



Future possibilities for recognition of vocational qualifications in Europe

A presentation of the findings from the project workshops and best practice sharing

CO-FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

BRAVO 101101715

2024



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1. Executive Summary

The second BRAVO report builds upon the findings of the first project report and further explores the challenges, opportunities, and recommendations related to establishing a network dedicated to recognition of foreign vocational qualifications. This report presents the outcomes of various workshops and expert discussions conducted throughout the project period. The aim is to provide concrete recommendations for a network that addresses the needs of stakeholders involved in recognition of vocational qualifications across the EU and the broader Europe.

Despite the potential identified by the BRAVO project, significant challenges remain when it comes to recognition of foreign vocational qualifications. There is still no formal international arena for cooperation dedicated to supporting organisations responsible for this task, which contrasts with the established ENIC-NARIC network for recognition of qualifications concerning higher education. The need for systematic cooperation, information exchange, and best practice sharing between recognition authorities is evident, particularly as more countries are beginning to recognise foreign vocational qualifications.

Exploring Alternatives for a Vocational Qualifications Recognition Network

Several models were considered for establishing a network for recognition of vocational qualifications. Alternatives such as maintaining the status quo or creating an independent network were considered but present challenges related to unfulfilled potential and funding, stakeholder engagement, and initial setup. The preferred approach is to extend the existing ENIC-NARIC network for example by creating a dedicated subgroup for vocational qualifications. This approach leverages the ENIC-NARIC's established structure and reputation, offering a cost-effective and efficient way to build a framework for recognition of vocational qualifications.

Recommendations for a Step-by-Step Approach

The report recommends a phased approach to expanding the ENIC-NARIC network to include vocational qualifications. The initial focus should be on ENIC-NARIC centres

that already recognise vocational qualifications, gradually involving other centres and stakeholders over time. The first step should involve sharing information using existing platforms and tools, such as EQF and Europass, to lay the groundwork for broader cooperation. As the network grows, further tools and resources should be developed to enhance collaboration and support recognition practices.

Stakeholder Engagement

Workshops conducted as part of the BRAVO project highlighted the need for better stakeholder engagement strategies. Many recognition authorities reported limited collaboration with employers and other relevant parties, which hinders the effectiveness of recognition of vocational qualifications. The report emphasises the importance of integrating stakeholders into the recognition process to enhance transparency, trust, and the quality of assessments.

Practical Challenges in Recognising Vocational Qualifications

Recognition of vocational qualifications is complicated by varying definitions and standards across countries. There is no common vocabulary and there are different understandings of terms and definitions in the sector. This is amplified by different organisations of recognition schemes for vocational qualifications. Differences in national education systems, terminologies, and recognition practices make it challenging to cooperate for credential evaluators.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The findings of this report confirm the need for a structured network for recognition of vocational qualifications, that builds upon existing resources and structures. The recommended step-by-step approach allows for manageable growth, ensuring that the network remains relevant and responsive to the evolving landscape of vocational qualifications. Moving forward, continued dialogue, stakeholder engagement, and resource development will be crucial to the success of this initiative.

2. Introduction

BRAVO - Bridging a European Network for Recognition of Vocational Qualifications is a collaborative initiative between NARIC centres, co-funded by the European Commission (EC). The project aim is mapping recognition practices and exploring the potential for a network dedicated to recognition of foreign vocational qualifications, specifically at EQF levels 4 and 5.

2.1. Project consortium

The BRAVO project consortium consists of ENIC-NARIC Norway, ENIC-NARIC Sweden and ENIC-NARIC Lithuania.

The Norwegian ENIC-NARIC centre has been involved in recognition of vocational education and training on European Qualifications Framework (EQF) level 4 since 2016 and with post-secondary vocational qualifications on EQF level 5 since 2019. Both recognition schemes were developed in close cooperation with social partners. While previously part of the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT), the Norwegian ENIC-NARIC office was transferred to the Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (HK-dir) in 2023, retaining its original tasks and mandates.

The Swedish ENIC-NARIC centre has extensive experience in assessing vocational qualifications at EQF levels 4 to 6. It provides an advisory statement that compares the foreign qualification to the closest equivalent qualification or educational level within the Swedish education system. Although the statement is not legally binding, it aims to support individuals in accessing the Swedish labour market.

Finally, the Lithuanian ENIC-NARIC centre has recently been authorised to recognise vocational qualifications, initially covering EQF levels 2 to 5, in response to a significant rise in applications for recognition of foreign vocational qualifications. The specific EQF levels are not fixed as this is an initial phase, and they may be revised.

The centre is currently in the early stages of establishing and implementing this new recognition scheme, and its experiences with this process will be presented later in this report.

2.2. The project and its aim

When the recognition schemes for foreign vocational qualifications at EQF levels 4 and 5 were established in Norway, the Norwegian ENIC-NARIC centre faced challenges in accessing the information necessary to assess these qualifications. In addition to the established best practices for dealing with bachelor's degrees and master's degrees, there is also the option to reach out to the ENIC-NARIC network for advice through the international mailing list or by contacting other recognition centres directly. However, when it comes to assessing vocational qualifications, there is significantly less support available. Consequently, the BRAVO project was motivated by the need to enhance international collaboration on recognition of vocational qualifications, particularly regarding information on educational systems and recognition practices.

The aim of the BRAVO project is to explore the need and possibility for a network dedicated to recognition of vocational qualifications, as well as the form such a network should take. As part of this exploration, the project has mapped policies on recognition of vocational qualifications through desk research and gathered information on current practices through a survey. Additionally, the project has facilitated three international workshops focused on best practice sharing in recognition of vocational qualifications. Based on the desk research and survey results, the project initiated discussions on the need and potential for such a dedicated network in the first project report (2023) and will further these discussions and submit recommendations in this report.

2.3. The first BRAVO report: Mapping recognition of foreign vocational qualifications (2023)

The first phase of the BRAVO project focused on mapping policies and practices related to recognition of vocational qualifications. Through desk research and a survey conducted among the ENIC-NARIC network, the project explored how vocational qualifications are currently assessed across various countries. The aim of the survey was to explore recognition practices on vocational qualifications in Europe, however as the survey was distributed to the entire ENIC-NARIC network, there were also valuable responses from centres located in countries outside of Europe. The findings from the desk research and survey were presented in the first project report (2023), which serves as a foundation for further analysis in this second report.

The first report highlighted key challenges, including the limited availability of resources and support networks for vocational qualifications, compared to the well-established frameworks for higher education. It revealed that many of the ENIC-NARIC centres that have extended their services to include vocational qualifications apply the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) when assessing vocational qualifications. Additionally, the report emphasised the need for greater stakeholder engagement, particularly with employers and other actors relevant to vocational education. The report highlighted that there is no dedicated network for organisations handling recognition of vocational qualification, leaving a gap in best practice sharing and collaboration. However, the BRAVO project has revealed that there is interest and potential for such international collaboration.

Building on the findings from the first report, this second report will further explore these themes, providing a deeper analysis and offering recommendations for improving recognition collaboration across borders.

2.4. Methods and activities

Building on the desk research and the survey findings, the project organised three international best-sharing practice workshops. The workshops were held in:

- Vilnius, Lithuania (2023)
- Cologne, Germany (2024)
- Stockholm, Sweden (2024)

To enhance the quality of discussions, international experts and stakeholders, including the European Training Foundation (ETF), the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), and the German Information Portal for Foreign Professional Qualifications (BQ-Portal), contributed to the workshops. These workshops focused on policies, practices, and challenges in recognition of vocational qualifications, while exploring opportunities for establishing a dedicated network. They included presentations from experts and facilitated discussions that highlighted the necessity for a collaborative approach to recognition practices, particularly in navigating diverse regulatory landscapes and definitions of vocational qualifications across Europe.

Insights gained from these workshops, along with findings from the survey and desk research, laid the groundwork for the discussions and recommendations presented in this second report.

2.5. Terminology and limitations

Terminology related to vocational qualifications varies across countries and contexts, necessitating clarification of its use and meaning. This chapter describes the terminology employed and outlines the scope and limitations of the BRAVO project.

Vocational or professional qualifications?

Chapter 3.2 in the first project report (2023) discussed some of the main challenges related to the terminology and definitions in the field of vocational qualifications. The

report mentioned that the concept of Vocational education and training (VET) has been broadly defined as:

“...education and training which aims to equip young people and adults with knowledge, skills and competences required in particular occupations or more broadly on the labour market” (Council Recommendation 2020/C 417/01).

The education and training can be provided in formal or non-formal settings and result in a qualification, for example a certificate or diploma (for a particular occupation or the labour market more broadly). The BRAVO project uses the term “vocational qualifications” as a collective term to capture the great variety of qualifications that are of a vocational nature.

It is important to note that not all countries and stakeholders mentioned in this report use the English term “vocational qualifications”. Some instead say “professional qualifications” to describe the same types of qualifications. In this report, however, the term “professional qualifications” is linked to the terminology of the Professional Qualifications Directive (PQD) and refers only to regulated professions (see below).

Recognition of vocational qualifications

The BRAVO project and this report revolve around the theme “recognition of vocational qualifications”. This general description covers all types of recognition, for any purpose. The purpose of recognition is important, since it helps us understand how recognition of vocational qualifications may fit into the existing recognition procedures within the ENIC-NARIC networks:

Academic recognition

- For further studies or use of academic title

Professional recognition

- For employment in a regulated profession
- For employment in a non-regulated profession

In practise, these procedures tend to overlap since academic recognition can also be used for seeking employment in non-regulated professions (ENIC-NARIC, 2024).

