

United Nations Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

**Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas
and Degrees concerning Higher Education
in the States belonging to the Europe Region**

Adopted at Paris, 21 December 1979



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Introduction

The preparation of regional conventions on the recognition of studies and diplomas in higher education including the present one, has been undertaken by UNESCO as part of a vast campaign designated to organize the co-operation of States in this field. These instruments are intended to provide assessment criteria, units of measurement, methods and techniques whereby the qualifications acquired can be evaluated. Each convention institutes an inter-governmental committee composed of representatives of the Contracting States which is responsible for promoting and extending application of the texts and for receiving and examining periodic reports from States on progress to date and difficulties met with in applying the conventions.

The Convention came into force on 19 February 1982

1. Adopted at Paris on 21 December 1979 by an International Conference of States, convened by UNESCO.

Preamble

The States of the Europe Region, Parties to this Convention.

Recalling that, as the General Conference of Unesco has noted on several occasions in its resolutions concerning European co-operation, 'the development of co-operation between nations in the fields of education, science, culture and communication, in accordance with the principles set out in Unesco's Constitution, plays an essential role in the promotion of peace and international understanding',

Conscious of the close relationship that exists between their cultures, despite their diversity of languages and the differences in economic and social systems, and desiring to strengthen their co-operation in the field of education and training in the interests of the well-being and lasting prosperity of their peoples,

Recalling that the States meeting in Helsinki expressed, in the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (I August 1975), their intention 'to improve access, under mutually acceptable conditions, for students, teachers and scholars of the participating States to each other's educational, cultural and scientific institutions . . . in particular by . . . arriving at the mutual recognition of academic degrees and diplomas either through governmental agreements, where necessary, or direct arrangements between universities and other institutions of higher learning and research', and also by 'promoting a more exact assessment of the problems of comparison and equivalence of academic degrees and diplomas',

Recalling that, with a view to promoting the attainment of these objectives, most of the Contracting States have already concluded bilateral or sub-regional agreements among themselves concerning the equivalence or recognition of diplomas; but desiring, while pursuing and intensifying their

efforts at the bilateral and subregional levels, to extend their co-operation in this field to the whole Europe Region,

Convinced that the great diversity of higher education systems in the Europe Region constitutes an exceptionally rich culture asset which should be preserved, and desiring to enable all their people to benefit fully from this rich cultural asset by facilitating access by the inhabitants of each Contracting State to the educational resources of the other Contracting States, more especially by authorizing them to continue their education in higher educational institutions in those other States,

Considering that, to authorize admission to further stages of study, the concept of the recognition of studies should be employed, a concept which in a context of social and international mobility, makes it possible to evaluate the level of education reached bearing in mind knowledge acquired, as attested by diplomas and degrees obtained and also the individual's other relevant qualifications, so far as these may be deemed acceptable by competent authorities.

Considering that the recognition by all the Contracting States of studies, certificates, diplomas and degrees obtained in any one of them is intended to develop the international mobility of persons and the exchange of ideas, knowledge and scientific and technological experience, and that it would be desirable to accept foreign students into establishments of higher education on the understanding that recognition of their studies or diplomas shall at no time confer on them greater rights than those enjoyed by national students.

Noting that this recognition constitutes one of the conditions necessary for:

1. Enabling means of education existing in their territories to be used as effectively as possible.
2. Ensuring that teachers, students, research workers and professional workers have greater mobility.
3. Alleviating the difficulties encountered on their return by persons who have been trained or educated abroad.

Desiring to ensure that studies, certificates, diplomas and degrees are recognized as widely as possible, taking into account the principles of the promotion of lifelong education, the democratization of education, and the adoption and application of an education policy allowing for structural, economic, technological and social changes and suited to the cultural context of each country.

Determined to sanction and organize their future collaboration in these matters by means of a convention which will be the starting point for concerted dynamic action taken in particular by means of national, bilateral, subregional and multilateral machinery already existing or that may be deemed necessary.

