

The ECA Methodology for Mutual Recognition

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european consortium for accreditation

Mutual recognition is primary aim of ECA

ECA Agreement of Cooperation 2003:

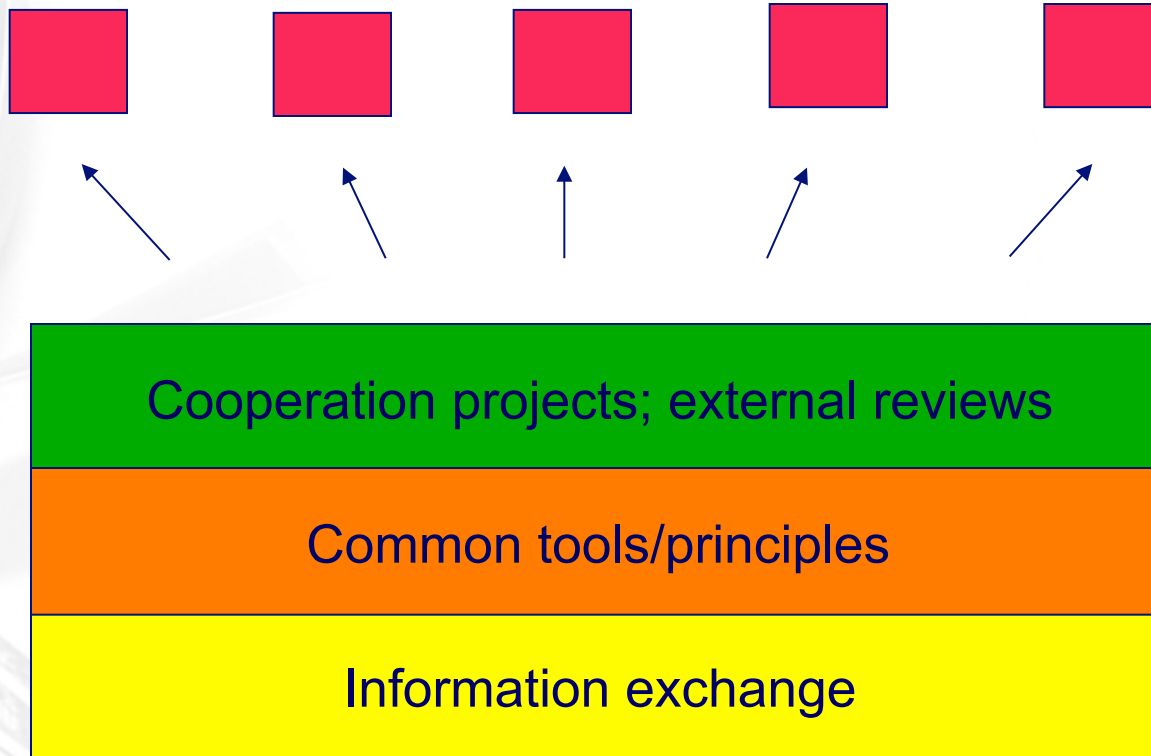
„The ultimate aim of the consortium is to achieve mutual recognition of accreditation decisions among the participating countries before the end of 2007“

Bergen Communiqué 2005:

„We underline the importance of cooperation between nationally recognised agencies with a view to enhancing the mutual recognition of accreditation or quality assurance decisions“.

Trust-building process

Mutual Recognition Agreements



ECA measures to foster mutual recognition

- “Subsidiarity”-principle
 - Respect for national competencies & legal frameworks
 - Co-operate across borders where possible
- External QA which takes into account:
 - National qualifications framework
 - Learning outcomes
- Transparent publication of results of external QA procedures (incl. learning outcomes)
 - National database:
register of accredited programmes and/or institutions
 - European register: www.grossroads.eu





Bilateral Agreements on MR (2007)

