



QQI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

Mind the gap- Recognition and RPL

*Opportunities and assets for fair
recognition of all our learning in a
mobile world*



Recognition of whose learning?

Higher education

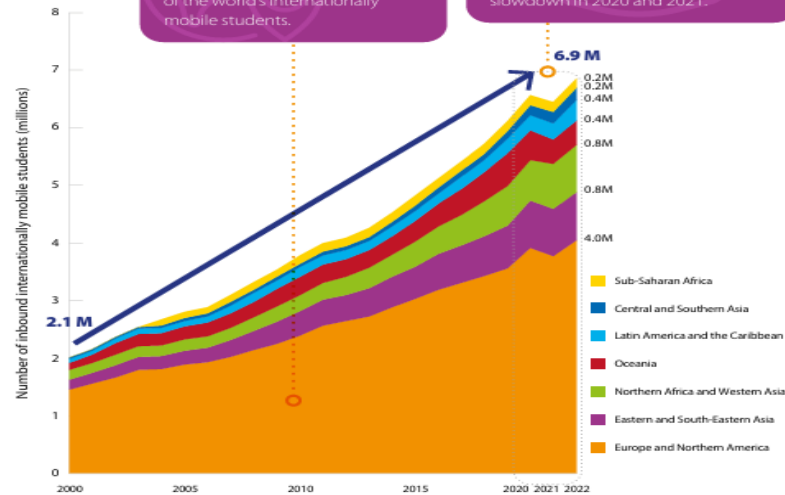
The number of internationally mobile students continues to rise

Internationally mobile students, by host region, 2000 - 2022

The global number of internationally mobile students more than **tripled** during the last two decades, rising from **2.1 million in 2000** to nearly **6.9 million in 2022**.

Europe and North America hosted 4 million international students in 2022, more than half of the world's internationally mobile students.

The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted the steady growth of international student mobility, causing a slowdown in 2020 and 2021.



Internationally mobile students are individuals who have physically crossed an international border between two countries with the objective to participate in educational activities in the country of destination, where the country of destination of a given student is different from their country of origin.
Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

Who is mobile?

International students and researchers in FET and HE (6.9m in 2022 HE)

Employers, employees and those seeking employment

Refugees and asylum seekers (0.34% of our population in 2024)



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Some definitions- recognition or RPL?

2012 Council Recommendation (In Implementation- EQF AG; see CEDEFOP)

- **validation** means a process of confirmation by an authorised body that an individual has acquired **learning outcomes** measured against a **relevant standard** and consists of the following four distinct phases: 1. IDENTIFICATION through dialogue of particular experiences of an individual; 2. DOCUMENTATION to make visible the individual's experiences; 3. a formal ASSESSMENT of these experiences; and 4. CERTIFICATION of the results of the assessment which may lead to a partial or full qualification;
- **recognition of prior learning** means the validation of **learning outcomes**, whether from formal education or non-formal or informal learning, acquired *before* requesting validation
- **a qualification** means a *formal* outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards;

Lisbon Recognition Convention (BINDING)

- **Recognition:** A formal acknowledgement by a competent authority of the value of a foreign educational qualification with a view to access to **educational and/or employment activities**.
- Article IV.1 Each Party **shall recognise the qualifications** issued by other Parties meeting the general requirements for access to higher education in those Parties for the purpose of access to programmes belonging to its higher education system, unless a *substantial difference* can be shown between the general requirements for access in the Party in which the qualification was obtained and in the Party in which recognition of the qualification is sought.
- European Area of Recognition Manual ([European Area of Recognition - EAR Manual](#)) Flexible Learning Paths- RPL: fair, equitable, transparent. Documented or certified outcomes of RPL processes are recognised.

Global Recognition Convention (in Preparation; when acceded to, will be Binding)

- **Prior learning:** *the experience, knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies* which an individual has acquired as a *result of formal, non-formal, or informal learning*, assessed against a given set of *learning outcomes, objectives, or standards*
- **Recognition:** *a formal acknowledgment* by a competent recognition authority of the *validity and academic level* of a foreign **education qualification**, of **partial studies**, or of **prior learning** for the purpose of providing an applicant with outcomes including, but not limited to: (a) the right to apply for **admission to higher education**; and/or (b) the possibility to **seek employment opportunities**



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What's in it for us?

