



Single Market Scoreboard

The United Kingdom withdrew from the EU on 31 January, 2020. The 2020 edition of the Single Market Scoreboard refers to time periods preceding the withdrawal of the UK, and the UK is therefore listed as a Member State.

Professional Qualifications

Reporting period:
2016-2018

The [Professional Qualifications Directive](#) provides rules on recognising the qualifications of professionals who are fully qualified in one EU country and wish to practise in another. It specifies two systems of recognition:

- **a general system** (with possible “compensatory measures“)
- **automatic recognition** (based on “minimum training requirements” or professional experience).

Professional qualification and the Single Market – why does it matter?

Under EU law, **Europeans** can live and **work in another EU country**. This is one of the **direct benefits** of the **Single Market**.

Rules on qualifications vary between EU countries. A professional might fully qualified in one country, but encounter difficulties practising their profession elsewhere. Getting qualifications recognised can be **complicated, expensive and time-consuming**.

This can hold people back from setting up a business or providing services in another EU country and prevent them from benefiting from the Single Market. It also reduces the number of skilled workers potentially available to businesses across the EU. In short, it hinders the free movement of services and people.

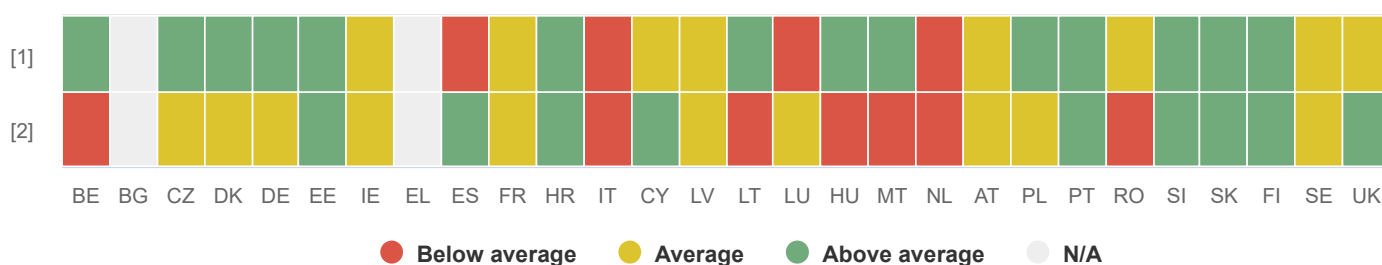
Key messages

- In 2016-2018, 143 975 decisions were taken to recognise qualifications in the EU. This is slightly higher than in the previous reporting period. Recognition rates vary widely between EU countries.
- In 59 218 cases, qualifications were recognised without compensatory measures (e.g. a test or traineeship). This figure also increased compared to the previous period.
- The system of mutual recognition of professional qualifications facilitates free movement in the Single Market. It would, however, benefit from further improvements in national regulatory environments and administrative procedures.

Performance indicators

Performance is assessed in terms of **recognition rates** across EU countries.

These statistics refer to decisions taken by host country authorities on professionals who, having qualified in another EU country, apply for their qualifications to be recognised in the host country so they can **practise there long-term**.



[1] Recognition	> 96.07 %	88.81 % – 96.07 %	< 88.81 %
[2] Recognition without compensatory measures	> 47.72 %	28.32 % – 47.72 %	< 28.32 %

Source: Regulated professions database (data validated up to 27 January 2020). Based on statistics recorded by national authorities (2016-2018: Greece recorded no data, Bulgaria's data was insufficient)

Each EU country's performance is scored on the two indicators as follows:

- **Green** = countries **significantly above the EU average** (higher than the average +½ standard deviation)
- **Yellow** = countries **close to the EU average** (within the average ±½ standard deviation band)
- **Red** = countries **significantly below the EU average** (lower than the average –½ standard deviation).

