



GEFÖRDERT VOM



Bundesministerium
für Bildung
und Forschung

Recognition Culture in Higher Education. Approaches to Transferring the Concept into Practice

11 December 2023

Agenda

- **Introduction**
- **Status quo of recognition at German universities**
 - Achievements
 - Challenges
- **The MODUS project**
 - Expert group on quality criteria for recognition
 - Supporting recognition culture
- **Conclusion and outlook**

Introduction



Key questions

- What is understood by recognition culture?
- Why is recognition culture necessary?
- What is MODUS doing for supporting the realization of recognition culture?

Setting the context

- Focus on and perspective of German higher education
- Legal framework in Germany differs regarding academic recognition and RPL
- Recognition in the framework of studies, less of admission



Status quo of recognition at
German universities

Achievements

- System level: LRC is national legislation
- Acceptance of recognition as a Bologna tool increasing for at least a decade
- In general, students and staff are content with recognition procedures
- Sources: Bologna Implementation Report 2020, Hochschulbefragung 2021/22

Challenges I

- Generally
 - Huge differences between universities
 - Much greater need for improvement in the area of RPL than in the area of academic recognition
- Digitalisation of procedures
- Procedures could be: simpler, more transparent, more reliable, more easily accessible, have more clearly communicated responsibilities
- Need for information on both student and staff side
- Wish for uniform standards/criteria, esp. for decision-making

Challenges II

- Little will for change amongst university boards and teachers
 - Student mobility and permeability between educational sectors are of medium priority in university boards; RPL less perceived as strategic tool than academic recognition
 - Teachers have reservations for various reasons (mistrust, insecurities)
- Sources: Bologna with Students' Eyes 2020; Hochschulbefragung 2021/22; Expert*inneninterviews 2023 (internal resource); Dörr, Tilman/Scheuch, Laila/Zervakis, Peter A.: „Hochschulen bei der Verbesserung von Anerkennung und Anrechnung unterstützen: Eine Zwischenbilanz des HRK-Projekts MODUS.“ In: *Handbuch Qualität in Studium, Lehre und Forschung*. Forthcoming (presumably January 2024).

The MODUS project of the German Rector's Conference



The goal

Supporting **student mobility** across **educational boundaries** through **improved recognition practices** at **higher education** institutions.

Key Facts I



- **Duration:** 2020-2025
- **Funding:** Federal Ministry of Education and Research
- **Staff:** 12
- **Target group:** German HEIs

Key Facts II

Thematic Priorities

- Coordination and dissemination of common standards
- Promotion of quality-assured procedures for making work easier and processes more transparent
- Optimization of procedures by increased use of digital processes and infrastructures

Measures

- Further development of the subject in cooperation with the relevant stakeholders
- Communication of results and findings
- Moderation of the change process and the exchange between actors and stakeholders
- Continuous improvement of the project

Key Facts III

Tools

- Expert groups
 - Quality criteria (2020/21)
 - Digitalisation (2021)
 - Microcredentials (2022)
 - Artificial Intelligence (2023)
- Informing and disseminating results
- Training and consulting
- Surveys and project-related evaluation

