

**EQUAM-LA STUDY VISIT, MARCH 2021**  
MARIA KELO, DIRECTOR, ENQA

# **RECOGNITION TOOLS AND PRACTICES IN THE EHEA**

**... AND CONNECTION TO QA**

**enqa.**

# THE BOLOGNA PROCESS AND THE EHEA

- Intergovernmental reform process, since 1999 (Bologna Declaration)
- Now: 49 signatories accross the European continent
- Three key commitments since 2018, all closely linked:
  - Quality assurance
  - Qualifications frameworks and the use of ECTS
  - Recognition
- Additional policy agendas: academic values, the social dimension of HE, innovation in teachning and learning, global dialogue...

# FRAMEWORK FOR RECOGNITION

- **The Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region**
  - developed by the Council of Europe and UNESCO
  - adopted by national representatives meeting in Lisbon in April 1997 → the “Lisbon recognition convention”
  - **NB.** Pre-dates the Bologna Process but is now one of its key commitments
  - since 1997 ratified by most European countries (but not fully implemented)
  - to facilitate fair recognition
  - <http://conventions.coe.int> (ETS 165)

## KEY PRINCIPLES

- adequate **access to an assessment** of qualifications in another country in a fair manner (including: without any type of discrimination) and within reasonable timelines
- recognition unless **substantial differences** are proven
- if negative decision, the **burden of proof is with the body undertaking the assessment**
- legislation or guidelines encourage **comparing of learning outcomes rather than programme contents**
- Applicant has a **right to appeal** (and procedures for that are in place)
- Recognition for:
  - a. **access to further studies** on the same conditions as “locals”;
  - b. the **use of an academic title**, subject to the laws and regulations of the country
  - c. possibly also facilitates access to the **labour market**

# TOOLS AND STRUCTURES

- **National Information Centres** on Academic Mobility and Recognition (and the ENIC-NARIC network)
  - Facilitate access to authoritative and accurate **information** on the HE system and qualifications **of the country in which it is located**;
  - facilitate access to **information** on the higher education systems and qualifications **of the other Parties**;
  - give advice or information on recognition matters and assessment of qualifications, in accordance with national laws and regulations to students, graduates, employers, HEIs, and others
  - **NB: recognition remains in most cases decentralised (competence of the HEIs)**
- **Diploma Supplement**
  - an instrument developed jointly by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO
  - aims to **describe the qualification in an easily understandable way** and relating it to the higher education system within which it was issued
  - a **standardised description** of the nature, level, content and status of the studies completed by its holder.
  - **links to QFs, ECTS and QA**

## HOW WELL ARE WE DOING?

- Repeated commitment of minister to the LRC since 2003, **still not fully implemented** or legislation amended
- Since 2012 (Bucharest): ambition of “automatic recognition”:
  - national legislation reviewed to ensure that the principles of LRC are respected;
  - HEIs receive clear guidance on implementing the principles of the LRC;
  - recognition decisions are taken within 4 months
  - appeals procedures are in place, with clear and reasonable time limits
  - recognition practice in HEI is monitored by external quality assurance (QA)

Now: 10 countries, for all EHEA, other 16 for some countries cover all these... So still a long way to go

# RECOGNITION OF PRIOR, INFORMAL AND NON-FORMAL LEARNING

## Definitions:

- **Recognition of Prior Learning – RPL (non-formal and informal):** An assessment process that assesses the individual's non-formal and informal learning to determine the extent to which that individual has achieved the required learning or competency outcomes; May also be referred to as: Accreditation of prior learning; Validation of informal/non formal learning.

Source: UNEVOC/NCVER 2009, Global.

- **Non-formal learning** is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective.
- **Informal learning** results from daily activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support. Informal learning is in most cases unintentional from the learner's perspective.

Source: Terminology of European education and training policy- a selection of 130 key terms. Second edition. CEDEFOP, 2014.

# RPL IN THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

- Became important in the Bologna Process in 2005 when mentioned as one of the important goals in the **Bergen Communiqué**:

*“We will work with higher education institutions and others to **improve recognition of prior learning** including, where possible, non-formal and informal learning for access to, and as elements in, higher education programmes”*

- Set as a commitment in the **Yerevan Communiqué in 2015**:

*“to **remove obstacles to the recognition of prior learning** for the purposes of providing access to higher education programmes and facilitating the award of qualifications on the basis of prior learning, as well as encouraging **higher education institutions to improve their capacity to recognize prior learning**”*