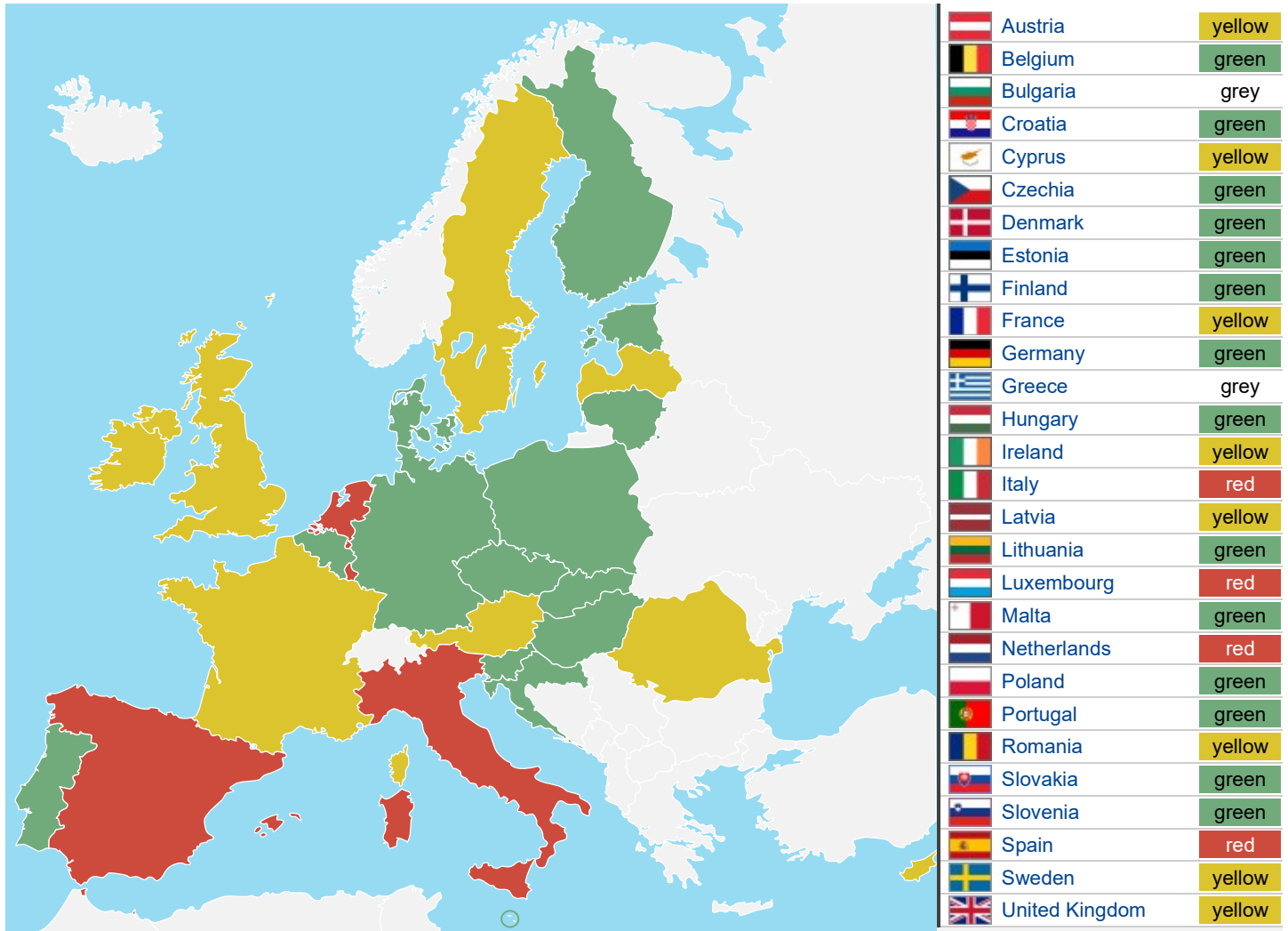
Main findings:

The average recognition rate in the EU (indicator 1) is 92.4 %, with a standard deviation of 7.3 %. The average recognition rate without compensatory measures (indicator 2) is 38 %, with a standard deviation

of 19.4 % (indicator 2 has a far wider dispersion than indicator 1).

