

**The Danish national Action Plan for
recognition**

**CIRIUS Denmark/ The Danish Ministry
of Education**

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Chapter 1: Legislation

Lisbon Recognition Convention

Denmark formally ratified the Lisbon Convention 20 march 2003. The ratification was deposited with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe. However, a de facto implementation of the convention was already in place with the establishment of the Danish Centre for Assessment of Foreign Qualifications (now CIRIUS) and the adoption of the Act No. 344 of 16 May 2001 on the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications, which was based on the text of the Lisbon Convention and the criteria and principles of the UNESCO-text and Council of Europe "Recommendation on Criteria And Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications.

Thus in 2001 assessment of foreign qualifications was treated in accordance with the principles in the Lisbon Convention and it's underlying texts, but the formal ratification of the convention was in 2003.

Review of national legislation relevant to recognition

Without a doubt the Lisbon Convention constitutes an important point of reference for the establishment, design and development of CIRIUS, the Danish ENIC/NARIC-office, and the general framework for recognition in Denmark. However, it is a specific characteristic of CIRIUS that its mandate to promote recognition of foreign qualifications does not just apply in the field of higher education, which is the field of application for the Lisbon Convention. It applies at all levels of education.

Recognition of foreign degrees and study periods are based on the Act on Assessment of Foreign Qualifications (Consolidation Act no. 74 of 24 January 2003- Danish Act in effect). The Act is supplemented with Ministerial Orders containing more detailed provisions on the recognition of foreign qualifications:

- Order no. 606 of 25. June 2003 on Assessment of Foreign Qualifications etc.
- Order no. 547 of 1. July 2002 on the Qualifications Board.

Order no. 606 of 25. June 2003 on Assessment of Foreign Qualifications etc. lays down the principles and criteria of assessment of foreign educational qualifications. These principles and criteria are predominantly based on the UNESCO/Council of Europe's Recommendation on Criteria And Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications.

On the basis of a clear understanding of both the national policy objectives and the international development in the field of recognition and related fields Denmark has set up a recognition framework that meets national priorities and at the same time incorporates Denmark's international obligations, including those deriving from the Lisbon Convention and EU Directives on recognition of professional recognition.

Already before the decision to draw up national action plans on recognition an amendment of the Danish act on assessment of foreign qualifications was planned by the Danish government. The Danish government is in the process of implementing a national strategy of Denmark in a global economy. One of the top priorities is to enhance the possibility of getting credit transfer at Danish higher education programmes. However, the amendment is targeted at facilitating favourable credit

transfer decisions from one Danish programme to another by setting up an appeal board on institutional credit decisions. By this amendment Danish students are given the same opportunities of appealing credit transfer decisions, which has been possible for persons with foreign degrees or study periods under the current act on assessment of foreign qualifications.

The amendment will be presented to the Danish Parliament ultimo November 2006. In this process the whole act on assessment of foreign qualifications has been critically re-examined. It has been found that the Danish act on assessment of foreign qualifications fulfils all the obligations under the Lisbon Convention and its underlying texts.

Another important order concerning recognition of foreign qualifications is "Bekendtgørelse om adgang m.v. ved bachelor- og kandidatuddannelser ved universiteterne (adgangsbekendtgørelsen) BEK nr 362 af 20/05/2005 ", (order on admission etc. at bachelor- and masterprogrammes at the universities (the admissision order)).

In article 2, number 4, it is stated that recognition of foreign educational qualifications must be done in accordance with the Act on Assessment of Foreign Qualifications (Consolidation Act no. 74 of 24 January 2003- Danish Act in effect). Thus admission based on foreign qualifications is regulated by the Danish act on assessment of foreign qualifications, which as mentioned is under a process of amendment.

Bilateral or regional recognition agreements

A number of Nordic agreements concerning mutual recognition of educational programmes exist among the Nordic countries. The Reykjavik declaration from June 2004 concerns recognition of higher education degrees. The declaration is based on the Lisbon Convention and thus states that degrees within the Nordic countries should be fully recognised. Furthermore, the Nordic countries commit themselves to develop a close cooperation in the field of recognition in order to create greater unity in the assessment of non-Nordic degrees among the Nordic countries and to exchange information concerning recognition.

The Nordic ENIC/NARIC-offices have established a close relationship through the common Nordic NORRIC organisation. Various projects concerning eliminating barriers of recognition within the Nordic countries have been carried out. Some projects have focused on comparing recognition standards of foreign degrees among the Nordic countries and other projects focusing on the methodology of recognition in order to develop a common Nordic best practice within recognition.

A Nordic treaty on admission to higher education from 1996 exists. "Agreement concluded by Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden on admission to higher education". The treaty emphasises that Nordic citizens should have the same rights as national citizens regarding admission to higher education programmes in Nordic countries.

In general the Nordic agreements are based on the text and principles of the Lisbon Convention, but also enhance cooperation among the Nordic countries in the fields of recognition as well as educational cooperation on higher education level.

Chapter 2: Recognition practice

Criteria and procedures

Assessment criteria

CIRIUS bases its assessments on the principles and criteria laid down in the Lisbon Convention and the Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications. These principles and criteria are incorporated in the Act on Assessment of Foreign Qualifications (Consolidation Act no. 74 of 24 January 2003- Danish Act in effect) and in the order no. 606 of 25. June 2003 on Assessment of Foreign Qualifications etc.

Also incorporated in the order is the principle that assessments are done by comparing the learning outcome of the foreign degree with the learning outcome of a similar Danish degree. This means that foreign degrees can be fully recognised although they to a large extent do not contain the subject courses as in a similar Danish programme. This also means that if the applicant has been conferred e.g. a bachelor degree and in his/her home country has been given credit for other studies or prior learning, recognition in Denmark is done through looking at the final learning outcome meaning that CIRIUS does not question credit transfer decisions of a publicly recognised/accredited foreign institution.

