



EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCE WITH EXTERNAL VET AND HEI

Report

Based on primary literature research and input from Belgium, Iceland, Sweden, Greece and Italy

Recognition of Qualifications held by Refugees

2017-1-BE-KA202-034709



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CONTENT

INTRODUCTION.....	3
PROJECT WELCOM.....	4
INTRODUCTION TO THE REPORT.....	5
BELGIUM	6
GREECE	9
ICELAND.....	12
SWEDEN	15
ITALY.....	18
CONCLUSIONS	20
REFERENCES.....	20

INTRODUCTION

Project Welkom, recognition of qualifications held by refugees is an approved Erasmus+ project within key action 2: cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices. The project has been created as an answer to the growing needs for social, economic and educational integration of refugees. The aim of the project is to develop transparency, recognition and validation of skills and qualifications held by refugees in Belgium, Greece, Iceland, Italy and Sweden. This report discusses the results of the literature research and survey that were conducted in each participating country. These results shed some light on existing assessment methodologies with their potential gaps as well as some best practices. The report ends with a proposition for a methodology in assessment of prior learning (APL) that is uniform and transparent to use for education providers.

Project “WELKOM”

Project “Recognition of Qualifications held by Refugees” (acronym: “WELKOM”) is an approved Erasmus+ project within Key Action 2: Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices. The project has been created as an answer to the growing needs for social, economic and educational integration of the refugees fleeing to the European countries during the last few years. The massive and continuing internal and external displacement of people, especially from Middle Eastern and Northern African countries, has had enormous social, economic and political consequences in these regions, derailing their development path and affecting the growth gains previously achieved. Based on the conclusions of the Council of Europe and the Action Plan on Building Inclusive Societies (2016-2019), the response to the refugee crisis is planned to be implemented based on three main pillars; the first and most important is the pillar of Education which stresses that focus should be given on (1) language skills as an engine for integration, (2) recognising qualifications held by migrants and refugees, (3) access to education for migrant and refugee children and young people.

The aim of “WELKOM” is to develop transparency, recognition and validation of skills and qualifications held by refugees and migrants based in Belgium, Greece, Iceland, Italy and Sweden. Consequently, this will make it easier for the target groups to study and work in the host countries, leading to further social inclusion and integration. Hence, our main objective is to analyze and plan the terms for the valid recognition of skills and qualifications already held by refugees and migrants, to make them more coherent and easier to use, and to ensure a stronger focus on the needs of pupils, students, workers, employers and society as a whole.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.projectwelkom.eu>.

INTRODUCION TO THE REPORT

The overall aim of Exchange Of Experience with External VET and HEI (initially IO10) was to contact the Universities, VET centres and educational institutes from the 5 target countries, and get information from their experience in order to exchange best practices and develop a common policy blueprint on the recognition of diplomas and educational level of the refugees.

Through a questionnaire we asked for information regarding procedures in order to be able to evaluate their respective level based on the European Union scheme and as result of this activity is a report based on their answers of the foreign VET and HEI.

Belgium has several educational institutions that offers services such as vocational or language training, academic recognition of qualifications, diploma certificates and integration courses. Since the Belgium education system is under the supervision of the government, the recognition procedures for any qualifications are state-regulated. As such, both higher institutions and vocational training centres have the tools they need in order to implement a working system, thus creating a nation-wide, government regulated framework for the recognition of qualifications that allows refugees or asylum seekers to undergo an application process.

Description of the education institutions

Three Flemish education institutions participated in our study.

CVO De Vedioeping is an adult education centre that offers language education and vocational education and training. They are a public institution located in a suburban area with a large community of migrant workers. This area also hosts a small reception centre for refugees. The school receives about 100 applications from refugees and immigrants a year. As an educational institution it offers professional recognition.

UC Leuven-Limburg is a university college that offers professional and academic bachelor programmes. The majority of the programmes are offered in Dutch, a small number is also offered in English. The institution offers academic recognition, diploma supplements and accreditation of ECTS.

