



# Self-Evaluation Report

## *of SKVC*

### *(Lithuanian ENIC/NARIC)*

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# Executive Summary

## ○ Rationale

SKVC acts as a national center of competence in the field of academic recognition of qualifications acquired abroad and in Lithuania, and is an active member of international associations of similar academic information centres – ENIC and NARIC networks. We are committed to development of recognition methodologies and tools both on national and international level with the aim to reflect upon on our activities, to constantly learn, share and improve. Academic recognition is about providing information and transparency of qualifications and this way helping to realise their value when moving between the education systems and transitioning from education to the labor market. With our services to higher education institutions, employers, and individuals we strive to be useful and conducive to the free movement for the purposes of further studies and employment.

The self-evaluation methodology, developed in terms of SQUARE project, to which SKVC was a partner, is intended to enable ENIC-NARICs centres to critically reflect to which extend they comply with the good practice agreed upon within the networks, and to improve where necessary and to enhance where possible. In 2016, SKVC as Lithuanian ENIC/NARIC centre performed its first self-evaluation, received a peer review visit in early days of 2017, and the external review report in spring 2017. SKVC was among the first 12 academic recognition and information centres within ENIC/NARIC networks who participated in this exercise.

This is our second self-evaluation and it has two aims. Our first intension is to analyse our current practices, identify some strengths and weaknesses, and areas for improvement. Our second aim is to use this as an accountability opportunity to our founder, Lithuanian Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, and contribute to the national debate about the overall framework for recognition.

The present self-evaluation consisted of an analysis of compliance with the standards and guidelines for good practice. The purpose was to gather data, reflect and establish the extent to which the existing practices and procedures of our centre comply with the standards and guidelines for good practice. As advised in the Protocol, various members of SKVC were involved into the self-evaluation, namely:

- two experienced credential evaluators;
- three middle-level managers with extensive experience in evaluation of credentials;
- one senior-level manager, head of the ENIC/NARIC.

Before doing the self-evaluation, the Centre completed the typology form, the essence of which remains the same from the previous self-evaluation. In general, the core practices of the Centre stay the same, only brought further in line with the latest developments in and around recognition.

For a few standards, where it was explicitly requested to provide evidence for how the standard is met, we are referring to practice in the text and also attach examples. They all are kept in an electronic form.

## ○ Level of compliance

Standard 1: Procedures, Criteria and Quality Assurance – *full compliance*

Standard 2: Applicant-centred Recognition – *full compliance*

Standard 3: Quality, Legitimacy and Authenticity – *full compliance*

Standard 4: Evaluation Tools and Resources – *full compliance*

Standard 5: Transparency and Information Provision – *substantial compliance*

Standard 6: (Inter)national Cooperation and Presentation – *full compliance*

## ○ Priority areas

Standard 5: Transparency and Information Provision

Standard 6: (Inter)national Cooperation and Presentation

## ○ Actions

1. To conclude work on the development of evaluation methodology and IT tools for academic recognition of VET qualifications. The driver for this action is the external need (of employers and schools) to provide academic recognition of VET qualifications, which to date is missing, nobody offers such a service. This kind of expansion is a logical addition to the profile of activities SKVC performs. Internal preparations in terms of methodology development and IT system adaptation within the KPMPC<sup>1</sup>-coordinated project is under way, the key now is to adopt relevant changes in the national legislation on the Government level enabling formal conclusion of this.
2. To complete development of our Electronic Recognition Area (in Lith. EPE) IT system, which is the main tool to apply and process recognition requests, to increase its user-friendliness, and implement automatic recognition. This action comes from the internal analysis of how the system operates and from the need on the country level to prepare for processing of applications regarding recognition of EHEA degrees that fall under the automatic recognition provisions. Appropriate actions are being taken within KAPRIS-2 project.
3. To develop the potential for institutional users of IT system for recognition. There is a two-fold need for this to enable more effective consultation process between SKVC and HEIs. This is already planned within the further development of the recognition portal (EPE).
4. To ensure the administrative and technical maintenance and support of the IT tools. These questions are continuously discussed together with the Council of SKVC and the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport as founder of SKVC, in the

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<sup>1</sup> KPMPC – Lithuanian VET authority, also in charge of the development on the national qualifications framework

package of all activities and functions to be performed, while developing the new medium-term Strategic Plan of SKVC for 2023-2026.