Global citizens 2030 ([Global-Citizens-2030.pdf](#))

- Talent and innovation at the heart of Irelands global footprint
- A first choice destination for international learners, researchers and innovato
- Global citizens in multi-national multi-cultural and diverse workforces
- Enhanced European influence in education and research
- A new level of North-South and East West collaboration
- Thought leadership in talent, innovation and science policy

Ageing population-

- by 2057, 1 in 3 of us will be over 60. 700,000 will be 80+.
- In 2023, our population increased by 1.5%- good at almost 4 time the EU average- but is it enough?



'Diversity begets stability...'



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Assets

Legal mandate-

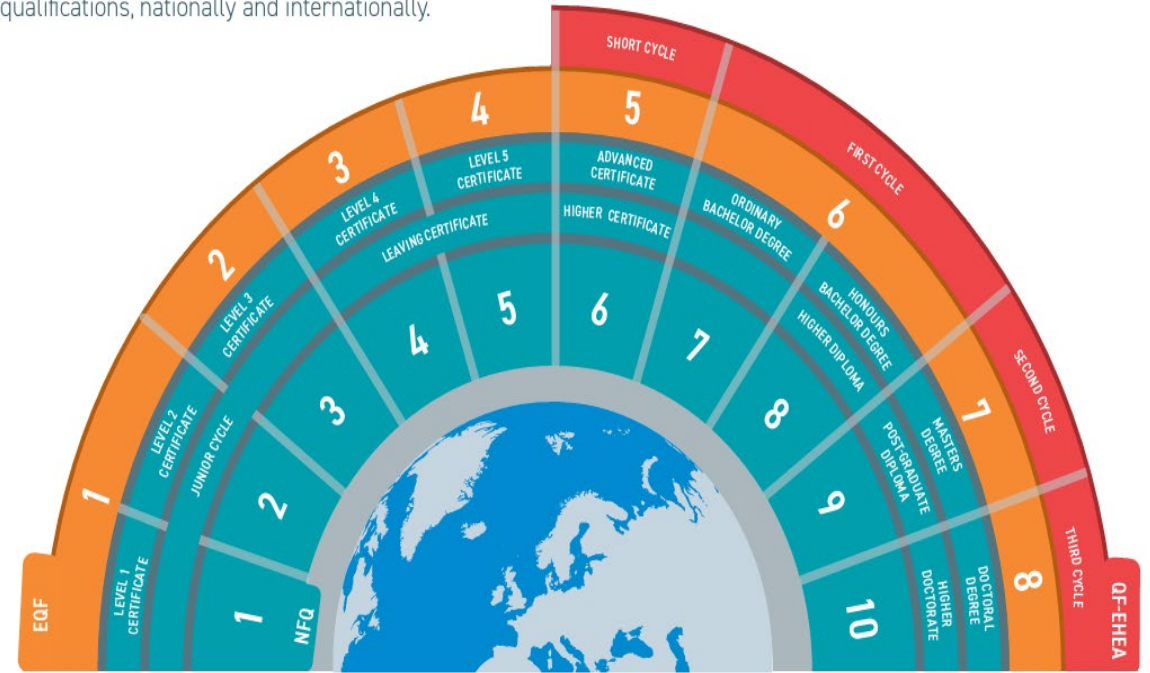
- recognition and RPL

National Framework of Qualifications-

- EQF, EHEA, Bologna
- Award types, indicators, standards
- Quality Assurance- institutions, programmes
- Transparency tools- credit, DS/CS
- Comparison exercises with other regional Frameworks via EQF
- ENIC NARIC Network
- National policy framework
- International Education Mark- TrustEd Ireland – Codes of Practice
- Signals quality of experience for international learners including LRC

Qualifications Frameworks - Going Global

Enhancing the transparency, quality and mobility of qualifications, nationally and internationally.



- NFQ Irish National Framework of Qualifications
- EQF European Qualifications Framework
- QF-EHEA Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area



For further information consult: www.QQI.ie

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Some general principles in fair recognition

Learning achieved should not be repeated

Presumption of innocence! Recognition is fair but not at any price. Verification, authentication does apply, as for national systems. Specify. Ensure clarity of information, including timelines.

Recognition and RPL is always with reference to standards.

Applicants for RPL will need support-mentors, guidance counselling.

Recognition of foreign qualifications may need additional support- check ENIC NARIC / NARIC Ireland.

Substantial difference- genuinely prevents success in desired activity. May be addressed in gap analysis of learning outcomes, through 'periods of adaptation', through tuition, through self study and assessment and a variety of means

Valid, reliable, sufficient, authentic, current. Balanced judgement, balanced assessment. Assessment is always by a subject matter expert.

