



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



**THE COMMITTEE OF THE CONVENTION ON THE RECOGNITION OF
QUALIFICATIONS CONCERNING HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE
EUROPEAN REGION**

Eight session
28 June 2019, UNESCO House, Paris

**MONITORING OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
ARTICLE VII OF THE
LISBON RECOGNITION CONVENTION**

Final report

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC), the Committee of the Convention shall oversee its implementation and guide the competent authorities of the Parties in implementing the Convention and in their consideration of applications for the recognition of foreign qualifications. The *Rules of Procedure* (adopted by the Committee in Vilnius in 1999) reiterates this role – the function of the Committee is to promote the application of the Convention and oversee its implementation.

Article VII of the Convention is about the obligation that each Party shall take reasonable steps to develop procedures designed to assess whether refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee like situation fulfil the relevant requirements for access to higher education, to further higher education programmes or to employment, even if the qualification cannot be proven through documentary evidence.

To improve the situation concerning the implementation of Article VII, the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee (LRCC) adopted the *Statement of the Committee of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region on the recognition of the qualifications held by refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation*, in 2016, at its Seventh session in Paris. With this statement, representatives of the LRCC recalling importance of Article VII, invited Parties to implement fully provisions of the Article before the end of 2018, and invited LRCC to develop a Recommendation on the recognition of undocumented qualifications.

The Recommendation was drafted by the 2017, and the document entitled *Recommendation on the Recognition of Qualifications Held by Refugees, displaced Persons and Persons in a Refugee-like Situation*, was adopted by the LRCC on 14 November 2017, at its extraordinary session in Strasbourg.

The objective of this monitoring exercise has been to oversee the implementation of the provisions of the Article VII in line of the Recommendation adopted in 2017. The questionnaire used for the monitoring exercise was drawn up by the LRCC Bureau (Gunnar Vaht – President of the Committee, Gayane Harutyunyan – First Vice-President, Allan Bruun Pedersen – Second Vice-President and Baiba Ramina – Rapporteur), together with the Council of Europe/UNESCO Co-Secretariats. The questions were focused primarily on how the provisions of the Recommendations are implemented at national and institutional levels and to what extent the rules are reflected in national legislations.

The questionnaire was sent to 54 States Parties to the LRC, and replies were received from 39 entities (37 States Parties and USA). 22 countries out of 39 documented that there are national level procedures for the recognition of undocumented qualifications or it is regulated by competent recognition authorities. However, some countries where there are no regulations may also have some arrangements in practice concerning assessment and recognition of undocumented qualifications. The monitoring report includes both, the procedures regulated in the country, as well the practice used even the regulation was not reported. This is the reason why under some chapters there are more than 22 countries reported the implementation of an arrangements.

Country codes

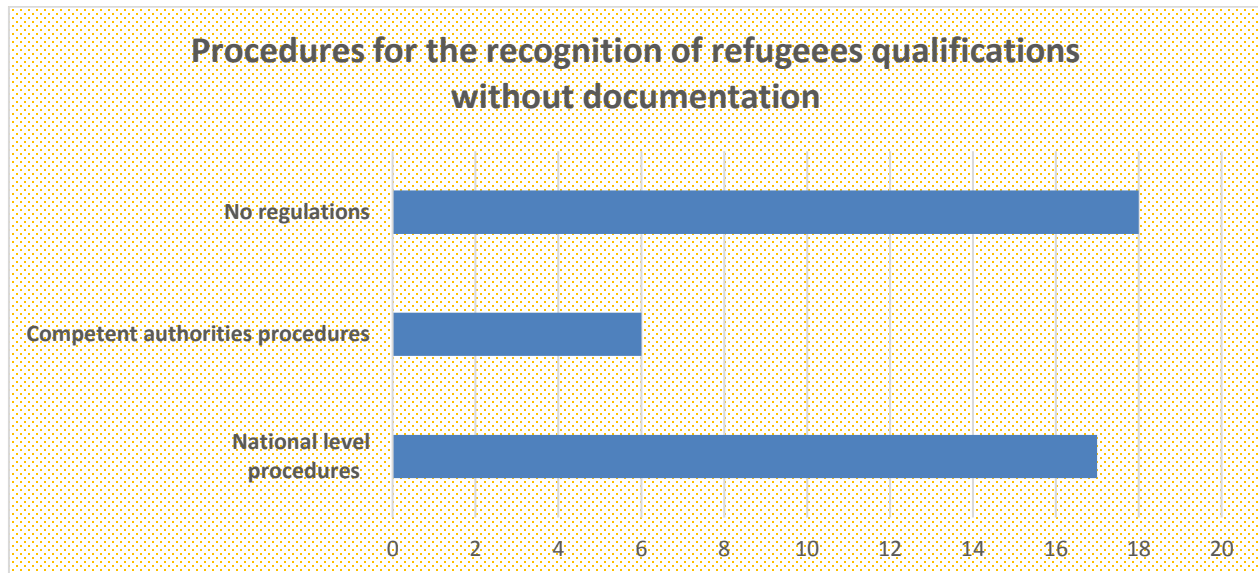
AD – Andorra
AM – Armenia
AT – Austria
BE-FI – Belgium-Flemish Community
BE-Fr – Belgium-French-speaking Community
BA – Bosnia and Herzegovina
BG – Bulgaria
CA – Canada
HR – Croatia
CZ – Czech Republic
DK – Denmark
EE – Estonia
FI – Finland
FR – France
GE – Georgia
DE – Germany
VA – Holy See
HU – Hungary
IS – Iceland
IE – Ireland
IL – Israel
IT – Italy
LV – Latvia
LT – Lithuania
LU – Luxembourg
MT – Malta
NL – The Netherlands
NZ – New Zealand
NO – Norway
PL – Poland
PT – Portugal
RO – Romania
RU – Russian Federation
SI – Slovenia
ES – Spain
SE – Sweden
CH – Switzerland
UA – Ukraine
US – United States of America

