A Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications

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Dear colleagues, dear friends,

In November last year, the 39th Session of the General Conference of UNESCO decided to continue the preparation of a future Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications. The aim is to formally adopt the new convention by the next session in November 2019.

A draft of the convention text has now been sent to UNESCO's member states and selected organisations for feedback and comments.

According to UNESCO, "the future Convention will be a major step forward for the rights of applicants to have their higher education qualifications assessed by competent national authorities in a fair, transparent and non-discriminatory manner. It will also strengthen international cooperation in higher education. It will enhance trust in higher education systems and their quality assurance mechanisms. It will be in line with the relevant United Nations Sustainable Development Goals"[1]

What am I going to talk about

This is the backdrop for my speech to you today, where I will take us on a journey through the Global Recognition Convention and the Relevance of Digitalization for Recognition and Mobility. I will begin by exploring some of the fundamental issues of <u>recognition</u>, and why it is a good idea to have good legal and practical arrangements in place for this. I will then introduce the new draft global recognition convention, before moving on to explore areas where processes of digitalization can immensely improve the field of recognition.

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[1] CL/4236 Consultation with Member States

Recognition

What is recognition?

Although many of the participants of this meeting here today come from universities, ENIC-NARIC offices and other organisations that deal with recognition regularly, I think it is a good idea to dwell a little on the term recognition in itself. What do we mean when we talk about recognition of foreign qualifications?

UNESCOs draft convention gives the following definition:

Recognition is, and I quote, "a formal acknowledgement by a competent authority of the value of a foreign education qualification or of partial studies or prior learning" (p.3)

Academic vs professional recognition

It is often useful to make a distinction between academic and professional recognition. According to the European Area of Recognition (EAR) manual[2], academic recognition focuses on recognition of periods of study or qualifications from educational institutions. This is often necessary for persons who wish "to continue or to begin studying or to use an academic title".

If, let's say, a student from India, applies for a master's programme at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands, the admission process will involve a form of academic recognition by the university. The applicant's educational background is assessed against the university's admission requirements for the degree programme in question.

Professional recognition, on the other hand, is "an official authorisation to practice a particular profession", usually for professions that are regulated by law or other professional or regulatory controls. Professional recognition differs from academic recognition in that it usually involves an assessment of both the educational background and the professional status and skills of a specific person.

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[2] http://www.eurorecognition.eu/emanual/Chapter%205/introduction.aspx

In Europe, the EU's Professional Qualifications Directive[3] established the right for professionals in the EU to move across borders and practice their occupation or provide services throughout the European Economic Area; the goal being the free movement of professionals across Europe.

However, professionals from outside the EU, for example a trained nurse from the Philippines or a chartered accountant from Pakistan, will usually have to go through a detailed process of professional recognition before they can obtain authorisation to practice their profession.

Purposes of recognition

A further, and related, point is that the process for assessing foreign qualifications will vary depending on the purpose for which recognition is sought. To quote the EAR manual, "the assessment and recognition of a qualification for entry into the labour market or a regulated profession may differ from the assessment and recognition of a qualification for admission to further studies."

Let's return to our definition of recognition from the draft global convention:

Recognition is "a formal acknowledgement by a competent authority of the value of a foreign education qualification or of partial studies or prior learning" (p.3)

It should be clear then, from the definition and other paragraphs in the draft text, that the convention aims to regulate global practices of academic recognition. The purpose is applying for admission to higher education or pursuing employment opportunities in non-regulated professions in another country. It is not an instrument for global professional recognition, and my focus on the following will be on academic recognition of higher education.

A matter of trust

The practices of recognition and assessment of foreign education qualifications can be seen as a balancing act between two roles: that of a door-opener and that of a gate-keeper.

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[3] Directive 2005/36/EC, recently amended by Directive 2013/55/EC

Recognition is a door-opener to further studies and work in a different country from where you have your education. An assessment or formal recognition decision from a trusted recognition body helps employers and education institutions understand the foreign qualification and trust that it is on the same level as national qualifications.

Recognition can also be a gate-keeper, in that we try to keep fraudulent qualifications and false diplomas from so called diploma mills out of our education institutions and working life.

This also means that we must sometimes deny recognition of qualifications that we assess as too weak. Or, as it is called in the tribal speak of recognition, "substantially different" from national qualifications.