The basic principle of CIRIUS' assessment is, that foreign educational qualifications are recognised, unless there are substantial differences, when comparing to the Danish qualifications. The assessment is based on the following criteria:

- 1) Recognition of the qualification in the home country: Is the educational institution and/or educational programme recognised or accredited in the home country.
- 2) The date of completion of the educational programme.
- 3) The admission requirements of the educational programme: It is examined whether the admission requirements for the foreign educational programme correspond to the admission requirements that apply to a corresponding Danish educational programme and whether the entry qualification is comparable in terms of length and

level. In this process the level of the foreign educational programme is established. It is analysed, whether it is an upper secondary, post secondary or higher education qualification. Furthermore it is examined whether it is a first, second or third cycle degree, and whether it is a university or non-university qualification.

- 4) The length of the educational programme: The nominal duration of the programme is examined.
- 5) The purpose of the educational programme: Does the qualification give access to further studies and/or the labour market or is it an intermediate qualification.
- 6) The structure and academic content of the educational programme: The combination of academic/non-academic subjects and the inclusion of subjects not normally included in Danish HE programmes (e.g. religious subjects, ideological subjects, sport and military service) are examined. Furthermore the inclusion of papers, project-work or a thesis is examined.
- 7) The relationship between theory and practice in the educational programme.
- 8) Previous assessments made by CIRIUS and others

Procedures

2003 was the first year that the assessments were made according to the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications etc. Act. The workload and case processing time from 2003–2005 under the assessments for the purpose of academic recognition and professional de facto recognition were

	2003	2004	2005	
Number of assessments		1.282	1272	951

The decline in cases processed from 2004–2005 can be explained by the fact that CIRIUS in 2005 were given the powers to establish standards and criteria for general admission to higher education programmes in Denmark and to provide guiding information on specific requirements of admission such as grade conversion and establishing levels of subjects of upper secondary programmes. This has been done by publishing a website with clear and transparent information on general admission requirements for applicants with upper secondary exams and guidelines for specific requirements for admission at the same site. Criteria for admission for holders of diplomas from more than 120 countries have

been published and the list is continuously developed, checked and monitored. This means that decisions on admission, which was previously dealt with as specific written assessments, are now to a large extent assessed by consulting the website and not by actual letters of decisions.

The case processing time in the same period is:

	2003	2004	2006	
Case processing time		43 days	32 days	26 days

The decline in the case processing time is largely due to the growing expertise of the staff, which has enabled the Danish office to develop fixed standards of recognition from the various countries from the establishment of the office in 2000 until now.

The case processing time is calculated from the time, when all the necessary documentation is provided.

Documentation of qualifications

Assessments of foreign qualifications must be done on a thoroughly documented basis. The applicant must fill in an application form and provide certified copies of the following documents:

- Diplomas or certificates from all completed educational programmes.
- Translations of diplomas or certificates from all completed educational programmes.
- Transcripts of marks.
- Internship or traineeship agreements.
- Any previous assessments or decisions concerning the recognition of the qualifications of the individual in question submitted or made by others than CIRIUS.

In some cases CIRIUS furthermore asks the applicant to provide

- Curricula or study descriptions
- Subject or course descriptions (syllabus), or
- Theses, dissertations or other equivalent written works (either in full or in summary).

CIRIUS compares the level of foreign qualifications with the level of specific Danish programmes, if all the necessary documentation is provided. If the applicant cannot provide a transcript, but only sends

in the diploma, CIRIUS will make an assessment, in which the foreign qualification will only be compared with a general level of the Danish education system and not with a specific Danish programme.

In other cases where not all the required documentation is provided, CIRIUS will make a comparison with a specific Danish programme, if the documentation as a whole clearly supports the level and content of the foreign qualification as described by the applicant in the application form. CIRIUS tries to verify lacking or unclear information by contacting the educational institution, which has conferred the degree and by seeking information on institutional websites.

Recognition of refugees' educational qualifications or other persons lacking evidence of their educational attainment

Recognition of undocumented qualifications is a difficult process. The Danish ENIC/NARIC-office will assess applications from persons lacking evidence on a case-by-case basis. The basic principle is that if there is no evidence at all, the Danish ENIC/NARIC office will write a general assessment of the degree, which the applicant informs the office that he or she holds. This means that the applicant will not get a personal assessment with detailed information about the programme a comparison with a specific Danish programme, but a general assessment of the level of the qualification.

The Danish office will ask the applicants to provide us with any documentation supporting the information on their educational qualifications. This could be a partial transcript, evidence of work experience related to the educational qualifications, proof of membership of unions, official letters naming the professional title of the applicant and so forth. The single pieces of information are gathered and evaluated, and if the evidence to support the applicant's information is strong enough, a personal letter of assessment will be issued.

If this is not the case, the Danish office will issue the general assessment mentioned above. A system of recognition of prior learning is currently being developed in Denmark. It is still too early to imply the consequences for recognition of prior learning in comparison with higher education programmes in Denmark.

A system of recognition of prior learning is already functioning at upper secondary level in vocational education and training programmes, to which CIRIUS currently refers persons with no evidence of their VET-qualifications. In these cases it is established, whether the qualifications will be fully recognised or if there is a need for supplementary studies or training.

Joint degrees

Recognition of joint degrees in Denmark is based on the general national legislation on recognition of foreign qualifications¹. The recognition of joint degrees follows the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the accompanying Recommendation of the Recognition of Joint Degrees (2004).

Denmark is as earlier mentioned preparing a revision of the national legislation on recognition. The previewed revision does not include any particular regulation regarding joint degrees, as national legislation does not create any impediment to recognition of joint degrees in Denmark.