Evidence- UDL principles apply. Diversity of evidence is expected. Assessment instruments are appropriate to the outcomes being assessed. Skills challenges, interviews, reflections on learning from experience, attestations, artefacts, video and other documentary evidence is all relevant.

There has to be a documented outcome. Credit, certification, formal outcomes and or documentation that the applicant can take with them.



The myth of stasis

- 123M people are forcibly displaced (2024, 1 in 67 people)
- 73.5M people are internally displaced,
- 42.7M people are refugees
- 8.4M of us are asylum seekers

The top five country of origin International Protection applications to Ireland are

- Nigeria
- Pakistan
- South Africa
- Zimbabwe
- Bangladesh

Most come with qualifications, including some which partially documented. Everyone has history.

NARIC Ireland has Comparability Statements for qualifications from each of these countries among our total 2130+, and 'Rough Guides' for Ukraine, Syria and Afghanistan*.

[UNHCR - Refugee Statistics](#)

[Recognition of foreign qualifications | Quality and Qualifications Ireland \(qqi.ie\)](#)

Boy with life tube III, John Behan RHA.



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Our binding obligations- the Lisbon Recognition Convention

Article VII

- *Each Party shall take all feasible and reasonable steps within the framework of its education system and in conformity with its constitutional, legal, and regulatory provisions to develop procedures designed to assess fairly and expeditiously 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 activities, even in cases in which the qualifications obtained in one of the Parties cannot be proven through documentary evidence.*

2017 Recommendation & Explanatory memorandum

- Qualifications should be recognised unless a substantial difference is shown
- Assessment is an entitlement for access purposes
- The 2010 Revised Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the assessment of Foreign Qualifications applies where qualifications cannot be fully documented
- Includes periods of study
- [CETS 165 - Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region \(coe.int\)](#); *Woman with suitcase 2022 Behan*



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Where does Recognition stop and RPL begin?

The 'European Area of Recognition (EAR) Manual' is a set of Guidelines developed by the ENIC NARIC Network to support Credential Evaluators, including with specific chapters on

- Refugees
- Substantial Difference
- Alternative Recognition
- Non-traditional learning (RPL is included under this heading, and treats mainly the recognition of qualifications achieved through RPL)

The underlying orientation, informed by outcomes, is whether the applicant is ready, sufficiently prepared for the desired activity?

Clear gap- experiential, informal learning can be recognised through RPL processes, including RPL for access, exemptions and awards.

Processes supporting recognition where qualifications and other documentation is missing have been developed through two collaborative projects of the ENIC NARIC Network led by NOKUT:

- **ARENA** ([ARENA | Nokut](#)) (Borundi, Yemen, Sudan, Palestine, Rwanda)

and

- **REACT** ([REACT – Refugees and Recognition | Nokut](#)) (Iran, Ethiopia, Somalia, Venezuela, DRC)



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Issued: 14.03.2017
Valid through: 14.03.2022

Personal information

Surname: Nasry	Given names: Ahmad
Partner's name: Alamy	Partner's name: Rabaa
Date of birth: 28.08.1983	Place of birth: Deir Ez-Zor, Syria
Nationality: Syria	

Assessed qualifications
Highest assessed qualification: (2011) Bachelor in Electrical Engineering, University of Damascus, Syria¹

Additional relevant information from the applicant
Languages: Arabic (native speaker), Arabic (language of instruction), English (language learned)
Work experience: **3 years of teaching experience in Syria²**
Instructor and classroom assessment is conducted by teacher/lecturers from QIC/ARIC participating in the project³.

Official stamp of the process	Evaluation coordinator signature
Examiner 1	Examiner 2
Signature	Signature

¹ European Qualifications Passport for Refugees is neither a recognition nor an equivalent for the national recognition criteria, but a document intended to be of help in connection with applications for recognition/translation and studies. The evaluation is based on available documentation and a structured interview with a professional context of evaluation. This document is only valid together with the respective part.
² No available documentation.
³ No available documentation.

• The European Qualifications Passport for Refugees

- Bologna (2020); Coordinated by the Council of Europe, individual applications directly to them
- Process results in a **standardised document** outlining educational level, work experience, and language proficiency
- Through a panel-based (2) evaluation process involving a structured interview and assessment of available documentation (background paper)
- Thirty participating Countries, sharing and growing expertise
- *Supported by 16 Institutions across FET and HE nationally; QQI 'soft' Network.*
- *Highlighting- Learning from response to crisis in Ukraine- FET and HE, DFHERIS leadership. University of Sanctuary movement. Irish Refugee Council work.*

- *Coordinated national approach?*

Minding the gaps...