Expert Group on Quality Criteria

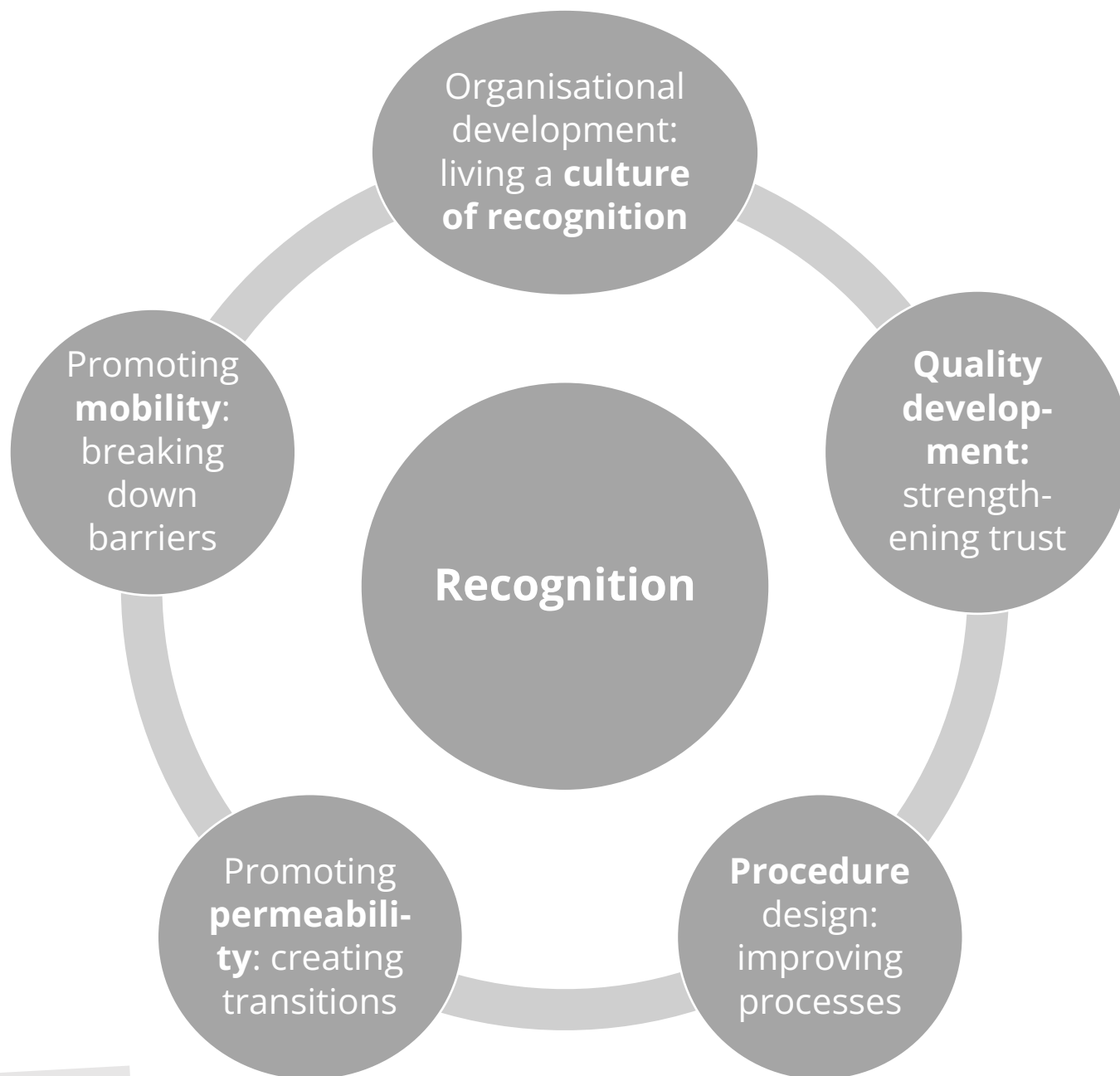
Goal

- Define quality criteria for recognition
- Support HEIs with further development of recognition procedures

Members

- 16 experts
- Including university and other higher education stakeholders (e.g. university board members, German Accreditation Council, student representative)
- Covering several topics (lifelong learning, internationalisation, quality assurance etc.)

Fields of Action



The concept of recognition culture I

A vision

- An open, welcoming university, particularly sensitive to the diversity and heterogeneity of their students
- Focusing on learners, offering flexible lifelong learning paths locally, regionally, internationally, and in addition virtually
- Valuing existing knowledge and skills on university level of (prospective) students while maintaining the profile of an academic research and teaching institution

The concept of recognition culture II

Challenges

- *Change management*: values not new, putting into practice a process of organisational development
 - cf. for example the recommendations of the German Council of Science and Humanities for higher education, the European Commission for a European Area of Lifelong Learning or the statements of student interest group
- *Trust*: uncertainties and concerns of university members about competences acquired elsewhere
 - E.g. because of lack of information, difficulties of knowledge transfer between university administration and teaching staff, complexity of designing competence- and learning outcome-oriented study programmes

The concept of recognition culture III

Recommendations

- For university leaders, departments or faculties or subjects, student administration, students, the federal government and the federal states, non-university education actors
- E.g. for **boards**: establish a recognition culture at their institution by actively managing change, e.g. by integrating the concept of a heterogeneity-sensitive university into the strategy and regulating recognition in a binding manner
- E.g. for **departments** etc.: develop study programmes and modules in a competence- and learning outcome-oriented manner
- E.g. for **administration**: implement recognition procedures in a student-friendly manner
- E.g. for **students**: participate in the design of procedures (academic self-governance)
- E.g. for the **government**: financial support, advocacy for permeability, create uniform legislation for RPL in all 16 states

Supporting recognition culture I

Products of the expert group

- Paper (oriented per field of action) [only available in German]
 - Provide definitory and legal framework
 - Analyse five central fields of action: challenges and possible solutions
 - Support universities strategically and practically
- HRK-Resolution (actor-oriented) [[English version here](#)]
 - Achieve a signaling effect
 - Ensure that the standards are considered binding

Supporting recognition culture II

Working principles of MODUS



- ❖ Participatory and integrative approach
- ❖ Respect the diversity of universities (profiles, types, location)
- ❖ Provide high and concrete practical relevance



Conclusion and outlook

Is it successful? Any results yet?

- Interim assessment of the external evaluation: the project measures are overall appropriate and effective
- Internal evaluation of participants in all project events: majority of HRK member universities were reached (82 %)
- Further work needed because of developments in the field (cf. Global Convention) as well as structural features of recognition (e.g. diversity of actors involved, including various administrative units and teachers, lack of sufficient funding, frequent staff changes, high workload of audit committees)



Thank you for your attention.
Your questions and comments



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