However, in order to assure transparency concerning recognition of joint degrees the national ENIC/NARIC office (CIRIUS) is preparing specific guidelines on recognition of joint degrees as well as transnational education.

According to those guidelines CIRIUS will recognise a joint diploma issued by two or several educational institutions on condition that the diploma and the institutions are publicly accredited/recognised in the diploma-issuing countries.

Joint degree diplomas awarded as national diplomas are recognised on equal terms with other national diplomas from the country in question.

The guidelines will be published on the Internet site of the national ENIC/NARIC bureau, www.ciriusonline.dk

Recognition of double and multiple degrees

In Denmark, double and multiple degrees are a rather recent phenomenon. So far, Denmark, has not established a recurrent monitoring of the participation of Danish higher educational institutions in double or multiple degrees.

The Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA) carried out a survey of transnational education in Denmark on behalf of The Danish Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation in 2005². The survey included informa-

¹ The act on recognition of foreign education qualifications etc. in Denmark (lbk 74/24.01.2003).

² Transnational uddannelse - en undersøgelse af omfanget af transnational uddannelse på de videregående uddannelser. København, Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut, 2005.

tion on transnational education³ as well as on multiple and joint degrees

The participation of Danish Institutions in double and multiple degrees is monitored on an ad hoc basis as part of the monitoring of the internationalisation of Danish higher education by the Danish educational authorities.⁴ Besides, the participation of Danish educational Institutions in the Erasmus Mundus "European Masters Courses" is followed closely by CIRIUS. Up till now, nine Danish Universities are taking part in a European Master programme.

A recent amendment to the Danish Act of Universities has regulated the participation on Danish Universities in joint and so-called parallel degrees.⁵ The amendment defines the conditions under which Danish Universities have the right to issue joint degrees and national Danish degree to students that have taken part in a Danish programme without being enrolled in the programme. A similar regulation is being prepared by the Danish Ministry of Education concerning short-cycle or medium-cycle higher education programmes.

The act defines the conditions under which double or multiple degrees in which Danish Universities take part are granted recognition as national qualifications and might as such be considered as an instrument to ensure recognition.

Overview of institutional practice

The individual educational institution makes a decision on admission of applicants with foreign qualifications based on CIRIUS' assessments. This means that the application for admission must be treated on an equal footing with applications from applicants with Danish

³ As defined in the "Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education" (2001).

⁴ The monitoring is carried out by CIRIUS, an authority within the Danish Ministry of Education supporting the internationalisation of Danish education.

⁵ According to the Danish Universities Act universities may offer students the opportunity to undertake part of the programme at one or more non-Danish universities as per exchange agreements between the universities concerned. Besides, the universities might be allowed that parts of a university study programme must be taken at one or more non-Danish universities as per exchange agreements between the universities concerned. Besides, the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation might accept that a Danish university issues a certificate to students who have completed parts of their study programme at the university without being enrolled on the programme in question. L 141 (9 December 2004) Bill to amend the legislation governing universities (the University Act)

qualifications at the same level of education as that stated by CIRIUS in its assessment.

CIRIUS lays down guidelines for the assessment of foreign qualifications for entry to higher education, including with regard to conversion of subject levels and grades. This is done in cooperation with the Ministry of Education's upper secondary school department and, to the widest possible extent, in cooperation with the institutions. The guidelines are published on the CIRIUS website.

The individual educational institution makes decisions on credit transfer of foreign qualifications to replace parts of a Danish educational programme. The educational institution may use an assessment from CIRIUS as a guide in its decision on credit transfer.

Holders of foreign qualifications may complain about educational institutions' credit transfer decisions to a special complaints board: The Qualifications Board. A decision made by the Qualifications Board will be the final and conclusive administrative decision.

Compliance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and national laws

The Danish ENIC/NARIC-office has carried out a survey on the institutional practice on admission and credit transfer. A questionnaire has been distributed to all higher institutions, which consist of universities, medium cycle higher education institutions (centres of higher education/university colleges) and short cycle higher education institutions (academies of professional higher education).

The institutions were asked:

1. Does the institution have a common standard for the procedures concerning recognition of foreign degrees and credit transfer
2. Does the institution have common principles for the assessment of foreign degrees and study periods, and if so, please specify
3. Are there special procedures and/or principles for decisions on admission and credit transfer for applicants with foreign educational background
4. 4. How does the institution inform applicants on recognition and credit transfer of foreign degrees and study periods and on the principles of recognition?
5. Does the institutions give guidance on appeal possibilities on decisions of credit transfer
6. Are there aspects of the recognition process, which need to be developed? Please specify.

CIRIUS received 58 answers to the questionnaire, which was voluntary for the institutions to answer. It goes beyond the scope of the action plan to give a detailed description of the survey. However, it is possible to sum up the conclusion, and the questionnaires are very useful in developing CIRIUS' service to the institutions.

Ad 1: In conclusion the majority of the institutions have a common standard for the procedures concerning recognition of foreign degrees and credit transfer. Decisions are taken by study boards, admission officers and in the case of some smaller institutions the deans/directors of the institutions. Some institutions have no common standards in this area. This applies mainly to the smaller institutions, which receive few or no applications from persons with a foreign educational background.

Ad 2: The majority of the institutions have common principles when assessing foreign degrees and study periods. General admission is decided on the basis of CIRIUS assessments and the institutional decisions on the specific requirements are based on "Eksamenshåndbogen", which is CIRIUS' conversion of subject levels and grades. Most institutions use CIRIUS' hotline on admission when in doubt. CIRIUS' decisions on admission are all in compliance with the Lisbon convention.