CHAPTER 1 – REGULATION OF PROCEDURES

“Parties to the Lisbon Recognition Convention should review and, as required, amend their legal framework and regulations to ensure that national legislation does not impede the implementation of Article VII of the convention and the provisions of the present Recommendation. State Parties are encouraged to take any required action to simplify and speed up the recognition process in a coordinated way.” (Recommendation: Art.IV para 14).

QUESTION: Do the competent recognition authorities in your country have procedures for the recognition of qualifications held by refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee like situation (hereinafter *refugees*) without documentation or incomplete documentation (hereinafter *undocumented*) for their qualifications?

According to the responses given by the authorities, in 16 countries¹ out of 39 (AT, BE-FI, BE-Fr, CZ, DK, EE, DE, VA, HU, IT, LT, NO, PL, PT, SI, UA) there are national level procedures for the recognition of undocumented qualifications. In 6 countries (AM, CH, NL, MT, NZ, SE) it is regulated by competent recognition authorities. And in 17 countries there are no regulations.



The Bureau of the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee (LRCC Bureau) conducting this monitoring of Article VII of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) has asked countries to provide evidence of the legal implementation of Article VII.

¹ In this report, the term country is used to denote a state or an entity within a state with an education system of its own.

In the analysis of the answers from the responding countries the LRCC Bureau has thus placed the countries, which have presented clear evidence of legal regulations of the implementation of Article VII in the category of countries, which have implemented Article VII in their legal documents.

6 countries have provided evidence of the implementation of Article VII at the level of competent recognition authorities. In the analysis of this answer the Bureau has analysed websites of the ENIC/NARIC offices to find evidence of procedures for recognition of refugees' undocumented qualifications. Information on the possibility for recognition of undocumented qualifications at the national information centres' websites is evidence that competent recognition authorities have implemented procedures at *national* level.

Some countries have provided as evidence projects on recognition of refugees' qualifications or named institutions having implemented measures to recognise refugees' undocumented qualifications. While these measures are a strong asset and a proof of the awareness of the importance of establishing procedures in line with Article VII, these cannot be taken as evidence of national implementation of Article VII.

All together 22 countries have implemented measures regulating Article VII in national regulations or at the level of competent recognition authorities.

This is a significant step forwards compared with the last monitoring of the implementation of Article VII presented at the LRCC meeting in 2016. In 2016 47 countries responded to the survey and only 8 countries provided evidence of national regulations on recognition of refugees' qualifications and among these 8 countries only 5 of them had fully implemented the provisions of Article VII. 6 countries provided evidence of regulations at the level of the competent recognition authorities in 2016.

Furthermore, in the 2019 monitoring 6 countries have answered that there are discussions on implementing regulations for the recognition of refugees' undocumented qualifications. AD reports that legislation on refugees specifies that measures concerning recognition of refugees' qualifications should be taken. However, currently these measures have not been developed. BG reports on discussions between the Bulgarian ENIC/NARIC and higher education institutions but no concrete actions have been taken. FR has answered that the French ENIC/NARIC in cooperation with the French Ministry of National Education currently is working on developing specific procedures of recognition of refugees' undocumented qualifications. Furthermore, the French ENIC/NARIC is partner of the Council of Europe Project on the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees. LV reports that discussions on implementing Article VII are going on though the number of refugees is very low. ES has answered that the Ministry of Education in cooperation with NGOs are discussing regulations concerning refugees' qualifications. Finally, RU reports that the Russian ENIC has suggested procedures for recognition of refugees' qualifications, but no further steps have been taken.