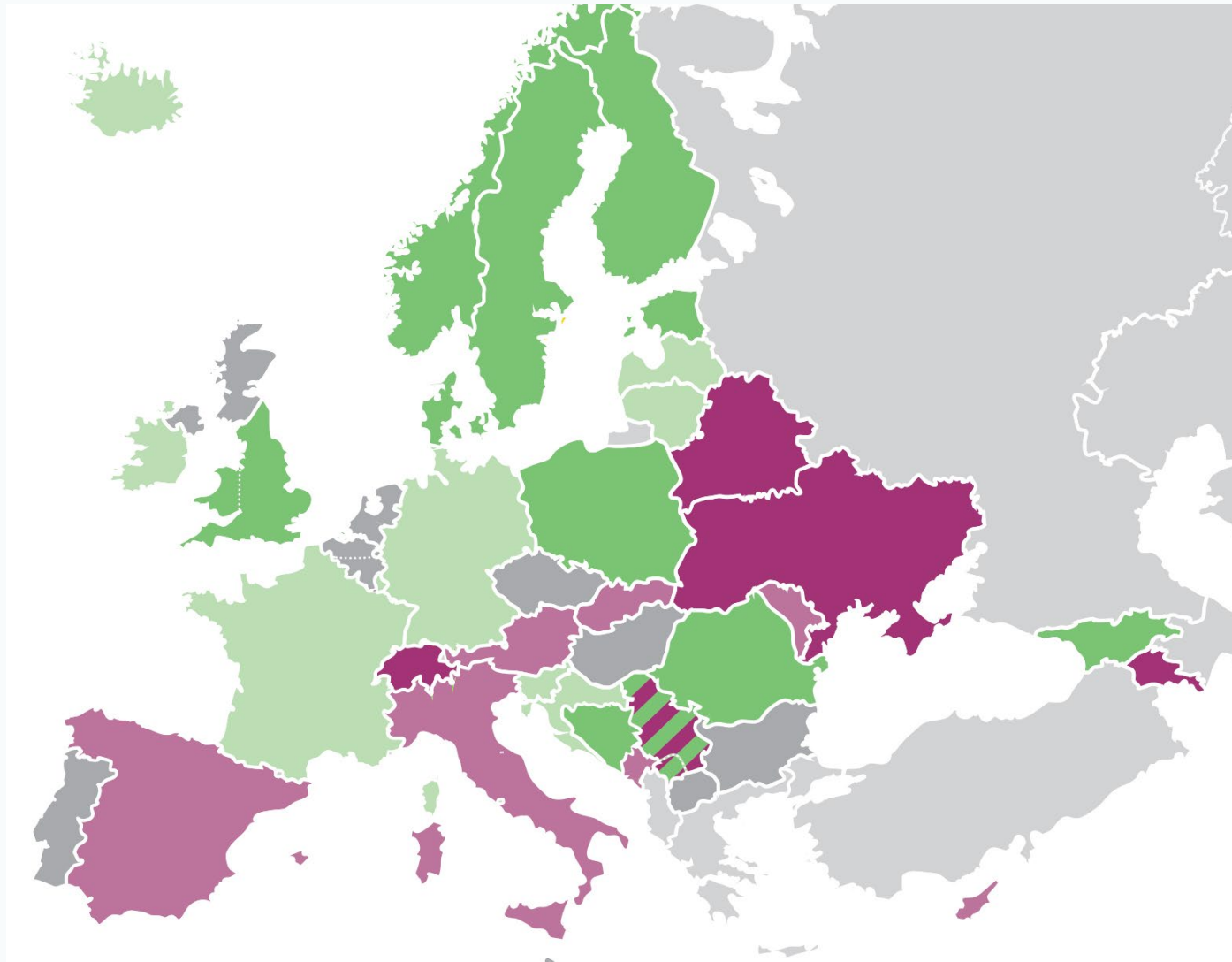
*“to review national qualifications frameworks, with a view to ensuring that learning paths within the framework provide adequately for the recognition of prior learning”*

- **Paris Communiqué (2018)**, the ministers:

*“urge the **adoption of transparent procedures** for the recognition of qualifications, prior learning and study periods, supported by interoperable digital solutions”.*