Again mainly the smaller institutions have no common principles, because they have none of few foreign applicants

ECTS-credits are used in credit decisions and full credit is given, when courses are described in ECTS-credits. In the case of exchange students pre-approved credit transfer is used by almost all institutions when the Danish institution have an exchange agreement with a foreign institution.

A comparison between the Danish and foreign curricula is commonly used, when deciding on credit transfer for persons holding a foreign degree of study periods from foreign educational institutions. Some institutions use CIRIUS' assessments and give full credit based on CIRIUS' decision. Others decide credit transfer mainly on the comparison of curricula. It cannot be clarified, whether this means that the institutions look for full compliance with their own curricula.

An important aspect of credit transfer decisions is the possibility of appealing credit transfer decisions to the Qualifications Board, which is an independent appeal board to which CIRIUS functions as secretariat. The Qualifications Board acts under the Act on Assessment of Foreign Qualifications (Consolidation Act no. 74 of 24 January 2003-Danish Act in effect). As mentioned previously the Danish act is based on the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the Council of Europe/UNESCO guidelines "Recommendations on Procedures and Criteria for the assessment of Foreign Qualifications and Periods of Study". This implies

that the Qualifications Board in its guidelines and practice makes decisions on appeals of institutional credit transfer decisions in accordance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and its underlying texts.

Ad 3: All institutions emphasise that the procedures and principles concerning recognition on admission and credit transfer are identical for students with Danish and foreign educational background. Some institutions point out that the only difference is a language test for foreigners, which is a specific admission requirement in the Danish act on admission.

Ad 4: Nearly all institutions inform applicants on recognition and credit transfer of foreign degrees and study periods. A variety of measures are used and combined. Information is commonly available on the institutional website, individual guidance provided by guidance counsellors, study coordinators and international coordinators is used by all institutions.

Again some small institutions have not had foreign students for many years, which means that their information will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Ad 5: The questionnaires prove that only half of the institutions, which have answered the questionnaire, give information on appeal possibilities.

As stated above holders of foreign qualifications may complain about educational institutions' credit transfer decisions to a special complaints board: The Qualifications Board. At present only applicants with foreign educational background can appeal credit decisions. A new act is being prepared granting persons with Danish educational background appeal possibility of decisions of credit transfer. The Danish Parliament is expected to adopt the new act in 2007.

Ad 6: A number of suggestions for further developments are suggested, which will form the basis for CIRIUS' development of serving the institutions.

The conclusions cannot be said to give full coverage of the situation, since answering the questionnaire was voluntary. However, they do provide the CIRIUS with clear indications of the status regarding institutional practice, since the questionnaires support the impression of institutional practice, which CIRIUS had in advance based on our intensive contact with the Danish higher education institutions.

Admission is done in full compliance with the Lisbon Convention. The institutions use "Eksamenshåndbogen" and CIRIUS' assessments.

Information on procedures and principles of recognitions is done in numerous ways. Conclusively, it can be said that all institutions inform on procedures and principles either by common fixed standards of information or on a case- by case basis.

Two areas need to be developed further. The national act on assessment of foreign qualifications states that credit decisions can be appealed to the Qualifications Board. Only 50 % of the institutions give information on this appeal possibility.

Furthermore it is unclear to what extent some institutions look for full compliance with their own curricula when deciding on credit transfer. The question is, whether the credit transfer decision is based on comparison of learning outcome or equivalence.

Suggested measures

CIRIUS will continue to hold seminars for Danish institutions on admission. CIRIUS has held an annual seminar for admission officers with workshops and information on rules of admission for holders of foreign degrees.

The next workshop in February 2007 will focus on decisions of credit transfer with an emphasis on a discussion of assessments based on learning outcome versus equivalence. Guidelines will be presented at the seminar and published on the CIRIUS website.

CIRIUS will host a seminar on the Lisbon Convention in 2007. The principles and procedures of recognition as stated in the convention and its underlying texts most notably "Recommendations on the procedures and criteria for the assessment of foreign qualifications and study periods" will be the main focus of the seminar.

At the seminar it will be emphasised that according to national legislation information on appeal possibilities of decision of credit transfer to the Qualifications Board is mandatory.

When the new act giving holders of Danish qualifications appeal possibility is adopted, CIRIUS will contact all institutions and publish information on the website clarifying that appeal possibilities for credit decisions for foreign qualifications already exist and that information on the appeal possibilities is mandatory.

Transparency tools for recognition

Since 2001 the use of ECTS-points has been obligatory for all Danish higher education institutions under The Ministry of Education and The

Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation. The Danish Ministry of Culture is responsible for higher education programmes within fine arts and architecture, library science, music, conservation science, the national Film School of Denmark and design academies. All programmes under the Ministry of Culture must use ECTS-credits except for programmes from the Danish National School of Theatre and the Danish Academies of fine arts.

ECTS must be used both as a credit transfer and as an accumulation system, e.g. all courses of a degree programme must be allocated with ECTS points. Nationally there continues to be a focus on improving the quality and correct use of the ECTS-system (implementation, calculation, description of learning outcome etc.). In 2005 and 2006 CIRIUS and the national team of Bologna Promoters hosted two seminars on ECTS and ECTS Label.

Diploma Supplement

Since 2002 it has been obligatory for all Danish higher education Institutions under The Ministry of Education and The Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation to issue a Diploma Supplement in English to all graduates. As Erasmus-NA and Europass-centre, CIRIUS advises the institutions on their work with Diploma Supplement. Additionally, CIRIUS hosts various information meetings and seminars for higher education institutions, where Diploma Supplement is included if relevant. As an example CIRIUS and the national team of Bologna Promoters hosted a seminar on Diploma Supplement and Diploma Supplement Label in 2005.

Other transparency tools

Denmark participates in the international cooperation of the Europass Framework, and CIRIUS is the National Europass Centre. As such CIRIUS informs about the Europass concept in all contexts and events relevant and encourages the target group to use Europass documents.