Even among countries which cannot document legal implementation of Article VII or measures at the level of the competent recognition authorities, or which have not reported plans of implementation regulations there are developments. CA has reported that in some of their provinces and territories regulations concerning refugees' qualifications are being discussed and agreements of acceptance of other countries' background documents have been made.

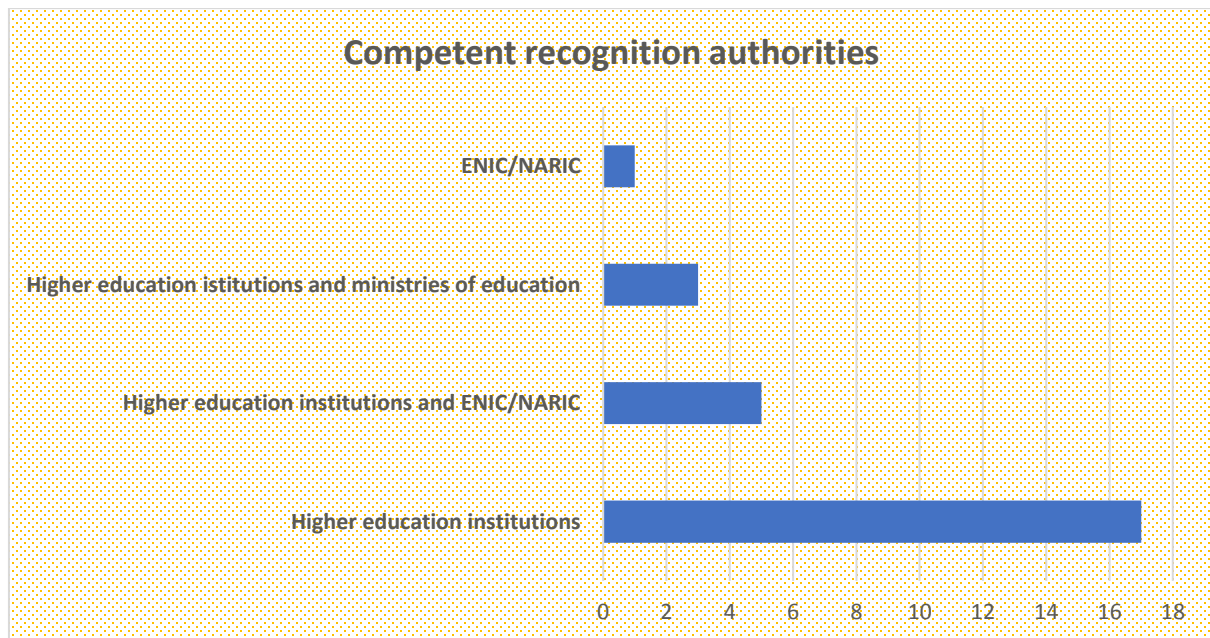
In BA, the ENIC office has developed a recommendation on the recognition of refugees' qualifications and sent it to the recognition authorities in the different cantons.

CHAPTER 2 – COMPETENT RECOGNITION AUTHORITIES

QUESTION: Which competent recognition authorities or authority make decisions on the recognition of undocumented refugee qualifications?

30 countries responded that they have decision making authorities responsible for the recognition of undocumented refugees' qualifications. There were different authorities mentioned namely, higher education institutions, ENIC/NARIC offices, employers, ministries of education or other bodies. Most countries have several decision makers, e.g. higher education institutions and ENIC/NARIC offices.

In 25 countries (AM, AT, BE-FI, BA, CA, CZ, DK, EE, FI, DE, HU, VA, IS, IE, IT, LT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SI, CH, UA, US) the decision making authorities are higher education institutions, while in 6 countries (BE-FI, VA, LT, NO, RO, SI) the decision making authorities are not only higher education institutions, but also ENIC/NARIC offices. In 4 countries (BE-Fr, BA, CZ, UA) the competent recognition authorities are not only higher education institutions but also ministries of education. In 3 countries (MT, RU, SE) decisions are made by the ENIC/NARIC office solely.



In NZ, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) is responsible for comparing qualifications gained overseas with the standards of the New Zealand Qualifications Framework. The recognition of refugees' qualifications (including undocumented cases) is conducted by the NZQA as part of the Refugee Resettlement Strategy, in partnership with the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment.

