing and supporting the frameworks on a national level
   d) Describe the role of the Network in supporting the frameworks internationally
   e) Provide comparative analysis of the current roles and those described in the Charter
   f) Propose potential areas for development and boosting the role of the Network

2) How would you summarise the role of your Centre in relation to the NQF?	Free text	
3) What, if any, significant change has the national framework undergone in the past 15 years?	Free text	
4) How has such change impacted on the work of the Centre?	Free text	
SECTION 2: Questions on transnational qualifications frameworks		
5) Has your country referenced its national qualifications to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?	Yes □ No □	
5.1) If your country's national qualifications have been referenced to the EQF please answer the following questions:	5.1a) Was your Centre involved in the referencing of national qualifications to the EQF? Yes □ No □	
	5.1b) How has this impacted your Centre's work on a policy level? Free text	
	5.1c) How has this impacted your Centre's work on a day-to-day, operational level? Free text	
5.2) If your country's national qualifications have not been referenced to the EQF please answer the following questions:	5.2a). Do you intend to recognise national qualifications in the context of the EQF? Yes □ No □ Please give details as to why/why not?	
6) Does your Centre recognise national qualifications in the context of any other transnational qualifications frameworks?	Yes □ No □ Please give details	

The outcomes of the survey informed the selection of two specific Centres who enabled the development of two detailed case studies. These covered, on a country-specific level, the role of Centres in relation to qualifications frameworks and enabled detailed comparative analysis of the current roles of Centres against those described in the Charter (research question e[64]). Although only two case studies are not

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[64] For reference. the research questions were defined as:
 a) Describe the impact of frameworks on the recognition practices of individual Centres
 b) Describe the impact of frameworks on the Network as a whole

sufficient to draw firm conclusions representative of the work of the entire Network, they are intended to provide background for reasonably founded assumptions which form the basis of the final research stage.

Finally, having gained an understanding of the issues and having collected and analysed information from the interviews and case studies, recommendations were made as to potential areas for development and enhancement of the role of the Network in the context of qualifications frameworks (research question f).

Overall, the four-tier methodology started from a very broad overview which was used to inform deeper levels of investigation. Each layer of the method informed the focus of investigation of the next, allowing flexibility to respond to emergent themes. At the end of the process, this enabled a thorough understanding of the impact of national and transnational qualifications frameworks on Centres.

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c) Describe the role of individual Centres in developing and supporting the frameworks on a national level
d) Describe the role of the Network in supporting the frameworks internationally
e) Provide comparative analysis of the current roles and those described in the Charter
f) Propose potential areas for development and boosting the role of the Network

The fifth theme of the CHARONA project seeks to analyse the Professional Qualification Directives and its impact on the individual Centres and the Network. It will examine the roles Centres and the Network play in ensuring compliance with the Directives and how the Centres and Network have been affected by the Directives.

Research questions

To research these areas, a number of research questions have been developed:

a) Describe the impact of the Directives on the recognition practices of individual centres;
b) Describe the impact of the Directives of the Network as a whole;
c) Describe the role of individual centres in ensuring compliance with the Directives on the national level;
d) Describe the role of the Network in supporting the Directives internationally;
e) Provide comparative analysis of the current roles and those describes in the Charter; and
f) Propose potential areas for developments and boosting the role of the Network.

When addressing the theme of Professional Qualification Directives and seeking to answer the research questions, a variety of different research methodologies will need to be adopted.

Firstly the Professional Qualification Directives and their implications for each of the Centres will be identified. The Directives as well as studies that have been done and papers that have been written regarding the Directives will be considered to draw together the way the Directives has been adopted and their consequences.

An initial survey will be sent to each Centre to determine how they ensure they comply with the Directives or whether the Directives have had an impact on countries where the Directives do not apply. Draft survey questions are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Draft survey questions

Question number	Draft survey questions
1	Who is responsible for the recognition of professional qualifications in your country?
2	If an organisation other than yours holds responsibility, do you receive requests from professional bodies?
3	Has your Centre changed its practices in light of the introduction of the Professional Qualifications Directive 2005/36/EC?
4	Since the introduction of the Professional Qualifications Directives, have there been any notable changes in the number of applications for Recognition Statements from EEA applicants who hold professional qualifications?
5	What are your thoughts regarding modernising the directive – i.e. reducing the number of regulated professions, introducing a professions card and having a network-wide alert system for medical professionals who have been struck off?