To support these information activities CIRIUS has established a national Europass web site from where the Europass CV, Language Passport and Certificate Supplement can be obtained, and where information is given on the Diploma Supplement. Further, this web site will in the course of 2006 include a Europass Mobility Database, to enable the operation and use of the document in an electronic version.

Borderless/transnational education

Denmark has no specific regulation concerning borderless/transnational education⁶. Borderless/transnational educational institutions established in Denmark are treated like other private educational institutions that exist outside the formal public system. That implies that foreign educational institutions in Denmark do not have the possibility of offering Danish national degrees.

Foreign education providers' cooperation with Danish educational institutions might take the form of franchising, e.g. the teaching being delivered by the Danish institution under the responsibility of the foreign institution and the examination and degree being delivered by the foreign institutions. Thus the aspect of quality control lies within the national authorities of the exporting countries.

There is no legal regulation of exported transnational higher education by Danish educational institutions⁷. Thus Danish higher educational institutions do not have the possibility of delivering nationally recognised degrees outside Denmark, besides joint and parallel degrees as regulated in the act of Universities.

An expected act on accreditation will in a short period of time replace the state regulated higher education system in Denmark. The accreditation/certification of Danish degrees/higher education institutions might eventually imply a right to establish transnational education and deliver qualifications outside Denmark accredited by the future Danish Accreditation Council.

Transnational education is recognised in Denmark by the Danish national recognition authorities on the condition that the programme and the provider accomplish the code of good practice in the provision of transnational education. That implies basically that the diploma as well as the transnational provider is state-recognised/accredited in the exporting country. Besides, the qualification/provider has to be legally established and respect national regulation in the importing country. If the qualification is claimed to be identical with a national qualification (programme) differences in e.g. workload or programme elements might lead to non-recognition.

Furthermore, it should be noted that CIRIUS has been directly involved in developing the UNESCO/OECD guidelines on "Quality provision in cross-border higher education" and CIRIUS acts as the national contact point for implementation of the guidelines in Denmark.

⁶ As defined in the "Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education" (2001).

⁷ Besides the Act on universities (joint and parallel degrees), LBK 280, 21.03.2006.

Chapter 3: Information provision:

Provision of information on recognition

The national ENIC/NARIC centre, CIRIUS, is the principal provider of authoritative information on recognition of foreign qualifications. The provision of recognition information was greatly expanded as a result of the setting up of the Danish Centre for Assessment of Foreign Qualifications (CVUU) in 2000. Since 2005, when CVUU was merged into CIRIUS, the recognition information has benefited from being linked to information previously provided by the other parties to the merger, in particular information about the Danish education system, transparency and mobility.

It is considered that Denmark fulfils the "Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Information on Recognition"⁸ and the points on information of the "Recommendation on Criteria And Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications"⁹ through the activities described below. The tables at the bottom of each section give an overview of the main steps that have been taken and the main improvements that are planned (including timetable and responsible body).

a) Information on recognition criteria and procedures

CIRIUS provides advice to individuals enquiring about the possibilities and procedures for submitting formal applications for the recognition or assessment of their foreign qualifications. This applies to all types of recognition and to qualifications of all levels.

As a central channel of communication, CIRIUS' website provides practical as well as background information about all types of

⁸ Adopted by the Joint ENIC-NARIC Networks, June 2004

⁹ Adopted by the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee, June 2001.

recognition (see section on the state of electronic provision of information on recognition). Enquirers and applicants are invited to visit the website and then mail or telephone CIRIUS if they have any remaining questions.

CIRIUS has published printed information material for holders of foreign qualifications on assessment procedures, access to the regulated professions and the complaints procedure concerning credit transfer decisions, as well as various factsheets.

The major part of the information published on the internet and in print is available in both Danish and English.

Furthermore, to ensure adequate information and good communication relations and to actively promote recognition CIRIUS maintains regular contacts in the form of networks etc. with stakeholders in the field of recognition, mainly educational institutions and competent authorities involved in professional recognition of professional qualifications, by means of seminars and bilateral meetings. CIRIUS also arranges ad hoc meetings with guidance counsellors, caseworkers, ethnic minority/integration-related organisations and other interested parties.

CIRIUS is continually developing its recognition information, trying to make it as target group oriented as possible, in particular by means of the website, which has a specific entrance for each target group. The same principle is applied to factsheets and brochures.

CIRIUS plans to make a user survey in order to gain a better basis for adapting the form and content of information to the users' needs.

Web and printed information is being revised with a view to ensuring a consistent and easily understandable terminology. While the use of specialist terminology is limited as much as possible, a word list explaining key recognition terms will be published on the website.

Measure	Date	Responsibility
Appointment of an information officer with a specific responsibility for the recognition-related web pages, databases, information standards and publications.	2000	CIRIUS
Information strategy concerning recognition	2001	CIRIUS

Measure	Date	Responsibility
Revision of web information to make it as target group oriented as possible (specific entrance for each target group: holders of foreign qualifications, educational institutions, guidance counsellors, employers, professional recognition bodies etc.).	2002	CIRIUS
Publication of the outcome of individual assessments as a searchable web database.	2002	CIRIUS
Extensive web manual on foreign qualifications for access to Danish higher education	2005	CIRIUS
Publication of standard assessments and descriptions of education systems ("country manual").	2006	CIRIUS
Updated edition of information brochure on how to get an assessment (earlier versions published in 2001 and 2003)	2006	CIRIUS
Updated editions of information brochures on professional recognition and on the complaints procedure concerning credit transfer (earlier versions published in 2004)	2007	CIRIUS
Conference to promote the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the recommendations of the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee	2007	CIRIUS
User survey	2007/2008	CIRIUS

b) Information on the national education system

The Danish education system is described in English on CIRIUS' web-site, which includes:

1) Short presentations of the education system, mainly for those who consider a stay in Denmark, with pages on

- Pre-school
- Primary and lower secondary education
- Upper secondary education

- Higher education
- Adult learning
- Educational and vocational guidance
- Values and Opinions

2) More detailed information about the education system, mainly aimed at education and recognition professionals and persons with a particular interest in the education system, includes:

- General organisation
- Quality assurance
- School education
- Upper secondary education
- Higher education (including the Danish "Qualifications Framework" for higher education)
- Teacher Education
- Grading systems
- Glossary

In the section about transparency of qualifications, there are descriptions of all vocational qualifications in the form of certificate supplements (in English, French, German and Danish).