Het Agentschap voor Integratie en Inburgering is a Flemish government organisation that offers educational and legal support for refugees and immigrants. The agency grants language certificates and offers integration courses, translation services and legal advice. The range of responsibilities of the institution is limited to legal enquiries.

The role of the government in education

The majority of schools in Flanders are public institutions, recognised and supported by the Flemish government. This is the case for both Higher Education as for Vocational Education and Training. As a consequence, education policies and recognition procedures are stipulated by the Flemish Government.

The education institutions that participated in our study are public institutions, hence all have indicated that their education policy and recognition procedures are strongly regulated by the government.

RECOGNITION FOR REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS

Application procedures for refugees and immigrants

CVO De Vedioeping receives around 100 applications from refugees and immigrants a year. The application process takes around 2-3 weeks. The institution allows entry to learning cycles through entrance exams.

UC Leuven Limburg didn't provide any numbers on applications from refugees and immigrants. The university college allows entry through bridging programmes and preparatory programmes.

Het Agentschap voor Integratie en Inburgering receives around 5000 refugees and immigrants a year. The application process takes around 2-3 weeks. The agency grants language certificates and determines level of education based on the recognition of informal learning.

Recognition procedures for refugees and immigrants

CVO De Vedioeping applies recognition procedures for entrance to VET courses and language courses. For entrance to VET courses, the institution relies on their own recognition procedures, which are based on interviews and/or entrance exams. For entrance to language courses; they cooperate with *Agentschap voor Integratie en Inburgering* who grant the certificates for a level of language that has been achieved. For this recognition or certificate, the Agency relies on the Common European Framework for Reference of Languages (CEFR). The staff that is responsible for the recognition of the level of language is specifically trained for this task and has extensive experience. They don't feel they lack any information or expertise to accomplish this task.

UC Leuven-Limburg (UCLL) is a public higher education institution governed by the Flemish education policy. Their recognition procedure for refugees and immigrants is stipulated by *The Decree of the Flemish Government on the conditions and procedure for the recognition of foreign study certificates issued in Higher Education*. This Decree determines the following main guidelines for higher education institutions in recognition procedures:

1. Authority in recognition procedures:

The recognition procedure at a university or university college happens internally; they have the authority to issue certificates based on the outcome of the recognition procedure for foreign diploma's. The higher education institution can consult external experts for advice on

foreign diploma's, especially in the case of refugees.

2. *Duration of the application process:*

The application process for foreign diploma's should take no longer than 2 months in case of full equivalence, and 4 months in case of degree equivalence.

3. *Expertise of the department:*

The higher education institution selects experts for the international department based on their specific expertise and their knowledge of education systems in certain countries or regions.

4. *Framework:*

In the recognition procedure, the institution always refers to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), which complies with the General Qualifications Framework (EHEA).

5. *Steps and consequences of the recognition procedure:*

- Formal qualifications: for the recognition of formal qualifications, the institution requires an application form for recognition. The recognition procedure is based on formal documents. For authenticity control the institution can ask for extra documents and an individual interview.
- Informal/non-formal learning: when the institution decides that there is a substantial difference between the foreign diploma and the Flemish education standards, the recognition authority can accept relevant professional experience and other relevant education as a compensation measure in order to recognise the foreign diploma.
- Inadequately documented applications: for refugees or asylum seekers who are not able to show all the requested documents or information from the homeland, there is an adjusted, more flexible recognition procedure. In case the documents don't contain all the necessary information, the institution can use extra documents or an individual interview from the applicant.

All three types of recognitions procedures can lead to either full equivalence, where the foreign diploma is equivalent for the specific specialisation in higher education, or to degree equivalence, where the foreign diploma is equivalent to the corresponding Flemish level of education, more specifically the level of graduate, bachelor, master, or doctor.

For UCLL, the department of Internationalisation has the authority and the expertise for the recognition procedure.