In the European context, it is important to distinguish *de facto* professional recognition from *de jure* professional recognition (Bergan, 2009). **De jure professional recognition** is a competence of the European Union (EU) and is regulated by the Professional Qualifications Directive (PQD) (Directive 2005/36/EC as amended in 2013/55/EU). Under the PQD, applicants seek authorisation to carry out a specific profession in an EU Member State, and the recognition process is legally subjected to the possession of relevant diplomas (Kortese, 2016). There are many regulated professions in the EU, but only seven professions are regulated in all Member States. This poses a challenge for applicants to find the right recognition process and authority in each country they may wish to relocate to.

Non-regulated professions are, in principle, not subjected to any formal recognition procedures under EU law. Therefore, **de facto professional recognition** of vocational qualifications refers to the voluntary recognition procedures that take place for any (other) type of use on the labour market. Even if a person seeking employment in a non-regulated profession is not required to seek formal recognition, a recognition statement or some type of assessment of their qualifications can be very useful.

Differentiating between vocational qualifications at higher levels and professional higher education is also challenging. Especially when it comes to EQF level 5 qualifications, which are classified as short-cycle higher education in some countries, but in others are considered upper or post-secondary vocational qualifications, not part of higher education. Similarly, defining vocational qualifications at EQF levels 3-4 is difficult due to the broad range of educational forms it encompasses, from upper secondary vocational education to various formal and non-formal vocational and adult education programmes, including continuing vocational education and training (CVET). These and other similar challenges related to differentiating between types of education were also discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.2 of the first project report (2023).

The scope of the BRAVO project was defined in the first project report (2023). The BRAVO project focuses on formal vocational qualifications at EQF levels 4 and 5 and aims to explore recognition practices primarily related to non-regulated access to the labour market. The scope of the project does not include higher education qualifications nor regulated professional qualifications. Should a network for recognition of vocational qualifications be established, the network will have to decide what the limitations and scope of the network will be.

3. Policy on recognition of vocational qualifications

In the first project report (2023), the BRAVO project presented an overview of existing policies and tools for recognition of vocational qualifications in the European Union (EU) and the broader Europe. The report concluded that the current framework for vocational qualifications is mostly characterised by non-binding agreements and “soft policy”, providing little coordination and harmonisation between countries. This framework has mainly been shaped with emphasis on the provision of vocational qualifications, as well as the promotion of vocational qualifications as an attractive career pathway for individuals. For example, the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) confirms EU citizens’ right to initial and continuous vocational education and training for a successful transition into the labour market (European Commission, 2020).

The BRAVO project is aiming to create a better understanding of the current vocational reform agenda, to make the best possible recommendations for a network dedicated to recognition of vocational qualifications. It is worth noticing that the year 2025 marks the final year of the Osnabrück Declaration (2020), the latest agreement on policy actions for vocational education and training deriving from the “Copenhagen Process” initiated in 2002. Despite an increased focus on comparability of qualifications in recent years, there is no actual EU policy framework that supports the development of best practices for *mutual recognition* of vocational qualifications among Member States. There are also no mechanisms supporting standardisation of vocational qualifications, resulting in a great variety when it comes to the levels, content, and duration of qualifications in the EU and beyond. Therefore, the BRAVO project has continued to navigate through the complex landscape of declarations, recommendations, tools, and upcoming initiatives relating to vocational qualifications. The project workshop in Vilnius (2023) provided a better understanding of the latest developments and outlined many opportunities for further cooperation between the stakeholders in this field.

3.1. Right to free movement in the EU/EEA

The fundamental right for EU citizens and their family members to move and reside freely within the EU is established by Article 21 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and Article 45 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (CFR). In addition, the Union Treaties and particularly Article 45(1) TFEU secures the free movement for workers within the EU. Freedom of movement also applies to Norway, Iceland, and Lichtenstein, who alongside the EU Member States make up the European Economic Area (EEA), and Switzerland. In principle, the situation for EU/EEA citizens seeking employment in a non-regulated profession in another Member State appears to be quite uncomplicated. Nevertheless, employers still hold the power to decide whether to hire a citizen from another EU country instead of a citizen from their own country, and therefore to some extent “inhibits” exercise of non-regulated profession in another Member State (Kortese, 2016). For that reason, there is a broad consensus in the EU context that professionals seeking employment can benefit from voluntary recognition procedures that help employers to identify their knowledge and skills.

3.2. Recognition of qualifications from third countries

The challenge is even greater for individuals trained outside the EU. During the webinar series *Recognition of Qualifications of Third Country Nationals* in 2024, the European Commission presented statistics showing that the lack of recognition of qualifications is perceived as an important obstacle to finding a job (European Commission, 2024). In November 2023, the Commission published its *Recommendation on the recognition of qualifications of third-country nationals* (European Commission, 2023). The Recommendation sets out a new framework for recognition procedures, targeting third-country nationals holding qualifications obtained both in the EU and in the home country. The Recommendation addresses the Union's shortage of skilled workers, and how it affects the ability to adapt to the

ongoing changes in the European labour market. The document acknowledges that existing procedures for recognition of skills and qualifications of third-country nationals are more complex and costly than for those available to EU citizens (p. 8). The lack of access to information on qualifications obtained in third countries is also identified as a main challenge for employers. In addition, the Recommendation outlines how the Commission will continue to support cooperation and exchange of good practices between Member States. Most interesting for the BRAVO project is that the Commission states that it will encourage Member States to consider extending the NARIC's competences to cover vocational education and training (VET) qualifications (p. 19). This is likely to create an increased need for cooperation and exchange of information regarding recognition of vocational qualifications.

3.3. The European Education Area

Another important development at the EU level is the “European Education Area” (COM(2020)625), outlined by the Commission in 2020. The initiative originated in 2017 and aims to create an inclusive system of education across the EU. The vision for 2025 is a Europe *“in which learning, studying and doing research would not be hampered by borders”*. The work is focused around five topics, including green education, improving quality, international cooperation, digital education, and the revalorisation of the teaching profession. The European Education Area is designed to allow learners to move between countries in the EU/EEA at all levels of education. In the EU context, national education systems are divided into Early childhood and care, School education, Higher Education, Vocational Education and training (VET), as well as adult learning. VET is defined as a focus area for cooperation for the European Education Area until 2030 (Council Resolution 2021/C 66/01).

A working group on *vocational education and training and the green transition (VET)* has been established under the European Education Area strategic framework (European Commission, 2024). This group aims to support Member States to implement the objectives of the Osnabrück Declaration, as well as the Council Recommendation 2020/C 417/01. The work is carried out in accordance with priorities

2 and 5 of the Council Resolution 2021/C 66/01, but also with the European Pillar of Social Rights, the European Green Deal (2019), and Action 6 of the “European Skills Agenda” (2020).

In the first BRAVO report (2023), the European Skills Agenda was mentioned as one of many ongoing initiatives that together shape the current EU policy framework for vocational qualifications. The coming years will show how this framework can also help to support increased coordination and harmonisation among Member States in the field of recognition.

3.4. The varied use of EU tools and joint resources

One of the main challenges in implementing recognition policies on vocational qualifications in Europe is that provision of vocational qualifications differs greatly across Europe. Vocational qualifications are often more diverse than higher education qualifications and there is no common area of “vocational education” like the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). However, joint tools and resources for recognition of vocational qualifications can to some extent compensate for the lack of mutual recognition agreements. The first BRAVO report (BRAVO, 2023) outlined some of the main EU tools that are used for comparing and recognising vocational qualifications throughout the ENIC-NARIC network, such as the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), Europass Certificate Supplement (CS), the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET), and European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO).

The use of the EU tools may vary among countries depending on how their recognition scheme has been set up. For example, countries applying content-based assessment methods may focus more on the learning outcomes (LO) of the foreign qualifications than countries assessing the level only. During the BRAVO project, the partner countries have gathered in workshops together with experts to learn more about how the tools are used in practice. As for recognition of higher education qualifications, the tools and resources for analysing vocational qualifications can be structured around the five “key elements” of a qualification. Although the Lisbon Recognition Convention

(LRC) and the European Area of Recognition (EAR) manual do not encompass vocational education, credential evaluators assessing vocational qualifications still need to establish the *quality, level, workload, profile and learning outcomes* of a qualification. This chapter discusses how the EU tools relate to these steps of the recognition procedure.

Quality assurance

Under the LRC, the provision of information about recognised or accredited institutions and programmes is the responsibility of the authorities in the country where the qualification was awarded. The promotion of quality assurance in higher education has been one of the key features of the Bologna process in the past decades (European Commission, 2020). The rise of quality assurance in the EHEA culminated in the adoption of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). Although implementation and challenges remain, the ESG enables a common understanding of quality assurance that helps facilitate recognition of higher education in the European context. In the field of vocational qualifications, the equivalent framework for quality assurance is the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET). It provides a common set of principles, and quality criteria to support quality assurance in vocational qualifications systems and providers across Europe. Rather than recommending a particular quality assurance system, the EQAVET is presented as a "toolbox" that allows Member States and vocational qualifications providers to choose the most relevant tools for their specific needs, making it adaptable to diverse vocational qualifications systems (European Commission, 2024). By establishing common quality assurance principles and practices, EQAVET aims to enhance the transparency and credibility of vocational qualifications across borders. In that sense, the EQAVET also helps facilitating recognition of vocational qualifications.

Still, quality assurance as a step in VET recognition procedures poses a major challenge to credential evaluators. In some cases, recognised VET providers in the home country (such as schools, colleges etc.) are listed by ministries or quality assurance bodies. In other cases, these lists are limited to Higher Education

Institutions (HEIs). Other challenges arise, for example when quality assurance is decentralised or there is no clear division of quality assurance between formal and non-formal vocational qualifications. It can also be unclear whether a foreign vocational qualification is subjected to programme accreditation, institutional recognition, or both. In some countries, one institution provides the training and relevant certificates, while another body issues a qualification for the vocational skills upon a passed exam. Thus, credential evaluators share a common need to acquire information about these quality assurance systems, regardless of the differences in our recognition schemes. The discussions throughout the BRAVO project conclude that quality assurance is an aspect of recognition of vocational qualifications that can easily benefit from increased information sharing in a dedicated network.