Proportion of positive decisions

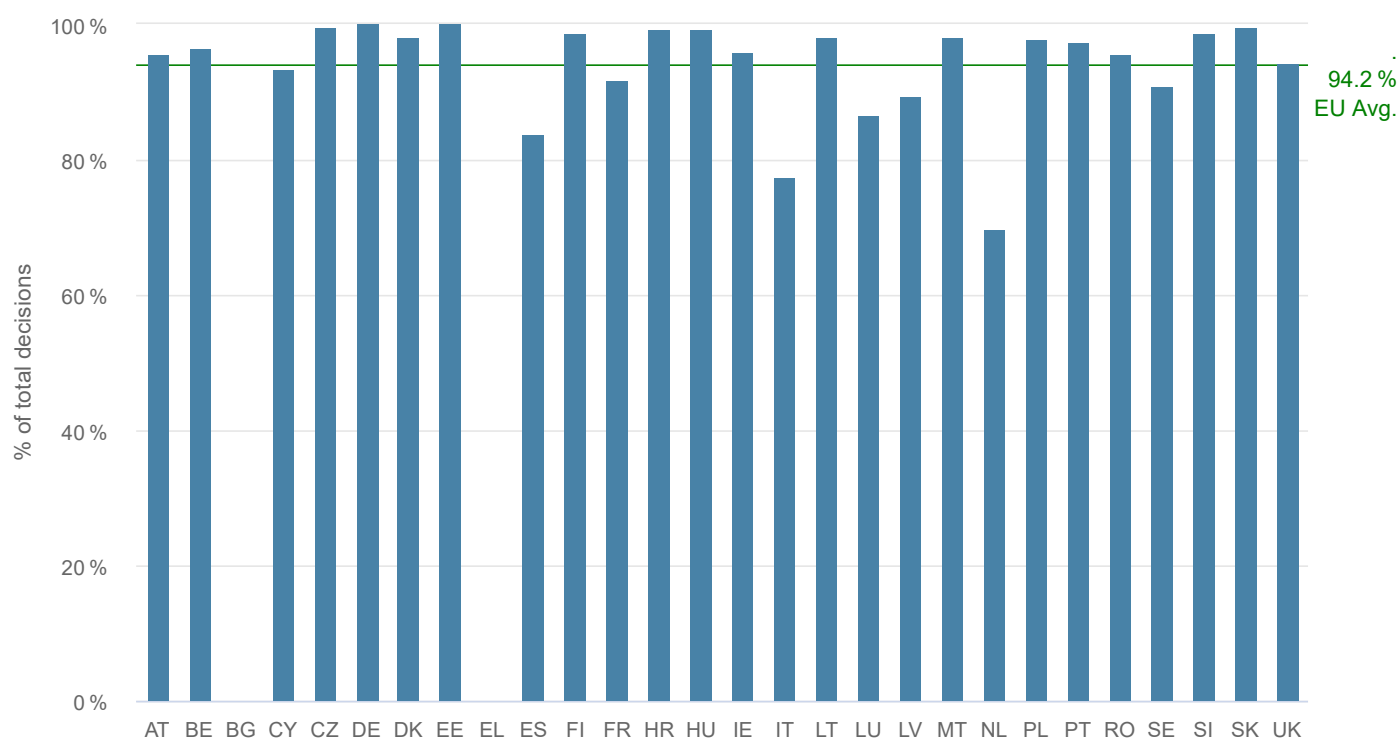
The map below shows how each EU country performed on the first indicator (positive recognition decisions).



Source: Regulated professions database (data validated up to 27 January 2020). Based on statistics recorded by national authorities (2016-2018: Greece recorded no data, Bulgaria's data was insufficient)

Indicator [1]: Positive recognition decisions

This indicator shows **positive recognition decisions** as a percentage of total decisions in each host country.



Source: Regulated professions database (data validated up to 27 January 2020), based on statistics recorded by national authorities.

Main findings:

In 2016-2018, of the **181 155 cases** recorded in the regulated professions database:

- **86 %** (155 754) were concluded by a decision – either recognition (143 975) or non recognition (11 779),
- the remaining **14 %** (25 401 cases) were either unsettled (no decision taken), under examination or subject to appeals.

EU averages:

- Recognition – **92.4 %**
- Non-recognition – **7.6 %**

In general, a **relatively high response and recognition rate** means it is **easier and/or cheaper** for professionals to have their qualifications recognised.