Basically, it all comes down to trust. If our goal is to make sure that society can trust our assessments of a foreign educational qualification, we obviously need to close the gate to false or fraudulent documents. We also need to make sure that when we say that a qualification can be recognized on par with our own qualifications, it is not substantially different from our national ones.

At the same time, if we demand that the foreign qualification should be identical, or equivalent in every respect, to our own qualifications, we needlessly close the door to people who would stand a fair chance of succeeding in our own universities and working life.

We should also be asking ourselves if our practices deal fairly with foreign credentials and new forms of educational qualifications. This includes, for example, the growing number of transnational education programmes, online education programmes and MOOCs. Finding other ways of dealing with such qualifications will be increasingly important in the future.

Why is recognition important?

So far we know that there is a new global recognition convention on its way in UNESCO, and we have briefly discussed what recognition really is about. But why - is it important that we have practical arrangements and legal frameworks in place for this?

Right to freedom of movement

First of all: Freedom of movement is a human right.

The UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, Article 13, states clearly that – and I quote:
(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.
(2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

Under UN's Sustainable Development Goals, adopted in 2015, the signatory nations have promised to, and I quote again

"Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies" under SGD number 10.

In other words, UN member nations have a moral obligation to facilitate the recognition of foreign qualifications to make freedom of movement possible.

Mobile students

The second point is presumably much more obvious and directly relevant to many of us here today. Over the last generation, there has been an explosion in international student mobility worldwide. According to the OECD, the number of international students in higher education has risen from 0.8 million in the late 1970s to 4.6 million in 2015. This increase has been accompanied by a growth in student mobility between regions. UNESCO estimates that there are 2.5 million international students currently studying in a country outside their region of origin – that is, more than half of all internationally mobile students.

In Europe, increased student mobility has long been a goal for the European Commission. In last year's Rome Declaration, the Leaders of 27 Member States and of the European Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission committed to creating a "Union where young people receive the best education and training and can study and find jobs <u>across</u> the continent."[4]

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[4] http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-17-767_en.htm

The European Commission decided to pick up the ball and run with it, setting out its vision for a European Education Area to be realized by 2025. Among the major goals that the Commission has set, a central goal is "making mobility a reality for all". This could be achieved by, amongst other things, expanding the Erasmus+ programme and creating an EU Student Card to store students' academic records. However, the next item on the Commissions list is the creation of a new 'Sorbonne process' to prepare the ground for the mutual recognition of higher education and school leaving diplomas.

Higher education is important for the creation of a common European market and a shared European cultural identity. It has also become an important international commodity, and learners are increasingly willing to make a substantial investment of their time and money in an international education that will help them get ahead.

A prerequisite for further increases in student mobility, both inside Europe and across the continents, is comparability across education systems and transferability of the qualifications obtained by mobile students. Even though some students study abroad as the first step in a process that leads to permanent migration, a large majority of internationally mobile students eventually return back home. Some of them might end up working in a field where the fact that they have studied at a well-known brand university is enough. However, many will need to get a formal recognition of their foreign qualification before they can apply for further studies or work.

One example is Tereza, from Bolivia, who came to Norway on a prestigious scholarship to do a master's degree in petroleum engineering at the University of Stavanger, which is the "oil capital" of Norway. She did extremely well, and dreamt of returning to Bolivia after her studies to take part in building the oil industry in her home country. But when she returned to Bolivia, her problems started. It was impossible for her to get her education recognized – or even understood – by the government, by higher education institutions, by

companies even, in her home country. After some time she simply had to give up her dream.

Currently, she works as a senior oil engineer in Houston, USA.

The story of Tereza – and many other similar stories – clearly shows how important it is to have legal frameworks for persons who move between different regions in the world.

For the students' investments in higher education to pay off, they must be confident that the qualifications they have earned abroad can be recognized in another country, including their home country.

Financial and personal considerations

This brings us to our next point – the money. On a societal level, it is wasteful not to utilize the intellectual and educational resources available in the population. And seen from the level of the individual, the personal costs for those who are denied recognition of their educational qualifications are high.

In Canada, the 2015 Brain Gain study on The State of Canada's Learning Recognition System[5] estimated that underemployment and poor labour market integration of immigrants costs the economy billions of dollars in lost earnings each year.