Educational level vs learning outcome level

Credential evaluators also need tools and resources to establish the level of a vocational qualification. For clarification, the term “level” can refer both to educational level (e.g. upper secondary or post-secondary) and learning outcome (LO) level in a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) or the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). Therefore, it is important to distinguish between the concepts of educational level and LO level. According to the Council definition adopted in 2020, VET may be provided at all levels of the EQF including tertiary level (Council Recommendation 2020/C 417/01). The terms “initial” and “continuous” VET are also used to categorise different levels of vocational qualifications. Credential evaluators therefore might need different types of tools and resources to establish the level of a foreign vocational qualification, in relation to their national education system.

The challenge of comparing qualifications at different levels is less of an issue in the field of higher education. The development of national qualifications frameworks began with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA), originating from the Bologna Declaration (1999) and adopted in 2005. The objective of the Bologna process and the QF-EHEA was to harmonise education systems into the three-cycle degree system. The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) emerged in 2005 and is a much broader framework. It is not intended to

harmonise qualifications but is rather described as a “translation device” (European Commission, 2008). Still, the EQF has been developed to ensure full compatibility with the QF-EHEA. The higher levels of the EQF are built on the EHEA cycle descriptors, resulting in a commonly accepted comparability between the EQF levels 5 to 8 and the Bologna cycles.

Today, all EU/EEA members and eight European countries have references (or are in the process of referencing) their NQFs to the EQF (European Union, 2024). The BRAVO project’s experience is that the EQF has made a wide range of qualifications more understandable and comparable across our diverse education systems, and this view is shared by the European Commission (2024). However, while the EQF is a rather “accurate” tool for comparing HE qualifications in the EHEA, it can be argued that we need to be more cautious when using the EQF to compare vocational qualifications.

For instance, it is important to keep in mind that there is no inbuilt cross-referencing in the EQF for upper secondary and post-secondary education. To the contrary, vocational qualifications at these educational levels cut straight across NQF levels 3 to 6 and even higher in some cases. Therefore, discrepancies in educational level and NQF/EQF-level can constitute a “substantial difference” between the closest comparable vocational qualifications in the host country. In some countries, the statement or decision reflects a “level assessment” where the foreign qualification is compared to a generic diploma at the same educational level (e.g. example upper secondary vocational qualifications). In other cases, the purpose of the assessment is to compare the content and learning outcomes of the foreign qualification to the occupational standards or curricula of a particular national qualification (e.g. carpenter). It is also possible to use an EQF level as a “reference point” in itself, to make it easier for employers to understand how advanced the training is, regardless of the educational level or content of the qualification. Thus, educational level and NQF/EQF-level are not equally important across different recognition schemes.

Workload

The diversity in vocational education systems also give rise to various systems for measuring workload of programmes and qualifications. Credential evaluators face different credit systems and need to find methods to compare the workload of foreign qualifications to national qualifications. As described in the first BRAVO report (2023), efforts have been made to facilitate the accumulation and transfer of vocational learning in Europe. The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) was developed through a Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council in 2009. However, whilst some of the tools developed in the ECVET model remain, the implementation of the credit system is no longer pursued.

In summary, recognition of vocational qualifications sometimes requires a great deal of research, and it helps if information is gathered in one place. One useful online tool is Cedefop's *VET in Europe database* that presents information gathered by the ReferNet network. The BRAVO project concludes that such joint resources can play a crucial role in supporting recognition of vocational qualifications.

3.5. Comparing vocational qualifications remains a challenge

In the past decades, we have indeed seen major developments in terms of available tools and resources for comparing qualifications, such as the EQF. However, as discussed in the previous BRAVO report (2023), most tools provide little guidance for the actual recognition of foreign vocational qualifications. For that reason, the BRAVO project closely follows the Cedefop project 2023-2025 on supporting the comparison and recognition of qualifications (Cedefop, 2024).

Cedefop (2024) has, among other actors in the field of vocational education and training, identified that labour markets must make best possible use of already existing skills and qualifications. According to Cedefop, this calls for the strengthening of lifelong learning and employment opportunities, but also intensified support for comparing and recognising qualifications. As a starting point, Cedefop has identified

some of the main challenges related to comparing vocational qualifications. The technical challenges involve differences in information sharing practices, lack of standardised information on awarded qualifications, as well as the absence of common methodologies for comparison. Cedefop also raises challenges related to mutual trust, such as the lack of flexibility and acceptance of existing differences between qualifications. Some barriers are of a political nature and may require interventions at policy level. On a more optimistic note, many solutions already exist or are being developed. For example, the Europass Certificate Supplement (CS) provides a common language for describing vocational qualifications. The BRAVO workshops conclude that credential evaluators find it to be a valuable tool, although it is far from fully implemented among awarding institutions in the EU/EEA. However, efforts are being made to improve the Europass CS and to make it more accessible.

In the daily practice of recognition of vocational qualifications, artificial intelligence (AI) is probably the most promising technical solution for the future. The hope is that AI can support host countries to overcome some of the challenges related to lack of resources for recognising vocational qualifications. Cedefop (2024) suggests that AI can check the status of a qualification, the institution, and certain elements of a vocational qualifications programme such as workload, access requirements, professional rights etc.

3.6. Vocational qualifications and the Lisbon Recognition Convention

The Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC), along with the Bologna Process, is one of the main instruments intended for guaranteeing academic recognition for higher education qualifications in Europe and the EU. Under the LRC, qualifications concerning higher education are recognised unless substantial differences between the foreign qualification and a comparable national qualification can be demonstrated. Students seeking academic recognition may at some point also seek some type of professional recognition from the country they relocated to.

The BRAVO project has investigated how countries within the ENIC-NARIC network relate to recognition that falls outside the scope of the LRC, and to what extent the principles of the Convention are applied also for comparing and recognising vocational qualifications. Although several countries in the ENIC-NARIC network go beyond the mandate that the Convention ascribes, it has not been an explicit concern for the network to support recognition of vocational qualifications. In fact, BRAVO is one of the first NARIC projects that concerns education that falls outside the scope of the LRC and that is supported by the European Commission Erasmus+ programme.

As mentioned in the first BRAVO report, there is a broader definition of higher vocational qualifications that covers all vocational qualifications at EQF level 5 and above, including those covered by the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). There is also a narrower definition that only covers vocational qualifications that are fully outside the EHEA and the scope of the LRC (European Commission, 2016).

The project has discovered that the different definitions and approaches to the LRC create a “grey zone” of education and recognition practises. Depending on the categorisation of a foreign qualification and the relevant national qualification, vocational qualifications may fall under the scope of the LRC in some cases, and in some cases not. This challenge is commonly seen among qualifications at EQF level 5 and 6, since they can be regarded as either Higher Education or Higher, Technical or Tertiary Vocational education, depending on how the education system is structured and how recognition is carried out.

Finally, vocational qualifications at both secondary and post-secondary level can also give access to higher education and are (in part) covered by the LRC. In countries and/or ENIC-NARIC centres where recognition of vocational qualifications is an integral part of the recognition procedures concerning higher education, the LRC can inevitably serve as an inspiration and “framework” for recognition of vocational qualifications. Because of these variations, the BRAVO project concludes that in practice, we cannot make a clear distinction between recognition under the LRC and recognition beyond the LRC, that applies to all countries in the network.

4. Differences in recognition in practice

The BRAVO project discussed several topics related to recognition in practice in the project workshops. Some of the topics are discussed and summarised in this chapter.

4.1. Recognition of vocational qualifications in Germany and Türkiye

Recognition of vocational qualifications is organised differently around Europe. To provide an example, this section will show how recognition is organised in Germany and Türkiye and provide a comparison of the two countries.

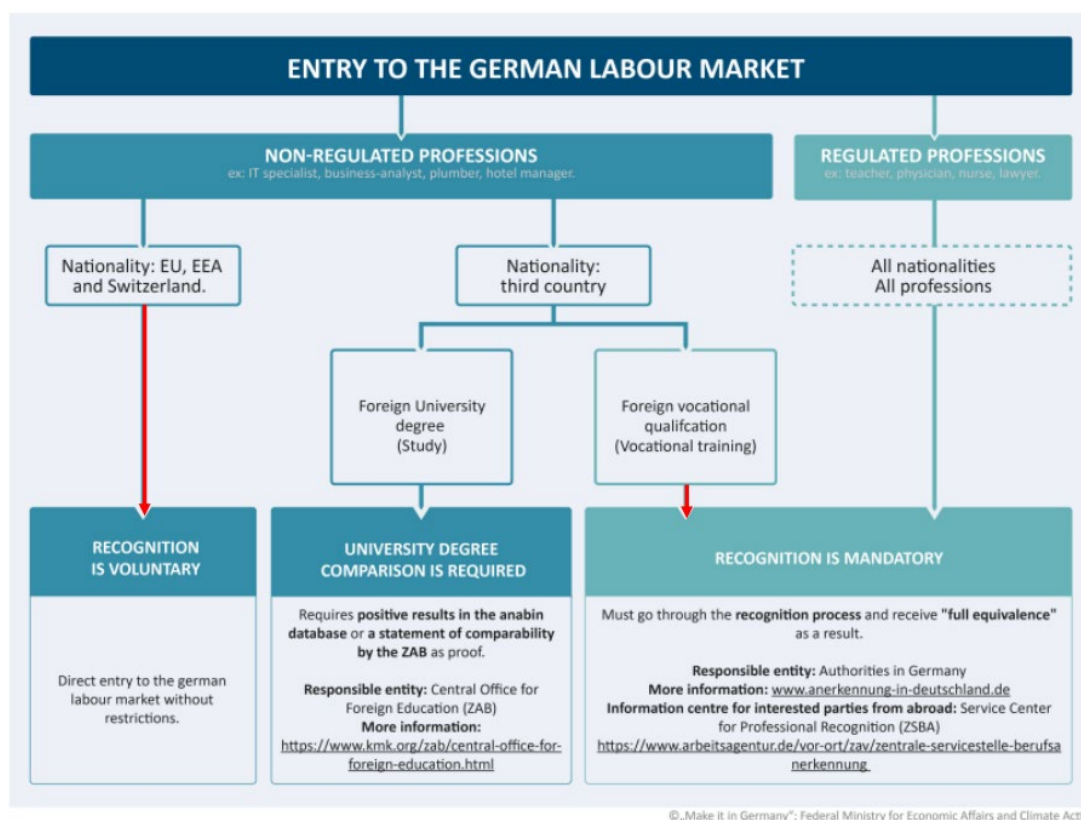
Recognition of vocational qualifications in Germany

The BRAVO workshop in Cologne in February 2024 provided comprehensive information about how recognition of vocational qualifications is organised in Germany.