Detailed comments

Recognition rates vary widely between EU countries. Several factors may be involved including:

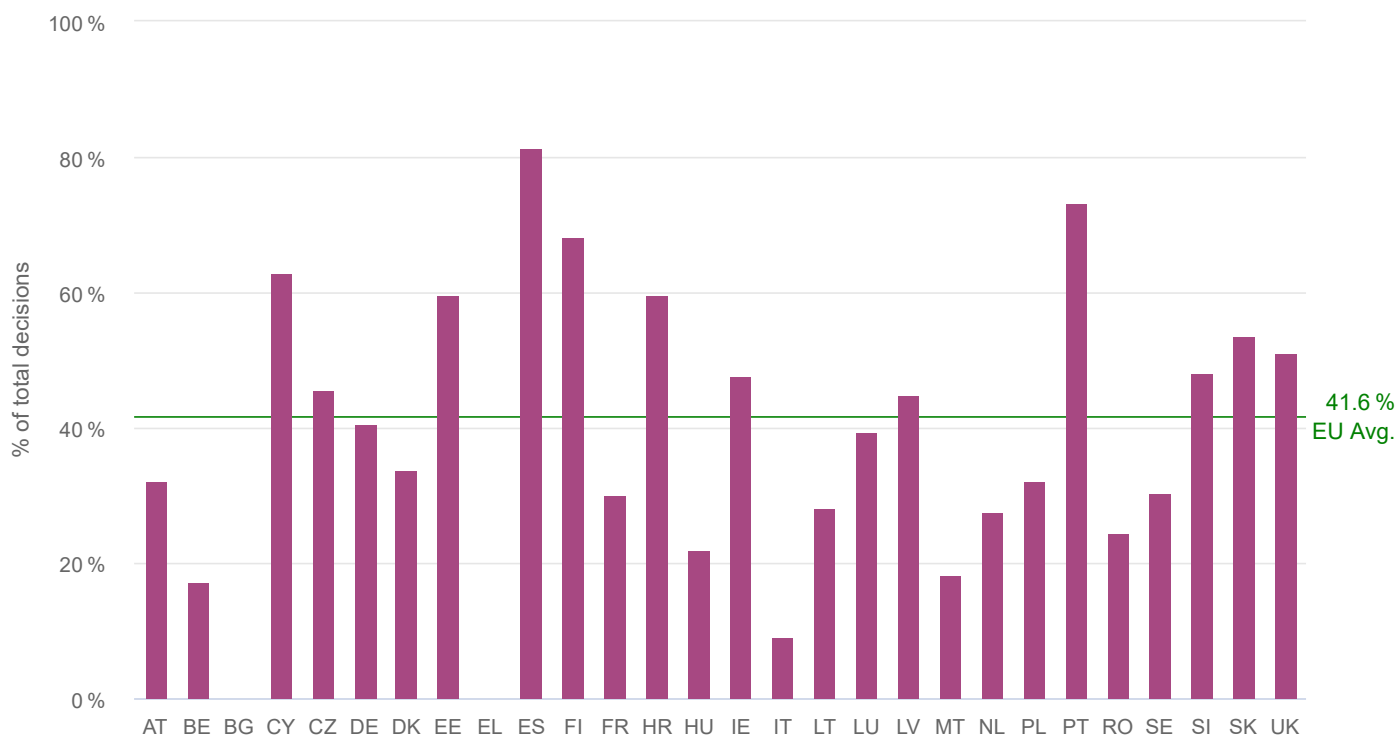
- resources available to manage applications and the attention given to them;
- number of applicants;
- complexity of the rules concerned.

Highest recognition rates: Estonia (100 % of 132 decisions), Germany (99.9 % of 19 103 decisions), Slovakia (99.8 % of 1347 decisions), Czechia (99.6 % of 2992 decisions) and Hungary (99.5 % of 1033 decisions).

Lowest recognition rates: the Netherlands (69.9 % of 6640 decisions), Italy (77.4 % of 15 836 decisions) and Spain (84 % of 1252 decisions) – see Chart 3.

Indicator [2]: Positive recognition decisions without compensatory measures

This indicator shows **positive recognition decisions without compensatory measures** (e.g. a test or traineeship) as a percentage of total decisions in each host country using the general system. Automatic recognition is not included.



Source: Regulated professions database (data validated up to 27 January 2020), based on statistics recorded by national authorities.

Main findings:

- EU average: **38 %**;
- Wide dispersion.

Detailed comments

Highest recognition rates without compensatory measures: Spain (81.4 % of 1252 decisions), Portugal (73 % of 971 decisions) and Finland (68.3 % of 739 decisions).

