



The Committee of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region

## **RECOMMENDATION ON THE RECOGNITION OF JOINT DEGREES**

Adopted on 9 June 2004

**Preamble**

The Committee of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region,

*Considering* that the aim of the Council of Europe and UNESCO is to achieve greater unity between their members, and that this aim can be pursued notably by common action in cultural matters;

*Having regard* to the Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (ETS no. 165);

*Having regard* to the European Cultural Convention (ETS no. 18);

*Having regard* to the process towards the establishment of a European higher Education Area, and in particular to the Declaration of the European Ministers of Education adopted in Bologna on 19 June 1999 as well as to their Communiqués adopted in Prague on 19 May 2001 and Berlin on 19 September 2003;

*Having regard* to the Diploma Supplement elaborated jointly by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO, to the UNESCO/Council of Europe Code of Good Practice in the provision of transnational education, to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and to the Council of Europe/UNESCO Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications;

*Having regard* to the practical action in favour of improving the recognition of qualifications concerning higher education carried out by the Council of Europe/UNESCO European Network of national information centres on academic recognition and mobility ("the ENIC Network");

*Considering* that the Council of Europe and UNESCO have always encouraged academic mobility as a means for better understanding of the various cultures and languages, and without any form of racial, religious, political or sexual discrimination;

*Considering* that studying or working in a foreign country is likely to contribute to an individual's cultural and academic enrichment, as well as to improve the individual's career prospects;

*Considering* that the recognition of qualifications is an essential precondition for both academic and professional mobility;

*Convinced* that the joint development of curricula between higher education institutions in different countries and the award of joint degrees contribute to academic and professional mobility and to the creation of a European Higher Education Area;

*Convinced* that the development and improved recognition of joint degrees will contribute to developing the European dimension of higher education and entail important benefits for individuals as well as for European society as a whole;

*Aware that* the recognition of qualifications originating in such joint arrangements is currently encountering difficulties of a legal as well as of a practical nature;

*Conscious* of the need to facilitate the recognition of joint degrees;

Recommends the governments of States party to the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (hereinafter referred to as “the Lisbon Recognition Convention”):

- i. to take into account, in the establishment of their recognition policies, the principles set out in the appendix hereto which forms part of this Recommendation;
- ii. to draw these principles to the attention of the competent bodies concerned, so that they can be considered and taken into account;
- iii. to promote implementation of these principles by government agencies and local and regional authorities, and by higher education institutions within the limits imposed by the autonomy of higher education institutions;
- iv. to ensure that this Recommendation is distributed as widely as possible among all persons and bodies concerned with the recognition of qualifications concerning higher education;

Invites the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and the Director-General of UNESCO, as appropriate, to transmit this Recommendation to the governments of those States which were invited to the Diplomatic Conference entrusted with the adoption of the Lisbon Recognition Convention but which have not become parties to that Convention.

## APPENDIX TO THE [DRAFT] RECOMMENDATION ON THE RECOGNITION OF JOINT DEGREES

### General considerations

1. The present Recommendation is adopted within the framework of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and applies to the Parties to this Convention. The principles and practices described in this Recommendation can, however, equally well be applied to the recognition of qualifications in countries other than those party to the Lisbon Recognition Convention or to qualifications issued between or among national education systems.
2. The purpose of the present Recommendation is to improve the recognition of joint degrees. While degrees that are considered as belonging to the education system of a Party to the Lisbon Recognition Convention even where parts of the degree have been earned in other education systems fall under the provisions of the Convention, the present Recommendation concerns joint degrees.
3. While the scope of the Lisbon Recognition Convention as well as of subsidiary texts adopted under the provisions of Article X.2.5 of the Convention concern the recognition of qualifications in countries other than that in which they have been earned, the provisions of the present recommendation may equally well be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to joint degrees issued by two or more institutions belonging to the same national higher education system.

### Definitions

4. Terms defined in the Lisbon Recognition Convention are used in the same sense in the present Recommendation, and reference is made to the definition of these terms in Section I of the Convention.
5. A joint degree should, for the purposes of this Recommendation, be understood as referring to a higher education qualification issued jointly by at least two or more higher education institutions or jointly by one or more higher education institutions and other awarding bodies, on the basis of a study programme developed and/or provided jointly by the higher education institutions, possibly also in cooperation with other institutions. A joint degree may be issued as
  - a. a joint diploma in addition to one or more national diplomas,
  - b. a joint diploma issued by the institutions offering the study programme in question without being accompanied by any national diploma
  - c. one or more national diplomas issued officially as the only attestation of the joint qualification in question.

### General principles

6. Holders of joint degrees should have adequate access, upon request, to a fair assessment of their qualifications
7. Competent recognition authorities should recognize foreign joint degrees unless they can demonstrate that there is a substantial difference between the joint degree for which recognition is sought and the comparable qualification within their own national higher education system. Competent recognition authorities of Parties whose higher education institutions confer joint degrees should recognize these degrees with the greatest flexibility possible.

### **Legislation**

8. Governments of States party to the Lisbon Recognition Convention should, where appropriate, therefore review their legislation with a view to removing any legal obstacles to the recognition of joint degrees and introduce legal provisions that would facilitate such recognition.

### **Quality assurance and institutional recognition**

9. Competent recognition authorities may make the recognition of joint degrees conditional on all parts of the study programme leading to the degree and/or the institutions providing the programme being subject to transparent quality assessment or being considered as belonging to the education system of one or more Parties to the Lisbon Recognition Convention.
10. Where the joint degree is issued on the basis of a curriculum developed by a group or consortium consisting of a number of recognized higher education institutions, recognition of the degree may be made contingent on all member institutions or programmes of the group or consortium being subject to transparent quality assessment, or being considered as belonging to the education system of one or more Parties to the Lisbon Recognition Convention, even if only some of these institutions provide courses for any given degree.

### **Information**

11. Institutions providing joint degrees should be encouraged to inform the competent recognition authorities of programmes giving rise to such degrees.
12. As appropriate, in order to facilitate recognition, candidates earning joint degrees should be provided with a Diploma Supplement, and study programmes leading to joint degrees should make use of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).
13. The Diploma Supplement issued with a joint degree should clearly describe all parts of the degree, and it should clearly indicate the institutions and/or

study programmes at which the different parts of the degree have been earned.