In Germany, there is no central competent authority for recognition; it depends on the location and the specific occupation in question. To navigate in this field the German government has developed an information portal for recognition of foreign qualifications, called *Anerkennung in Deutschland*. The portal is available in several languages and caters to different target groups, including those in regulated and non-regulated professions, employers, and advisors. The portal includes a tool called the Recognition Finder, which guides individuals to the appropriate procedure. It provides information about German qualifications, whether authorisation is needed, and where to apply based on the applicant's location in Germany (*Anerkennung in Deutschland*, 2024). Another portal for skilled workers is *Make it in Germany*, the Federal Government's official site for skilled workers from abroad. As part of a promotional campaign for Germany, the portal provides comprehensive information on living and working in the country (*Make it in Germany*, 2024).

Employees in non-regulated professions from the EU/EEA and Switzerland do not need a recognition decision to enter the German labour market. However, with the

implementation of the new Skilled Immigration Act (Make it in Germany, 2024), it is now mandatory for most professionals from third countries to obtain recognition from a responsible authority before entering the labour market. According to the BQ-Portal, nine out of ten assessments in Germany involve qualifications from third countries.



The German system of recognition (Make it in Germany, 2024)

The BQ-Portal is an information resource for the assessment and evaluation of non-regulated foreign vocational and further training qualifications. Its main target groups are various chambers that act as competent bodies in the recognition process, and companies that conduct their own evaluations of candidates (BQ-Portal, 2024). The qualification profiles provided on the portal are content-based and are not aligned with the LRC or EQF. The portal also includes a restricted area where competent bodies can access previous assessments. Measuring the impact of these assessments is challenging, as it is unclear whether companies rely on them or prefer to assess candidates independently. The BQ-Portal has attempted to address this through a

project, which found that companies often need to retrain employees, as their skills frequently only meet the qualifications on paper.

KMK – Kultusministerkonferenz (ENIC-NARIC Germany) provides content-based recognition of non-regulated vocational qualifications, primarily at EQF levels 4 to 5, governed by the laws of the Länder (Kultusministerkonferenz, 2024). The benefits of this type of recognition are believed to include improved job prospects, full access to further education, enhanced opportunities for professional development, higher wages, and a crucial role in facilitating integration into society.

Chambers at the state level, such as the Chambers of Crafts (CC) and Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CCI), have recognition procedures aimed at improving the employment of skilled workers. Some of these chambers work directly with companies facing a shortage of skilled labour. While the recognition procedures vary by state, they generally involve comparing the content of qualifications against training regulations in Germany rather than established qualification frameworks. Additionally, some chambers organise practical tests for individuals who hold formal qualifications but lack documentation, with costs ranging from 1,000 to 1,500 EUR per test.

The German recognition landscape can be challenging to navigate due to the numerous bodies involved, each with their own interests at the political level. However, a cooperative system exists among the chambers, which have chosen to focus on specific countries. The BQ-Portal plays a crucial role in providing essential information, and there has been an increase in cooperation between the chambers and ENIC-NARIC Germany.

Recognition of vocational qualifications in Türkiye

Technical and vocational education in Türkiye is regulated by the Vocational Education and Training Act No. 3308, first issued in 1986 and further amended in 2001. It is available as formal education and non-formal education, which includes apprenticeships and in-service training (ecctis, 2024).

The Vocational Qualifications Authority Mesleki Yeterlilik Kurumu (MYK) was established in 2006 to bring Turkish technical and vocational education in line with that

of EU Member States and to align qualifications to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). MYK is responsible for establishing national occupational standards, developing and updating the vocational aspects of the Turkish qualifications framework and accrediting vocational training providers.

In Türkiye, higher education is classified at levels 5 to 8 in the Turkish National Qualifications Framework (NQF). So called vocational higher education programmes are limited to associate degree programmes (NQF/EQF level 5). However, all NQF level programmes including associate (NQF level 5), undergraduate (NQF level 6), graduate (NQF level 7), and doctorate (NQF level 8) confer both academic and professional rights to diploma holders, including those in vocational fields.

ENIC-NARIC Türkiye, operating under the Council of Higher Education (CoHE), functions at the national level as the centre responsible for the academic and professional recognition of qualifications. The procedure for recognition of academic and professional higher education qualifications on EQF levels 5 to 8 consists of an online application through the State portal (e-Devlet) and the issuing of an e-Recognition Statement. Credential evaluators conduct a pre-evaluation focusing on the five key elements of the qualifications, while the verification of all documents is carried out by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other relevant sources. The final evaluation is conducted by the Scientific Advisory Board of Professors, who specialise in different academic programmes, along with the University Committees (UCOM). UCOM intervenes when a second opinion is required and is also essential for unconfirmed and undocumented qualifications of migrants and refugees, assisting in identifying the "major and level" of the higher education qualification.

The final recognition decision made by the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) is legally binding and determines the main learning outcomes of a foreign qualification in comparison to the national qualification. If the decision is positive, full recognition is granted. If the decision is negative, the applicant has the right to appeal. For qualifications that do not fully meet the requirements, alternative forms of recognition are offered. These include alternative recognition, which evaluates the qualification in

terms of relevance; partial recognition, which accepts some credits and allows for enrolment to complete remaining requirements; and conditional recognition, which requires the completion of additional courses, orientation programmes, or internships (YÖK, 2024).

A post-secondary but non-higher education sector also exists in Türkiye; however, it is not classified as academic studies or higher education and is therefore not included in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). This type of education is not the responsibility of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) but is under the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and the Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA). In Türkiye, increased migration has led to the need for specific recognition schemes for vocational qualifications, with the aim of facilitating access to further studies and integration into the labour market (YÖK, 2024).

Comparison of Recognition Systems in Germany and Türkiye

In Germany, the recognition of foreign qualifications is quite decentralised, with the evaluation of vocational qualifications carried out by several bodies, some of which operate across all states. Applicants must apply for recognition at the relevant entity in their home state to obtain an evaluation of the vocational content in their qualifications. To help navigate this complex landscape, several tools are provided by the government.

In Türkiye, on the other hand, the recognition of foreign qualifications is more centralised, with a single recognition body operating at the national level. This recognition is legally binding. Recognition is divided into academic and professional categories; however, the recognition of vocational qualifications is not nationally recognised. Both countries offer alternatives for qualifications that do not receive full recognition.

4.2. Lithuania: A new recognition scheme for vocational qualifications

Extension of the Lithuanian recognition schemes to include vocational qualifications

Since the BRAVO project started in 2023, Lithuania has opened their recognition scheme of vocational qualifications.

Legislative reforms introduced in June 2024 brought significant changes to recognition of foreign qualifications in Lithuania. Before these reforms, there was no specific institution tasked with recognition of vocational qualifications. However, the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (ENIC-NARIC Lithuania) has now been assigned this responsibility, effective from 15 June 2024. As demand for qualified personnel in Lithuania continues to rise, it has become essential to reorganise the recognition system for foreign qualifications and establish designated bodies responsible for evaluating and recognising qualifications that align with levels 1 to 5 of the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework.

The main innovations include a collaborative framework between the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education and the Research Council of Lithuania, which will focus on legal entities responsible for the education, study, and employment of individuals with qualifications obtained abroad or through international programmes. A "one-stop shop" principle has been established, enabling holders of foreign qualifications to apply directly to the institution where they wish to study or work. Employers, competent institutions, and educational establishments can also seek recommendations regarding a candidate's qualifications. This new system aims to provide more efficient and targeted services to holders of foreign qualifications

4.3. Existing cooperation and agreements for recognition

In addition to the ENIC-NARIC network, cooperation already exists in Europe regarding recognition of academic and vocational qualifications. For instance, regional agreements such as the Nordic Agreement on recognition of higher education facilitates mutual recognition among the Nordic region (Nordic Council of Ministers for Education and Research, 2022). Similarly, the Baltic Agreement simplifies academic recognition processes among Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania (The Governments of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, 2019).

The “Mutual recognition of vocational or professional training in construction and civil engineering between the labour market parties in Sweden and Norway” (2008) ensures that qualifications related to construction are recognised across both countries. However, this agreement is primarily applied by employers rather than recognition centres. While such regional agreements provide valuable pathways for recognising academic and vocational qualifications, they operate independently from recognition authorities, leading to inconsistencies in outcomes. A dedicated network for vocational recognition could address gaps left by agreements that are currently more employer-driven than institutionally standardised. Furthermore, collaboration between the network and employers could enhance overall effectiveness of recognition processes.

The Nordic experience in collaborating on recognition of vocational qualifications is a valuable example for the broader European dialogue on information exchange and recognition of vocational qualifications. The NORRIC VET group, established by the Nordic Council of Ministers (NMR) and comprising the Nordic ENIC-NARIC offices, is committed to enhancing cooperation in recognising vocational qualifications at EQF levels 3 to 5. The group is exploring mutual recognition of vocational education and training and equal access for skilled workers to further education in other Nordic countries. However, challenges arise due to variations in mandates for recognition schemes and the differing levels of stakeholder involvement. The working group suggests that principles from the Nordic agreement on access to higher education

should be expanded to vocational qualifications in time. The group suggests a stronger focus on the Nordic network and to strengthen the role as information providers, for example through exploring a common NORRIC information platform while respecting national contexts (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2023).