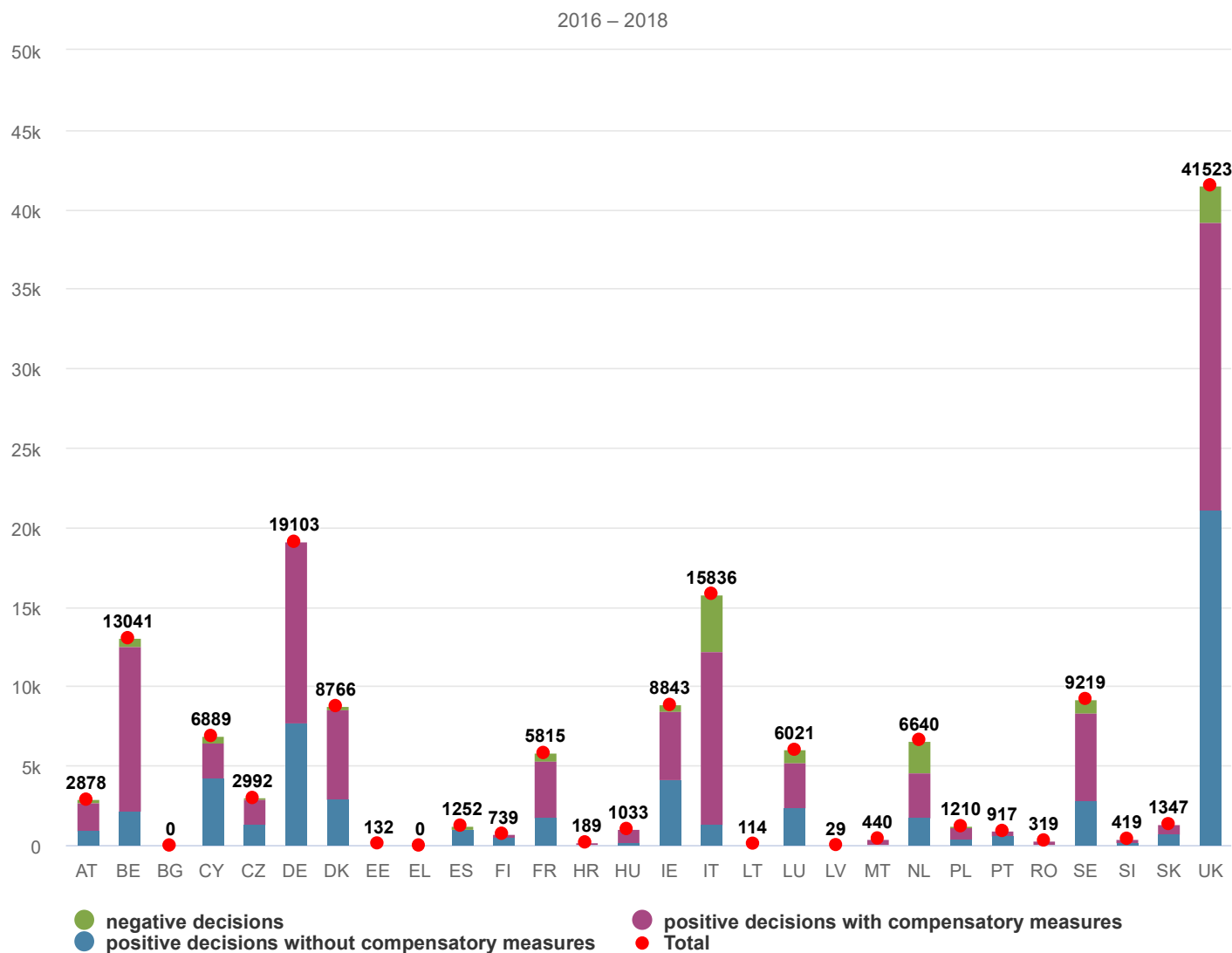
Lowest recognition rates without compensatory measures: Italy (8.9 % of 15 836 decisions), Belgium (17.2 % of 13 041 decisions) and Malta (18.4 % of 440 decisions) – see Chart 4.

Priorities

- Ensure that Member States and their authorities transpose and implement the **Professional Qualifications Directive** and its recent amendments in full.
- Ensure that Member States and their authorities transpose and enforce the **Proportionality Test Directive** in full. Implementation will be supported by a new online form in the [Regulated Professions Database](#) and later on via the [Internal Market Information System](#).
- Follow up on implementation of the Commission's [reform recommendations](#) for professional services by national authorities.

Facts and figures

Total number of decisions by host country (2016-2018)



Source: Regulated professions database (data validated up to 27 January 2020), based on statistics recorded by national authorities.