Being over-educated and underemployed results in lower earnings, lower productivity and lower life satisfaction for immigrants. This often contributes to systemic economic exclusion.

Underemployment, when an individual is working in a position that is not in accord with their experience and skills, is not a barrier unique to immigrants. But immigrants are much more likely to be underemployed. In Canada, the study estimated that 29.6% are over-educated for their jobs, compared to 12% of people born in Canada.[6]

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[5]Brain Gain 2015: The State of Canada's Learning Recognition System http://www.conferenceboard.ca/e-library/abstract.aspx?did=7607

[6] Much of this is borrowed from http://triec.ca/the-economic-cost-of-underemployment/

It doesn't end there. Once immigrants secure a job that matches their skills and experience, both established and recent immigrants are less likely to receive a promotion than their Canadian-born counterparts.

How do we solve this? These complex issues require various responses. But, one thing is sure: We need flexible and responsive credential recognition systems to make qualifications more portable - both to ensure better life satisfaction for the individual, and because it makes sense economically for society at large.

The first Global Recognition Convention

Existing regional recognition conventions

As the only United Nations agency with a mandate in higher education, UNESCO has long supported member states in the recognition of studies, credentials and qualifications. This is particularly visible in UNESCO's efforts to develop six regional recognition conventions to facilitate the mobility of students and researchers in the 1970s and 80s - for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Mediterranean, the Arab States, Europe, Africa, and the Asia-Pacific regions.

The conventions established a legal framework for the recognition of qualifications in higher education between states <u>at a regional level</u>. The regional conventions for Europe, the Asia-Pacific region and for Africa have later been revised, although the 2014 Addis Ababa convention has not been ratified by a sufficient number of states to enter into force. UNESCO's member states have begun a process to revise the convention for Latin America and the Caribbean. Two large capacity building projects under Erasmus+, RecoLATIN and Meric-net, are currently ongoing to develop recognition practices in Latin America and South Mediterranean countries respectively.

In Europe, the Lisbon Recognition Convention (1997) was an important step to increased harmonization efforts in European higher education through the Bologna process and the creation of the European Higher Education Area.

In Asia, the new Asia-Pacific Regional Convention, the Tokyo Convention, came into force on 1 February this year, after it had been ratified by the required number of 5 signatory states, including China, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and South Korea.

However, as regional conventions, none gave the signatory states an obligation to recognize studies or qualifications from outside their region. That means that a person educated in Europe would not have a legal right to have her education recognized in a country in for example South America or Asia.

The new global convention will be the first normative instrument of recognition with a global scope. It is important to note, however, that the global convention will be implemented in coordination with the existing conventions, and not replace or supersede any other bilateral or multilateral recognition agreements already in place.

What it will do, though, is to give the 2.5 million students who study <u>outside</u> their home region a <u>legal right</u> to have their qualifications assessed for admission to further study or employment in another country for the first time. And that, ladies and gentlemen, is no small achievement in itself.

Strengthening the rights of international students

The draft global convention proposes fundamental principles that are crucial for enabling academic mobility by strengthening the rights of international students. I will mention three:

First, it establishes the right to have foreign qualifications assessed in a fair, non-discriminatory and transparent manner by national competent authorities. The setup will vary from one country to another, depending on things like the institutional setup and legal traditions in each country.

Secondly, it lays the burden of proof on the recognition authorities. Recognition must be given, unless the recognizing authority can demonstrate a substantial difference between the foreign qualification and qualifications from the country where recognition is sought. In other words, the convention moves away from a strict requirement of equivalence, which in many cases makes recognition practically impossible.

The principle of "substantial differences" was first introduced in Europe with the Lisbon Recognition Convention, which has been ratified by as many as fifty-three [countries](#) that have already signed the European Cultural Convention.

In order to facilitate systematic mobility on a larger scale, there was a need to simplify existing recognition processes. It was seen as necessary to move away from the strict principle of "equivalence" as the determining principle for recognition. The change in terminology points to an important evolution of attitudes. Those who look for "equivalence" seek to establish that the foreign qualification is essentially identical to their own. If it is, they will recognize it.