5. Implementation of projects, which provide alternative sources of financing. We plan to develop at least one new project proposal, to be submitted towards the NARIC call 2022.
6. To achieve better appreciation of recognition-related national and international agenda including dissemination of the results of international activities at the national level. To be done by more actively including ENIC/NARIC issues as a constant agenda item in SKVC's Council meetings and meetings at the Ministry. Further participation in informal working groups at the Ministry. Regular meetings with the Ministry are planned on a monthly or bimonthly basis. Also information dissemination to all stakeholders via newsletters of SKVC will be continuously implemented.
7. To focus on updating tools for HEI's to enable streamlined consultation. Six country education profiles will be updated in the restricted user area per year. Every year country specific requirements for documentation will be reviewed, also general recommendations for HEIs regarding recognition of qualifications. Specific attention will be devoted to recognition of short higher education cycle by end of 2022.
8. Provide a platform for the exchange of experience among HEI's to advance fair recognition. Every year two events on selected pertinent issues will be organized.

# 1. Typology

## 1.1 About the centre

- What is the name of your centre?

*In original:* Studijų kokybės vertinimo centras (SKVC)

*In English:* Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC)

- When was your Information centre established?

On 24 January 1995.

- Are you an ENIC or ENIC-NARIC?

☐ ENIC

☒ ENIC-NARIC

## 1.2 Legal Powers and status

### Legal powers

- The activities of your centre are:

☒ regulated by national law

SKVC activities are reflective of the usual remit and scope of ENIC/NARIC centres. The services provided by us are public services, which are available to Lithuanian institutions and the general public. Therefore, the activities of SKVC are regulated by national legislation and receive public funding.

The activities of SKVC are regulated by the following national legislation:

- *Law on Higher Education and Research (adopted in 2016, with later amendments):*
  - Article 22, point 2 assigns SKVC to the tasks to create favourable conditions for the free movement of persons when organising and carrying out the assessment and/or recognition in Lithuania of higher education-related qualifications awarded in foreign institutions and fulfilling other functions set by the Government;
  - Article 52, point 13, which delegates SKVC to perform academic recognition;
  - Article 52, point 14, which stipulates that SKVC should establish the correspondence of a higher education qualification to a certain study field, if this is not stated in documentation, and provided that the awarding HEI ceased its existence.
- *Description of the Procedure for Recognition of Education and Qualifications Concerning Higher Education and Acquired under Educational Programmes of Foreign States and International Organisations, adopted by Resolution No 212 of the Government of the*

*Republic of Lithuania of 29 February 2012*, assigns SKVC to the following tasks:

- to perform the functions of a member of the European Network of National Information Centres on Academic Mobility and Recognition (ENIC) and the Network of National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC);
  - to collect and provide information about educational systems of foreign states and the Republic of Lithuania to ensure recognition of education and qualifications, academic mobility and international cooperation;
  - to provide academic recognition of foreign higher education qualifications concerning higher education;
  - to provide information to interested institutions and persons and to perform other functions defined in legal acts to enable the evaluation and recognition of higher education qualifications acquired in Lithuania;
  - to monitor decisions by higher education institutions concerning academic recognition of foreign qualifications and provide methodological assistance;
  - to publish general recommendations on assessment and/or academic recognition of foreign qualifications on its website and in other ways on the basis of the established practice;
  - to provide information about assessment of particular foreign qualifications and recommendations on how to perform this assessment upon request of foreign qualification recognition authorities or other stakeholders;
  - to provide information about assessment of particular foreign qualifications and recommendations on how to perform this assessment upon request of foreign qualification recognition authorities or other stakeholders;
  - to collect information related to decisions taken by authorised higher education institutions on recognition of foreign qualifications;
  - to deal with appeals concerning decisions on recognition made by authorized higher education institutions.
- The order No. V-443 of the Minister of Education, Science and Sports of 25 March 2020 (originally issued on 4 April 2012) regarding the Authorisation to conduct academic recognition of education and qualifications related to higher education and awarded by foreign higher education institutions and international organisations. Following provisions of point 6.4, SKVC should submit a yearly analysis to the Ministry on the situation regarding academic recognition performed by authorized higher education institutions and should constantly inform about deviations from the established practice.
  - Order of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport No. V-932 of 19 June 2020 regarding allocation of state funded study places for holders of foreign and international qualifications provisions that SKVC is responsible