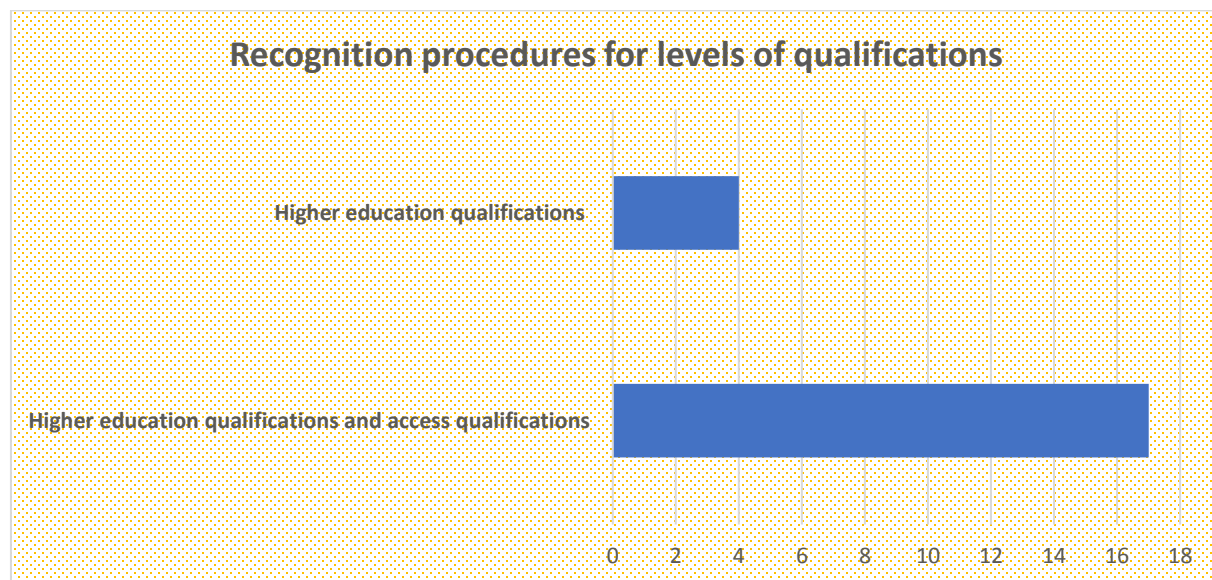
From 39 answers 9 (AD, BG, HR, FR, GE, IL, LV, LU, ES) are not applicable as there are no procedures in the country.

CHAPTER 3 – LEVELS OF QUALIFICATIONS THE PROCEDURES ARE ESTABLISHED

QUESTION: Do the procedures for the assessment and recognition of undocumented refugees' qualifications include both higher education qualifications and qualifications giving access to higher education?

From 39 answers 9 are not applicable as there are no procedures in the country: AD, BG, HR, FR, GE, IL, LV, LU, ES.

23 countries (AM, AT, BE-FI, BA, CA, CZ, DK, EE, FI, DE, HU, VA, IE, IS, IT, LT, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SI, UA) responded that the procedures for the assessment and recognition of undocumented refugees' qualifications include both higher education qualifications and qualifications giving access to higher education. FR is developing a new procedure for both higher education qualifications and qualification giving access to higher education. In some countries the procedure includes in addition to the higher education and general secondary qualifications, VET qualifications also, as reported by IE.



The procedures for the assessment and recognition of undocumented refugees' qualifications include only higher education qualifications in two countries (BE-FI and NZ).

In SE it includes qualifications on post-secondary and higher education levels, but not qualifications giving access to higher education

In US qualifications can vary depending on the entity undertaking the evaluation, and the competent authority deciding whether to recognise the qualification.

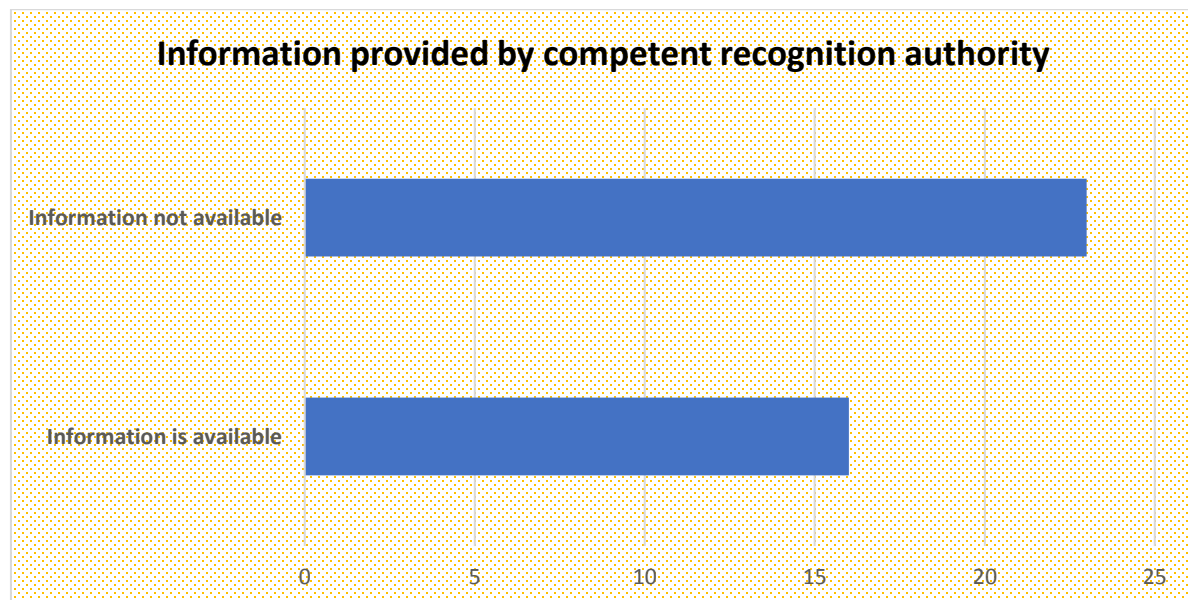
CHAPTER 4 – INFORMATION PROVISION ABOUT THE ASSESSMENT AND RECOGNITION FOR UNDOCUMENTED QUALIFICATIONS

