The EAR manual
Practical guidelines for fair recognition

What is the EAR manual?

The 1997 Lisbon Recognition Convention(LRC) is the foundation of recognition in the European region, but the text leaves room for interpretation. This has led to a range of different recognition practices between countries, which is currently one of the major obstacles for fair recognition and thus for the mobility of students.

The European Area of Recognition (EAR) project aimed to tackle this situation by developing a recognition manual bringing together the 'scattered' good practice developed in the years after the founding of the LRC: studies, projects and recommendations. The manual thus gives 'hands and feet' to the convention text and is explicit about what can be considered good practice. The ultimate aim of EAR is to foster fair recognition by converging recognition practices in the European region according to the good practice as described in the EAR manual.

The EAR manual was developed in the Nuffic-coordinated European Area for Recognition project by a group of ten national information centers on recognition – the ENIC/NARICs (including the president of the LRC committee and ENIC network) – and in close cooperation with the ENIC-NARIC network and the Bologna Follow Up Group Working Group on Recognition (BFUG WH).

Recommended in 2012 Communiqué

The EAR manual was published early 2012 and has already been embraced by the ENIC/NARIC networks and the BFUG WG on Recognition. The recommendation by the 47 ministers of education of the Bologna countries in the EHEA Communiqué 2012 is a very valuable top-down boost for the actual use of the manual.

The recommendation reads as follows: *'We welcome the European Area of Recognition (EAR) manual and recommend its use as a set of guidelines for recognition of foreign qualifications and a compendium of good practices'.*

Follow up & implementation

Although the inclusion of the recommendation is valuable for establishing convergence in recognition practices in the upcoming years, the actual work will be the use of the manual in daily practice.

To assist the implementation of the manual, EAR 2 started earlier this year. The project aims to train the ENIC-NARICs in the use of the manual. Because the education landscape is diverse and new issues keep arising, EAR 2 also took up the task to keep the manual up to date.

Furthermore, two other follow-up projects are initiated. The first focuses on enabling the ENIC-NARICs to assess if they are actually implementing the good practice and identify possible areas of improvement. To this end, the *Evaluation and Assessment of the Role of NARCs* (EARN) project will develop a self-evaluation tool. EARN will also explore the possibilities of a peer review process.

Finally, the *EAR–Higher Education Institutions* project will develop a recognition manual especially geared to the daily practice of higher education institutions. Most recognition decisions are made in institutions, while there still is a lot of work to do to share good practice.