
Recommendations to the Member States on the Recognition of EUI Qualifications

Introduction

Over recent years, the European University Institute has made substantial strides in broadening its academic offerings, particularly by developing master's degree programmes that complement its established doctoral programmes. This expansion aligns with the EUI's strategic goal of institutional growth, as the addition of master programmes plays a vital role in reinforcing the EUI's impact and relevance on a global scale. These programmes are integral to the EUI's mission and are essential for its future stability and broader influence. However, the recognition of these master's degrees has presented challenges that require urgent attention.

While the EUI has achieved notable advancements in securing recognition for its doctoral programmes, the same cannot yet be said for its master programme offerings. These programmes, essential to the EUI's sustainability and institutional development, face significant hurdles without adequate recognition, placing both the future of the EUI and its graduates' prospects at risk.

To address these concerns, the EUI initiated an accreditation process for the Master in Transnational Governance. This accreditation, conducted by the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO), is anticipated to be a pivotal step toward ensuring the recognition and continued success of the EUI's growing portfolio of master's programmes. The final decision by the NVAO Board is expected in December after which the accreditation outcome will be published in the Database for Quality Assurance Results ([DEQAR](#)).

The EUI requires strong support and assistance from the Member States in confronting the challenges of recognition.

Legal bases, historical foundations and the High Council's authorisations

Article 14 of the EUI Convention provides the legal basis for conferring degrees other than a doctorate. In this framework, the master's degree programmes have been developed and formalised with the strong backing of the High Council, whose role in authorising these programmes underscores their legitimacy and their alignment with the EUI's educational mission.

The master's programmes agreed upon by the High Council and offered by the EUI include the Master in Comparative, European, and International Legal Studies LLM¹, the Master of Research in Economics², the Master of Arts in Transnational Governance³, and the Global Executive Master⁴.

The rationale for the recognition of EUI qualifications, coupled with article 14, is firmly grounded in Article 3(2) of the EUI Convention, which mandates that *"the Contracting States shall encourage the spread of the Institute's influence in the scientific and university world. To this end, they shall assist the Institute to establish appropriate bonds of cooperation with the universities and scientific institutions in their territories and with the European and international bodies concerned with education, culture, and research."*

¹ High Council working document IUE 12/84 (CS 1) (pp. 9-10).

² High Council working document IUE 131/88, IUE 289/88 (CS 12), Item 10, (p. 12); IUE 321/88 (CS 15); IUE 64/89 (CS 1), Item 12, (p. 17).

³ High Council working document IUE 411/13 (CS 6), (p. 60);

⁴ High Council working document IUE 620/22 (CS 26) Annex 2, (pp. 169-199); IUE 176/23 (CS 1), Item 12, (pp. 34-39).

This foundation underscores the High Council's role in maintaining the quality and integrity of EUI's academic offerings. Each degree programme has thus evolved under the High Council's guidance, establishing a precedent for the High Council's involvement in setting educational benchmarks for EUI's academic offerings.

Recognition challenges and imperative

As Article 14 and the Final Act of the Convention confirm the EUI's authority to confer both master's and doctoral degrees, Member States should recognize these qualifications to enable the integration of EUI scholars and graduates within the universities and scientific institutions in their territories. However, a robust, formal recognition mechanism is currently lacking.

The recognition of qualifications conferred by national higher education institutions (HEIs) is rooted in national education systems, occurring within the framework of the Lisbon Recognition Convention ("Lisbon Convention"). According to Section VIII of the Lisbon Convention, states parties are expected to list recognised HEIs within and beyond their borders. However, as the EUI operates outside national education systems, it does not currently appear on such a list in any member state, underscoring the need for an agreed-upon recognition structure. This said, the EUI's standing as an intergovernmental institution, jointly established by several Lisbon Convention member states, positions it well within the framework of the Lisbon Convention, which encourages recognition of transnational education programmes.

Overall, despite the formal development of the EUI's master's programmes, inconsistent recognition among EUI Member States creates obstacles for graduates, limiting their access to professional opportunities, further studies, and in some cases, student funding schemes and subsidies.

Without consistent recognition, EUI graduates face undue obstacles in leveraging their qualifications across national and international job markets, diminishing the EUI's reputation and limiting the value it can offer its graduates. This situation poses a reputational risk to the EUI and constrains its impact as a leading European educational institution and research university.

The EUI is committed to accrediting all its master's programmes and has accordingly developed a quality assurance framework. However, unlike national higher education institutions, it does not have automatic recourse to a national Quality Assurance Agency for accreditation processes. To address this, the EUI is initiating an agreement with a quality assurance agency listed in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) to serve as its official quality assurance body. This arrangement will require Member States to recognise the agency's accreditation outcomes within their national systems.

The High Council's support is crucial in securing the consistent recognition of EUI master's degrees, sustaining the institution's reputation, and ensuring graduates can fully leverage their qualifications across Member States.

It is therefore proposed to the High Council that it makes the following recommendations to Member States:

1. Inclusion of the EUI as an Intergovernmental Research University in National Higher Education Institution Lists

Member States should include the EUI in their national lists of recognised higher education institutions, acknowledging it as an intergovernmental research university that is part of their higher education system but located outside their territory (except for Italy). This inclusion reflects the EUI's status as an institution belonging to the higher education system of all its Member States.

2. Inclusion of EUI Qualifications in National Recognition Databases

Member States should promptly notify all relevant national authorities responsible for degree recognition about EUI qualifications and actively encourage the recognition of EUI degrees as equivalent to comparable degrees awarded within their national systems. This should be in alignment with the good practices of the Bologna Process, ensuring a seamless recognition process. Each Member State should update its national databases and other reference sources for automatic qualification recognition to include EUI master's degrees.