for conversion of grades for holders of foreign or international qualifications who apply for state funded study places.

- The Statute of SKVC is approved by the order No. V-1002 of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, last amended on 14 November 2016. In the Statute, general provisions of the national legislation are repeated and other functions detailed as well.

☐ defined in a mandate given to your centre

- Are there any contractual requirements to be met for the services your centre offers?

No. There is no yearly or other type of contract signed, SKVC operates continuously, state budget allocations are disbursed on a yearly basis. Project contracts are concluded for a specified duration (e.g. 2, 3, 5 years), in most cases ESF-funded projects would be extended.

- How independent is your centre in setting its own recognition policies?

SKVC was founded in 1995 as an independent public body, funded from the State budget (a budgetary institution). Its founder was the Ministry of Education and Science. In 2002, the status of SKVC was upgraded to become a public administration institution, the majority of employees are civil servants. SKVC has autonomous responsibility for its operations and its conclusions, and recommendations made in its statements are not influenced by third parties such as organs of political influence and various stakeholders. The Centre has the rights of initiative to propose changes in national legislation and is free to take part in the projects that develop and advance recognition policies and practises.

Independence of SKVC is guaranteed through the following measures:

- its operational independence from ministries and other stakeholders is guaranteed in the official documentation (e.g. the aforementioned legal acts);
- the definition and operation of its procedures and methods, and the determination of the outcomes of academic recognition process and other processes are undertaken autonomously and independently from government, higher education institutions, and organs of political influence;
- while relevant stakeholders in higher education or particular experts are consulted in the processes, the final outcomes of an assessment and academic recognition remain the responsibility of SKVC.

## Legal status

- What is the legal status of your centre? Your centre is:

☒ a public body

☐ part of the ministry responsible for higher education:



- ☐ a separate unit;
  - ☐ not a separate unit<sup>2</sup>
- ☐ accountable / answerable to any other ministry or government department
- ☒ independent institution
- ☐ part of another larger public organization<sup>3</sup>
- ☐ a private body
  - ☐ not for profit
    - ☐ independent institution
    - ☐ part of another larger private not-for-profit organization<sup>4</sup>
  - ☐ profit-oriented
    - ☐ independent institution
    - ☐ part of another larger private for-profit organization

### 1.3 Remit and Scope of Services

- What services are offered by your centre?
  - ☒ Evaluation of international qualifications.
    - ✓Are your statements/evaluations:
      - ☒ legally binding:
        - ☒ Recognition for further study
        - ☐ Recognition for access to regulated professions
        - ☐ Recognition for access to non-regulated professions
        - ☒ Recognition for employment<sup>5</sup>
      - ☒ a recommendation/ advice:
        - ☒ Recognition for further study
        - ☐ Recognition for access to regulated professions
        - ☐ Recognition for access to non-regulated professions
        - ☒ Recognition for employment<sup>6</sup>
    - ☒ Information on international qualifications<sup>7</sup>
    - ☒ Statements on international qualifications<sup>8</sup>
    - ✓Which applicants are requesting your statements/evaluations?
      - ☒ Individuals

<sup>2</sup> Functions assigned to staff alongside other functions.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. national rectors' conference, university, etc.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. educational exchanges support office, international education foundation, etc.