CIRIUS has published a brochure, "The Danish education system" (2006, 12 pages A4):

<http://www.ciriusonline.dk/Default.aspx?ID=4688&M=News&PID=9447&NewsID=1555>.

Links to further information about the education system are offered on the Links page.

Educational institutions: For primary, secondary and adult education, there are links to the Danish Ministry of Education's institution register, which is in Danish. For higher education, there is a list of addresses and links for each type of institution.

Measure	Time	Responsibility
English-language web pages on the Danish education system, in two sections: 1) for those interested in studying in Denmark, 2) for those looking for in-depth information about the education system	2005	CIRIUS

Measure	Time	Responsibility
English-language web pages on Danish education institutions	2005	CIRIUS
It will be examined how to provide online information about the status of individual Danish institutions with an English-language interface.	2007	CIRIUS

The state of electronic provision of information on recognition

CIRIUS maintains web pages on recognition:
www.ciriusonline.dk/anerkendelse (Danish) and
www.ciriusonline.dk/recognition (English).

The recognition web pages provide guidance in particular on the assessments offered by CIRIUS, on access to regulated professions and on access to higher education. In addition, the website provides background information about various topics: recognition of foreign qualifications (the Danish system of recognition and Danish educational institutions; the Minister of Education's annual report on recognition of foreign qualifications, including statistics; legislation; international cooperation, FAQ, links etc.); education systems of other countries; the Danish education system; recognition of Danish qualifications abroad etc.

As part of the guidance, CIRIUS's website provides both 1) an inventory of typical recognition cases and 2) a comparative overview of other education systems or qualifications in relation to that of its own country.

1) Most individual assessments made by the Danish NARIC office since 2001 are published in an anonymous form through a searchable database.

2) A "country manual" was launched in 2006. It provides

- descriptions of education system
- standard assessments, i.e. how CIRIUS would normally assess typical qualifications from each country
- descriptions of the system of quality assurance and accreditation
- descriptions of marking systems
- glossaries.

At the outset, the manual has such extensive coverage of the 18 countries from which the unit most frequently gets qualifications for assessment. The database is intended as a help for businesses, educational institutions and individuals.

In a similar way, the website offers a manual concerning qualifications for the purpose of access to Danish higher education.

It contains general as well as country specific information. So far, the manual covers entry qualifications from 90 countries, 16 regions/provinces and 4 international high school exams. For each of them, the manual states which exams give general access to Danish higher education, how to compare subject levels and convert marks. Furthermore, there is an overview of the primary and secondary school system and a glossary. The largest amount of details is provided for EU/EEA countries and the international exams. A limited version exists in English, aimed at foreign applicants.

In addition to the section on recognition, a number of topics linked to recognition are covered in the transversal parts of the website, such as the Bologna process, transparency tools, qualifications frameworks and marking scales. Two CIRIUS sub-websites provide practical information for Danes who consider studying or working abroad (www.udiverden.dk) and foreigners who consider studying in Denmark (www.studyindenmark.dk), including information on recognition.

Information package for applicants

CIRIUS provides applicants with an information package in the form of an application form and a brochure. The same material is offered to persons making preliminary inquiries, but if they have access to the Internet it is often enough to give them the address of the website, where all of the information is easily accessible.

More specifically, standardised information about the questions mentioned in the Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures is delivered in the following ways:

- Documentation required, including requirements as to the authentication and translation of documents → Application form + website + brochure
- Description of the assessment process, including the role of the national information centre, other assessment agencies and higher education institutions: Website + brochure
- Description of the assessment criteria → Website + national legislation (also published on the website in Danish and English)
- Status of recognition statements → Fact sheet accompanying the assessment letter + website + brochure.
- Approximate time needed to process an application → Application form + website + brochure.
- Any fees charged → Not applicable (there are no fees).

- Reference to the national laws and international conventions and agreements which may be relevant to the assessment of foreign qualifications → Website + The assessment letter mentions the national law that implements the Lisbon Convention and on which the assessment is based.
- Conditions and procedures for appealing against a recognition decision, according to national legislation → Assessment letter + website.

Acknowledgement of the receipt of an application is given in various ways depending on the case: When additional documentation is required, CIRIUS sends the applicant a letter, which includes an acknowledgement that the application has been received. Otherwise, the acknowledgement is given as part of the assessment letter, which is normally delivered in less than two months (more than 90% of assessments).

Applicants are notified in case of prolonged case processing time, e.g. if their documents are being sent to the issuing institution for verification.

Chapter 4 Structures:

The Danish National Information centre

The Danish ENIC/NARIC office is placed within the national authority CIRIUS under the Danish Ministry of Education.

Nominally, the Minister of Education exercises the powers contained in the Danish legislation on assessment of foreign qualifications. However, Article 2 of the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications etc. Order of 25 June 2003 states that CIRIUS, the Danish ENIC/NARIC-office, shall exercise the powers of the Minister of Education under the Assessments of Foreign Qualifications etc. Act.