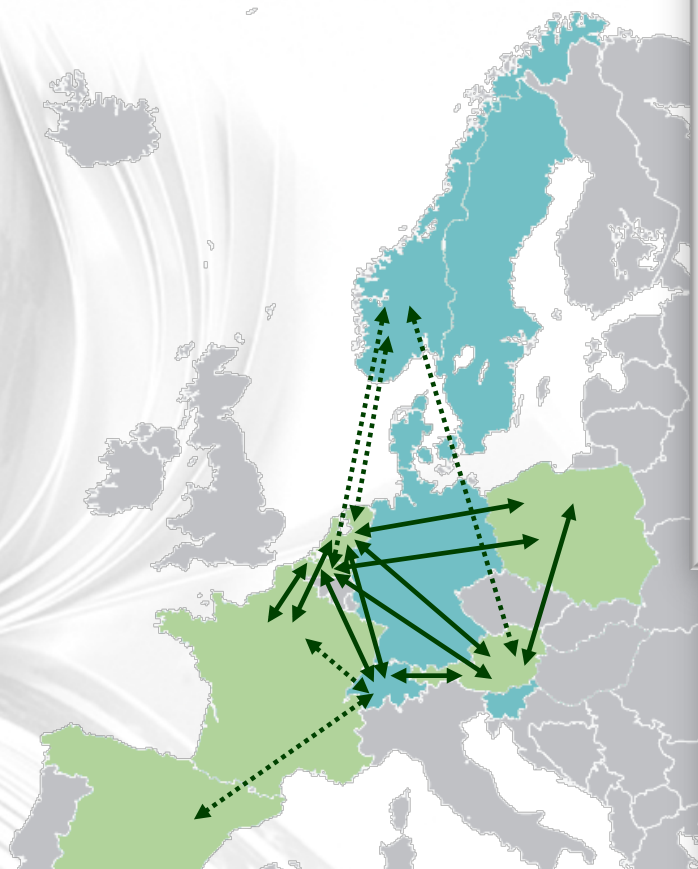
“The signing accreditation organisations agree to regard their accreditation procedures, standards and results as free of significant differences and confirm that within their competences they accept the results/decisions of the procedures of the other signing accreditation organisation”

RESULTS OF THIS COOPERATION:

- Code of good practice (2004)
- Principles for the selection of experts (2005)
- Principles for accreditation procedures regarding joint programmes (2007)
- **Bilateral mutual recognition of accreditation agreements (2007)**
- Grossroads.eu (2008)
- Principles regarding learning outcomes in accreditation procedures (2009)
- **Multilateral agreement regarding joint programmes (2010)**

PARTICIPANTS:

-  ECA Partners (& one observer)
-  Multilateral agreement re. joint programmes
-  Mutual recognition agreements 2007
-  Mutual recognition agreements 2010-2011



Joint declaration regarding the automatic recognition of qualifications

Aim: if preconditions are met, degrees awarded by accredited institutions and/or accredited programmes should be automatically accepted in the countries concerned



Multilateral MR agreement for joint programmes

- Mutual recognition particularly useful for joint programmes
- MULTRA (2010):
*“The signing accreditation organisations agree to apply the ECA principles for accreditation procedures regarding joint programmes;
and confirm that within their competences they accept the results of the accreditation procedures of the other signing accreditation organisations when accrediting joint programmes”*

Multilateral MR agreement for joint programmes

- Signing MULTRA possible after external review of agency (ESG/ECA Code/INQAAHE GGP,...) and observation of procedure
- MULTRA signed by agencies in Austria, Denmark, France, Netherlands and Flanders, Poland, Spain
- PLUS: Germany, Colombia!
- More agencies/countries planned
- If agency is not (yet) part of MULTRA: possibility of single procedure (1 panel, 1 report, multiple decisions):
 - JOQAR pilots
 - European coordination point for joint programmes

accreditation

What is automatic recognition?

- Recognition of qualifications: not to be confused with recognition of QA decisions (e.g. EQAR registered agencies allowed to operate in other countries or assessing joint programmes)
- Bucharest: “to work together towards the automatic recognition of comparable academic degrees”
- “Support the work of a pathfinder group of countries exploring ways to achieve automatic recognition of comparable degrees”
- Negative connotation in some countries (automatic recognition agreements from Soviet times)