Mindful that the ultimate objective set by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization consists in 'preparing an International Convention on the Recognition and the Validity of Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates issued by establishments of Higher Learning and Research in all Countries',
Have agreed as follows:

I. Definitions

Article 1

1. For the purpose of this Convention, the recognition' of a foreign certificate, diploma or degree of higher education means its acceptance as a valid credential by the competent authorities in a Contracting State and the granting to its holder of rights enjoyed by persons who possess a national certificate, diploma or degree with which the foreign one is assessed as comparable.

Recognition is further defined as follows:

- (a) Recognition of a certificate, diploma or degree with a view to undertaking or pursuing studies at the higher level shall enable the holder to be considered for entry to the higher educational and research institutions of any Contracting State as if he were the holder of a comparable certificate, diploma or degree issued in the Contracting State concerned. Such recognition does not exempt the holder of the foreign certificate, diploma or degree from complying with the conditions (other than those relating to the holding of a diploma) which may be required for admission to the higher educational or research institution concerned of the receiving State.
- (b) Recognition of a foreign certificate, diploma or degree with a view to the practice of a profession is recognition of the professional preparation of the holder for the practice of the profession concerned without prejudice, however, to the legal and professional rules or procedures in force in the Contracting States concerned. Such recognition does not exempt the holder of the foreign certificate, diploma or degree from complying with any other conditions for the practice of the profession concerned which may be laid down by the competent governmental or professional authorities.
- (c) Recognition of a certificate, diploma or degree should not, however, entitle the holder to more rights in another Contracting State than he would enjoy in the country in which the certificate, diploma or degree was awarded.

2. For the purposes of this Convention, 'partial studies' means periods of study or training which while not constituting a complete course are such that they add significantly to the acquisition of knowledge or skills.

II. Aims

Article 2

1. The Contracting States intend to contribute through their joint action both to the promotion of the active co-operation of all the countries of the Europe Region in the cause of peace and international understanding, and to the development of more effective collaboration with other Member States of Unesco with regard to a better use of their educational, technological and scientific potential.

2. The Contracting States solemnly declare their firm resolve to co-operate closely within the framework of their legislation and constitutional structures, as well as within the framework of existing intergovernmental agreements, with a view to:

- (a) Enabling, in the interest of the Contracting States, and consistent with their general policy for educational provision and administrative procedures, the best use of their available education and research resources, and for this purpose:
 - (i) to make their higher educational institutions as widely accessible as possible to students or researchers from any of the Contracting States;
 - (ii) to recognize the studies, certificates, diplomas and degrees of such persons;
 - (iii) to examine the possibility of elaborating and adopting similar terminology and evaluation criteria which would facilitate the application of a system which will ensure the comparability of credits, subjects of study and certificates, diplomas and degrees;
 - (iv) to adopt a dynamic approach in matters of admission to further stages of study, bearing in mind knowledge acquired, as attested by certificates, diplomas and degrees, and also the individual's other relevant qualifications, so far as these may be deemed acceptable by competent authorities;
 - (v) to adopt flexible criteria for the evaluation of partial studies, based on the educational level reached and on the content of the courses taken, bearing in mind the interdisciplinary character of knowledge at the higher educational level;
 - (vi) to improve the system for the exchange of information regarding recognition of studies, certificates, diplomas and degrees;

- (b) Constantly improving curricula in the Contracting States and methods of planning and promoting higher education, on the basis of not only the requirements for economic, social and cultural development, the policies of each country and also the objectives that are set out in the recommendations made by the competent organs of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization concerning the continuous improvement of the quality of education, the promotion of lifelong education and the democratization of education, but also the aims of the full development of the human personality and of understanding, tolerance and friendship among nations and in general all aims concerning human rights assigned to education by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations International Covenants on Human Rights and the Unesco Convention Against Discrimination in Education.
- (c) Promoting regional and world-wide co-operation for the solution of the problems of comparison and equivalence between academic degrees and diplomas' . . . as well as for recognition of studies and academic diplomas.

3. The Contracting States agree to take all feasible steps at the national, bilateral and multilateral levels, in particular by means of bilateral, sub-regional, regional or other agreements, arrangements between universities or other higher educational institutions and arrangements with the competent national or international organizations and other bodies, with a view to the progressive attainment by the competent authorities concerned of the goals defined in the present article.