Variations in number of decisions reported

Numbers differ from country to country for several reasons:

- the country's **size** – the bigger it is, the more decisions are (usually) taken;
- some countries **attract more professionals** than others and therefore receive proportionally more requests than those of the same size or larger;
- **not all EU countries report their statistics** on recognition decisions in the same detail or as often – this can distort the true picture.

Positive recognition decisions in 2016-2018

143 975 decisions were taken to recognise qualifications. The highest numbers recorded were:

By profession:

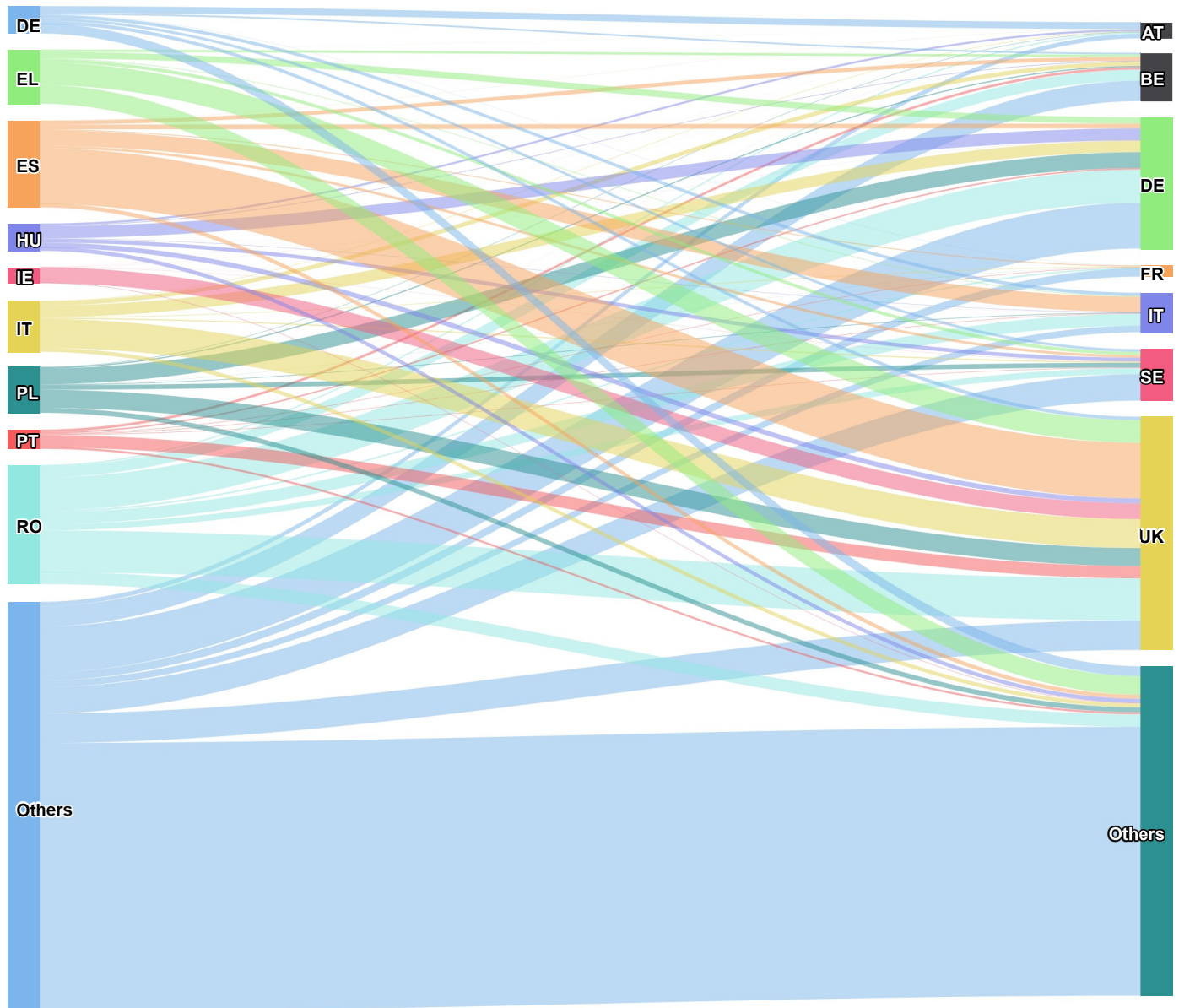
1. Nurses: **24 608**;
2. Doctors: **21 716**;
3. Secondary school teachers: **16 439**.