accreditation

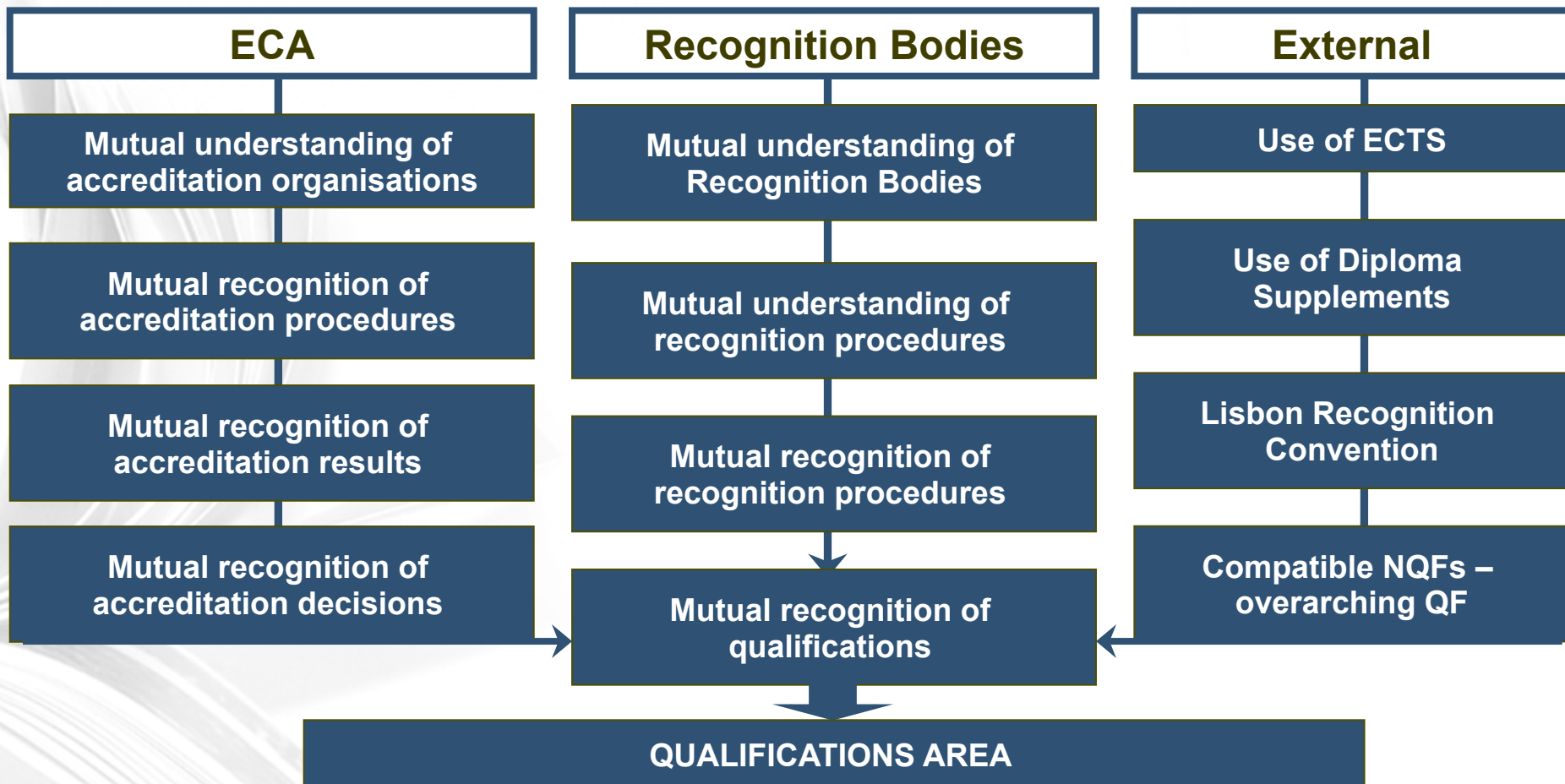
What is automatic recognition?

- In Joint declaration ENIC-NARICs and ECA:
 - “recognition without invoking the substantial differences provision under the Lisbon Recognition Convention regarding quality and level of the qualification”
 - Based on MR agreements between agencies and NQFs compatible with EQF (Bologna or EU)
- Anyone working on “automatic recognition” should clearly define what they mean!

How to relate automatic & mutual recognition?

- There are no “1 stroke of pen” solutions:
 - Recognition requires trust
 - Trust in different systems does not come automatically but has to grow; cooperation and reassurance
- Having trust in each other QA systems creates trust in quality and level; Mutual recognition agreements
- Connecting the worlds of QA and recognition
 - QA agencies, E-Ns and HEIs have to work together and trust each other

Roadmap towards a qualifications area



Pilot Project: The Netherlands and Flanders

Learning outcomes as linking pins

Bucharest Communiqué: Bologna tools are interdependent (LOs, ECTS, DS, recognition, NQFs, QA). Bologna Triangle:

Qualifications Frameworks/ECTS/DS



Quality Assurance

Recognition

accreditation

Conclusions

1. “Automatic” recognition can be based on quality and level of qualifications assessed by QA agencies which recognise each other (cf. Joint declaration)
2. ESG, external agency reviews, EQAR/ENQA are about necessary procedural minimum requirements
3. MR agreements are also based on observations of how agencies and experts assess the quality & level
4. Learning outcomes (intended *and* achieved) are crucial (linking pins)
5. Worlds of QA and recognition (includes HEIs) have to be better connected; start with joint programmes
6. Governments need to take necessary legal steps

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!



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