

General Recognition of Qualifications

The General System

The general system of recognition of qualifications applies as a fall back for qualifications not covered by specific recognition. The system is based on mutual recognition of qualifications by EU Member States. It allows the application of compensatory measures by the host States, if there are substantial differences between the training acquired by the migrant and the training required by the host. The compensatory measure may take the form of an adaption period or an aptitude test. The choice is generally be up to the migrant unless specific derogations exist.

If access to a profession is regulated (i.e. subject to specific qualifications) the Authority in the host Member State must allow access to the profession in question under the same conditions as for its own nationals provided the applicant holds a training qualification obtained in another Member State which attests a level of training at least equivalent to the level immediately below that which is required in the host Member State. Where the profession is not subject to specific professional qualifications, the applicant should provide evidence of two years full time professional experience or within the preceding ten years on top of the qualifications.

Types of Qualifications Covered

There are five types of qualification mentioned in the 2005 Directive on the mutual recognition of professional qualifications:-

- Attestation of competence which corresponds to general primary or secondary education or an attestation of competence issued by an authority in the home States on the basis of a training course not forming part of a certificate or diploma

- Certificate which corresponds to training at secondary level of a technical and professional nature or which is general in character and supplemented by a professional course
- Diploma certifying successful completion of training at post secondary level of at least one year duration or comparable professional training
- Diploma certifying successful completion of training at university level of a duration of at least three years and less than four years
- Diploma certifying successful completion of training at higher level university of a duration of at least four years.

Compensating Provisions

The host Member State may make recognition of the qualification subject to the applicant completing a compensation measure if

- the training is one year shorter than required by the host Member State or
- the training covers substantially different matters to that covered by the evidence of formal training required in the host Member State or
- the profession is defined in the host Member State comprises one or more regulated professional activities which do not exist in the corresponding profession in the applicant's home State and the difference consists of specific training which covers different matters from those covered by the migrant.

The host Member State must generally offer the applicant a choice between an adaption and aptitude test. Host Member States can vary this requirement with the EU Commission's consent.

The Directive provides for representative associations at both national and EU level to establish common platforms to determine measures to compensate for substantial differences identified between the requirements of different Member States. The purpose is to make recognition of professional qualification easier. The EU Commission may submit implementing measures to the Member States. Once this is in place the Member State must waive the imposition of compensatory measures on applicants who meet the relevant conditions.

Recognition Based on Experience

There is a system of recognition of qualification attested by professional experience in certain industrial craft and commercial areas. The elements taken into consideration for recognition of experience are duration and form of professional experience in a self employed or employed category in the relevant sector. Previous training is also taken into account and this may reduce the amount of experience required. Activities in this category cover various sectors ranging from textiles to chemical industry including printing manufacture and construction.

An individual application must be made to the regulatory authority in the host States accompanied by the required documents and certificates. The competent authority has one month to acknowledge receipt and draw attention to any missing document. A decision must be taken within three months of the date the application was received.

Member States may require migrants to have knowledge of languages necessary for practising the profession. Evaluation of language skills is separate from recognition of professional qualifications. It must take place after recognition of an actual access to the profession is sought.