By country (2016-2018):

1. The **UK**, with **39 246** professionals hosted, including more than 10 000 **nurses** (around 3700 from Romania, 2500 from Italy and 1800 from Spain), followed by **secondary school teachers** (9200) and **doctors** (4500).
2. **Germany**, with **19 094** professionals hosted, including 7000 **nurses** and 4300 **doctors** (both mainly from Romania).
3. **Belgium**, with **12 590** professionals hosted, including nearly 2000 **doctors** (mostly from the Netherlands, France and Romania) and 1500 **nurses** (mainly from France and Romania).

Main country-to-country flows in a range of professions

This part of the analysis focuses on the professions that recorded the highest numbers of decisions to recognise qualifications in recent years: dentists, doctors, nurses, physiotherapists and secondary school teachers.



Source: Regulated professions database (data validated up to 27 January 2020), based on statistics recorded by national authorities.

In 2016-2018, the host countries that recorded the most arrivals in these 5 professions were the UK (over 24 700), Germany (around 14 000), Sweden (5500), Belgium (5100) and Italy (4200).

The countries with the largest number of professionals leaving to practise in another EU country were Romania (over 12 700), Spain (around 9 200), Greece (5700), Italy (5400), and Poland (4900).

Achievements

- The EU **systematically applies rules** for mutual recognition of professional qualifications among its Member States.
- Directive 2005/36/EC on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications, the cornerstone of the EU mechanism for mutual recognition, was amended in 2013 by [Directive 2013/55/EU](#). The 2013 Directive has simplified recognition processes through **digitalisation**. It introduced the [European professional card](#) (EPC), the first electronic recognition procedure harmonised at EU level, which helps people get their professional qualifications recognised more quickly and easily. The card is supported by the Internal Market Information system (IMI) and by the EU budget. It became available in January 2016 for general care nurses, physiotherapists, pharmacists, real estate agents and mountain guides.
- The revised Directive also introduced an **alert mechanism** in specific sectors (health and education of minors). This flags up individuals who were barred from practising their profession or who have used fake qualifications.
- In January 2017, the Commission issued [recommendations on reform needs](#) in regulation of professions for each EU country. These indicated possible ways to reform specific professional regulations based on a qualitative and quantitative assessment of national regulation.
- To support such regulatory assessments, the Commission has developed a composite [restrictiveness indicator](#) for the comparative analysis of barriers between EU countries. It measures how restrictive national regulation is in 7 key professions. This enables the benchmarking of regulatory differences across Member States for each of these professions.
- [Directive \(EU\) 2018/958](#) on a proportionality test before adoption of new regulation of professions was adopted in June 2018. It states that before new professional requirements are introduced or existing ones amended, Member States should assess the impact of these measures against clear criteria and should ensure they are suitable for achieving legitimate policy objectives. Member States are required to implement the Directive by 30 July 2020.

More information on the legislation

The Professional Qualifications Directive specifies two systems of professional recognition.

General system

Professionals wishing to work in another EU country need to apply to the relevant authority in the country where they are moving to have their qualifications recognised.

The relevant authorities examine the duration and content of the professional training attested by their diploma(s) and any accompanying documents. The issue is whether there are any significant differences between their training and the qualifications required to practise the relevant profession in the host

country.

If there are major differences, the authorities can impose “**compensatory measures**” on the applicant. For instance, they might have to take a test or complete an **adaptation period**.

Automatic recognition

This system, which does not allow for compensatory measures, covers a **limited number of professions**:

- **health professions** (doctors, nurses, dentist, pharmacists, veterinary surgeons);
- **architects**.

Applicants from either category must meet the minimum training requirements set out in the Directive.

Certain professionals in trade, industry and business can also have their qualifications recognised automatically if they meet minimum professional experience requirements.

For more details, visit the [free movement of professionals](#) page of the European Commission.

The source data for indicators (retrieved from the Commission's [regulated professions database](#)) refer to **2016-2018**. As it is the **national authorities** that record recognition decisions, the Commission receives these statistics at different times, with a delay of a year or even longer. For instance, when this report was being drafted, Greece had no data for 2016-2018, while Bulgaria's data was insufficient. Using the 3-year reporting period, the Commission can – to some extent – even out data gaps arising from delays in providing statistics.