Study on Obstacles to Recognition of Skills and Qualifications

Study overview

June 2016
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• **Aims:**
  - To collect empirical evidence on the **practical obstacles** to fair, efficient and effective recognition of skills and qualifications and their underlying causes
  - To explore how **existing transparency and recognition tools** can be used to overcome the obstacles, and identify **other tools and measures which would be needed** at both EU and national level

• **Target groups:**
  - **Organisations:** employers (in non-regulated professions), education/training providers (outside formal higher education), intermediary organisations (PES, ENIC-NARICs, EURES)
  - **Individuals:** nationals, mobile EU nationals, third country nationals, cross border workers (with/without EU qualifications)

• **Geographical scope:** EU28 Member States + EEA countries (IS, LI, NO)

• **5 types of mobility covered:** between types and levels of education; between education and employment; across economic sectors; across geographic borders; temporary and permanent

• **Scope of recognition considered:** formal and de facto
Research tasks

Phase 1
- EU level statistical data analysis
- EU level literature review
- Country level desk research (x 13)
- Exploration of de facto recognition
- Interim reporting

Phase 2
- Country level interviews (6-10 per country)
- Country level surveys (employers & educ/training providers)
- Country level focus groups (individuals)
- Cross country analysis and synthesis of key findings
- Workshop on conclusions and recommendations (13/5/16)
- Final reporting (draft final report submitted 14/6/2014)

- In-depth assessment of 13 countries: AT, BG, DE, EE, HR, IE, IT, LU, NO, PL, PT, SE, UK
- Duration: November 2015 – June 2016
Challenges encountered

- **Tight timeframe** for delivery of outputs on a complex topic addressing multiple types of mobility and target groups
- **Limited statistical data** on recognition and in-country mobility
- Lack of clear definition in relation to **de facto recognition**
- **Limited availability of existing literature on recognition**: either policy-focused, e.g. evaluation of EU tools, or relates to international recognition
- **Gaps in the evidence** available on recognition in existing sources on: role of NQFs, transition from VET to HE (and vice versa), involvement of providers of non-formal education in validation systems, mobility between economic sectors, temporary/permanent mobility, transitions between employment and education/training in a lifelong learning perspective
- **Limited interest/knowledge** of certain intermediaries e.g. EURES
Some **provisional** results: identified obstacles to recognition
1. Obstacles prior to entering the recognition process

- Lack of awareness of the existence and usefulness of recognition and validation procedures in other countries
- Lack of understanding of the education and training system in (new) country of residence
- Changing landscape of qualifications / outdated qualifications
- Lack of awareness of own skills and reference qualification in host country
- Lack of knowledge and use of qualifications amongst employers
- Lack of awareness of the importance of membership of professional bodies
- Lack of comprehensive and correct information on recognition
- Restricted access to recognition procedures
- Lack of entitlement to recognition
- Lack of transition services for refugees in particular
- Lack of entitlement to recognition
- Restricted access to recognition procedures
2. Obstacles when applying for recognition

- Insufficient awareness of how to present skills and qualifications in applications for employment or education/training
- Complexity and lack of integration of recognition tools
- Costs of recognition procedures
- Limited and unclear opportunities for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning
- Complexity of procedures for recognition of prior learning (RPL)
- Existence of informal recruitment practices
- Lack of language skills and lack of training courses (funding)
- Persistence of differences between EU Member States
- Restrictions on work permits
- Existence of informal recruitment practices

Persistence of differences between EU Member States

Lack of language skills and lack of training courses (funding)

Restrictions on work permits
3. Obstacles during the recognition process

- Complex and lengthy processes for recognition
- Lack of documentary proof of education/employment
- Poorly developed recognition systems for movement within education and training systems
- Lack of recognition of qualifications issued by certain education/training institutions
- Complex (partial) recognition notifications
- Obstacles after granting of (partial or complete) recognition
- Lack of fairness in the application of recognition procedures
- No single-point of contact for recognition
4. Obstacles after granting of (partial or complete) recognition

- Lack of recognition of qualifications issued by certain education/training institutions
- Lack of evidence regarding the effect of recognition, and potential effects on providing the correct guidance
- Complex partial recognition procedures: complex (partial-) recognition notifications
Some *provisional* results:

identified solutions for overcoming obstacles
Solutions prior to entering a recognition process
- Provide “one-stop shops” for information and guidance
- Improvement and promotion of existing information portals
- Development of an online database of recognition practices (primarily for intermediaries)
- Development/expansion/further funding of advice and guidance
- Improve resources for intermediaries
- Establish an entitlement to recognition
- Information/communication campaign on issues related to recognition addressing employers, in particularly SMEs
- Build capacity of and incentivise employers to document informal learning
- Develop European-level opportunities for networking amongst employers
- Ease the requirements around visas and work permits related to recognition
- Clarify and improve transparency regarding legal aspects of recognition
- Establish an entitlement to recognition
- Reduce the costs of being a recognition body
- Provision of training for staff involved in recognition processes

Solutions when applying for recognition
- Financial support programme to support individuals in the recognition process, including for bridging courses
- Promote the use of existing tools
- Provide opportunities for cross-country collaboration
- Specific recognition services for refugees

Solutions after granting of (partial/complete) recognition
- Streamlining and mainstreaming of existing tools
- Improvement in collaboration and co-operation between relevant institutions involved in recognition processes within countries
- Development of a framework, system and process for the recognition of non-formally and informally acquired competences for all
- Expand provision of language courses at higher levels and for specialist fields
- Develop work placements/trials with employers
- Develop employers’ capabilities to assess more effectively skills and competences not recognised in qualifications
- Develop tools for employers to understand foreign qualifications more easily

Solutions subsequent to recognition
- Invest in a follow-up monitoring system

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