“Parties to the Lisbon Recognition Convention should ensure that information on the assessment and recognition of qualifications held by refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation is transparent, up to date and is provided to refugees as early as possible. To the extent possible, the information should be available in both the national language(s) and at least one widely spoken language.” (Recommendation; Art VII, para 22).

QUESTION: Does the competent recognition authority provide information about the assessment and recognition procedure and policies for undocumented qualifications? If so, in which language(s) is this information provided? (Please, provide a link to the website the information is provided.)

16 countries reported that competent authorities provide information about the assessment and recognition for undocumented qualifications: AM (Armenian and English), BE-FI (Dutch and English), BE-Fr (French and English), CZ (Czech), DK (Danish and English), EE (Estonian and English), VA (English), IT (Italian and English), LT (Lithuanian and English), NL (Dutch and English), NO ((Norwegian and English), NZ (English), SI (Slovenian and English), SE (Swedish and English), CH (German, French and English), UA (Ukrainian, Russian and English).

In 23 countries there is no information available on recognition of refugees' undocumented qualifications.



Among the countries which have not presented evidence of information on recognition of undocumented qualifications, some have other types of information targeted towards refugees. This information may refer to information on single institutions' websites with measures or projects to recognise undocumented

qualifications or refer to general information on refugees' possibilities of further studies, the waiving of fees for refugee applicants and more but not to specific information regarding recognition of undocumented qualifications.

Although information to refugees may be available when contacting the recognition authorities the LRCC Bureau notes that clear and transparent information to refugees on how to have their qualifications assessed is vital for their possibility to enter into further education or the labour market according to the national rules for asylum and integration. Refugees are newcomers to the country and often have special challenges of understanding the national systems and languages in their host countries, therefore information on the recognition of their qualifications should be easily available.

CHAPTER 5 – ASSESSMENT AVAILABLE FREE OF CHARGE OR AT REASONABLE COST

“Arrangements for the recognition of inadequately documented qualifications should ensure that no applicant is prevented from seeking recognition of their qualifications because of the costs involved. The assessment should be based on transparent procedures and criteria, and it should be available free of charge or at reasonable cost and within a reasonable time.” (Recommendation: Art.III, para 10).

QUESTION: Is there a cost to refugees for the assessment of undocumented qualifications or periods of study? Is this regulated at national level or by the competent recognition authorities? Please provide details?

In 18 countries (AM, BE-FI, BE-Fr, DK, EE, FI, FR, DE, HU, IS, IE, IT, LT, MT, NL, NZ, NO, SI, SE) there is no cost for the assessment of undocumented qualifications, and this service is free of charge.

In some countries the application fee is regulated. For example, in DE, the application, including assessment of undocumented qualifications or periods of study, is free of charge for registered refugees only, and in NL it is regulated at the national level and funded by the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment.

In 10 countries (AT, BA, CA, CZ, PO, PT, RO, CH, UA, US) they have costs for recognition and there is no exception for refugees.

In 9 countries the recognition of refugees' qualifications is not regulated at national level, thus they did not answer to the question.

CHAPTER 6 – METHODS USED TO COLLECT RELEVANT INFORMATION ABOUT THE QUALIFICATIONS CLAIMED

“The assessment of inadequately documented qualifications will seek to establish whether applicants are likely to hold the qualifications they claim.” (Recommendation: Art.V, para 15). *“The assessment of inadequately documented qualifications should be based on information collected from reliable public sources as well as the person applying for recognition of their qualifications and should, as appropriate, be supplemented by interviews with the applicant, examinations and any other appropriate assessment methods.”* (Recommendation: Art.V, para 17).