Instead, a core principle of the Lisbon Recognition Convention is that those who wish to deny recognition must demonstrate there is a "substantial difference" between the foreign qualification and national qualifications.

This fundamentally important approach is also reflected in UNESCO's draft Global convention. The starting point is that foreign qualifications should be recognized. Non-recognition is the exception and needs to be duly explained and justified.

Applicants no longer need to prove that their qualifications are "good enough". It means that it is up to the recognition body to demonstrate that they are not. Recognition bodies may do that by demonstrating that the differences between the applicant's qualification and comparable qualifications in their own system are such that the applicant will most likely not be able to use the qualification in the ways he or she envisages.

"Substantial differences", then, are differences that impact on the purposes for which recognition is sought. In this Convention, the methodology changed from looking for similarities that could possibly justify recognition, to verifying that there are no differences substantial enough to make recognition impossible.

Thirdly, the draft convention establishes an obligation to put in place procedures for the recognition of qualifications for individuals with insufficient or unverifiable documentation, including refugees and displaced persons. This is an interesting topic as well, and as many of you will know, NOKUT has been a

driving force in establishing recognition procedures for the recognition of qualifications for refugees with insufficient or unverifiable documentation. We are also deeply involved with the Council of Europe's European Qualifications Passport for Refugees and several EU-funded projects in this field. However, I will leave this aside in my presentation today.

A trust-building transparency instrument

Besides establishing these important rights for internationally mobile students, UNESCO's draft Global convention also establishes important principles of transparency that are designed to serve as instruments for building trust in foreign qualifications and education systems.

Most importantly, the signatory states must put in place "robust and ethical" quality assurance systems for higher education institutions "in order to promote <u>trust</u> in their higher education system."

 Each state must also provide complete, accurate and updated <u>information</u> on its higher education system and qualifications, and give advice on the relevant procedures and criteria for recognition of foreign qualifications. They must also establish "a national information centre or similar structure and encourage the use of technology to facilitate access to relevant, accurate and up-to-date information about its higher education system."

In Europe, a core measure in the operationalization of the Lisbon Recognition Convention was the establishing of national ENIC-NARIC offices as national information centers.

The case of ENIC-NARIC

To implement the Lisbon Recognition Convention and, in general, to develop policy and practice for the recognition of qualifications, the Council of Europe and UNESCO set up the ENIC Network. The Council of Europe and UNESCO jointly provide the Secretariat for the ENIC Network. The ENIC Network cooperates closely with the NARIC Network of the European Union.

The organizational setup and size of the ENIC-NARIC centres vary greatly from country to country. Some are part of a ministry, others are agencies or directorates, and some are non-governmental entities such as foundations.

Many centres perform assessments – from advisory statements to legally binding decision – but you have to keep in mind that recognition in one country is not exactly the same in the next.

However, there are two important common denominators:

1. The responsibility of the ENIC-NARIC offices to inform the outside world about their own national qualifications; and
2. The responsibility the ENIC-NARIC offices have to be a source of expertise on foreign qualifications to national stakeholders.

Together, the ENIC and NARIC networks have been driving forces in the development of recognition policy and practices in the European region. And on the more practical side, the exchange of information about foreign qualifications in the ENIC-NARIC network has been essential to the roles we play in our societies today.

Digitalization of recognition

So let's sum up for a moment: There are millions of international students, and working migrants who need recognition of their foreign education. UNESCO is working on a Global recognition convention that will ensure people the right to have their foreign education qualification recognized outside their country of study.

Millions of people, including migrants and mobile students. And here we are, in the middle of Fourth Industrial Revolution, still largely reliant on exchanging paperwork for our recognition processes.

Wouldn't it be better to let people share their academic and professional attainments digitally, in a safe and trustworthy manner, with whomever they want, whenever, wherever? I guess that since you're here, you are likely to agree.

Academic mobility, and the recognition processes that enable mobility, will not remain immune to change. The technological developments present some very important opportunities for recognition and credential evaluation that become

even more important now that we are finally in the process of establishing a global legal framework for the right to recognition. These questions are high on the agenda in the ENIC-NARIC Network and are looked upon in the upcoming Erasmus+ Funded DigiRec project, led by Dutch ENIC-NARIC NUFFIC, and in which NOKUT also participates.