University admission at the undergraduate level is under the supervision of the Greek Ministry of Education, Research, and Religious Affairs. Admission to postgraduate study is coordinated by each school or department that will set the entry standard accordingly. Refugees or asylum seekers do not enjoy any special privileges in terms of VET or HEI admissions and they must take part in exams at the same level as Greek nationals. Moreover, there is no legislation that facilitates the admission of refugees or asylum seekers to universities or vocational education institutions. However, according to national regulations, foreign qualifications held by refugees should be recognised the same way as national degrees and the relevant authorities should facilitate this process. Therefore, a number of departments assist in the recognition of diplomas for both vocational or higher education such as the National Academic Recognition Information Centre.

Programme Erasmus+ Key Action 2 – Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practices; KA202 – Strategic Partnerships for vocational education and training

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Intellectual Output 8 – Exchange of experience with external VET and HEI

(Intellectual Output 10 based on the original Application)

Country Report for the case of Greece regarding the recognition procedures for qualifications held by refugees and migrants, as deriving from the Questionnaires’ input and from the information provided by the responsible bodies.

To begin with, all Universities in Greece are public and free of charge. There are of course many private Colleges and Departments of foreign Universities established in Greece requiring tuition fees, but their graduates do not enjoy quite the same benefits and, in many cases, they have to recognize their Diplomas like those obtained abroad from foreign Institutions.

Although the Universities are centrally regulated by the Greek Government in terms of how they operate etc. they have a degree of autonomy in deciding their curriculum and study programme. However, they do not have authority in students’ admission, especially at the undergraduate level, whether they are Greek natives, migrants or refugees – and this is in fact something that has been under scrutiny during the recent refugee crisis. More specifically, the

State legislation stipulates the education procedures in Greece to a full extent, as admission at the undergraduate level is fully coordinated by the Greek Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs. On the other hand, admission to postgraduate studies is coordinated by each School/Department that sets the entry standards, while still being regulated by the State legislation and based on the recognition of foreign Diplomas by independent bodies as well (like the Greek NARIC).

Therefore, as the Questionnaires we received are from Greek Universities, the responses were not able to identify any insights concerning the recognition procedures at an Institutional level, because they simply do not exist – apart from cases of language learning. In this regard, we have collected the information regarding procedures in Greece for recognition of qualification held by refugees (both in VET and HE) that are presented below:

The Greek education system is under the authority and supervision of the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs.

If you are an asylum seeker, or a recognized refugee, or a beneficiary of subsidiary protection, your minor children may access the national education system under similar conditions as Greek nationals. However, refugees and their children do not enjoy any special provisions if they wish to enter Vocational Education and Training and/or Higher Education Institutions after they have finished secondary education in Greece, and they have to take part in exams. If one has graduated from secondary education in another country, they are treated as other migrants and foreigners; unfortunately, there are no special provisions of law facilitating refugees and asylum seekers to enter Universities in Greece.

In addition, there are several educational programmes for adults organized by State or private agencies, NGOs and other organizations. The General Secretariat of Lifelong Learning of the Ministry of Education is the responsible authority for most of the educational programmes for adults that offer, among others, Greek language courses for refugees and migrants.

Are Diplomas from other countries recognized in Greece?

Consequently, if you are a recognized refugee or beneficiary of subsidiary protection, you are treated in the same way as Greek nationals in relation to recognition of foreign Diplomas, certificates and evidence of formal qualifications. If you cannot provide evidence of your qualifications, the relevant Greek authorities should facilitate the process; however, procedures taking into account the specific situation of refugees are not yet in place. If you are an asylum seeker, you may be able to have your Diploma or Certificate recognized, however

you will need to fulfil additional requirements. Accordingly, the following State bodies facilitate the recognition of Diplomas:

- The **Department of Studies, Programmes and Scholar Issues** of the Ministry of Education, concerning the recognition of titles of Primary and Secondary education.
- The **National Organization for the Accreditation of Qualifications and Professional Orientation** (EOPPEP), concerning Vocational Education and Training. EOPPEP operates under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs and has derived from the amalgamation of three national bodies, all under the supervision of the same Ministry: the National Centre for the Accreditation of Lifelong Learning Providers (EKEPIS), the National Organization for the Certification of Qualifications (EOPP) and the National Centre for Vocational Guidance (EKEP). Its mission is geared towards linking VET with labour market needs, upgrading people's occupational qualifications, reinforcing their employment perspectives and strengthening social cohesion. Therefore, EOPPEP develops and implements comprehensive national systems for the accreditation of non-formal & informal learning and provides scientific and technical support in designing and implementing the vocational guidance national policy, as well as the provision of such services in Greece.
- The **National Academic Recognition Information Center** (DOATAP), concerning Higher Education. DOATAP, as the Greek NARIC, is an organization also supervised by the Greek Ministry of Education Research and Religious Affairs. It is responsible for the recognition of University or technological degrees that are awarded by foreign Higher Education Institutions. DOATAP is also responsible for providing information about educational systems and accreditation of Institutions in Greece and abroad.

At an institutional level, the Icelandic validation process depends on the subject or trade in question. For academic or practical careers, it is required that the individual can showcase the required knowledge and skills in order to pass the exams. However, even if they have diplomas showing their skills, lack of knowledge of the Icelandic system can be a strong barrier. For minor children of refugees there are several programs that can assist with language or integration courses. However, this will depend upon availability and is subject to conditions such as regional necessity.

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Country Report for the case of Iceland regarding the recognition procedures for qualifications held by refugees and migrants, as deriving from the Questionnaires’ input and from the information provided by the responsible bodies.

The first input will be related to University System in Iceland. Iceland have Universities that are both Public and Private. All University have tuitions that vary based on the nature of the studies and the topics. As expected, the Public Universities are cheaper than Private ones. Public University Tuitions start basically at 75.000 ISK per year, and there might be some additional small fees per subject (like for example for medical studies). On the other hand, Private Universities start at 300.000 ISK per semester and rise up depending on the topic. Even though that Public Universities are not expensive they are recognized as more reliable related to the Private ones. Public Universities in Iceland, which are 3 in total, follow the Scandinavian Evaluation System; while Private ones (which are also 3 in total), follow mostly the Academic System of UK or USA.

Although the Universities are centrally regulated by the same laws and they are mastered by the Icelandic Government in terms of how they operate etc. They follow the same basic rules and have the same the level of autonomy (Dean, Professors, Board of Management etc. decide

for the institute). The curriculum and study program should be finally approved by the Ministry of Education. However, the Ministry they do not have authority in students' admission.

The admission on the Universities is done with the same way, regardless they are natives, migrants or refugees – if they speak Icelandic, and have it certified accordingly. The basic difference up to now was that only the Citizens could get a Study Loan that would cover tuitions and the rest of the expenses. Though from 2019 Refugees without Citizenship can also apply and get the Study Loan. The Migrants and Immigrants can't apply for the Student's Loan.

The admission in the Universities occurs with two ways and depends on the Subject. Traditional demanding studies like Medical Studies, Law etc. need an Admission Test that is developed per topic and consists of both typical knowledge as well as general knowledge. Other topics you can follow by just registering to the University Secretariat.

Therefore, as the Questionnaires we received are from Icelandic Stakeholders and University Professionals. During the procedure we identified the procedure for recognition of the institutional Level. The identification comes with practical exams, for example if you are a Dentist you need to showcase that you have the knowledge. As far as you pass the practical exam and you have certified the Icelandic language you also get your degree validated. The procedure is finalized by a committee. If the subject is not that practical, you might be asked to attend some additional lectures and pass some exams (for example sociologist).

The Icelandic validation system of learning is a systematic process whereby all knowledge and competencies an individual has gained through various activities.

Such as work experience, work related learning, non-formal and informal learning, social activities and family life, these are formally documented and validated.