QUESTION: What is the method used to collect relevant information about undocumented qualifications (detailed application, interview, examination(s), other)?

26 countries have some clear methods used to collect more detailed information to identify the qualification earned by undocumented refugees. Most methods used are detailed application/questionnaire (answered by 19 countries); interview (15), examination (7) or test (6) or combined.

The extended application form or questionnaire is used in AM, BE-Fr, CZ, DK, EE, FI, DE, VA, IS, IT, LT, NL, NZ, NO, PL, RO, SE, CH, UA. Besides the questionnaire, AM is also collecting information about work experience and language proficiency of a refugee applicant.

There has been different methods used at extended application forms, like asking the applicant in the digital application form for further information in a sworn statement, and the applicant must sign and declare that the given facts are true (SE). Sworn statement is asked in CH also. It is also in practice where the applicant is asked to sign whether the competent authority may ask authorities in the country of education in order to verify the applicant’s information (DK).

There is a number of countries (AM, AT, BE-FI, BE-Fr, FI, DE, VA, IS, IT, LT, NO, PL, PT, RO, SI) where interview maybe organised to the undocumented applicants. The interview may be an in depth interview with involvement of international evaluators (AM). Competent recognition authority may also ask experts to provide an advisory statement regarding the foreign qualification of refugees, on the basis of an interview (BE-FI). If relevant, an interview can be organised with the competent body in the field of study (for instance if the background paper does not appear as sufficient in order to fairly assess the level of the qualification) (BE-Fr).

In IT the applicant has the interview with credential evaluators. In addition, some universities are also added an examination after the interview carried out by professors of the related field of study to verify the applicant’s competencies. They are doing both, oral and/or written examinations.

In 13 countries (AT, CA, FI, DE, VA, IT, MT, NO, PL, PT, RO, SI, UA) the tests/examinations are organised to the undocumented applicants.

In most cases the test or examination will be organised if necessary, and not always. The methodology used in the assessment depends on the case and may involve interviews, tests and skills demonstration (FI). If necessary, additional examinations or interview can be conducted, or the applicant can be asked to apprentice (PL). The *ad hoc* tests are in practice in MT, where the tests are carried out by higher education institutions or employers to determine if the refugee did indeed obtain said qualification.

In UA, in case of undocumented qualifications the procedure of recognition may include specially organised examinations, consultations with the representatives of higher education institutions and/or other competent field authorities, research on system and programme of education. In RO the Romanian ENIC issues recommendations that will be sent to the other competent recognition authorities (higher education institutions, County School Inspectorates) who will interview the undocumented applicants and examine them.

In SI, for access to the upper secondary level of education a form of interview and testing has been developed in cooperation with National Education Institute. For access to the tertiary level the oral and written examination has been developed by the National Examination Centre (SI).

In addition to extended application forms, interviews and examinations or tests, there are other methods used in assessment of undocumented qualifications (AT, CA, FI, IS, LT, NL, NZ).

In AT the authorities compare application qualification with precedent parallel cases. In CA, CICIC's *best practices and guidelines* published in November 2017, identifies five different approaches which could be used, depending on the situation and type of organisation. These five approaches are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive, and many organisations that adopt a case-by-case approach will use different ones at different times: a) country profile plus comparability statement; b) background paper; c) some documentation; d) some verifiable documentation; e) testing of skills and competencies.

Also electronic databases are used when possible for example to confirm award of degrees and students' admission to programmes of study (FI), or international networks and available contacts are useful in this process (IS). LT reported that collecting any contextual or indirect evidence (such as proof of work experience, professional licensing or registration, etc.), if available; c) relying on our own databases and resources to gather additional information.

They are also may asked to provide any additional relevant information, like student cards (NL). At the assessment stage, if any additional information is required, contact is made with the relevant Red Cross support worker to get in contact with the refugee applicant to supply further information (NZ).

US reported the methods can vary depending on the entity undertaking the evaluation, and the competent authority deciding whether to recognise the qualification.

In 12 countries (AD, BA, BG, HR, FR, HU, IE, IL, LV, LU, RU, ES) the recognition of refugees' qualifications is not regulated at national level, thus they did not answered to the question, or indicated that there are no methods developed. IE reported that even there is no specific regulation, NARIC Ireland advice is accessed via their website.

CHAPTER 7 – ACCEPTANCE OF INFORMATION COLLECTED BY AUTHORITIES IN OTHER COUNTRIES

“Parties should accept information collected about inadequately documented qualifications carried out in other Parties by competent recognition authorities.” (Recommendation; Art.III, para 12)

QUESTION: Do the competent recognition authorities in your country accept information about undocumented qualifications collected by other competent recognition authorities in States Party to the Lisbon Recognition Convention?

