



ENIC NETWORK (COUNCIL OF EUROPE/UNESCO)  
NARIC NETWORK (EUROPEAN COMMISSION)

CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE IN THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION ON RECOGNITION

Adopted by the ENIC and NARIC Networks

Strasbourg, 7 – 8 June 2004

Information on recognition

Information is of key importance in making the European Higher Education Area a reality by 2010, so that students and those who already hold higher education qualifications may move as freely as possible within as much of Europe as possible. At the same time, information on recognition is equally important in ensuring acceptance of qualifications from European countries in other areas of the world as well as fair recognition of qualifications from other regions in Europe. Information on recognition is also of crucial importance in a number of other contexts, including for further study within the European Region or outside it, for access to regulated professions and for employment in the non-regulated parts of the labour market.

The main problem facing credential evaluators and others called upon to assess or otherwise make use of foreign qualifications is not lack of information per se, but lack of authoritative, adequate, relevant, well targeted and easily available information.

A key function of the ENICs/NARICs is to provide accurate, reliable, authoritative and easily accessible information on their own and foreign higher education systems and on the recognition of qualifications.

The present Code of Good Practice aims to offer guidance to national information centres as well as to the ENIC and NARIC Networks in fulfilling this important task. It also aims to indicate to higher education policy makers and other interested parties what might be expected of ENICs/NARICs and the two Networks as a whole. The Code should be read in conjunction with the report on information strategies elaborated by a Working party appointed for this purpose [and adopted by the ENIC and NARIC Networks on 8 June 2004].

The role of national information centres

The national centres should be the principal providers of authoritative information on recognition, in particular on:

- the higher education systems and qualifications of the country in which they are located;
- the recognition of foreign qualifications in the country in which they are located;
- foreign education systems, to enquirers in the country for which they are responsible;

The national information centres should either be in a position to answer enquiries ("one stop") or refer the enquirer to the appropriate body that could provide an authoritative answer ("two stop").

At international level, the national information centres should represent their country in the ENIC and NARIC Networks.

Terminology

In providing information, ENICs and NARICs should explain their use of specialized terminology and define technical terms that are important in the context of the information provided and/or differs significantly from common international use of these terms.

Standards of information provision

National centres should consistently aim to provide information that is of high quality, i.e. both accurate, adequate and relevant to the user.

In general terms, the information provided by national centres should:

- be meaningful to the users and respond to their needs;
- recognize that different users or user groups have different information needs;
- seek to provide information that is relevant to each group without overburdening them with irrelevant information;
- be accessible in terms of content, language and style (i.e., *inter alia*, avoid unnecessary complications or specialized language);
- be accurate (i.e., *inter alia*, be factually correct and also avoid oversimplification – implying that a balance needs to be struck between accessibility and accuracy);
- originate from –and as far as possible be provided by – the competent authority closest to the source of information (the subsidiarity principle - e.g. information on a given education system should be provided by the authority competent for that system);
- be up to date.

Target groups

Each national information centre should give careful consideration to the main target groups for its activities and, as far as possible, adapt the information it provides to the needs of the individual target group.

While allowance should be made for the diversity of national situations, the key target groups are likely to include:

- individual holders of qualifications;
- public authorities (typically – but not limited to – Ministries responsible for higher education);
- quality assurance agencies;
- higher education institutions and bodies, such as Rectors' conferences or

similar structures

- mobility and exchange agencies;
- employers;
- professional organizations;
- other ENICs/NARICs.

### **Type of information**

National information centres should be in a position to provide information on both higher education systems and qualifications frameworks and on the status of individual institutions, programme and qualifications.

Within each broad category of information, national centres should seek to identify the precise information that is most likely to be of interest to each of the main target groups.

### **Information dissemination**

Information centres should use a variety of means to provide information to various target groups. Information should be provided by all appropriate means, including:

- information technologies, in accordance with internationally accepted standards;
- printed information sheets, leaflets and booklets;
- interviews and articles in appropriate journals, newspapers and other media;
- other means of promotion, as appropriate.

Information centres should, as far as possible, provide standardized information adapted to the needs of specific target groups. This information should be provided in the appropriate national language(s) as well as in at least one widely spoken foreign language.

In addition to written information provided electronically or in printed form, national information centres should seek direct contact with the main stakeholders through participation in relevant fairs and similar events as well as by organizing information meetings and seminars for relevant target groups.

In elaborating information material, national centres should make full use of the material elaborated by the ENIC and NARIC Network, and the web sites of individual national centres should provide adequate links to the ENIC/NARIC web site.

In particular, national information centres should post or provide prominent links to the overview of "Frequently Asked Questions" and the overview of "Questions Every Student Should Ask of Higher Education Providers" provided through the ENIC/NARIC Web site and, where relevant, provide translated and/or adapted versions of these documents

### **Networking and information exchange**

National information centres should seek to establish regular contacts with their main organized target groups, such as Ministries, higher education institutions, student organizations, employers and their organizations, quality assurance agencies, student loan and grant authorities, immigration authorities and others. Where pertinent, the national centres should seek to establish networks of stakeholders and cooperation partners for regular exchange of information.

### **The ENIC and NARIC Networks**

The ENIC and NARIC Networks should provide the most important forum for the exchange of information on the recognition of qualifications within the European Region. Information should be exchanged through the formal meetings of the Networks, through the means of communication established within the Networks – in particular the ENIC/NARIC Web site and list server – and through bilateral contacts between member centres.

The ENIC and NARIC Networks should seek to support the national centres in their provision of information within their particular context, especially by developing and providing information of relevance to the Networks as a whole and by encouraging the exchange of competence and examples of good practice among national centres.