



A new Convention on the conditions of Transparency and Quality Assurance for Automatic Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications in Europe

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The philosophy behind the Convention:

Triangular relation between transparency, quality (assurance) and recognition

- The new Convention will ***not establish*** AR – the only binding multilateral instrument today actually establishing AR is the *Treaty on the Automatic Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications* (2021) initiated by Baltic States and Benelux countries (Poland in accession and Ireland preparing accession)
- CDEDU at its 23-25 September 2025 meeting requested the working title to be adjusted in order to state clearly that the new Convention would stipulate commitments to **enabling conditions** for automatic recognition (provisionally *Convention on the Transparency and Quality Assurance Conditions for Automatic Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications in Europe*)

The philosophy behind the Convention:

Triangular relation between transparency, quality (assurance) and recognition

- TRUST triangle: if the conditions of transparency and quality assurance are not met, the trust basis for (automatic) recognition is not fulfilled
- Conceptualisation/definition of this triangle stems from the 1990-ies in a context of increasing international mobility (and global competition between HE systems) and Erasmus programme requiring more convergence in HE.
- Permanent dialogues between COE, EC and UNESCO, culminating in milestone instruments/processes
 - UNESCO/COE Lisbon Recognition Convention 1997 => fair procedural recognition. No AR yet but binding legal instrument
 - Sorbonne Declaration 1998 and Bologna Declaration 1999 => automatic recognition implicit goal (alongside strong positioning of European HE in an era of globalization) – voluntary process with strong peer pressure

Importance of QA and role of EQAR

- In the trust triangle **quality** plays a pivotal role. Automatic recognition, i.e. reciprocal, immediate, not procedure-mediated recognition, stalls at first instance because there remains doubt about the quality of each other's higher education system
- Proposal of CDEU for a new Convention:
 - Commitment to full implementation of ESG for QA in the EHEA.
 - How to assess the implementation in an objective way? Membership of EQAR of QA body is *prima facie* evidence
- EQAR is active member of the COE expert group on AR in HE (that will continue to support the process of drafting with its preparatory work until end 2026)

CONCLUSION

New Convention:

- Complements the voluntary EHEA/Bologna Process by providing a binding legal basis for the Bologna instruments and commitments taken by Ministers in a voluntary setting
- Builds on the principles of the LRC
- Mutually reinforces the Treaty concerning AR of HE Qualifications (2021) and other (bilateral) binding agreements.

=> Triangular relation between LRC, Treaty (2021) and new COE legal instrument. This requires the same binding status for the latter, hence proposal for a Convention

- **Hopefully reinforces initiatives geared at more convergence in external QA in Europe**