There was no country reported that it does not accept information provided by the foreign competent authorities. 9 countries did not answer to the question, because there is no any national level regulation on recognition of refugees’ qualifications (AD, BG, HR, FR, IL, LV, LU, RU, ES).

21 countries reported that they accept information collected by other competent recognition authorities in States Party to the LRC (AT, BE-Fr, BA, DK, EE, VA, HU, IS, IE, IT, LT, MT, NL, NZ, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, CH, UA), or encourage HEIs to accept the information (IT, MT). However, a number of countries confirm that they are ready to accept information provided by the competent authorities of other Parties, but add, that there are not yet such cases (BE-FI, EE, IE, LT, NL, PT) or they didn’t confirm the acceptance of such information because they have no cases yet (AM, FI, SI).

In some countries they added that every kind of information that could support and help evaluation process is welcome (BE-Fr, HU, UA), or competent recognition authorities respect the work of ENIC/NARIC networks (BA, MT). NZ reported that refugee applicants can provide additional information supporting their application which may also include information from other competent recognition authority. PL answered it is up to the competent authority to decide the use of such information. PT reported that they accept information provided, however issues such as whether the information collected by other competent recognition authorities in states Party to the LRC had been intended for the same purpose (e.g. further study) or its accordance with national and/or institutional regulations would have to be raised. VA indicated the need for a quality of the information provided.

Countries also raised challenges related with provision of information and its sharing. The case-by-case approach is used by CA and CZ. In US acceptance of information varies depending on an entity undertaking an evaluation, and the competent recognition authority.

CHAPTER 8 – BACKGROUND DOCUMENT

„In cases where refugees, displaced persons or persons in a refugee-like situation for valid reasons cannot adequately document the qualifications or periods of study they claim, competent recognition authorities are encouraged to create and use a background document or a similar information document. The background document should give an authoritative description of the qualifications or periods of study applicants are considered likely to have obtained or completed with all available documents and supporting

evidence. The background document does not in itself constitute an act of recognition." (Recommendation: Art.VI para 18).

QUESTION: Is there a background document or a similar information document issued to the applicant? If so, what is the title of this document? What information does a background document or a similar information document include? Please provide a general or anonymised sample.

22 countries have documented that they have implemented regulations for the recognition of refugees' undocumented qualifications. Out of these 22 countries, 15 (AM, BE-FI, BE-Fr, DK, EE, LT, IT, NL, NZ, NO, RO, SI, SE, CH, UA) have stated that they issue background documents for recognition of refugees' undocumented qualifications. Thus the other 7 countries (AT, CZ, VA, HU, MT, PL, PT) that have regulations do not issue a background documents.

Some countries have provided evidence that they issue a background document but have not sent a sample, which is why the content of the documents cannot be described and they are not listed below.

9 countries are part of the Council of Europe project on the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR). The document provides information on the highest achieved qualification, unfinished studies, level and duration of programme, status of higher education institution and the refugees' language competences.

BE-Fr issues the background document of the same format which provides information on level and duration of claimed programme, status of higher education institution and an assessment of the level of the study and an advisory recognition statement. Moreover the same format is used for legally binding decision on the level of studies.

In DK the background document is partly based on the Diploma Supplement and ordinary legally binding recognition decision's format including information on the status of higher education institution and programme, the level of the programme and an advisory recognition statement. A disclaimer is issued without documentation and as advisory recognition statement.

In EE prior to assessment of a qualification, the Estonian ENIC/NARIC creates a Background Paper, which gives an authoritative description of the qualification or period of study applicant is considered likely to have obtained or completed with all available documents and supporting evidence. The Background Paper includes information about the educational institution, programme and qualification and giving information about the comparison of the qualification in the Estonian education system.

In LT the Lithuanian ENIC/NARIC issues regular recognition statement if information deemed authentic: "If the background report and/or the interview demonstrate consistency, a standard recognition decision is issued. It provides general information on the qualification (title, year of award, awarding institution and country of origin) and its comparability within the Lithuanian system of education. It makes a note regarding the fact that the applicant was not able to provide the documents, but, otherwise, its format or its status does not differ from regular recognition decisions".

In NL the Dutch ENIC/NARIC issues an *Indicatie Onderwijsniveau* (ION) (Indicative educational level) based on the diploma supplement. The ION is very similar to a regular credential evaluation issued by the Dutch ENIC/NARIC but includes a disclaimer that the actual qualification has not been presented. The ION

includes the name of the qualification obtained and the university and a comparison to level of education in the Netherlands.