4.4. Automatic recognition of vocational qualifications: Current landscape and challenges

Significant emphasis is placed on *automatic recognition* within the recognition sector, with policymakers actively promoting its implementation. *Automatic recognition*, as defined by the ENIC-NARIC network, follows the principle that "a bachelor is a bachelor," meaning that qualifications at a specific level should be universally recognised without detailed content comparisons. One common approach to automatic recognition involves utilising downloadable recognition statements with standardised information.

However, challenges persist regarding *automatic* recognition of vocational qualifications, excluding regulated professional qualifications. In addition to the existence of various established recognition schemes, the substantial variation in vocational education systems complicates the identification of equivalent qualifications. Moreover, vocational qualifications are often specialised, making the assessment of learning outcomes critical. For instance, determining the equivalence of a plumber's qualifications from different countries necessitates a thorough examination of their content. Additionally, level-based recognition approaches frequently overlook the specific skills and knowledge required by employers.

Automated recognition systems, such as Norway's registry for evaluated qualifications, which enables the system to propose outcomes based on previous evaluations, can streamline processes but may still require considerable time for initial evaluations.

In conclusion, it remains premature to establish *automatic* recognition for vocational qualifications as significant challenges continue to hinder the achievement of equivalence across diverse educational systems.

4.5. Vocational refugee qualifications and incomplete documentation

The term "refugee" typically refers to individuals forced to flee their country due to persecution, war, or violence, including displaced persons and those in refugee-like situations (UNHCR, 2024). A common challenge for these groups is their inadequately documented qualifications, which often arise when certificates are lost or unavailable, or when verifying documentation is impossible because of political instability in their home country.

According to Article VII of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) (1997), refugees, displaced persons, or individuals in refugee-like situations who have formal education from a recognised or accredited institution and cannot document their qualifications have the right to have their qualifications assessed when applying for admission to a study programme.

Most European states are committed to developing procedures for assessing qualifications under Article VII of the LRC (1997), which primarily applies to higher education qualifications, making it both a legal obligation and a social and economic benefit. Although the article does not formally require recognition of vocational qualifications, several European countries have started to introduce measures to assess such skills and qualifications of migrants and refugees, even in cases where formal documentation is lacking.

UNESCO's Recognition of Prior Learning (RVA) initiative (2024) aims to enhance accessibility for groups such as migrants and refugees by improving assessment tools and methods, particularly for technical and vocational competencies. UNESCO's Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) has led projects mapping similar schemes across various countries (UNESCO, 2022). These initiatives aim to integrate refugees and

displaced persons into the labour market by recognising their vocational skills, despite gaps in formal documentation. These frameworks are particularly vital for vocational qualifications, where conventional recognition processes may not apply.

For instance, France has established a system for the validation of prior learning (*Validation des acquis de l'expérience* or VAE), which allows individuals to have their work experience and informal education recognised as equivalent to formal qualifications, facilitating their integration into the workforce (UNESCO, 2022). The German BQ-Portal complements such efforts by providing information about recognition for refugees and an overview of the qualifications of refugees in Germany (BQ-Portal, 2024). Additionally, Germany's #ShowYourSkills initiative, although not directly connected to recognition, focuses on empowering low-skilled workers, including migrants and refugees, to validate their professional skills in the labour market through accessible self-assessment tools and comprehensive evaluations (UNESCO, 2022). Collectively, these initiatives promote the inclusion of beneficiaries in the labour market and support their pathways to vocational training opportunities in their host country. Despite the existing initiatives there remains a critical need for further advancements to enhance the recognition of vocational qualifications for refugees and migrants.

5. The mandate and scope of a network dedicated to recognition of vocational qualifications

The BRAVO project consortium consists of three NARIC centres that are part of the NARIC network, and the project is co-funded by EU funding for NARIC offices. Many NARIC centres also function as ENIC centres. While each network has its own mandate, they collaborate closely through the Joint ENIC-NARIC *Charter of Activities and Services* (2004) and are commonly referred to as the ENIC-NARIC Network.

When considering options for a network dedicated to recognition of vocational qualifications, the project has identified three relevant pathways:

- a) **Extending the NARIC network** to incorporate a specific network for recognition of vocational qualifications.
- b) **Starting an independent network** for recognition of vocational qualifications, separate from the NARIC network.
- c) **The zero option** - Maintaining the current status quo.

5.1. The mandate of the NARIC network

The ENIC (European Network of Information Centres in the European Region) and NARIC (National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union) networks are participating in an ongoing collaboration between the national information centres on academic recognition of qualifications of in total 55 countries.

The ENIC Network was established in 1994. The mandate of the ENIC Network is laid down in the Terms of Reference of the ENIC Network (Council of Europe, 2006) and aims to facilitate cooperation between national information centres on academic mobility and recognition in the European Region. ENIC centres should abide by LRC provisions and facilitate access to authoritative and accurate information on the higher education system and qualifications of the country in which it is located. The

network upholds and assists with the practical implementation of the LRC by competent national authorities and serves as a multilateral cooperation mechanism within the UNESCO Europe and North America region (ENIC-NARIC, 2024).

The NARIC Network was established in 1984 with the European Commission as secretariat. The NARIC Network has a similar mandate to the ENIC Network, but in the context of the European Union (ENIC-NARIC, 2024). The current mandate of the NARIC Network was formulated with the establishment of the so-called *SOCRATES II* (Decision No 253/2000/EC), which states that the network will “*collect and disseminate authenticated information, which is necessary for the purpose of academic recognition, also bearing in mind synergies with professional recognition of diplomas*”.

5.2. The scope of the ENIC-NARIC network

The scope of the ENIC-NARIC network is outlined in the *Joint ENIC-NARIC Charter of Activities and Services* (2004). This charter primarily focuses on recognition of higher education (HE) qualifications and those qualifications that grant access to higher education, as specified by Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC). Although the LRC is directed at academic recognition and will not be amended, some of its principles can, and are, being applied to recognition of vocational qualifications.

The *Joint ENIC-NARIC Charter of Activities and Services* (2004) outlines the framework and operational guidelines for national ENIC and NARIC centres in Europe. Its primary focus is to ensure a minimum standard of services provided by these centres, facilitating the recognition of qualifications across different educational systems. The charter emphasises the importance of political support, appropriate resources, and adequate funding for each centre to effectively carry out its mandate. Although initially concentrated on higher education qualifications, the principles of the charter can be amended to include vocational qualifications as well, reflecting the evolving needs of stakeholders in the education and labour sectors.

5.3. Perceived need for a dedicated network for recognition of vocational qualifications

The NARIC project CHARONA II (2016) shows that many ENIC-NARIC centres have already broadened their scope beyond higher education qualifications to include secondary, vocational, and higher professional qualifications. This expansion is primarily driven by stakeholder consultations, which reveal a growing need for information on various types of qualifications. It suggests that while the ENIC-NARIC network initially focused on academic recognition, the roles of some centres have naturally evolved to also include vocational qualifications as a response to the demands of the labour market and society.

The BRAVO workshops and survey results further highlight the need for a more structured and collaborative approach to vocational qualifications recognition. For example, during the BRAVO workshop in Stockholm (2024), participants emphasised the benefits of developing a dedicated network within the ENIC-NARIC network. These include optimising information sharing mechanisms, refining recognition criteria, and fostering closer collaboration between national recognition authorities.

Survey results also showed broad support for building a network or sub-network that would enhance cooperation on recognition of vocational qualifications. While there is a perceived need for a dedicated vocational network, there are also concerns from some centres already engaged in recognition of vocational qualifications who question the value of adding such a network when networks like ENIC-NARIC are already in place.

There is also a willingness among the European Commission and stakeholders outside of the ENIC-NARIC network to form a dedicated network to recognition of vocational qualifications, which was also indicated in discussions at the project workshops. Overall, the demand for better cooperation and structured processes is apparent.

5.4. Extending the scope of the ENIC-NARIC network to include vocational qualifications

Socioeconomic developments have made individual ENIC and NARIC centres adapt to varying local and national contexts, tailoring their remit to meet specific regulatory frameworks and recognition purposes. This emphasises the growing need for sharing detailed information about vocational qualifications between countries. Currently, the labour market's increasing demand for skilled workers is not being met by existing recognition systems, highlighting gaps in recognition of vocational qualifications across Europe.

Given these gaps, extending the NARIC or the ENIC-NARIC network to include vocational qualifications seems logical, especially as recognition of vocational education is crucial to meet evolving societal needs. Whether it is preferable to extend only the ENIC network or the entire ENIC-NARIC network remains a matter for further discussion. However, for simplicity, this report refers to the extension of the “ENIC-NARIC” network. Expanding the scope of the network would require significant support from recognition centres and decision-makers, as it would necessitate revising the Joint ENIC-NARIC Charter and altering the mandates of the ENIC and NARIC networks. A key issue in this debate is striking a balance between the necessity of extending the networks and the willingness of the centres to do so.

A phased approach to expanding the network could be a practical solution. Initially, participation could be limited to ENIC-NARIC centres already involved or planning to be involved in vocational qualifications recognition. This would allow the network to leverage existing expertise, gradually considering the inclusion of non-ENIC-NARIC centres where relevant. Further discussions would need to determine how these non-ENIC-NARIC centres would contribute - whether as full members or in close collaboration with the network.

Replacing ENIC-NARIC centres who do not deal with vocational qualifications with another relevant authority could be considered in relevant countries. However, this

approach requires careful consideration of the roles and responsibilities within each country's education system to avoid duplication of efforts or jurisdictional conflicts. While all of these issues are important, they may require further in-depth discussion beyond this initial report.