III. Undertakings for immediate application

Article 3

1. The Contracting States in addition to any obligations of governments, agree to take all feasible steps with a view to encouraging the competent authorities concerned to give recognition, as defined in Article 1. paragraph I to secondary school leaving certificates and other diplomas issued in the other Contracting States that grant access to higher education with a view to enabling the holders to undertake studies in institutions of higher education situated in the respective territories of the Contracting States.

2. Without prejudice to the provisions of Article- 1, paragraph 1(a), however, admission to a given higher educational institution may also be dependent upon the availability of places and the qualifications concerning linguistic knowledge required in order profitably to undertake the studies in question.

Article 4

1. The Contracting States, in addition to any obligations of governments, agree to take all feasible steps with a view to encouraging the competent authorities concerned to:
 - (a) give recognition as defined in Article 1, paragraph I to certificates, diplomas and degrees with a view to enabling the holders to pursue advanced studies and training and undertake research in their institutions of higher education;
 - (b) define, so far as possible, the procedure applicable to the recognition, for the purpose of the pursuit of studies, of the partial studies pursued in higher educational institutions situated in the other Contracting States.
2. The provisions of Article 3, paragraph 2 above shall apply to the cases covered by this article.

Article 5

The Contracting States, in addition to any obligations of governments, agree to take all feasible steps with a view to encouraging the competent authorities concerned to give recognition to the certificates, diplomas or degrees issued by the competent authorities of the other Contracting States for the purpose of practising a profession within the meaning of Article 1, paragraph I(b).

Article 6

Where admission to educational institutions in the territory of a Contracting State is outside the control of that State, it shall transmit the text of the Convention to the institutions concerned and use its best endeavours to obtain the acceptance by the latter of the principles stated in Sections 11 and 111 of the Convention.

Article 7

1. Considering that recognition refers to the studies followed and the certificates, diplomas or degrees obtained from institutions approved by the competent authorities concerned in the Contracting State in which the certificates, diplomas, or degrees were obtained, any person, of whatever nationality or political or legal status, who has followed such studies and obtained such certificates, diplomas or degrees shall be eligible for consideration to benefit from the provisions of Articles 3, 4 and 5.

2. Any national of a Contracting State who has, obtained in the territory of a non-Contracting State one or more certificates, diplomas or degrees comparable to those defined in Articles 3, 4 and 5 may avail himself of those provisions which are applicable, on condition that his certificates, diplomas or degrees have been recognized in his home country and in the country in which he wishes to continue his studies.

IV. Machinery for implementation

Article 8

The Contracting States shall undertake to work for the attainment of the objectives defined in Article 2 and shall make their best efforts to ensure that the undertakings set forth in Articles 3, 4, 5 and 6 above are put into effect by means of:

- (a) national bodies;
- (b) the Regional Committee defined in Article 10;
- (c) bilateral or subregional bodies.

Article 9

1. The Contracting States recognize that the attainment of the goals and the execution of the undertakings defined in this Convention will require, at the national level, close co-operation and co-ordination of the efforts of a great variety of national authorities, whether governmental or non-governmental, particularly universities, validating bodies and other educational institutions. They therefore agree to entrust the study of the problems involved in the application of this Convention to appropriate national bodies, with which all the sectors concerned will be associated and which will be empowered to propose appropriate solutions. The Contracting States will furthermore take all feasible measures required to speed up the effective functioning of these national bodies.

2. The Contracting States shall co-operate with the competent authorities of another Contracting State especially by enabling them to collect all information of use to them in their activities relating to studies, diplomas and degrees in higher education.

3. Every national body shall have at its disposal the necessary means to enable it either to collect, process and file all information of use to it in its activities relating to studies, diplomas and degrees in higher education, or to

obtain the information it requires in this connection at short notice from a separate national documentation centre.

Article 10

1. A regional committee composed of representatives of the governments of the Contracting States is hereby set up. Its Secretariat is entrusted to the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
2. Non-Contracting States of the Europe Region which have been invited to take part in the diplomatic conference entrusted with the adoption of this Convention shall be able to participate in the meetings of the Regional Committee.
3. The function of the Regional Committee shall be to promote the application of this Convention. It shall receive and examine the periodic reports which the Contracting States shall communicate to it on the progress made and the obstacles encountered by them in the application of the Convention and also the studies carried out by its Secretariat on the said Convention. The Contracting States undertake to submit a report to the Committee at least once every two years.
4. The Regional Committee shall, where appropriate, address to the Contracting States recommendations of a general or individual character concerning the application of this Convention.