NZ issues a statement comparable to their regular recognition statements with information on the level and duration of the programme and the status of the higher education institution. The document contains a recognition statement and a disclaimer that no documents have been provided for the assessment.

In SI the document contains information on different elements of the assessed education, such as the status of educational institution and programme, information on the qualification, the field of study, name of qualification obtained, a short description of foreign educational system and the information on a comparable level of education in national system, if it is possible.

The background paper in SE is based on the Diploma Supplement and contains information on the level and duration of the programme, the status of the higher education institution and an advisory recognition statement. A disclaimer of statement is issued without documentation and as advisory recognition statement.

CONCLUSIONS

Regulation of procedures

In comparison with the monitoring of the implementation of Article VII presented at the convention meeting in 2016 it becomes clear that significantly more Parties to the LRC have now implemented regulations and measures concerning the recognition of refugees' undocumented qualifications and the full implementation of Article VII.

Furthermore, more countries now report of discussions and activities concerning the implementation of Article VII or of local activities responding to the needs of refugees with undocumented qualifications.

It is evident that the topic of refugees' qualifications now has become an important agenda in many countries.

However, among the responding countries it must also be noted that there is still a group of countries which have not documented any regulations or activities concerning the recognition of refugees' qualifications and that 14 countries never responded to the survey. There are still very valid reasons for keeping the topic on top of the international recognition agenda.

Competent recognition authorities

In the countries where the assessment and recognition of undocumented refugee qualifications are regulated at national or institutional level, the competent authorities for recognition are the same institutions as for regular applicants – ministries of education, ENIC/NARIC offices or higher education institutions. Most countries have several decision makers, e.g. higher education institutions and ENIC/NARIC offices.

Levels of qualifications the procedures are established

In 56.4% of the countries the procedure for the assessment and recognition of undocumented refugee qualifications include both higher education qualifications and qualifications giving access to higher education.

To fulfil the provision of the LRC, it is recommended that Parties to the LRC should establish the procedure for both higher education and access qualifications.

Information provision about the assessment and recognition for undocumented qualifications

Although significantly more countries have implemented procedures for the recognition of refugees' undocumented qualifications there is still a need for many countries to provide clear and transparent information on recognition targeted towards refugees. Information to refugees may be available when contacting the recognition authorities the LRCC Bureau notes that clear and transparent information to refugees on how to have their qualifications assessed is vital for their possibility enter into further education or the labour market according to the national rules for asylum and integration. Refugees are newcomers to the country and often have special challenges of understanding the national systems and languages in their host countries, which is why that information on the recognition of their qualifications should be easily available.

Assessment available free of charge or at reasonable cost

Only 35% of all respondents stated that there is no cost for the assessment of undocumented refugees' qualifications, and service is free of charge. In 5 (13%) countries there are costs for recognition and there is no exception for refugees. As LRC emphasises that assessment should be available free of charge or at reasonable cost, therefore countries should review their fees to make sure that costs are reasonable for refugee applicants and if possible introduce lower fees for refugees.

Methods used to collect relevant information about the qualifications claimed

There has been a progress to develop methods to collect relevant information about the qualifications claimed by the undocumented refugees. The extended application form is already quite widely in practice, where the application includes detailed questions about the studies and awarding institutions. In some countries the application form in addition includes questions about work experience or language proficiency.

In 15 countries the competent recognition authority may organise an interview, and in 13 countries the test/examination may be organised if necessary.

Acceptance of information collected by authorities in other countries

The Recommendation on the Recognition of Qualifications Held by Refugees, displaced Persons and Persons in a Refugee-like Situation that was adopted in 2017, states that Parties should accept information about undocumented qualifications collected by the competent recognition authorities in other Party.

There is very little experience with the cases where the information collected by a competent authority of one country cross a border to another country, but all countries where they have at least some regulations on recognition of undocumented qualifications, reported that they will accept the information collected by a competent recognition authority of other Party, or support to do so by the competent authorities in their country.

Background document

In conclusion, the samples provided to the LRCC Bureau are quite similar in relation to the content. Most of background documents provide information on the level and duration of the programme, which the refugee claims to have completed, the status of the higher education institutions and in most cases an advisory recognition statement besides the personal information of the refugee applicant. The countries issuing EQPRs have additional information on work experience and language competences for guidance purposes.

In relation to the content of the background papers the information provided in these documents seem to provide the applicants as well as stakeholders with the necessary and relevant information regarding the applicants' qualifications. The provided background documents do meet the recommended standards as proposed in the subsidiary text to the LRC on Recommendation on Recognition of Qualifications Held by Refugees, Displaced Persons and Persons in a Refugee-like situation. However, it must also be noted that the majority of responding countries at present do not issue a background document, which can support refugees' possibilities of seeking employment, further education or more according to the rules and regulations in the host countries.