Using the results of the survey, it will be possible to examine the impact of the Professional Qualifications Directives on the Network as a whole, as well as their impact on individual centres.

A selection of Centres will be contacted (initially the NARICs in Poland, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Ireland and the UK as they are involved in the project, but also Italy, France and Spain) to carry out more detailed questioning. From these, two countries will be selected as case studies (see Table 4). The national profiles already provided by the Charona support team willwill help with this. A combined approach will enable specific case studies to be examined in depth.

Table 4: Anticipated case study questions

Question number	Anticipated case study questions
1	Should there be different directives for different professions – do all professions need directives?
2	Does your NARIC have competence for certifying "regulated education and training" under Directive 2005/36/EC?
3	With regard to the Morgenbesser case – where qualifications have an academic and professional training requirement, if an individual were only to complete the academic portion of the training, is your Centre well placed to deal with these issues?
4	Has the Bologna process implementation had an impact on professional recognition? E.g. in cases where professional training was an integrated programme?

A combination of the results from the initial survey and the case studies will provide the basis for a comparative analysis of the current roles of the Centres and the Network and those described in the Charter. An overview will be provided on how the Professional Qualifications Directives have led to changes within the roles played by the NARICs and highlight general trends. By looking at all of these areas, it will be possible to propose potential areas for development and boost the role of the network in supporting the Professional Qualifications Directives.

Research Theme: Managed migration / immigration policies

The theme will analyse immigration policies and their impact on the work of the individual Centres and the Network. The research will include two perspectives: 1) What role do the Centres/Network play in shaping and enabling compliance with the immigration policies 2) How have the Centres/Network been affected by the migration trends and immigration policies

Theme 6 aims to analyse immigration policies and their impact on the work of the individual Centres.

Research questions

To investigate these areas the following research questions have been developed:

   a) Describe the role of individual Centres in shaping and enabling compliance with the national immigration policies
   b) Describe the role of the Network in managing migration
   c) Describe the impact of the immigration trends and policies on the recognition practices of individual Centres and the Network
   d) Provide comparative analysis of the current roles and those described in the Charter
   e) Propose potential areas for development and boosting the role of the Network

The research methodology seeks to address these questions by combining a range of desk-based research methodologies including an internet-based literature review, data collection and a comparative analysis section (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Methodological design
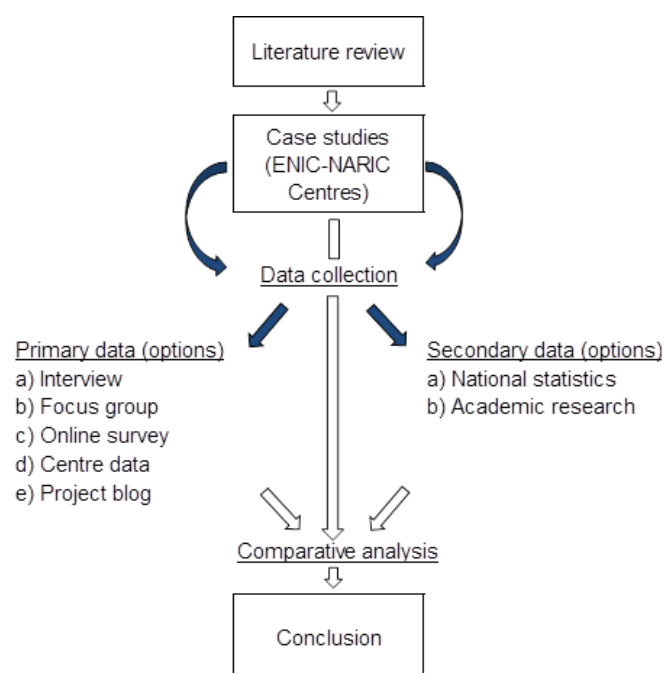
The methodological design begins with a comprehensive literature review to establish the current trends in migration and then focuses upon a case study

approach where in-depth analysis of primary and secondary data sources help highlight the impacts and effects of immigration at individual Centres. It is envisaged that two Centres will be selected as case studies, and these will include Centres in countries with managed immigration systems as they have greater experiences working alongside immigration policy, giving rise to greater content and depth of material that can be examined for best practice.

The primary and secondary data collection techniques are still optional at the methodological design stage, depending very much on the individual Centre under review. The comparative analysis stage exists to examine the findings of the data collection, highlighting similarities or differences between the case study examples. The conclusion will draw together all the relevant findings of the different methodological processes in order to put forward considered responses to the research questions posed in this theme based on the aspects investigated.