The network could help bring clarity regarding the integration of existing tools like the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and Europass. Questions remain about whether these tools are being used effectively, whether they meet the needs of recognition centres, and how a network would supplement or improve upon them.

In conclusion, while the BRAVO project considers extending the scope of ENIC-NARIC centres to include vocational qualifications as a necessary step to meet labour market demands, further in-depth discussions are needed to fully understand the roles of various actors and tools in this expanded network.

5.5. Other relevant stakeholders

When exploring the possibilities to create a network dedicated to recognition of vocational qualifications, it is important to note that the landscape of relevant stakeholders extends beyond the existing ENIC-NARIC network. While some of the most obvious actors are local or national recognition centres who are not part of the ENIC-NARIC network, there are also other important stakeholders. The first BRAVO report (2023) introduced ReferNet, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) and the European Training Foundation (ETF) as main actors in this landscape. As explored in chapter 3, Cedefop is the EU agency that plays a central role in developing vocational qualifications policies in the EU. Created by Cedefop, the ReferNet network provides a comprehensive insight to qualifications and educational pathways in the EU Member States, Norway and Iceland.

ETF focuses on supporting education and training reforms in their partner countries. Their recent initiatives also include mapping and analysing qualification recognition centres across 55 countries, 44 of which are also covered by the ENIC-NARIC network. At the BRAVO workshop in February 2024, ETF highlighted that these efforts

are aimed at improving the recognition and comparability of vocational qualifications. ETF also supports the African Continental Qualifications Framework and provides a resource hub for Ukrainian nationals.

Understanding the diversity among countries in terms of responsible authorities and recognition procedures is crucial for developing a common understanding of the vocational recognition landscape. Involving actors outside the ENIC-NARIC network in a dedicated network for recognition of vocational qualifications could help ensure a coordinated approach to vocational recognition across the sector. These partnerships could enhance the network's ability to adapt to the evolving needs of European stakeholders.

5.6. Alternative network

An alternative to extending the ENIC-NARIC network to include vocational qualifications could involve establishing a new, dedicated network specifically for vocational qualifications. This approach would require creating a separate administrative and operational structure, which could potentially avoid overburdening the existing ENIC-NARIC network.

While a dedicated network might allow for tailored solutions and specialised focus on vocational qualifications, it also presents significant challenges. These include the high initial costs of setting up a new network, developing new coordination mechanisms, and establishing the same level of trust and recognition that the ENIC-NARIC network currently enjoys. Another consideration is the potential overlap and redundancy that a separate network might create. It could lead to confusion among credential evaluators, stakeholders and duplicate efforts, which could be avoided by integrating vocational qualifications into the existing ENIC-NARIC network.

When considering a dedicated network for recognition of vocational qualifications, the issue of including relevant centres that are not part of the current ENIC-NARIC structure may be simpler. In many countries, non-ENIC-NARIC centres are already responsible for recognition of vocational qualifications. Establishing an independent

network would make it easier to incorporate these centres from the. However, this approach also introduces challenges, for example in terms of financing and administration. If vocational qualifications are not relevant to certain ENIC-NARIC centres, those centres could be excluded from the network.

5.7. The number of central recognition bodies per country

When considering the organisational structure for a dedicated network, it is important to keep in mind that different countries have different organisational structures for recognition of foreign education. Some countries have centralised their recognition services while others are decentralised. Some countries have recognition schemes for higher education and vocational qualifications in the same centre meaning that the NARIC centre offers both services, while in other countries other recognition bodies offer recognition of vocational qualifications. In addition, some countries do not offer recognition of vocational qualifications at all. There are different mandates, legislations and the recognition schemes themselves are also often organised differently in different countries.

A single central recognition body per country would streamline processes, reduce duplication of efforts, and provide a clear point of contact for recognition issues. This centralised approach could enhance efficiency and consistency in recognition practices. Therefore, it would be beneficial if the NARIC centres are responsible for recognition of vocational qualifications. However, the network will not be able to make such decisions. In countries where recognition of vocational qualifications is delegated to other recognition bodies, there could still be one centre who is responsible for that country's participation in the network. If there are more recognition bodies on vocational qualifications in the respective country, the main network contact could be responsible for including the rest of the centres.

Determining the most effective structure for the network to communicate with members will require careful consideration of national contexts and the specific needs of the member countries and the tasks of the network.

5.8. A bottom-up or a top-bottom approach

Implementing a dedicated network for recognition of vocational qualifications could follow either a bottom-up or a top-bottom approach. In this context, the bottom-up approach is particularly relevant and reflects our current situation.

The bottom-up approach involves individual ENIC-NARIC centres extending their services to include vocational qualifications either by their own or their governments initiative, and subsequently individual centres taking the initiative to start up a dedicated network for recognition of vocational qualifications. The ENIC-NARIC centres are already familiar with national circumstances and may already have connections with relevant stakeholders, such as individual holders of qualifications, employers, professional organisations, public authorities, and other interested parties. This grassroots method can also build on the existing network's strengths, building on established practices and expertise. However, such an approach lacks support from relevant policy makers, administrative measures and budget, and a support system.

Conversely, a top-down approach would involve policymakers, such as the European Union, mandating the creation of a dedicated network or issuing directives for cooperation, similar to the establishment of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC). This approach could provide clear directives and uniformity across countries. However, it might lack the adaptability to address specific local needs and contexts effectively.

5.9. Maintaining the Status Quo – The Zero Option

Maintaining the status quo, meaning not establishing a dedicated network for recognition of vocational qualifications, would maintain the current systems where each country manages recognition of vocational qualifications independently, without efforts for more international collaboration than there is today. While this avoids the complexities and resources required to create and maintain a network dedicated to recognition of vocational qualifications, it also limits cross-border collaboration and information-sharing. This approach may work for countries with well-established

national systems, however it is likely that all centres, no matter their experience, would benefit from international collaboration.

6. Organisation of a network dedicated to recognition of vocational qualifications

When establishing a dedicated network for recognition of vocational qualifications, careful attention must be given to its administration to ensure smooth operation and effectiveness. Defining the network's key tasks and considering the involvement of relevant stakeholders is essential for its success and long-term sustainability.

6.1. Potential organisation models for the network

The question of ownership is central to the establishment of a network dedicated to the recognition of vocational qualifications. Ownership determines not only the governance structure but also the accountability, strategic direction, and long-term sustainability of the network.

While the EU emphasises recognition of vocational qualifications, it is unlikely to take ownership of a dedicated network for this purpose. Instead, the EU is more likely to offer political support and guidance. Given the existing infrastructure and expertise of the ENIC-NARIC network, it would be more logical for this network to assume responsibility for a network dedicated to recognition of vocational qualifications. As mentioned, both the NARIC network or the ENIC-NARIC network could potentially integrate such a dedicated network, however we will use the joint name ENIC-NARIC network in this report for simplicity. It is important to note that BRAVO is primarily a NARIC project, and the specific forms of ownership and the relationship between the dedicated network and the ENIC and NARIC networks have not been fully explored. Further discussions will be required to clarify these aspects and determine the most appropriate form of ownership.

ENIC-NARIC ownership would allow the new network to draw on the existing relationships and trust built over decades of cooperation within the ENIC-NARIC network. It would also facilitate the sharing of best practices and resources between academic and vocational recognition bodies. However, this model might also risk

overburdening the ENIC-NARIC centres, as they are not likely to get more resources from their national governments.

The second option is to establish an entirely new, independent entity to own and operate the network. This model would create a specialised body focused exclusively on vocational qualifications, allowing for a tailored approach to the unique challenges and requirements of vocational recognition. Independent ownership would provide flexibility in governance, enabling the network to evolve organically and respond to the specific needs of the vocational education sector. However, creating an independent network from scratch would require significant effort to establish its credibility, secure funding, and develop partnerships.

Administration of the network

The administration of the new network will depend largely on its ownership model but will require clear governance structures, effective management, and robust administrative support regardless of the ownership scenario.

Under ENIC-NARIC ownership, the governance structure could involve a specialised sub-committee within the existing ENIC-NARIC framework, focusing exclusively on vocational qualifications. This subcommittee could work closely with national ENIC-NARIC centres to ensure consistency in recognition practices while allowing for the specificities of vocational qualifications to be addressed. This is just one example, there are options on how to organise the new network within the ENIC-NARIC network. The ENIC-NARIC network has established the annual meeting, the ENIC Bureau (EB) and the NARIC Advisory Board (NAB) as decision making bodies and advisory bodies. The new network could be incorporated in these bodies, or new bodies could emerge. It is still beneficial to build on something that is already established, if there is room for development.

An independent network would require a more self-contained governance model, possibly including a board of directors composed of experts in vocational education, representatives from industry, and policymakers. This board would be responsible for

setting strategic priorities, overseeing the network's activities, and ensuring accountability.

Effective management is critical for the network's success. Regardless of ownership, the network will need a dedicated secretariat or administrative body to handle day-to-day operations, coordination between members, and communication with external stakeholders. If owned by ENIC-NARIC, the secretariat could be housed within a central ENIC-NARIC centre or operate as a decentralized entity, with responsibilities shared among various NARIC centres. An independent network would need to establish its own administrative body, likely requiring more substantial initial investment and capacity-building efforts.

Funding of the network

Securing stable and adequate funding is essential for the sustainability of the network dedicated to recognition of vocational qualifications. The funding model will vary depending on the ownership structure.

The European Commission might provide funding in the way it does for the existing ENIC-NARIC network, particularly through dedicated funding for administration through open calls or projects that align with EU priorities. If the ENIC-NARIC network assumes ownership, partial funding could be sourced from a combination of national budgets, with contributions from each participating country. However, relying on national funding could lead to disparities in resource availability between countries, potentially affecting the network's overall effectiveness.