<sup>5</sup> In case of formal requirements to the level of a qualification for access to non-regulated professions.

<sup>6</sup> Idem.

<sup>7</sup> E.g. information on generic level, including e.g. references to websites and databases.

<sup>8</sup> Objective information without evaluation, e.g. accreditation status, level, workload, purpose and/or learning outcomes, without evaluating/compared them.

■ Education institutions:

- tertiary
- post-secondary non-tertiary
- upper secondary

■ Employers

■ Ministries

■ Other:

- State institutions, like the Recruitment Division of the Armed Forces of Lithuania, the National Health Insurance Fund under the Ministry of Health, Lithuanian Labour Exchange, Administrations of Municipalities, the State Health Care Accreditation Agency under the Ministry of Health, the State Tax Inspection under the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, State Civil Service Department under the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport.
- Public institutions, like the Association of Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions for Centralised Admissions (LAMABPO).
- Also other institutions, like the International Red Cross, etc.

■ Online database for your applicants.

The SKVC operates several resources that are all free of charge and available online, namely:

- **Recognition practice database.** The SKVC operates a database of recognition decisions that provides accurate and up-to-date information on our recognition practices. The database is filterable by country, qualification type and awarding institution and automatically transfers the relevant information from our evaluation portal. The database is freely available to everyone, however it is designed for use in Lithuanian: <https://epe.skvc.lt/en/portal/practice/>.
- **Country education profiles.** The specific resource for admissions and international offices of HEI's providing detailed information on specific countries' systems of education, qualifications, quality assurance, etc. The resource is provided in Lithuanian only and is available only to registered users that are part of HEI's admissions, international relations or similar offices or otherwise deemed to benefit from the information (e.g. vocational education and training providers, secondary schools, etc.): <https://www.skvc.lt/default/lt/vartotojai/>.
- **Grade conversions calculator.** A resource provided free of charge to for admissions/international offices of HEI's, as well as other institutions, such as schools, VET providers, etc. The resource is a calculator based on the nationally approved formula that converts evaluations from a foreign grade system to the Lithuanian grade system.
- **General recommendations.** SKVC provides a list of specific foreign qualifications as well as their general comparability to Lithuanian qualifications. This list is intended to be used by HEI's authorized to perform

recognition independently, to ensure that homogeneity of recognition practice is maintained (available only in Lithuanian): <https://www.skvc.lt/default/lt/uzsienio-kvalifikaciju-pripazinimas/institucijoms/rekomendacijos#Auk%C5%A1tosioms%20mokyklo ms>.

- **Country specific documentation requirements.** SKVC maintains a list of documentation requirements for specific qualifications so that people can know what specific documents they will have to submit when applying for recognition. The list is available both in Lithuanian and English: [https://www.skvc.lt/default/en/60/apply/country\\_specific](https://www.skvc.lt/default/en/60/apply/country_specific), [https://www.skvc.lt/default/lt/uzsienio-kvalifikaciju-pripazinimas/kreiptis/specialieji\\_reikalavimai](https://www.skvc.lt/default/lt/uzsienio-kvalifikaciju-pripazinimas/kreiptis/specialieji_reikalavimai)

## ■ Provide training to third parties.

### Training activities for higher education institutions

In the period of 2017-2021, the SKVC has organized seven seminars for higher education institutions in total. Such seminars were focused on sharing good practices in assessment and academic recognition of foreign qualifications, information provision regarding foreign educational systems, trends in academy mobility, and the pertinent news in recognition of qualifications and/or study periods/prior learning, etc.

- Main assessment principles and steps of assessment procedure, working principles with documentation, status of educational institutions and programmes, etc. were discussed in three seminars (2017, 2019, 2021) organized to share good assessment practice with the new HEIs' staff members working with foreign students and their qualifications.
- The training seminar introducing educational systems of Azerbaijan, India, and UK including assessment of international qualifications was organized in 2018.
- Training was provided by SKVC credential evaluators mainly. Invited experts from France and Ireland HEIs participated in the seminar "Recognition of Prior Learning in Higher Education: the Way Forward" organized in December of 2019. Ms Kristina Sutkutė from the SKVC made a presentation on recognition of MOOCs and other forms of e-learning in this seminar.