The extent to which the design methodology answers each of the research questions is illustrated in the Table 5 below. Most of the methodological processes can broadly cover each of the research questions, although some techniques are more appropriate to certain research questions over others. A more detailed description of each of the methods follows.

Table 5: Mapping research questions to methodological approaches

	Literature review	Data collection	Comparative analysis	Conclusion
a) describe the role of individual Centres in shaping and enabling compliance with the national immigration policies	✔	✔	✔	✔
b) describe the role of the Network in managing migration	✔	✔	✔	✔
c) describe the impact of the immigration trends and policies on the recognition practices of individual Centres and the Network		✔	✔	
d) provide comparative analysis of the current roles and those described in the Charter	✔		✔	
e) propose potential areas for development and boosting the role of the Network	✔			✔

The first stage of research will involve a literature review. With careful consideration to the source, the review will help firstly by contextualising this theme (identifying the most current trends in migration and national policy responses at regional or country-specific level) and secondly by identifying the current role of the individual Centres / Network in consuming and shaping immigration. Specifically, the literature review aims to:

- Provide an overall definition of migration / immigration using secondary source information from specialists in this field.

- Briefly describe the current migration / immigration trends and policies by region (Africa and Middle East, Americas, Europe, Oceania and Asia) to provide a general summary of the global situation, including similarities and difference across regions.
- Describe credential evaluation in the context of immigration / immigration policy and review the findings of existing research in this area.
- Establish which Centres function in countries with managed migration systems and describe the generic country profiles of those within or without managed migration systems.
- From countries identified as having managed migration / immigration systems, select two Centres as case studies for further in-depth analysis.
- Examine the national immigration policies in respect of the ENIC-NARIC case studies identified in point e).
- Appreciate the complexity in methodological design, noting limitations in the scale, scope and direction of this theme, exerting caution in applying sweeping statements.

The second stage of analysis will comprise data collection and analysis. This will involve a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis on a variety of primary and secondary data to be sourced from each ENIC-NARIC case study. The data can be collected using various techniques including interviews, focus groups, online surveys, project blogs and raw data analysis. The most appropriate method(s) of data collection will be decided upon once the individual case studies are known. Specifically, the data collection and analysis for each case study aims to:

- Gauge the Centre's ethos in relation to social awareness and responsibility of involvement in immigration.
- Assess the extent to which the case study Centres have been impacted by immigration trends and policies with specific focus on enquiries, procedures, resources and strategic direction.
- Measure the extent of the Centre involvement with immigration policy at the national level.

The objectives within each case study (where applicable) are to:

- Use reliable secondary source information for each case study to report on region / country-specific migration trends over time, including a brief country profile describing current economic, social, political and environmental factors.
- Use reliable secondary source information to list the strategic objectives of national immigration policy for each case study.
- Analyse individual application data at each ENIC-NARIC case study as a primary source of information to measure the extent and volume to which qualification queries have changed over time.
- Use primary source information from interviews, focus groups and surveys in comparing each case study's self-assessment of roles and responsibilities in immigration.

Having collected and analysed primary data, the next stage seeks to compare the responses of individual ENIC-NARIC case studies in relation to immigration trends and policies. Specifically, the aims of this section are to:

- Compare how each Centre responds to immigration policies whilst ensuring fair recognition of international qualifications, looking specifically at

information management systems, evaluation criteria and processes and procedures.

- Highlight best practices in the recognition of international qualifications for managing immigration from each case study Centre thus far.
- Pool together the overall findings of the literature review and the case study assessments in order to link the findings back to the research questions.
- Using the overall findings of the literature review, compare the country profiles of Centres that function within a managed migration system against those that do not, considering the numbers of both as an indicator of the influence of migration on the whole Network.

Finally a conclusion will summarise the role / potential role of individual Centres in countries with managed migration systems, based on the findings of the specific case studies. It will also draw conclusions on the role of the Network as a whole based on the findings of the case studies and the number of Centres that currently do not function in managed migration systems.

For Centres that do not currently function within managed immigration systems, scenarios for migration trends and possible impacts for the future will be suggested, offering recommendations for best practice in recognition procedures. Recommendations will also be made with regard to developing the NARIC Charter to incorporate migration as a key element in recognition practices, which will help data collection and further analysis in the area.

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