An independent network would need to explore diverse funding sources, including membership fees, grants, and partnerships with industry. This model could allow for greater flexibility and innovation but might also face challenges in securing consistent and sufficient funding, especially in the early stages of development.

Platforms for cooperation

Collaboration is critical to the success of a new network dedicated to recognition of vocational qualifications, ensuring that all members can share knowledge, best practices, and resources.

A robust digital platform is essential for facilitating communication and cooperation across the network. This platform should include tools for document sharing, virtual meetings, and collaborative project management. Additionally, it could host a centralized database for recognised qualifications, accessible to all members, ensuring transparency and consistency in recognition decisions.

In time, artificial intelligence (AI) could serve as a valuable tool for project administration, cooperation, and the collection and sharing of information. However, implementing AI would require digital development, which requires dedicated funding.

While digital tools are crucial, in-person meetings, workshops, and conferences will also play a vital role in fostering cooperation. Regular gatherings of network members will allow for the exchange of ideas, the development of joint initiatives, and the building of trust and relationships.

6.2. Potential tasks for the network

Establishing a dedicated network for recognition of vocational qualifications could help address current issues related to recognition of these qualifications, by providing a common ground for sharing information and resources. However, there are many tasks such a network can take on.

Establishing the network

To achieve a functioning network dedicated to the recognition of vocational qualifications, the first step must be to establish and initiate the network. By using the existing ENIC-NARIC network as a starting point and considering how vocational qualifications can be integrated, participants with experience from both the ENIC-NARIC network and recognition of vocational qualifications would be in a good position to do this job. This includes doing the necessary work in the starting phase, including communication work, registration of participants, deciding on structure and administration, and which platforms to use. For the network to function effectively, clear objectives and administration are essential.

Systematic approach to Information sharing

A significant task for the dedicated network would be to gather and centralize information about vocational qualifications and recognition of vocational qualifications. This includes gathering data from different countries on how their education system is organised and how they assess foreign qualifications, making it easier for users to find the information they need. Today, there are many different sources of varied quality, and it is hard to navigate. A systematic approach to information gathering, including examples of qualifications, documents, and competencies, would be important for the network. The users could be both credential evaluators and applicants. Employers are also interested in understanding how these qualifications translate into competencies, which could also be a focus of the network.

One of the key points that came up during the BRAVO project is the difficulty in accessing and updating information. Therefore, the network could focus on improving the exchange of information between different centres and making the existing information accessible. Creating a separate page for vocational qualifications on the ENIC-NARIC website could be a practical first step toward centralizing information and providing a resource for all interested parties. In addition, there should be a structure for keeping the information updated and some guidelines to prevent new sources from popping up if they could be incorporated into the existing pages. In addition, learning modules about vocational education could be developed by the network.

Collaboration and expertise sharing

As recognition of vocational qualifications is a relatively narrow field, the dedicated network should facilitate collaboration among credential evaluators. Getting to know colleagues in other countries is valuable for learning and expanding understanding of the field. By sharing experiences and best practices, participants can learn from each other and potentially improve and adapt their own practices. Evaluators would have direct contacts to colleagues that could help with providing information on education

systems or how they evaluate a qualification. In addition, an important area for cooperation is discovering documentation fraud through system and document knowledge, and verification databases. Collaboration among credential evaluators could also help create a sense of community. In addition, the network can facilitate cooperation with different actors, including institutions, ministries, and other stakeholders involved in the field of vocational recognition.

Physical meetings are also important for networking. By organizing workshops or other themed events, credential evaluators could get to know each other and share perspectives in person. In addition, there could be hospitality visits to other offices to learn from each other. The network could also organise conferences on recognition of vocational qualifications to gather interested stakeholders and credential evaluators. In many ways, the network could be the gathering point for all interested parties. Lastly, the network could also function as a policy advisor for the European Commission in the relevant field.

Harmonisation and methodology

While recognising that practices vary across countries, the network should look at potential for harmonisation of recognition processes where possible. This does not mean enforcing uniformity but rather promoting best practice sharing and collaboration to make recognition processes more streamlined and understandable. It can be valuable to learn both from colleagues who work in similar ways and those who have different recognition procedures. And even if the recognition schemes are organised in different ways, it is still useful to share information on how one understands different qualifications. Mapping the authorities responsible for recognition of vocational qualifications in each country and sharing information about vocational education systems can help achieve this goal.

From the perspective of an end user, it would also be beneficial with similar practices in different countries. The applicants can today experience different processes and different treatments because of how the different recognition schemes and assessment processes are organised,

6.3. Stakeholder involvement in the network

Employers are key stakeholders as they are the end users of recognition statements. According to the BRAVO survey results, over half of the respondents who assess foreign vocational qualifications do not engage directly with stakeholders, indicating a pressing need for improved engagement strategies.

The BRAVO survey identified various opportunities for engaging stakeholders in recognition processes. These include involving stakeholders directly in the recognition process, collaborating on the development of recognition procedures, raising awareness about recognition schemes, engaging industry representatives in policy development, and partnering with educational institutions to implement compensatory measures. Relevant stakeholders include other recognition and policymaking authorities, employers, healthcare organisations, labour organisations, regulatory bodies, and educational institutions. This broad spectrum of collaborators highlights the complexity and variability of recognition processes across different organisations.

Collaboration with the ReferNet network could be beneficial. The European network for vocational education and training (ReferNet) offers valuable insights and data on various vocational systems across the European Union. This partnership could enhance understanding of different vocational qualifications within the EU, enabling credential evaluators to better assess and recognise these qualifications across countries.

A dedicated network for recognition of vocational qualifications should adapt to include a wider range of stakeholders and recognition purposes while looking to enhance the stakeholder cooperation already established by some recognition centres. Partnerships with stakeholders can provide valuable insights into the labour market's needs and ensure that recognition of vocational qualifications aligns with industry requirements.

7. Challenges related to creating a network for recognition of vocational qualifications

There are several potential challenges to overcome when creating a network for recognition of vocational qualifications. This section explores the primary obstacles, including issues related to language and definitions, organisational expertise, varying national recognition models, and the potential risks in creating such a network. Findings from Cedefop's analytical framework for comparing VET (2023) and discussions within BRAVO at the BRAVO workshops emphasise the importance of having a common conceptual basis and standardised terminology to successfully navigate these challenges.

7.1. Language and definitions

The lack of a common language among the various stakeholders in the vocational recognition sector creates barriers that complicate the development of best practices and make it challenging to ensure all stakeholders share the same understandings. The need for a "common language" extends linguistic translation; it requires developing a shared terminology that accurately reflects the nuances of vocational qualifications across different educational and occupational contexts. According to Cedefop's analytical framework (2023), a standardised vocabulary is important for effective communication and collaboration among the offices involved in recognition of vocational qualifications. The BRAVO project discussed different definitions comprehensively in the first BRAVO report (2023). Additionally, various countries adopt different terminology to recognising foreign vocational qualifications, such as "academic recognition," "professional recognition," and "recognition of regulated professions". It is important to acknowledge the differences and begin working towards finding some common ground for cooperation.

This calls for better collaboration and development of tools, that may help facilitate a common understanding and terminology for vocational qualifications. Having in mind Cedefop's analytical framework (2023), which highlights the importance of a shared

conceptual foundation to support mutual understanding and trust, solving these challenges involves defining and distinguishing between vocational qualifications and regulated professional qualifications, clarifying the scope of TVET, HVET, initial VET, and continuing VET. It also involves harmonising the definitions of higher vocational education, post-secondary vocational education, and short-cycle qualifications.

Such harmonisation can help facilitate cooperation, joint resources, and tools. It can also ensure that all stakeholders, regardless of their national context or the specificities of their educational systems, have a shared understanding of the terms in the recognition sector. By establishing a common language and harmonising definitions, it will be possible to improve communication, reduce misunderstandings, and create a more efficient recognition sector and network.

7.2. Expertise about vocational qualifications in the ENIC-NARIC networks

The BRAVO findings demonstrate the network's broad engagement in recognition of vocational qualifications across multiple educational levels, particularly at the upper secondary and post-secondary levels. Approximately 54% of respondents assess vocational upper secondary education, while 57% are involved in evaluating vocational post-secondary education. These figures illustrate the increasing importance of vocational qualifications within the ENIC-NARIC network's remit.

Collaboration with stakeholders in the recognition process also varies significantly across the network. Approximately 55% of respondents report conducting assessments independently, while the remaining 45% work with various stakeholders, including educational institutions and industry bodies. This collaborative approach enhances the network's ability to align recognition practices with the changing needs of both education and the labour market.

Navigating the complexities of recognising vocational qualifications within the ENIC-NARIC network necessitates ongoing adaptation to evolving qualification landscapes and harmonisation of practices across diverse national contexts. The expertise of the

network dedicated to recognition of vocational qualifications can help facilitate effective recognition processes for vocational qualifications.

7.3. Different models for organisation of recognition at national level

The organisation of recognition for vocational qualifications varies significantly across countries, shaped by differing legislative frameworks, institutional practices, and stakeholder engagement, reflecting different socio-economic and educational contexts. Insights from the BRAVO survey highlight the complexity of these national models and the need for improved understanding to enhance recognition processes.

A significant challenge arises from diverse practices and regulations. ENIC-NARIC centres operate under unique national mandates, resulting in varied recognition processes that complicate assessments for both academic and professional purposes, varying from detailed content assessments to broader descriptions. While harmonisation is difficult without a comprehensive framework similar to the LRC for vocational qualifications, there are opportunities for centres who want to set up recognition schemes for vocational qualifications to learn from established recognition schemes. Sharing best practices and developing common guidelines can improve consistency without necessitating complete uniformity.

Differentiating between formal and non-formal education is particularly challenging in the vocational sector, especially for qualifications at EQF levels 4 and 5, due to their dual roles in education and employment contexts. A specialised network could help, guided by national legislation and inspired by frameworks such as the LRC and the European Area of Recognition (EAR) manual. The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and Europass provide reference points for mutual understanding.