Icelandic Qualification Framework

Icelandic Qualification Framework (ISQF)	Descriptors of the Icelandic Qualification Framework	European Qualification Framework (EQF)
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has advanced knowledge of theories, research and the latest developments in a scientific field. • Can conduct and manage research with confidence in order to develop new knowledge. • Can work independently, show initiative and be responsible for complex theoretical tasks and pass on knowledge to others. 	8
6.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has obtained knowledge through research and has a good understanding of theoretical challenges and arguments and is able to contextualise the latest knowledge. • Can understand complex problems and use appropriate methods to conduct smaller research projects. • Can initiate and lead new projects, evaluate the most suitable approaches, and be responsible for their own work and that of a team. 	7
6.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has knowledge and understanding of theoretical challenges and arguments and is able to contextualise the latest knowledge. • Can apply the methods of the relevant field/profession to formulate, develop and solve problems. • Can initiate and lead new projects and be responsible for their own work and that of a team. 	
5.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has an understanding of and insight into major theoretical concepts and theories and is familiar with the latest knowledge within a specific field. • Can apply critical theoretical and/or professional analysis when solving problems and evaluate the results independently. • Can work independently in an organised manner, make and carry out plans and supervise teamwork. 	6
5.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has knowledge of selected theories and theoretical concepts and has insights into the relevant field in a broader context. • Can develop and manage projects using the techniques relevant to the field/profession. • Can show initiative and work independently in addition to solving problems as part of a team. 	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has specialised knowledge useful for supervision and management in a specific field of work and/or further studies. • Can organise work procedures, apply the appropriate techniques and develop working methods in a responsible way. • Can give guidance and professional training, review own and others' performance and be responsible for the utilisation of the relevant occupation in cross-disciplinary cooperation. 	5
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has specialised knowledge in a specific field of work and/or as a preparation for further studies. • Can demonstrate professionalism, show initiative, organise tasks and evaluate own work. • Can make use of specialised knowledge for improvements, give professional advice and co-operate in cross-disciplinary activities. 	4
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has basic knowledge of work procedures and concepts useful in work and/or study. • Can solve problems by applying the appropriate work methods, tools and information. • Can work as a part of a team, initiate interaction and be responsible for well-defined tasks. 	3
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the basic knowledge for work and/or as a preparation for further studies. • Has the basic skills required to carry out simple tasks during studies and/or at work. • Can work under guidance with some independence on well-defined tasks. 	1-2

Unfortunately, the recognition of qualification held by refugees (both in VET and HE) are not generally accepted. Apart from showcasing that you obtain the knowledge, even if you have some diplomas approving that, recognition is impossible without taking lessons in the Icelandic System.

The Icelandic education system in every level is under the authority and supervision of the Ministry of Culture and Education.

If you are an asylum seeker, or a recognized refugee, or a beneficiary of subsidiary protection, your minor children may access the national education system under similar conditions as Icelandic nationals. The basic problem is the language integration. For kids with refugee status most likely they will get a language-aid. Language-aid is a companion, but comes upon availability in the Refugee's language, region and school.

If one has graduated from secondary education in another third country, they are treated as other migrants and foreigners; they need to go to High School again at least one year, and if the committee evaluates as such, even more years, before accessing University level.

There is no centralised, national framework for validation of degrees in Sweden. Rather, validation is performed on a regional level and every institution has their own responsibility over the process and will employ their own strategies. For validation in Higher Education, the labour market, or the third sector, individuals are usually assisted by career and guidance counsellors who help supervise the process. Moreover, if an individual wishes to pursue a degree or a career in a certain subject or trade, teachers or professions within that sector will help validate the skills or knowledge that is needed.

Intellectual Output 8 – Exchange of experience with external VET and HEI

(Intellectual Output 10 based on the original application)

National delegation for validation

National delegation for validation 2015-2019 “*Valideringsdelegationen 2015-2019*” consisting of 15 stakeholders that follows, supports and pushes for a regulated work to establish validation on both regional and national level in Sweden. They will also focus on forming an overarching national strategy on validation.

Every national agency concerning validation is autonomous and carries their own responsibilities. The implementation of validation is decentralised at national and regional level. Validation has been developed bottom-up.

The Budget Bill of 2016 was directed to improve the possibilities for validating real competences in HE. Everybody who wants their actual competences assessed for admission or for credits should have that opportunity. The Swedish Council for HE is appointed to coordinate and support validation within the sector.