CIRIUS is an authority within the Danish Ministry of Education with the aim to support internationalisation of education and training in Denmark. Besides being responsible for recognition, CIRIUS is the Danish National Agency for the EU-mobility programmes as well as other national or Nordic mobility programmes. CIRIUS also incorporates the Danish Eurydice, Euroguidance and Eurodesk units. CIRIUS was created to in order to improve coherence and synergy in the work related to mobility, recognition, transparency and international cooperation and to strengthen internationalisation in Denmark.

Legal competence

In Denmark, the responsibility for academic recognition is shared between CIRIUS and the educational institutions. The primary responsibility for professional de facto recognition lies with the employer, the union, the unemployment fund etc. Finally, competent authorities have the responsibility for professional de jure recognition.

According to the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications Act assessments issued by CIRIUS are binding on the following decisions:

- The decision on admission by a publicly recognised educational institution.
- The decision on admission by an unemployment fund.
- The decision by a public authority on appointment of personnel.

- The decision by a competent authority on access to a regulated profession.
- The decision by a trade committee (fagligt udvalg) or by the Council for Agricultural Education (Landbrugsuddannelsesrådet) on a reduction in the length of study.

In relation to academic recognition educational institutions must follow CIRIUS' assessment on admission meaning that an educational institution cannot deny admission to an applicant, claiming that he or she does not hold educational qualifications, which in level is comparable to the required Danish educational level. The institutions decide whether the applicants qualifications meet the specific requirements for admission, grade average, levels of different subjects, while CIRIUS decide on the level of general admission. CIRIUS publishes an "Eksamenshåndbog" (guide to admission) electronically where standards for grade conversion and conversion of levels of different subjects are provided as a tool for admission officers.

The majority of CIRIUS' assessments are assessments made for seeking employment or admission to higher education programmes. Except for instances where educational institutions themselves request CIRIUS' assistance CIRIUS does not conduct assessments with a view to decisions on whether foreign qualifications can replace parts of programmes to which holders of foreign qualifications have applied for admission or have been admitted (credit transfer). This latter category of recognition decisions is a prerogative of the educational institutions, although an appeals Board, the Qualifications Board, has been established to deal with complaints against decisions by institutions in this respect. CIRIUS functions as secretariat to the Qualifications Board.

Regarding professional de facto recognition CIRIUS' assessments are guiding for employers, which ask for assessments of foreign qualifications, in the process of employing. Public employers must pay the same salary to the holder of a foreign qualification as to holders of the same Danish qualifications, which CIRIUS has compared their education with.

CIRIUS' assessments even form part of the basis for decisions on professional de jure recognition made by Danish competent authorities. Under the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications etc. Act competent authorities are obliged to obtain an assessment of an applicant's academic qualifications from CIRIUS unless they give immediate recognition to the qualifications of an applicant. Assessments made by CIRIUS in this respect are binding for the competent authorities.

CIRIUS' role in recognition of professional qualifications goes further still. Thus, with a view to creating the best possible synergy

between the different forms of academic and professional recognition and in order to create one single national entrance point in relation to all forms of recognition the function as coordinating body in the field of professional recognition was transferred from the Ministry of Business to the Ministry of Education, CIRIUS, in June 2001. CIRIUS has since then taken on the overall responsibility for implementation and promotion of EU directives on recognition of professional qualifications as well as promotion of professional de jure recognition in general, including recognition of professional qualifications of nationals of countries outside the EU.

The existing legal framework for recognition furthermore gives CIRIUS responsibility to:

Advise municipalities and other authorities responsible for the integration of foreigners on assessment and recognition of foreign qualifications.

Function as Danish National Reference Point in the EU-cooperation in the field of Vocational Educational and Training (VET).

Function as competent authority in relation to recognition of foreign teacher qualifications.

The staff of CIRIUS

14 employees form the department of recognition within CIRIUS, which functions as the Danish ENIC/NARIC-office. The staff consists of a head of office, 7 credential evaluators, one information officer, to employees dealing with professional de jure recognition and one secretary. 2 part time student employees support the handling of assessments. Finally, occasionally the Centre buys consultant services. The director of CIRIUS is the overall responsible of recognition in CIRIUS.

Budget

The Danish stat budget allocates 8.700.000 DKK (approx. 1.175.000 EURO) to recognition of foreign qualifications (direct cost) with the addition of approximately 25 percent of this amount to indirect cost (administration, support etc.)

Capacity building in terms of expertise and service to the public

Competence development is underlined as an important aspect of the staffing of CIRIUS and plays an important role in the office's quality work.

The development of assessment competences has - especially for the credential evaluators - a high priority. Here on-the-job-training,

i.e. processing of case-files is the most common method. Other ways of supporting competence development is through internal meetings and participation in seminars, study visits and international projects/co-operation.

CIRIUS employs internal as well as external Quality Assurance mechanisms. An employee manual (personalehåndbog) collects the accumulated knowledge and best practice. The manual functions as a starting point for staff training and is a guarantee that cases are handled in a professionally consistent way. The assessment procedures for the various qualification recognition modes are described step by step. Other internal mechanisms are recurring evaluation seminars, checklists supporting the evaluation procedure and double-checking of all statements. The filing of all incoming and outgoing mails is introduced to support the sharing of knowledge and information and consistency in assessments.

All new employees are trained in the principles and procedures of recognition. In this training it is ensured that all national and international legislation and recommendations forms part of the training.

An annual "contract" between the Director and the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of education forms the basis of the external QA-mechanisms. CIRIUS is responsible for preparing annual report on the state of recognition work in Denmark. This report is transferred to the Ministry of Education and presented to the Parliament (Folketinget) by the minister.