Let's look at some areas where digitalization can massively contribute to reducing the barriers for academic mobility and facilitate easier recognition processes:

Information and verification

My first point is pretty obvious. Recognition bodies need verified, trustworthy information about a qualification and the education system in which it has been obtained to make a fair assessment of the qualification. This is why the establishment of national information centres for recognition play such a central role in the existing and proposed recognition conventions. It is obviously easier for everyone involved if this information is easily obtainable from open, quality controlled websites and standardised databases.

Related to this, recognition bodies need to verify the educational qualifications of applicants. To a large extent, we do this by checking papers, whether physical or in a pdf file. However, the process is immensely aided in those cases where we have access to a trusted data depository. The recently opened Norwegian Diploma registry is one example. The Diploma registry collects the students' results from higher education institutions in Norway, and allows the students to digitally share these with whomever they want. Other systems - at varying stages of development and based on somewhat differing business models - are in operation in Australia, Belgium (Flanders), China, Estonia, France, India, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Romania, the Russian Federation, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States, to name only the more well-known such depositories. These centralized student data depositories capture a very big chunk of the world's annual student mobility; almost all are engaged in the GDN.

Identification and authentication

My second point is about identification and authentication. Establishing a person's identity is crucial for access to most basic services in most countries. For recognition bodies, it is critical. A prerequisite for recognition of a person's qualifications is that you are able to establish the identity of the person. Is the name on the diploma really the name of the person applying for recognition? In many cases, it is impossible to authenticate a person's identity. In fact, The World Bank estimates that more than 1.1 BILLION people worldwide are unable to prove who they are. That's one-seventh of the world's entire population.[7]

In 2017, Microsoft and Accenture partnered with several UN organisations, and donor countries, to launch the ID2020 Alliance[8]. It aims to provide a permanent digital identity to people by means of a blockchain-supported network designed to build a user-owned, permanent and legal identity using biometric data on a person's phone.

The EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which comes into force this year, is designed to improve the security and privacy of personal data in the EU. It requires that the control of personal data should rest with the individual. Recognition bodies currently handle large amounts of personal data. A user-owned and controlled identity, like the one envisaged in ID2020, would reduce the quantity of personally identifiable data stored by the recognition body. That in itself would be a great advantage.

In Europe, the European Commission's plan from November last year of introducing an EU Student eCard as part of its proposal for establishing a European Education Area, can also play an important role in paving the way for digital identities and student data portability on a large scale. The new initiative was launched during the EU Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth and aims for electronic identification of students and secure exchange of student data. Done properly, the European Commission will have the opportunity to set a de facto standard in the field, at least in Europe.

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[7] http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2017/10/12/11-billion-invisible-people-without-id-are-priority-for-new-high-level-advisory-council-on-identification-for-development
[8] https://id2020.org/

Portability

Important initiatives are also underway to describe the qualifications of refugees who lack diplomas and transcripts to prove their educational background. Portable, digital student data would help us avoid having to map this out in every new country the refugee arrives in.

The Council of Europe's European Qualifications Passport for Refugees aims to make its assessment of qualifications portable in the form of a digital qualifications passport, using Blockchain, in the coming year. Another related example is the American-led Article 26 Backpack initiative, which aims for secure, confidential storage of academic documents, with the option of professional credential evaluation, and / or student-initiated permission of access to institutions and organizations. In Germany, KIRON has designed a MOOC-based, quality-assured, blended learning platform to help refugees start the process of qualifying for access to higher education immediately after arrival in their destination country.

Student mobility: Need for exchange of student data

The fourth area where digitalization can fundamentally change the name of the game for recognition is student mobility. Here I will quote a 2015 paper by Geir Vangen et al., which I think describes the current state of play in a good way:

"Recognition of studies is a major obstacle for student exchange. When the student applies for studies, the HEI needs information about previous studies to check admission requirements. In the case of recognition, the HEI needs this information to check previous studies in relation to the study the student has been admitted to.

The situation today is to some extent a bit obscure. Each HEI has different procedures to provide result information (Diplomas, Transcripts of Records, etc.), and the same is the case for the delivery of this information. The student has to obtain these documents, and submit them to the HEI where he or she has applied for admission or recognition. In many cases, the student also has to obtain textual descriptions of the qualifications and modules included in these documents. The receiving institution has to receive these documents, check for any cases of possible forgery, and register details in its administrative systems.