'I came back from that frugal republic

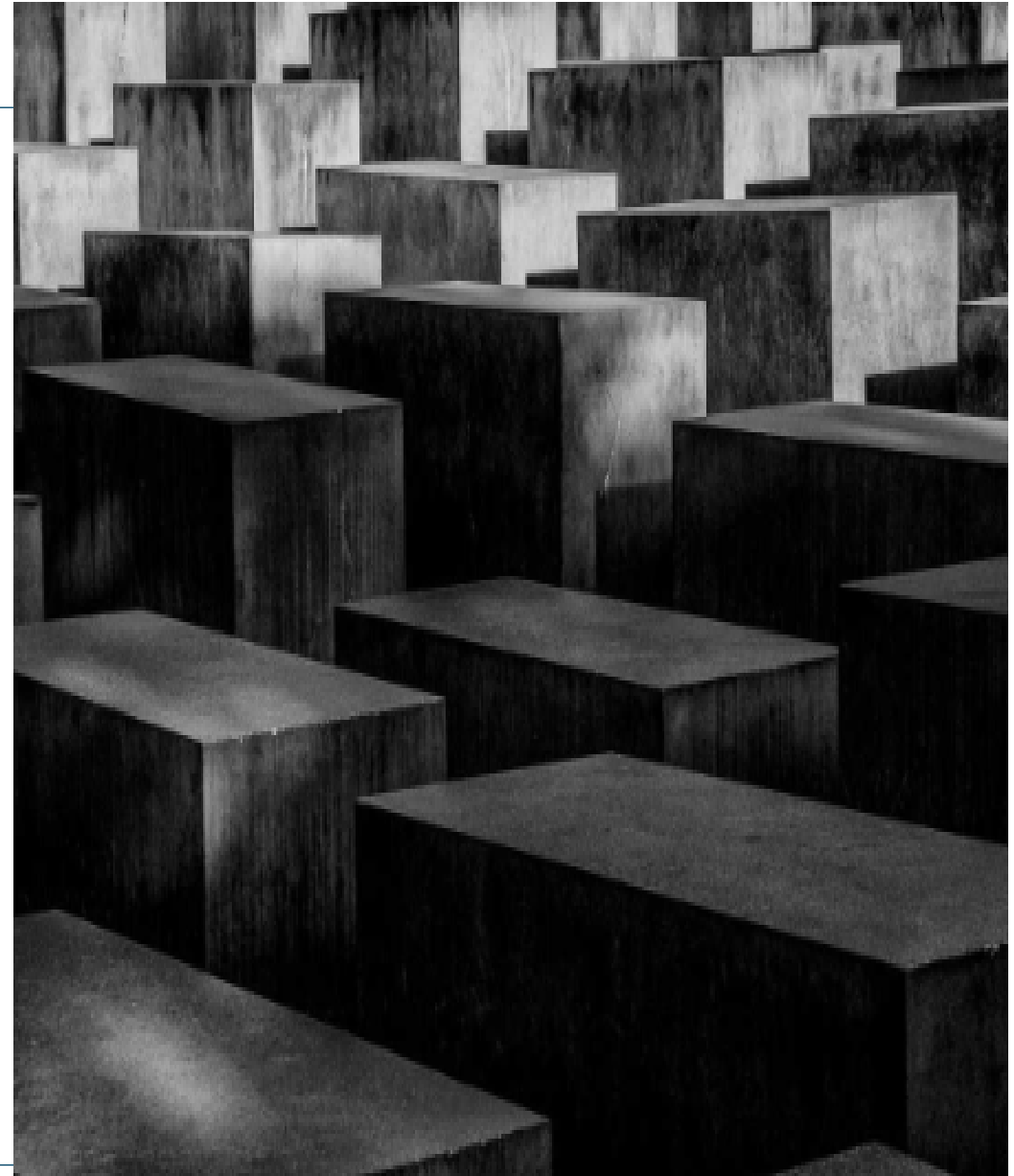
With my two arms the one length, the customs
woman having insisted my allowance was myself.

The old man rose and gazed into my face and said that was official recognition
That I was now a dual citizen.

He therefore desired me when I got home
To consider myself a representative
And to speak on their behalf in my own tongue.

Their embassies, he said, were everywhere
But operated independently
And no ambassador would ever be relieved.'

'From the Republic of Conscience' ...Heaney



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