Article 11

1. The Regional Committee shall elect its Chairman for each session and adopt its Rules of Procedure. It shall meet in ordinary session at least every two years. The Committee shall meet for the first time three months after the sixth instrument of ratification or accession has been deposited.
2. The Secretariat of the Regional Committee shall prepare the agenda for the meetings of the Committee, in accordance with the instructions it receives from the Committee and the provisions of the Rules of Procedure. It shall help national bodies to obtain the information needed by them in their activities.

V. Documentation

Article 12

1. The Contracting States shall engage in exchanges of information and documentation pertaining to studies, certificates, diplomas and degrees in higher education.
2. They shall endeavour to promote the development of methods and machinery for collecting, processing, classifying and disseminating all the necessary information pertaining to the recognition of studies, certificates, diplomas and degrees in higher education, taking into account existing methods and machinery as well as information collected by national, regional, subregional and international bodies, in particular the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

VI. Co-operation with international organizations

Article 13

The Regional Committee shall make all the Appropriate arrangements for associating with its efforts, for the purpose of ensuring that this Convention is applied as fully as possible, the competent international governmental and non-governmental organizations. This applies particularly to the intergovernmental institutions and agencies vested with responsibility for the application of subregional conventions or agreements concerning the recognition of diplomas and degrees in the States belonging to the Europe Region.

VII. Institutions of higher education under the authority of a Contracting State but situated outside its territory

Article 14

The provisions of this Convention shall apply to studies pursued at, and to certificates, diplomas and degrees obtained from, any institution of higher education under the authority of a Contracting State, even when this institution is situated outside its territory, provided that the competent authorities in the Contracting State in which the institution is situated have no objections.

VIII. Ratification, accession and entry into force

Article 15

This Convention shall be open for signature and ratification by the States of the Europe Region which have been invited to take part in the diplomatic conference entrusted with the adoption of this Convention as well as by the Holy See.

Article 16

1. Other States which are members of the United Nations, of one of the Specialized Agencies or of the International Atomic Energy Agency or which are Parties to the Statute of the International Court of Justice may be authorized to accede to this Convention.
2. Any request to this effect shall be communicated to the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization who shall transmit it to the Contracting States at least three months before the meeting of the ad hoc committee referred to in paragraph 3 of this article.
3. The Contracting States shall meet as an ad hoc committee comprising one representative for each Contracting State, with an express mandate from his government to consider such a request. In such cases, the decision of the committee shall require a two-thirds majority of the, Contracting States.
4. This procedure shall apply only when the Convention has been ratified by at least 20 of the States referred to in Article 15.

Article 17

Ratification of this Convention or accession to it shall be effected by depositing an instrument of ratification or accession with the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

Article 18

This Convention shall enter into force one month after the fifth instrument of ratification has been deposited, but solely with respect to the States which have deposited their instruments of ratification. It shall enter into force for each

other State one month after that State has deposited its instrument of ratification or accession.

Article 19

1. The Contracting States shall have the right to denounce this Convention.
2. The denunciation shall be signified by an instrument in writing deposited with the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
3. The denunciation shall take effect twelve months after the instrument of denunciation has been received. However, persons having benefited from the provisions of this Convention who may be pursuing studies in the territory of the State denouncing the Convention will be able to complete the course of studies they have begun.

Article 20

The Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization shall inform the Contracting States and the other States mentioned in Articles 15 and 16 and also the United Nations of the deposit of all the instruments of ratification or accession referred to in Article 17 and the denunciations provided for in Article 19 of this Convention.

Article 21

In conformity with Article 102 of the United Nations Charter, this Convention shall be registered with the Secretariat of the United Nations at the request of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF the undersigned representatives, being duly authorized, have signed this Convention.

Done at Paris, this 21st day of December 1979, in the English, French, Russian and Spanish languages, the four texts being equally authoritative, in a single copy which shall be deposited in the archives of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. A certified copy shall be sent to all the States referred to in Articles 15 and 16 and to the United Nations.