

Bridging the Gaps: Rethinking Recognition to Ensure Equal Opportunities for Refugees

Date and time: 3 December 2024, 09:00 – 16:00

Place: Norway House / Maison de la Norvège, [Rue Archimède 17, Brussels](#)

Concept note

Today, there are more than 120 million refugees and forcibly displaced persons in the world. According to the [UNHCR](#), only 7 per cent of refugees have access to higher education, far below the global average higher education enrolment at 42 per cent. At the same time, the number of refugees in Europe stands at 22.5 million. Many of them have qualifications and skills that can be put into use in host countries if assessed by competent recognition authorities such as ENIC-NARIC centres.

Through the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC), the European countries have committed to develop procedures for assessing refugees' qualifications, even when documentation is lacking. But how should higher education institutions and ENIC-NARIC centres go about to assess and recognize the qualifications of refugees' who are not able to provide documentation of their studies?

The [2019 LRC monitoring report](#) showed that 70 per cent of European countries did not have any formal procedures in place for recognition of refugees' qualifications. The [2022 monitoring report](#) reaffirmed that many countries are lagging behind with implementing procedures, despite the development of tools and initiatives, such as Erasmus+ projects [Toolkit](#), [REACT](#) and [ARENA](#).

Building on these, [EQUAL](#) has addressed the legal, procedural and technical barriers preventing refugees from admission to higher education or from finding work because they are unable to document their qualifications. The project has supported NARIC centres in establishing sustainable recognition procedures that align with national legislation and admission practices at higher education institutions.

Through the dissemination of the results of the project, this conference aims to engage higher education stakeholders in a broader discussion on how to improve refugees' access to further studies and work through the fair recognition of their qualifications, and how the results from EQUAL can be scaled up at national and international level.



Draft agenda (v. 09/10/2024)

Start	End	Activity	Who
09:00	09:30	Coffee and registration	
09:30	09:35	Welcome and practicalities	Dag Hovdhaugen , Executive Director, HK-dir Moderator: Andreas Snildal , Policy Director, HK-dir
09:35	09:50	Introduction to the EQUAL project	Helén Sophie Haugen , Head of Department, HK-dir
09:50	10:10	Keynote 1: Effects of improving recognition and validation of skills and qualifications of refugees and displaced persons in Europe	Thomas Liebig , Senior Administrator, International Migration Division, OECD
10:10	10:30	Keynote 2: Recognition of refugees' qualifications from a global and African perspective	Peter J. Wells , Head of Education at UNESCO Regional Office for Southern Africa
10:30	10:40	Q&A	
10:40	11:00	Coffee break	
11:00	11:10	Launch of EQUAL e-learning course	Florian Gorqaj & Kjersti Jensen , Senior Advisors, HK-dir
11:10	12:00	Development of new policies and assessment procedures for recognition of qualifications held by refugees missing documentation.	Aurelija Valeikiene , Deputy Director, SKVC (Lithuanian ENIC-NARIC) Hanna Reczulska Director of Department, NAWA (Polish ENIC-NARIC) Gianina Chirazi , Director, CNRED (Romanian ENIC-NARIC)
12:00	13:00	Lunch	
13:00	13:30	Sharing of best practice from higher education institutions	Prof. Maria Drakaki , Director of the Institute for the Management of Refugee Flows and



			<p>Crises, International Hellenic University, Greece</p> <p>Adriana Bortolotti, Manager of International students admission unit, University of Brescia, Italy</p> <p>Ceren Genç, Team Leader for International Student Admissions, Utrecht University, the Netherlands</p>
13:30	14:00	<p>Perspectives from stakeholder organizations in higher education.</p> <p>2 presentations (15 min.)</p>	<p>Helen Peterbauer, Policy Analyst, European Universities Association</p> <p>Iris Kimizoglu, President, European Students Union</p>
14:00	14:20	Coffee break	
14:20	14:50	<p>The way forward – which mechanisms, projects and tools are available for supporting recognition of refugees' qualifications in Europe, and what is needed to improve the implementation of Article VII of the Lisbon Recognition Convention?</p> <p>2 presentations (15 min.)</p>	<p>Villano Qiriaz, Head of the Education Department, Council of Europe</p> <p>Chiara Finocchietti, President of ENIC Bureau</p>
14:50	15:20	Panel discussion. How to maintain and develop knowledge and practice?	Panel: Peterbauer, Kimizoglu, Qiriaz and Finocchietti
15:20	15:45	Mini workshop	Group work
15:45	16:00	Plenary discussion and concluding remarks	

Registration

[Click here to register for in-person attendance in Brussels](#) (first come, first served)

[Click here to register for online streaming](#) by 22 November

Practical information

How to get to Norway house

Norway House is located at Rue Archimède 17, right in the centre of the EU quarters in Brussel (Schuman). It houses the Norwegian Mission to the EU. You might be asked to show a photo ID at the entrance, please make sure to bring one.