<u>All</u> this has to be done <u>before</u> getting to what is the actual purpose with collecting this information, i.e. to check the students qualifications."[9]

The paper goes on to suggest a solution based on a standardised digitisation and exchange of student data, which has been tested in the EU-funded EMREX project. I will get back to this in a short while, but let's first briefly look at automatic recognition.

Automatic recognition

Automatic recognition is in many ways the Holy Grail of recognition and credential evaluation. Automatic recognition was included as a clear commitment by the countries in the European Higher Education Area, who agreed in the Yerevan Ministerial Communique of 2015 – and I quote:

"to ensure that qualifications from other EHEA countries are automatically recognized at the same level as relevant domestic qualifications"

Basically, as it says in the Pathfinder Report which was presented at the ministerial conference, this means that "a bachelor is a bachelor is a bachelor".

Within Europe, the commitment to automatic recognition is a cornerstone to the provisions of the previously mentioned Professional Qualifications' Directive. It is also easy to interpret this as the end goal for the Commission's Recommendation on the Sorbonne process, to be published next month, with a goal of "mutual recognition of higher education and school leaving diplomas" in the EU.

There are several existing agreements and models for automatic recognition of education qualifications in Europe. One example is the agreement among the Nordic countries of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden on automatic recognition on qualifications giving access to higher education. For those who are interested in learning more about the current state of play, I would like to point you to the recent report published by the PARADIGMS project, coordinated by the Dutch ENIC-NARIC, NUFFIC. In Norway, NOKUT will

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[9] Vangen et al (2015): Delivering 3 in One Stroke: Supporting Student Mobility, Automatic Recognition and Learning Mobility Statistics

soon launch our own model of automatic recognition to fit with national legislation.

There are, however, some discrepancies in the use of the term automatic recognition itself. Some use it to refer to the right to recognition on par with educational qualifications in another country, where you would probably still have to forward your qualifications for assessment by a competent recognition body. Others use the term to refer to fully automated processes of recognition. "Automated recognition" might be a useful term to help distinguish between the two different ideas.

To quote Vangen et al. again, "For countries with a highly automated administration, the administrative costs of handling students with results from foreign countries, compared to students with results from [their] own country or own HEI, is typically 10 times higher. It is therefore possible to cut costs by looking more deeply into these processes, with a goal to automate them."

To achieve the greatest success, is it fundamental to agree on the use of a standard protocol so that information can flow directly into systems that support the recognition process, and further that the data itself is standardized.

The ELMO standard used in the EMREX project is an XML format that supports assessment information included in Diplomas, Transcripts of Records and Diploma Supplements. It also covers descriptions of the qualifications, programs, courses and modules for these assessments. This is information needed in admission and recognition processes.

Through the EMREX project and the development of the ELMO standard, we already have the means in place to fully automate many recognition processes:

1. Data on the students and their academic attainments can be encoded in a standardised format.
2. A lot of the data itself is standardised. Examples of this includes ISCED[10] codes specifying fields of education, ECTS credits, EQF levels etc.

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[10] International Standard Classification of Education

3. Secure, standardised transfer of student data through the EMREX network has been established.

EMREX provides a standard way to exchange information, in a format all the partners have agreed upon. The EMREX clients can send the EMREX data directly to a student information system at a higher education institution, or to a digital case processing system at a national recognition body, where the data can be used <u>directly</u> in automatic recognition processes.

The most obvious outcome of EMREX is to open up for easy exchange of students' results between institutions, based on the students' consent. EMREX will give the student a much easier and a standardized way to hand over his or her assessments from one institution to another, even across national borders. For the recognition bodies, both universities and other government agencies, many of today's manual procedures will become obsolete, like receiving paper copies of the documents, registering information and checking for possible cases of paper forgery, archiving, etc. Doesn't this seem like a dream come true?

At this conference, we have seen a large number of great presentations of ongoing projects and developments.

The great challenge, as I see it, is to make sure the different systems speak the same language. I would encourage everyone to explore the opportunities found in the EMREX project and the ELMO standard for us all to reap the benefits of secure digital student data transfer in a global recognition system.

The future is global, digital and happening right now. It is a hell of a ride. Thank you very much.