An eco-system perspective on the recognition culture in higher education

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External factors that shape universities

Some examples
- Global movement of people
- Socio-economic factors
- Regional developments

Most recent
- Covid-19
- Geopolitical situations
Effects of external factors

- Universities have become more open to non-traditional backgrounds
- But universities are part of a larger eco-system that intertwines with internal decisions at universities
Rīga Stradiņš University (RSU)

- A public research university
- Located in the capital city of Rīga in Latvia
- Established as a medical school in 1950, but currently has a full-university status
- Levels of study: college, bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral
- Number of students: ~10K
- Number of full-time international students from 70+ countries: ~2.8K (28%)
RSU examples: Recognising non-traditional backgrounds

- Expanding admissions criteria
- Additional certificates, volunteer work, etc.
- Language skill testing
- Digital educational documents
- Opportunities for credit-transfer
- Role of Open University
Becoming more open: Covid-19

• Transitioning to an online application process in a week
Becoming more open: War in Ukraine

- Recognising prior educational experience
- Transfer opportunities for Ukrainian students
- Open University courses
• Institutional culture of recognition is important, but not sufficient.
• Working with other actors in the higher education eco-system.
• Recognition must be approached from an eco-system perspective that involves multiple actors who play a decisive role in the creation of recognition culture.
Requirement for external recognition

- National recognition agency
  - Evaluation of previous academic credentials
  - Additional fee
  - Waiting times
Authentication of documents

- Legalisation
- Additional assessment countries and double-legalisation
Access to embassies and consular departments

- Staff shortages and administrative processes
- Lack of representations
- Foreign policy priorities
Different HE entry requirements in different countries

- Mandatory subjects
Lengthy administrative processes

• Repetitive paperwork
• Multi-step procedures
Health requirements

• Recognition of non-Western Covid-19 vaccines
• Lack of European vaccination passports (European electronic registry)
• Language problem
Conflict zones and lost documents

• National regulations on who qualifies for university studies
• One exception, but other situations
Inter-operable cross-border systems

- Electronic signatures
Consequences for students

• Lost time
• High costs
• Stress
• Uncertainty
• Lack of flexibility
• Sense of inequal treatment
Recommendations

- University collaborations with governmental institutions to shape national policies in ways that are friendly to international students;
- Shifting the formal responsibility of recognition of prior education and experience to universities;
- Creating opportunities for automatic recognition within the EU and other regions or, at least, inter-operable databases;
- Engaging international professional organisations and accrediting bodies;
- Facilitating collaborations among EU embassies in various parts of the world;
- Cross-border inter-operable systems and services.
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