Development of practical skills was an important part at training seminars as helping participants to apply theoretical knowledge in practice and discuss questions with experts directly. The training was organized in face to face format with the exception of the last one provided online in June of 2021 due to COVID-19 pandemic situation. Presentations and other material of training seminars are available at the website of the SKVC, at the restricted area created for HEIs and other institutions working with foreign qualifications.

As is explained in detail under Standard 6, since 2012, HEIs have a possibility to receive the authorisation to provide an academic recognition of foreign qualifications for study purposes. Initially, institutions did not hurry to take on

this new responsibility, but gradually more and more join this decentralised system. SKVC supported all HEIs with advice how to prepare the application, and, more importantly, internal processes for more active role in academic recognition towards admission. Just in 2020 alone, the SKVC provided consultations on recognition process to nine HEIs seeking to get this right. Currently there are 16 HEIs (of 36 in total) having recognition right for the aforementioned purpose.

### **Consultations for secondary school students regarding studies abroad**

Before the Covid-19 induced pandemic broke, every year consultations (including presentations) regarding recognition of foreign qualifications were provided by SKVC in annual educational fairs or other similar events in Lithuania aiming to offer useful advice for those seeking studies in foreign higher education institutions. In addition, SKVC used to hold several visits to upper secondary schools with a similar purpose of giving advice and guidelines on how to choose studies abroad.

## **■ Research**

Research is mainly done within projects or specifically aimed at policy development on national and international levels.

## **■ Projects**

The list of most recent projects, implemented from 2017 to date, include the following:

- KAPRIS-2: Strengthening the system of academic recognition of foreign qualifications concerning higher education in Lithuania (coordinated by SKVC) [2015-2021]
- PARADIGMS: New Paradigms in Recognition (coordinated by Nuffic, Dutch ENIC/NARIC) [2016-2018]
- IMPACT: Quality and Impact of the Recognition Networks (coordinated by Nuffic, Dutch ENIC/NARIC) [2016-2018]
- RENSA: Recognition of Non-country Specific Awards (coordinated by Eccis, UK ENIC) [2016-2018]
- ISOBAQ: Information System On pre-Bologna Academic Qualifications (coordinated by NACID, Bulgarian ENIC/NARIC) [2016-2018]
- LIREQA: Linking Academic Recognition and Quality Assurance (coordinated by SKVC) [2016-2019]
- AR-Net: Automatic Recognition in the Networks in 2020 (coordinated by Nuffic, Dutch ENIC/NARIC) [2018-2020]
- e-VALUATE: Evaluating e-learning for Academic Recognition (coordinated by Nuffic, Dutch ENIC/NARIC) [2018-2020]
- Improvement of the system of recognition and validation of competencies acquired in various ways (coordinated by KPMPC, Lithuanian VET and NQF authority) [2018-2022]

- I-Comply: Implementation of LRC COMPLIant recognition practices in the EHEA (led by the Dutch Ministry of Education) [2019-2021]
- STACQ: Stacking Credits and the Future of the Qualification (coordinated by Nuffic, Dutch ENIC/NARIC) [2020-2022]
- I-AR: Implementation of Automatic Recognition in the Networks (coordinated by Nuffic, Dutch ENIC/NARIC) [2020-2022]
- QUATREC-2: Comparing qualifications for reliable recognition (coordinated by AIC, Latvian ENIC/NARIC) [2020-2022]
- ONREQ: NARIC On-line training course 2020-22 (coordinated by Nuffic, Dutch ENIC/NARIC)
- Further support to the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework (EU Twinning Project, Lithuanian-led partnership (of Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, ESFA<sup>9</sup>, SKVC and KPMPC) with institutions in Slovenia (CPI) and France) [2021-2023].