VPL in Higher Education

There is no regulated framework for validation. Validation can be used to acquire credits towards both full and partial qualification. In Sweden, validation practitioners include diverse types of actors in charge of different stages of the process. Career and guidance counsellors are commonly major practitioners in the phase prior to the validation process in order to identify the purpose of validation for the individual and to follow up the process at different stages. In order to be able to assess the individual’s Real competences (reell kompetens) knowledge, skills or competences in a certain trade or subject, more in-depth knowledge in

that specific area is needed. In this stage of a validation process adequate teachers or professionals within that specific sector manage the process.

Since the increase of asylum seekers, the main focus lays on developing better validation methods to assess their prior learning.

Validation in the Labour Market

The focus of validation is nowadays more on issues regarding the labour market. Due to the increase of incoming asylum seekers, validation of immigrants' prior learning and knowledge had become a priority. There is a "fast-track" (*snabbspår*) that matches immigrants with appropriate experiences to occupations with a strong demand. Validation is used as a tool to pave way to the labour market in order to prevent they become counter-productive.

Validation in the Third Sector

Validation is performed and supported through Swedish 'folkbildning' (liberal/civic adult education for adults), which is considered to be part of the third sector. It has largely focused on validation of generic skills and competences. 'Folkbildning' is a parallel educational pathway to the formal system, with strong connections to various NGOs covering most of civil society.

Funding of VPL

The Budget Bill of 2015 provided by the Swedish government proposed 141 million SEK to intensify validation. The biggest part of these extra budgets is assigned to reduce waiting and processing times for assessment and recognition of foreign educational qualifications.

(Source: <https://vince.eucen.eu/validation-in-europe/sweden/>)

The 154 folk high schools and the ten national study organisations throughout the country make up an informal educational system reaching millions of people. Around 30% of the participants in courses organised by the folk high schools were born outside of Sweden and 3,000 refugees that recently received their permanent residence permit are participating in courses introducing them to the Swedish language, society and the labour market.

Agreement and questionnaire

We managed to collect eleven signatures for the agreement between public and private professional training organizations, HEIs and Welkom network. Eight of the organisations are

non-formal study organizations, two are providers of Higher Vocational Secondary Education – in farming and sustainable development (Skillebyholms) and in trade, law and human relations (Påhlmans handelsinstitut) respectively. One is a provider of Higher General Secondary Education in Swedish for academics (SIFA).

Out of those eleven we only had four responders to the questionnaire (Studiefrämjandet, Sensus, ABF and SIFA). Since Medborgarskolan also provide Swedish courses for the target group we have also answered the questionnaire, however not signed the agreement.

Four of the responders are non-formal education providers and one is a provider of Higher General Secondary Education in Swedish for academics (SIFA). They are all supervised by the state or the municipality. Three organizations provide Swedish courses.

Only two responders (SENSUS and Medborgarskolan) could answer thoroughly to the questions concerning asylum seekers. SENSUS receive approx. 5,000 applications from asylum seekers every year nationwide, while Medborgarskolan receives approx. 400 applications. All applicants are recognized, even if the applications are insufficient or if some documents are non-verifiable. Normally the process takes 2–3 weeks. As for SENSUS, the organization independently validates the applicants, and there are many employees taking part in the process. All persons involved have gone through the necessary education in order to do so and the organization rates themselves as qualified in this field.

Medborgarskolan independently validates the applicants as well, but they don't consider themselves to have enough information and expertise to do so. The teachers validating the applicants haven't gone through a certain education, so the validating process involves only interviews and oral examination to establish their language skills. Thereafter they are placed in a class at their level.

SIFA does not validate the competences of the participants in their language courses, as this has already been done when they come to the school. They do however grade the students' knowledge after each course, according to the national proficiency levels provided by the National Agency of Education.

