Effect of the COVID-19 on Higher Education and Recognition

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COVID-19: information provision and resources for recognition / 1

• Global scale sources
  • UNESCO;
  • Council of Europe: Covid-19 response, role of refugees, survey on ENIC-NARIC centres.

• Regional scale sources
  • Eurostat, Eurydice and European Commission updates: how covid-19 is affecting schools in Europe;
  • Information on international Exams (IB, AP, CGSE, A Level, etc)

• National sources
  • Ministries, agencies and other institutions operating on HE etc.
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Translation available in national languages (e.g. Eurydice Italy, update 27 Apr.)

Impact of Covid 19: Closure of higher education institutions in Europe

Impact of covid-19: school closures in Europe, 07/04/2020

European Commission - Eurydice
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Reflection Document – Recognition of foreign qualifications in times of COVID-19

Three main aspects:

COVID-19 and recognition of foreign qualifications
• Disrupted mobility and admissions
• Recognizing disrupted learning and its impact on policies/procedures
• Long term effects

The state of ENIC-NARIC centres during the time of COVID-19
• Moving to remote working
• The process of “recognition” during the time of COVID-19
• Some challenges

Response of the ENIC-NARIC Networks
• The role of the EB/NAB
• Possible actions for the EB/NAB
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Italy: legislative acts in education in response to COVID-19

Law 24 April 2020, n. 27 (conversion Decreto-Legge 17 marzo 2020, n. 18):

- final exams for the conclusion of the academic year 2018/2019 (usually held within the spring session of the following year), postponed until 15th of June 2020 (art. 101);
- Applications for professional recognition in the health sector shifted from national level to autonomous regions and provinces (temporary procedure related to the COVID-19 spread, art. 13);
- Laurea Magistrale (Master level degree) in “Medicina e chirurgia” (LM/41), gives the professional right to practise (art. 102);

The Ministerial Decree 16 May 2020, regulates the state exam at the end of the upper secondary school (so-called “Maturità”):

- one oral examination;
- the state examination will start on June 17th, 2020, thereby respecting the date decided at the beginning of the 2019/2020 school year;
- no change in the final qualification awarded and no impact on access to HE.
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Italy: “Post “lockdown” and the new Phases 2 and 3 for the Higher Education and Research system
Message of the Italian Minister for Universities and Research (4th May 2020)

Individual institutions will need to introduce appropriate planning, divided into five actions:

1. a blended teaching offer plan, one that can be delivered both in the classroom and by distance learning, in a synchronous and/or asynchronous way, guaranteeing the same possibilities in terms of accessibility and quality of teaching to onsite and remote students (for example, students away from home, students limited by travel or other restrictions), as well as students with disabilities or learning disorders and, in any case, in line with what will be imposed by the competent authorities in the various territories;

2. an access plan for physical spaces (classrooms, laboratories, libraries, etc.) and for the use of individual protection measures, capable of guaranteeing the necessary safety levels, in line with what will be imposed by the competent authorities in the various territories, and also through an “increase" in the hours and days of the activities, considering, if necessary, a weekly work period that includes Saturdays and Sundays;

3. a plan to strengthen the digital infrastructures of the HE institutions, in terms of classroom equipment, network connectivity, internal organisation and equipment for students, teaching and research staff, as well as for technical and administrative staff;

4. a plan for paperless administrative procedures, through the strengthening of the digital systems in use;

5. a technical-administrative staff training plan, to support the previous points.”
Challenges for recognition

• **Digitalisation and technological innovation:** crucial role in ensuring continuity of services and activities. CIMEA offers free of charge the Diplome platform, the first use case of blockchain technology applied in the field of recognition.

• **Mobility:** how will it be affected by the current crisis? More “internationalisation at home”?

• Will we see a growth in **transnational education (TNE)** as an adaption strategy of HEIs?

• **Qualifications:** will anything change in learning outcomes of qualifications due to the current crisis? What will be the impact on VET, professional qualifications and in learning pathways where greater practical activity is required? Shall we expect more non-traditional and flexible learning pathways? There will be a percentage of the population that will have to reconvert after the crisis, asking for new training offers: will they be online, short, tightly linked to digital innovation and oriented to the job market (e.g. the so-called microcredentials)?

• **Transition from secondary education to higher education:** how recognised disrupted learning? How ensure a smooth transition and a fair recognition of final school leaving qualifications, and how manage access and admission to Higher Education in the current context? Points related to right to education and equality.

• Another challenge could be the **delays in verification procedures or in receiving information**, due the closure of Higher education Institutions, difficulties in accessing paper archives for older qualifications, etc.

• Will the use of "dishonest" behaviour be one of the strategies to face the crisis? Will the crisis lead to a search for "shortcuts" during positioning in the labour market, and will it confront us with an increase of cases of **diploma mills** and **fake qualifications**, and more in general with an increase of **fraud in education**?

• In an era of digitalization, privacy, data protection in line with GDPR principles, digital ethics, cybersecurity will be a challenge.
Recommendations

• **digitalisation** is a key factor: rely on digital resources, accept digital qualifications, offer as much as possible information online;

• **flexibility**: some standard procedures in recognition are not possible. Do not impose to applicants with foreign qualifications requirements that are difficult or impossible to fulfil in the emergency situation;

• accuracy and promptness in **information provision**, in order to support recognition of national qualifications abroad;

• **quality assurance and recognition**: check the impact of the crisis (see [ENQA](https://www.enqa.ac.eu) and [EQAR](https://www.eqar.eu) sections related to COVID-19);

• **collaboration and information sharing** with colleagues at national and international level.

• **training activities** for staff
Initiatives:

• Publication of **Effect of the COVID-19 on Higher Education and Recognition (Informative note for HEIs)**

• Series of **webinar** on impact of COVID-19:
  o on HE and recognition (11 May 2020);
  o on transition from school to HE (18 May 2020);
  o on digitalisation and recognition (25 May 2020)

• **HE course for credential evaluators**, targeted to HEIs staff (June-Sept 2020) / university certificate and micro-credential
Thanks for your attention!