

# The Lisbon Recognition Convention

The **Lisbon Recognition Convention** is an international convention of the Council of Europe elaborated together with the UNESCO. The Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region was developed by the Council of Europe and UNESCO and adopted by national representatives meeting in Lisbon on 8 - 11 April 1997.

Among the main points of the Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention are the following:

- Holders of qualifications issued in one country shall have adequate access to an assessment of these qualifications in another country.
- No discrimination shall be made in this respect on any ground such as the applicant's gender, race, colour, disability, language, religion, political opinion, national, ethnic or social origin.
- Each country shall recognise qualifications – whether for access to higher education, for periods of study or for higher education degrees – as similar to the corresponding qualifications in its own system unless it can show that there are substantial differences between its own qualifications and the qualifications for which recognition is sought.
- Recognition of a higher education qualification issued in another country shall have one or more of the following consequences:
  - access to further higher education studies, including relevant examinations and preparations for the doctorate, on the same conditions as candidates from the country in which recognition is sought;
  - The use of an academic title, subject to the laws and regulations of the country in which recognition is sought;
  - In addition, recognition may facilitate access to the labour market.
- 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.
- All countries shall provide information on the institutions and programmes they consider as belonging to their higher education systems.
- All countries 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.
- All countries shall encourage their higher education institutions to issue the Diploma Supplement to their students in order to facilitate recognition. The Diploma Supplement is an instrument developed jointly by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO that aims to describe the qualification in an easily understandable way and relating it to the higher education system within which it was issued.

## New Zealand as signatory to the Lisbon Treaty

New Zealand has a common educational heritage with many European countries, and there is significant mobility of students, staff and workers between New Zealand and Europe. In order to facilitate this movement, and the mutual recognition of qualifications, New Zealand formally joined the Lisbon Recognition Convention in February 2008.

Under the Lisbon Recognition Convention, New Zealand is also obliged to promote a Diploma Supplement (Tertiary Education Qualification Statement), which is a document that provides tailored information to international audiences to help them understand and recognise New Zealand qualifications.