## ■ Conferences and seminars

The most important conferences organized by SKVC during the last five year period are as follows:

- “20 Years After Sorbonne Declaration: Bologna Process in Lithuania and other European countries” was organized on 11th June 2018. The event took place was aimed at discussing the overall European higher education reforms carried out since 1999 under the so-called Bologna Process, assessing progress in general and the situation in Lithuania in particular. Speakers included Mr. David Crosier (Higher Education Policy Coordinator (EACEA) and co-author of the Bologna Process Implementation Report), Dr. Una Strand Viðarsdóttir (member of the Bologna Follow-up Group and Senior Adviser at the Icelandic Ministry of Education, Science and Culture), Ms. Anna Gover (representative of the European University Association), Mr. Anne Flierman (member of the ENQA Board). This was followed by a roundtable discussion with representatives of Lithuanian higher education social stakeholders.
- The final LIREQA project conference in Vilnius “LIREQA: Linking Academic Recognition and Quality Assurance” (22 May 2019), which featured prominent speakers from two communities - quality assurance and academic recognition of qualifications. The opening speech was delivered by Mr Adam Gajek, President of European Student Union who talked about recognition as a key to quality, access, and internationalization for students. Ms. Tia Loukkola, Director of Institutional Development at the European University Association raised questions about the development of quality assurance and quality culture and if they provided panacea for everything. Monitoring of implementation as a tool to improve recognition and its results were presented by Mr. Gunnar Vaht, President of Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee. Results of external review of QA agencies - how they demonstrated effectiveness of internal quality assurance by external quality

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<sup>9</sup> ESFA – European Social Fund Agency

assurance was discussed by Caty Duykaerts, Vice-President of ENQA. Mr. Bas Wegewijs, Team Leader Advice & Policy, Nuffic (Dutch ENIC/NARIC) talked about the peer review of ENIC/NARIC centres and tools for HEIs to improve recognition practices. Finally, Ms. Aurelija Valeikienė, Deputy Director of SKVC made a presentation on how to connect recognition and quality assurance in Higher Education Institutions and discussed the content of LIREQA recommendations which are a novel tool for HEIs, QA agencies, ENIC/NARIC centres, and stakeholder organisations how each of these stakeholder groups could contribute towards fair recognition. This conference was well attended both by local and international participants, all together more than 120.

- On 11 December 2019, the SKVC organised an international conference "Quality, Accountability and Transparency in Higher Education". The event was addressed to higher education institutions' leadership (rectors, directors, vice-rectors for studies, international relations, strategic development) and middle management (heads of studies and international affairs departments), as well as to representatives of students' and other educational organisations. In the first conference part presentation were made by Prof. Modestas Gelbūda (Professor, ISM University of Management and Economics, founder of the Baltic Institute for Leadership Development, Lithuania); Dr. Ellen Hazelkorn (Professor Emerita, University of Technology, Dublin, Ireland, higher education policy researcher and consultant); Dr. Maria Manatos (Lecturer, Department of Social, Political and Territorial Sciences, University of Aveiro, Portugal, Researcher at the Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies (CIPES)); Mr. Eigirdas Sarkanis, (President of the Lithuanian Students' Union, Lithuania); Dr. Thomas Weko, (Senior Analyst, Directorate for Education and Skills, OECD, Head of the Higher Education Policy Unit). The second part of the event included a discussion involving representatives of higher education institutions, students, the Ministry, the Council for Higher Education, and SKVC.
- The Centre organised its first international distance conference entitled "Implementing Quality Distance Learning" on 15 December 2020. The opening keynote speeches were delivered by international guests Dr Chris Brink (Professor Emeritus, former Rector of Newcastle University, UK), Dr Tony Bates (President and CEO of Tony Bates Associates Ltd, Canada), Dr Piet Van Hove (Director of International Relations at the University of Antwerp, Belgium), and Mr Ben Walker (Senior Lecturer at the Manchester Metropolitan University Teaching Academy, UK). The speakers from Lithuania included Dr. Airina Volungevičienė (Director of the Institute of Innovative Studies, Vytautas Magnus University), Dr. Loreta Tauginienė (Ombudswoman for Academic Ethics and Procedures of the Republic of Lithuania), and Mr. Eigirdas Sarkanis (President of the Lithuanian Students' Union). Traditionally, a roundtable discussion followed involving representatives of higher education institutions and student organisations.
- A second international teleconference on "The Development of External Quality Assurance to Remain Fit for Purpose" was held on 14 December 2021. In the first part of the conference, presentations were made by Dr. Susanna Karakhanyan (7th President of INQAAHE, Armenia - United Arab Emirates), Mr. Jakub Grodecki, (Vice President of the European Students' Union, Poland); Dr. Daniela Cristina Ghițulică (Vice President of ENQA, Vice-President of ARACIS, Romania); Dr. Don F. Westerheijden (Researcher Emeritus, Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies

(CHEPS), University of Twente, The Netherlands); Dr. Eugenijus Stumbrys (Head of the Science Policy and Analysis Division, Lithuanian Research Council); Mr. Vytautas Kučinskas (President of the Lithuanian Students' Union, member of the SKVC Council). As usual, the second part – the round table discussion – was addressed to stakeholders in higher education and included representatives of universities, colleges, students, employers, the Ministry, LMT, and SKVC.

## ■ Publications

SKVC staff contributed to a number of policy papers and other publications produced within Erasmus+ funded projects. The most significant publications in terms of the European policy development are EAR Manuals (EAR Manual and EAR-HEI Manual) and LIREQA recommendations, found here: <https://www.enic-naric.net/enic-naric-recognition-tools-and-projects.aspx>

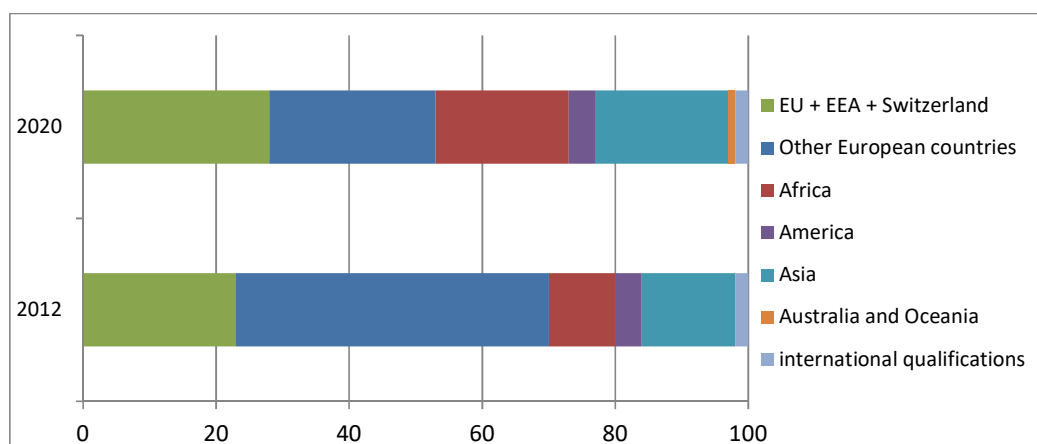
## □ Other

# 1.4 Statistics

## Number of enquiries

- How many enquiries, statements and/or evaluations does your centre process annually?<sup>10</sup>

Over the last eight years, the overall percentage of qualifications from Europe is decreasing, while Africa and Asia is on a rise, and the number of qualifications originating from America and international qualifications remains stable, as shown below.