# WHERE IS RPL POSSIBLE IN EUROPE?

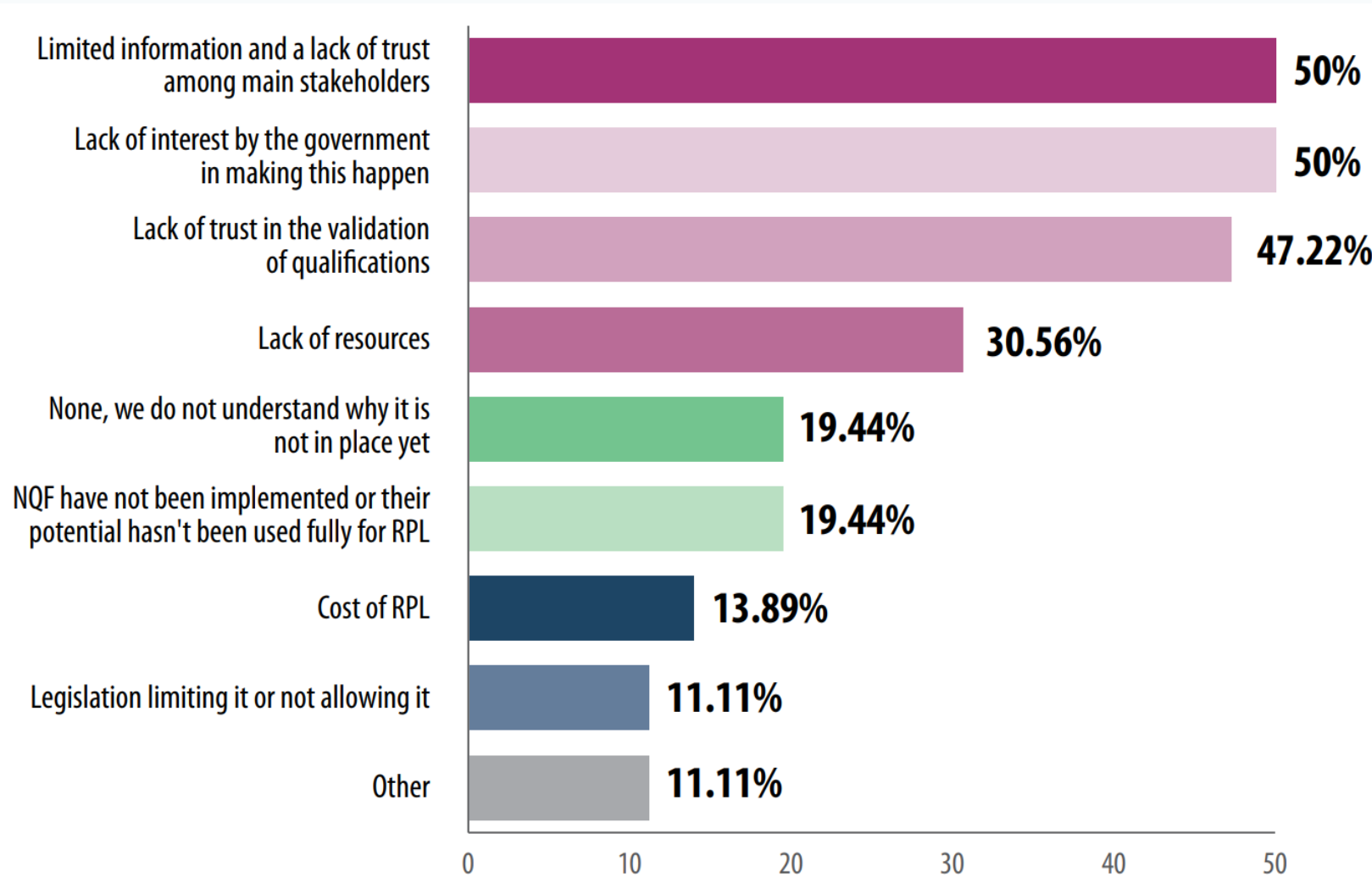


- No information available
- No, no work has been done in order to enable RPL
- No, not yet, but some initiatives are being developed
- Yes, there are some initiatives
- Yes, there are established systems

Source: Bologna With Student Eye 2020, The European Students' Union, (ESU) 2020

# WHAT ARE THE MAIN BARRIERS FOR RPL?

According to National Unions of Students



Source: Bologna With Student Eye 2020, The European Students' Union (ESU), 2020

## 1.4 STUDENT ADMISSION, PROGRESSION, RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION

### STANDARD:

Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student "life cycle", e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.

### GUIDELINES:

Providing conditions and support that are necessary for students to make progress in their academic career is in the best interest of the individual students, programmes, institutions and systems. It is vital to have fit-for-purpose admission, recognition and completion procedures, particularly when students are mobile within and across higher education systems.

It is important that access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner. Induction to the institution and the programme is provided.

Institutions need to put in place both processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression.

Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components for ensuring the students' progress in their studies, while promoting mobility. Appropriate recognition procedures rely on

- institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention;
- cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the country.

Graduation represents the culmination of the students' period of study. Students need to receive documentation explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed.

## CONNECTION TO QA

- all types of recognition included in the ESG, basis for QA in the EHEA
- QA agencies have a **considerable actual and potential impact** over recognition of qualifications (domestic/foreign) through several activities (core activities, facilitation, disciplinary networks, QA abroad)
- considerable room for improvement regarding **collaboration between QA agencies and ENIC-NARIC bodies**
- QA agency's role on **increasing transparency of institutional recognition practices** and outcomes
- **raise awareness at the system level** on the recognition issues and the LRC (collaborate with governments and other stakeholders to set clear criteria and indicators)
- A set of **common guidelines** regarding IQA/EQA of institutional recognition practices:  
[https://www.skvc.lt/uploads/documents/files/Kita\\_infromacija/Leidiniai/LIREQA\\_recommendations\\_final\\_version\\_web.pdf](https://www.skvc.lt/uploads/documents/files/Kita_infromacija/Leidiniai/LIREQA_recommendations_final_version_web.pdf)





THANK  
YOU

enqa.