Except for the secretary and the student employees all employees hold a degree at Master degree level. One very high priority is the availability of adequate language competences. According to the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications etc. Order applicants can provide documentation for qualifications in Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, English, French and German. Apart from these languages CIRIUS is currently able to deal with files in the Finnish, Spanish, Greek, Russian, Ukrainian, Serbo-Croat, Turkish and Arabic languages. 5 nationalities are represented in the staff.

The inclusion of juridical competences has been another specific priority of CIRIUS. CIRIUS considers the inclusion of such competences both necessary and a clear advantage in connection with CIRIUS' efforts to establish itself as an authority making authoritative decisions and standard setting and to proactively influence the legal framework and frame of competence of CIRIUS. On a day-to-day basis the availability of juridical competences is a way of ensuring that assessments made by CIRIUS are in conformity with the national and international legal framework on recognition and respect basic principles of administrative legislation.

All holders of foreign educational qualifications are entitled to an assessment of their qualifications. CIRIUS serve single persons, employers, both public and private, educational institutions, ministries and municipalities. CIRIUS informs all parts on the procedures and principles of recognition. CIRIUS also informs foreign partners on Danish qualifications.

One of the major developments within the last years has been the development of the electronic "Eksamenshåndbog" (guide to admission) which provides institutions with in-depth knowledge of foreign upper secondary qualifications, grading systems and conversions and information on levels of individual subjects all necessary for decisions on admission.

Besides recognition CIRIUS deals with all aspects of the Bologna process and transparency tools such as diploma supplement, ECTS-guidelines, EUROPASS etc.

Networking and cooperation at national level and internationally

Networking is highly prioritised for developing recognition in Denmark. Nationally CIRIUS obviously has close relations to all parts of the ministry of Education, which CIRIUS is a part of. Close relations to the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovations as well as the ministry of Culture have also been developed over time. The Danish Integration Ministry is another important partner, since CIRIUS' assessments form part of the integration process by clarifying foreigners of their possibility to seek employment or further education in Denmark. The Danish quality assurance agency, The Danish Evaluation Institute, is another important national partner.

CIRIUS' assessments are seen as part as the integration process of foreigners in Denmark. In this respect CIRIUS has close relations with guidance counsellors, job centres, social partners and other parties engaged in integration. CIRIUS has taken part in various projects with the aim of integrating persons from non-European countries in the Danish labour market.

Internationally CIRIUS is part of the ENIC/NARIC-networks and takes part in network meetings and the mailing list.

A very close relationship with the Nordic ENIC/NARIC-offices has been developed, which has formed an umbrella organisation called NORRIC. Besides setting up www.norric.org various projects have been finished, all focusing on removing barriers of recognition, exchanging knowledge of recognition standards and best practice in recognition within the Nordic countries. An information project on good practice in information in recognition is currently taken place.

Furthermore, bilateral exchange of information and knowledge between CIRIUS and national and foreign educational institutions, international organisations such as EAIE, AACRAO and NAFSA, plays an important role in CIRIUS network.

Cooperation recognition/Quality assurance bodies

The Danish ENIC/NARIC-office and the Danish quality assurance body "The Danish Evaluation Institute" (EVA) are both national agencies under the auspices of the Ministry of Education. In this respect there are many contact points between the two organisations from top levels and down.

Both organisations are represented in working groups concerning development and internationalisation of Danish higher education. Among these working groups the task of creating a national qualifications framework in Denmark has been the most important in relation to recognition. Several working groups with representatives from both CIRIUS and EVA have been established and recognition is obviously an important issue. Most notably a working group on the relationship between a national Danish Qualifications framework and the overarching European qualifications framework is preparing a model for a national Danish qualification framework, and CIRIUS and EVA are both members of this working group. Debates on recognition methods have been raised in these working groups, and the importance of basing recognition on learning outcome has been stressed among other things in the debates.

Apart from these working groups and contact points both organisations have descriptions of their working methods in the fields of recognition and quality assurance on their respective websites. The Danish ENIC/NARIC-office publishes its criteria and principles of recognition as well as the assessments made of individual credentials and EVA publish their methods of evaluation of Danish programmes.

Evaluations of the quality of Danish programmes are published and thus serve as a tool for comparing foreign credentials with Danish programmes. At the same time the evaluations carried out by EVA can be used in informing other ENIC/NARIC-offices on the status of individual Danish programmes.

Both CIRIUS and EVA publish reports and working documents from the ENIC/NARIC-network and the European Association for Quality Assurance

in Higher Education (ENQA). Important decisions and memoranda are thus widely spread within the organisations.

Suggested improvement in the cooperation between CIRIUS and quality assurance bodies

A new law on accreditation of Danish higher education programmes has just been submitted to hearing in Denmark. The proposal suggests setting up new structures for accreditation and quality assurance in Denmark. The new law on accreditation of existing and new programmes is supposed to be passed in the autumn session of the Danish Parliament and is planned to be implemented in spring 2007. CIRIUS awaits the final act, before future cooperation with the Danish quality assurance bodies can be established. The new law will strengthen quality assurance in Denmark and improve transparency by establishing an accreditation system for all higher education programmes in Denmark. Cooperation with this new structure and the existing Danish quality assurance body will be highly prioritised by CIRIUS both in regards to cooperation in working groups related to recognition and cooperation on a more regular basis.

In 2003 all employees of the Danish ENIC/NARIC-office visited EVA and information on the working methods in recognition and quality assurance was exchanged and the employees were introduced to each other. A follow-up meeting at CIRIUS was organised the same year.

It should be considered when planning seminars and conferences on recognition and quality assurance to involve partners from both sides when relevant either as speakers or guests.

Finally, the cooperation between the CIRIUS and the Danish quality assurance bodies in relation to qualifications frameworks must be upheld and even strengthened.