Providing differentiated services tailored to stakeholder needs presents a significant challenge. Recognition authorities must balance issuing legally binding decisions and advisory statements, considering the varying acceptance levels among stakeholders such as trade associations and competent authorities. Regional agreements and

treaties also influence recognition practices by establishing frameworks for mutual recognition and standard-setting.

In conclusion, the organisation of recognition of vocational qualifications at the national level is complex, influenced by varying legislation, practices, and stakeholder involvement. Establishing a network could facilitate information sharing and promote common understanding.

7.4. Differences in remit between organisations in different countries

Networks such as ENIC-NARIC play an important role in Europe, tasked with evaluating and recognising foreign higher education and qualifications giving access to higher education. However, ENIC-NARIC centres operate under distinct national legislations and institutional arrangements, influencing their scope and procedures. For instance, while some ENIC-NARIC centres handle both academic and professional recognition comprehensively, others may restrict their remit to specific purposes, educational levels or types of qualifications (Cedefop, 2023).

According to BRAVO survey results, operational differences among recognition organisations include varying remits, such as the scope of qualifications covered, including vocational levels and academic degrees, as well as the types of assessments conducted, including level assessments and content-based evaluations. These differences affect the competencies and expertise required of credential evaluators. Consequently, collaboration among organisations within networks like ENIC-NARIC can significantly contribute to harmonising recognition practices and sharing best practices.

As the landscape of vocational qualifications recognition continues to evolve, ongoing dialogue and capacity-building will be essential. Leveraging tools and recommendations from the European Commission and organisations like Cedefop and ETF will support inclusive and equitable recognition practices, fostering workforce mobility and economic integration across borders.

Differences in remit among recognition organisations reflect diverse national contexts and priorities, making ongoing collaboration and networking essential for fostering effective cooperation on recognition of vocational qualifications, enhancing information provision, and facilitating recognition opportunities across Europe.

7.5. Risks of creating a network for recognition of vocational qualifications

Creating a network for the recognition of vocational qualifications across countries involves managing several risks and challenges. These risks primarily revolve around attracting members, active participation, network relevance, platform functionality and administration.

One of the primary risks in establishing a network for recognition of vocational qualifications is the challenge of attracting enough members. Recognition centres and stakeholders across different countries may have varying priorities and limited resources, making it difficult to gain widespread interest and commitment. As shown in the first BRAVO report (2023), some centres do not see the benefits a dedicated network could add. To address this, it's essential to clearly demonstrate the unique benefits and practical outcomes of participation, such as improved recognition processes, shared resources, and increased cross-border collaboration.

Even after securing membership, fostering active participation is another significant challenge. In many networks, members join initially but fail to engage regularly, leading to a passive network with limited interaction and knowledge exchange. Ensuring ongoing involvement requires sustained motivation and structured opportunities for members to contribute meaningfully. Without proper incentives or mechanisms to promote engagement, the network risks becoming stagnant, reducing its overall impact. Structured communication channels, regular workshops, and clear roles can help foster ongoing participation and create a dynamic environment that encourages collaboration.

There is a risk that the network may struggle to be relevant to all its members, due to the differing approaches to vocational qualifications among recognition authorities and stakeholders. Different countries may have unique recognition needs that could cause the network to lose its appeal if it does not cater to these regional variations. Regular updates to the network's objectives, addressing current challenges, and incorporating member feedback will be vital for keeping the platform relevant and beneficial to all stakeholders.

A technical infrastructure that supports the network is crucial to its success, and the risk of poor platform functionality can hinder effective collaboration and information sharing. A network that relies on outdated or difficult-to-navigate systems will discourage use and contribute to disengagement among members. To manage this risk, the network should map and choose the best tools, and also consider investing in a user-friendly and flexible digital platform that integrates existing tools and facilitates efficient communication and data sharing between members.

Managing an international network for recognition of vocational qualifications presents significant administrative and financial challenges. Coordinating across various legal frameworks, recognition procedures, and educational systems adds complexity. Daily operations, such as addressing member queries, organising meetings, and maintaining data and technical systems, also contribute to this complexity. Therefore, a dedicated administrative body is necessary to efficiently manage these tasks and ensure smooth operations. Additionally, recognition centres vary in their funding and resources, which poses a risk that some may struggle to contribute to the network due to financial limitations. As the sources of funding for this network are yet to be determined, potential economic constraints could hinder its ability to operate effectively and develop essential tools and resources.

8. Final reflections and recommendations of the BRAVO project

The BRAVO project has highlighted the pressing need for a more structured approach to the recognition of vocational qualifications across Europe. When considering how to create a network dedicated to recognition of vocational qualifications, several options have been outlined. Each approach has its own advantages and potential challenges, and it's important to assess them carefully before making a decision. As we look to the future, both short-term and long-term strategies will be important in addressing the existing challenges and enhancing the effectiveness of vocational qualifications recognition.

8.1. Alternatives for a dedicated network for recognition of vocational qualifications

Alternative 1: Extend the ENIC-NARIC Network with a Subgroup

One viable option is to extend the existing ENIC-NARIC network to include vocational qualifications. This could involve creating a dedicated subgroup within the current network, specifically focusing on recognition of vocational qualifications. Since ENIC-NARIC already serves as a trusted platform for the recognition of qualifications concerning higher education, this extension would take advantage of the network's established reputation and existing structures. A step-by-step approach could be followed here, starting with ENIC-NARIC offices that already handle vocational qualifications, before gradually expanding to include others. Additionally, leveraging tools already developed by ENIC-NARIC could ensure a smoother and more efficient start. The project has outlined challenges which would have to be addressed, however they should be possible to solve.

Alternative 2: Establish an Independent Network

Another option would be to establish a completely independent network for vocational qualifications recognition. This network would operate autonomously from ENIC-

NARIC, allowing for greater focus on the specific needs of vocational qualifications and stakeholders. While this could offer tailored solutions, it comes with significant challenges, such as establishing a new administrative structure, higher costs and the effort required to build trust and participation from scratch.

Alternative 3: The Zero Alternative (Status Quo)

The third alternative is the zero option, which involves maintaining the current situation with no dedicated network for vocational qualifications recognition. In this scenario, the existing systems and informal networks would continue to operate as they currently do, without any major changes or dedicated effort toward creating a formal network. While this might be easier in the short term, it would likely perpetuate the existing challenges of inconsistency and inefficiency in vocational qualifications recognition across countries.

8.2. The BRAVO project's recommended approach to a dedicated network

Recommended Approach: Extending the ENIC-NARIC network

The Bravo project recommend extending the ENIC-NARIC network with a subgroup focused on vocational qualifications. This approach builds on the trust and recognition already established within the ENIC-NARIC network, offering a more efficient path to success than starting from scratch. It also allows the network to grow gradually, incorporating vocational recognition centres in a phased manner and beginning with those that already assess vocational qualifications.

Step-by-Step Approach

We suggest implementing this recommendation in stages. Initially, the network should include only ENIC-NARIC centres already involved in recognition of vocational qualifications. Over time, the network can expand to include other relevant centres and stakeholders. This will help ensure a manageable process and prevent the network from becoming overloaded in its early stages.

Stakeholder engagement

The network should aim to strengthen engagement with key stakeholders, including employers, educational institutions, and vocational training providers, to better understand their needs and expectations. In addition, the expertise of organisations such as Cedefop, ETF, and the European Commission can help a possible network for recognition of vocational qualifications to foster cooperation, enhance mobility, and support the integration of skilled professionals into the European labour market effectively.

Initial focus on Information Sharing

The network's primary goal should be focused on information sharing. According to the BRAVO project survey, more than 70% of the respondents stated their interest in a type of forum or mailing list to discuss and ask for advice relating to vocational education and recognition issues. The information sharing could include the use of existing platforms such as EQF, Europass, and other recognition tools already developed within the European framework. A challenge that the network should address early on is the different vocabulary and definitions in the sector. Once the information sharing process is well-established, the network can move toward developing more advanced tools. Information sharing can also be achieved through regular workshops, webinars, and the development of shared databases.

Long-term development

As the network evolves, it may be necessary to develop additional digital cooperation platforms and tools that address the specific needs of vocational qualifications stakeholders. The network can also explore whether AI can be used to enhance recognition procedures and cooperation. These developments should be introduced gradually and in response to the network's growing membership and scope, ensuring that the network remains relevant and manageable.

8.3. Conclusion

By adopting the project recommendations, we can move towards a more integrated and effective system for recognising vocational qualifications, benefiting both individuals and employers in Europe. Here are the alternatives, based on insights from the BRAVO project, for networking in the field of recognition of vocational qualifications.

Glossary

AI Artificial Intelligence

BQ – Portal The information portal for foreign professional qualifications

BRAVO Bridging a European Network for Recognition of Vocational Qualifications

Cedefop European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

CS Certificate Supplement

CFR Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union

CVET Continuing Vocational Education and Training

EAR European Area of Recognition Project

EC European Commission

EEA European Economic Area

EEA European Education Area

EHEA (QF-EHEA) European Higher Education Area (Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area)

ENIC European Network of Information Centres in the European Region

EQAVET European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training

EQF European Qualifications Framework

ESCO European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations

ESG Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

ETF European Training Foundation

EU European Union

HE Higher Education

HEIs Higher Education Institutions

HVET Higher Vocational Education and Training

IVET Initial Vocational Education and Training

LO Learning Outcome

LRC Lisbon Recognition Convention

NARIC National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union

NOKUT Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education

NORRIC Nordic Recognition Information Centres ? – maybe add as I will add something about the Nordic project

NQF National Qualifications Framework

PQD Professional Qualifications Directive

Refernet European Network of Expertise on VET

SCHE Short Cycle in Higher Education

TVET Technical and Vocational Education and Training

UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

VET Vocational Education and Training

WES World Education Services

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