While Italian refugees should enjoy the same educational prospects as native Italians, lack of government support implies that strong barriers exist between the two. However, a number of NGO's and educational institutions such as **CIMEA** do provide certain services to refugees such as language courses, statements of comparability or translation of qualifications. The only Nationwide system used to achieve recognition of a qualification is known as a **Declaration of Value** and the application procedure is largely left to the discretion of the applicant without much assistance.

Intellectual Output 8 – Exchange of experience with external VET and HEI

Country Report for the country of Italy regarding the recognition procedures for the qualifications and diplomas held by refugees or migrants based on information gathered from the responsible bodies.

Italian legislation states that all children, national or foreign, are entitled to take part in the educational system until the age of 16. Moreover, under international reception conditions, foreign children living in Italy are subjected to compulsory education and are entitled to the same level of services as native Italians. In terms of higher education, Italy has a number of universities that are both public and private. The Italian Higher Education System includes universities, The Higher Education for Fine Arts, Music, and Dance Sector, and Higher Technical Institutes. International students or individuals with a foreign qualification must show that they have a relevant secondary education in their home country in order to enter into higher education in Italy.

Recognised refugees entitled to international protection and asylum seekers with a valid residence permit have the same legal right to seek education and enter the labour market as Italian nationals. However, many refugees with valid foreign degrees face practical difficulties entering academia or the labor force due to lack of government support or language barriers preventing them from fully integrating in Italian society. Accordingly, there are a number of NGO's, private and public facilities, and other educational organisations that help facilitate the process and provide services to refugees such as translation of qualifications or Italian language courses that will help ease the transition.

How are academic diplomas and/or qualifications from other countries recognised

nationally in Italy?

If you are a recognized refugee and entitled to international protection or a beneficiary of subsidiary protection, you have the same rights as Italian nationals to receive legal recognition of your foreign qualifications, certificates, and diplomas. Refugees currently residing in Italy are entitled to having the legitimacy and authenticity of their foreign qualifications recognised by the **Italian Diplomatic Representative Offices**. In order to gain recognition of an academic or vocational qualification awarded by a foreign establishment, the individual must apply for A **Declaration of value** (Dichiarazione di valore in loco). This is an official document written in Italian which certifies that a foreign secondary school qualification is authentic and legitimate under Italian legislation, therefore entitling the individual to apply for vocational or higher education. However, while the document does function as an informative translation of the relevant qualification, the ultimate decision on whether to admit an individual to higher education lies in the hands of the Italian universities who will assess the quality of the qualification on a case-to case basis. It is also important to highlight that some refugees may face difficulties in obtaining the document due to language barriers, living in a remote location, or payment of fees.

The **Dichiarazione di valore in loco** provides the following information:

- **The legal status** and nature of the relevant educational establishment issuing the qualification.
- **The value** of the qualification in the home country.
- **The requirements** for access to the study that resulted in the qualification, the duration of the course, and any other information deemed useful.

In addition to the **Dichiarazione di valore in loco**, the Centro Informazioni Mobilità Equivalenze Accademiche(CIMEA) provides its own services to individuals who seeks recognition of their foreign qualifications. Through the implementation of the Credential Information Service (CIS), CIMEA offers all foreign qualification holders a Statement of Comparability for their university or secondary education qualifications. However, this recognition does not guarantee any formal recognition of the foreign degree within the wider framework of a national system and does not guarantee that the university will accept the application.

CONCLUSION

It is fundamental to know the purpose and the objective for which a recognition is requested by regarding system before beginning any evaluation procedure, taking into account the different existing procedures in country's legislation and the different bodies responsible for such implementations.

All countries, shall develop procedures to assess whether refugees and displaced persons fulfil the relevant requirements for access to higher education or to employment activities, even in cases in which the qualifications cannot be proven through documentary evidence; shall provide information on the institutions and programmes they consider as belonging to their higher education systems; shall appoint a national information centre, one important task of which is to offer advice on the recognition of foreign qualifications to students, graduates, employers, higher education institutions and other interested parties or persons. and all countries shall encourage their higher education institutions to issue the Diploma Supplement to their students in order to facilitate recognition.

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