From the Zaventem airport, the venue is easily accessible by bus or train.

From the airport by train or bus

From the airport, there are frequent **trains** to the centre of Brussels (Gare Central or Gare du Midi), or even to Schuman (twice per hour), if you are coming directly to the venue. The train station at the airport is situated at the bottom level (- 1) and is easily accessible and well indicated from the arrival hall. Tickets can be purchased from a machine at the airport or via the [SNCB app/webpage](#), and cost 10,8 Euro one way. Travel time is approx. 15-20 minutes to the city centre, or 15 minutes to Schuman. From the Schuman train station, Norway house is a 5 minute walk (see map). You should choose the exit "Charlemagne".

The **Airport bus** (line 12 and 21) goes from level 0, and tickets cost 7,5 Euros (can be paid contactless with credit card onboard the bus, or on the machine at the bus stop). The bus uses 30-45 minutes (depending on traffic, which can be heavy in the rush hours). You should leave the bus at the stop called **Schuman**, and it stops right opposite Norway house.

From Brussels city centre

From the city centre, the easiest way to reach Norway house is by **Metro 1 or 5**, direction Hermann-Debroux or Stockel. From Gare Central it is a 10 minute ride, and you can pay contactless tapping your credit card (around 2,10 euros per trip). If you come from other locations in Brussels, for instance Gare du Midi, you can change from lines 2 and 6 at the Arts-Loi stop.

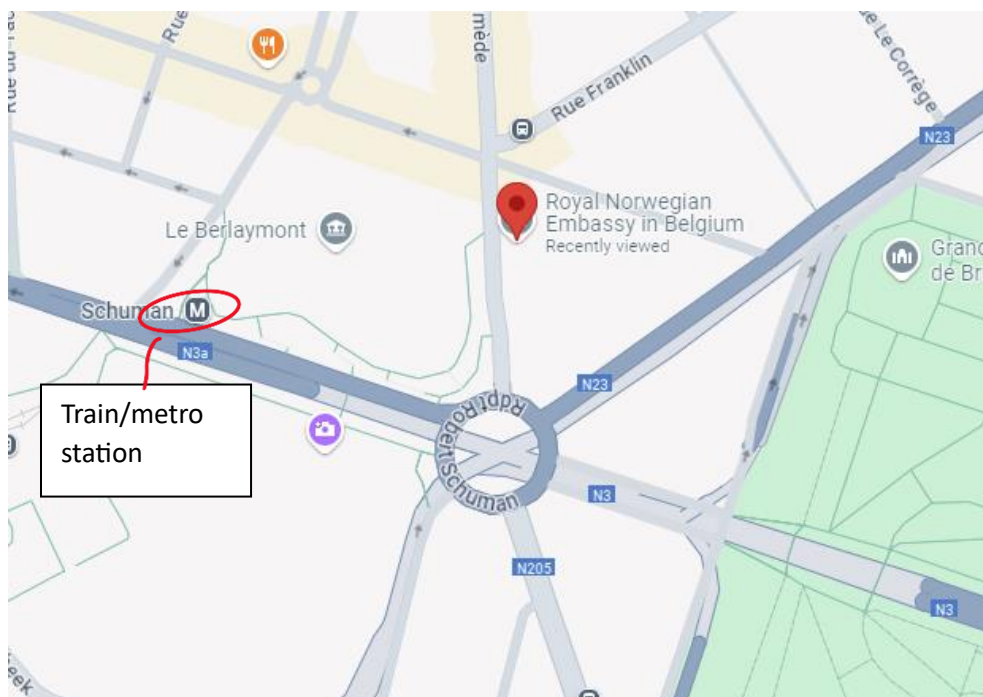
More info about bus and metro here: [STIB-MIVB – Brussels Intercommunal Transport Company](#)

Taxis

There are taxi services from the airport, although with a lot of road works going on, train might be a safer and quicker solution. They cost 45–50 euros from the airport. Most companies accept cards, but it is a good idea to ask the driver before getting into the car.

Companies:

- Taxis Verts, +32 (0)23 49 49 49, <http://www.taxisverts.be/en/>
- Taxis Autolux, +32 (0)2 5 123 123, <http://www.taxisautolux.be/en/>
- Uber/Bolt via app.



Money: More and more places accept credit cards as payment, but it is still a good idea to have some cash. Small bars/cafes might only accept cash, or the local “bancontact” debit cards.

Weather: December is a bit unpredictable but expect cold and perhaps wet weather conditions. Many places keep a cooler indoor temperature than for instance in some Scandinavian countries, so it might be a good idea to bring warm clothes.

What to do/see: Do you have some spare time? You can get some ideas here: [What to do | Visit Brussels](#). From the end of November, the Brussels Christmas market is up, with different vending stalls and a light show on the Grand Place: [Winter Wonders and Christmas Market 2024 | City of Brussels](#)

Project consortium