1 fig. distribution of qualifications received by region

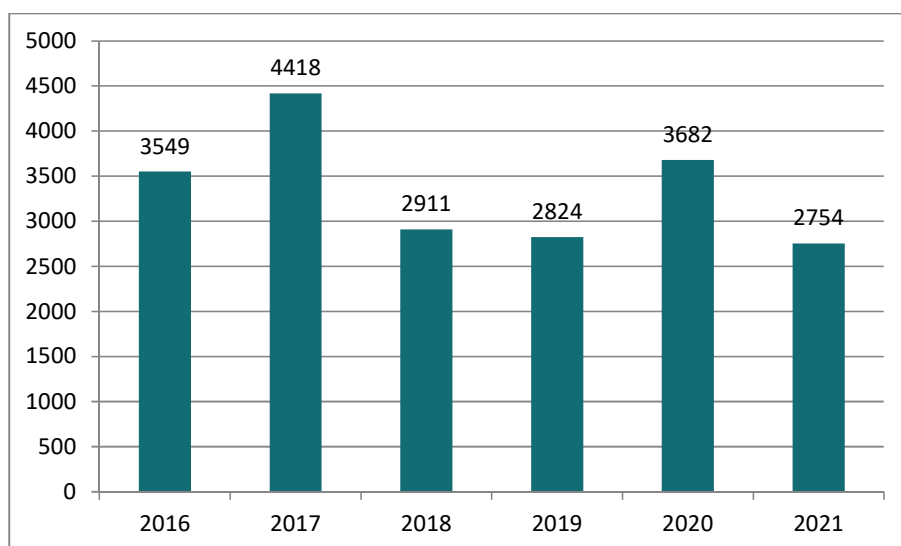
<sup>10</sup> Provide an indication, e.g. based on the average of the last 5 years.

There is an increasing diversity and number of qualifications that SKVC receives, as shown below.

	2004	2012	2020
Number of qualifications per employee	217	229	460
Number of countries per employee	8	8	13
Total number of different countries dealt in a given year	33	70	107

1 table. Workload per employee per selected year

- Total number of applications received at SKVC for academic recognition of foreign qualifications



2 figure. Total number of applications received for SKVC's recognition in 2016-2021

- Total number of decisions that were taken by authorised HEIs which were monitored and support for recognition provided by SKVC

Total number of academic recognition decisions taken by authorised HEIs reviewed by SKVC by year						growth 2019 and 2020 compared
2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	
<b>381</b>	<b>474</b>	<b>1376</b>	<b>1861</b>	<b>2112</b>	<b>2524</b>	<b>+20%</b>

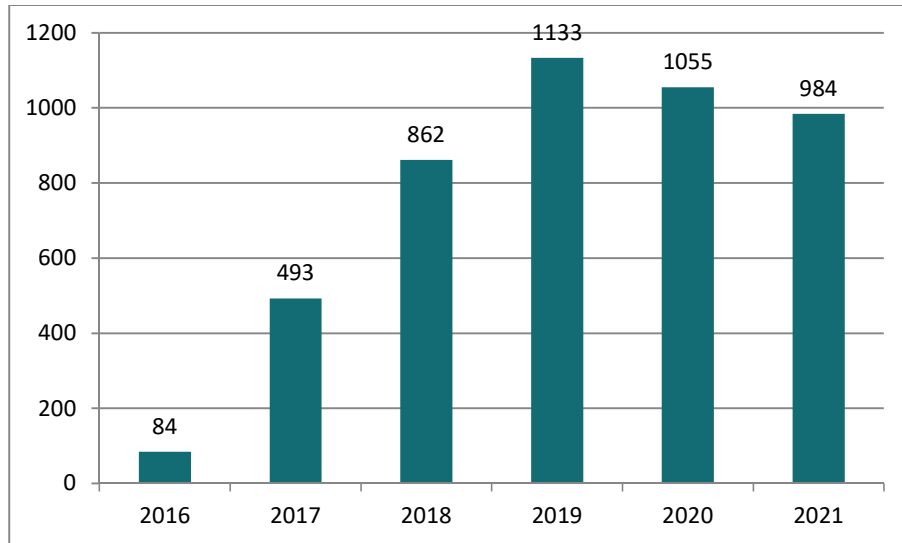
2 table. Recognition decisions taken by authorised HEIs and reviewed by SKVC in 2015-2020\*

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\*due to the monitoring cycle, data for 2021 will be available after 1 July 2022.

- Total number of applications from HEIs for a recommendation regarding assessment of foreign qualifications:

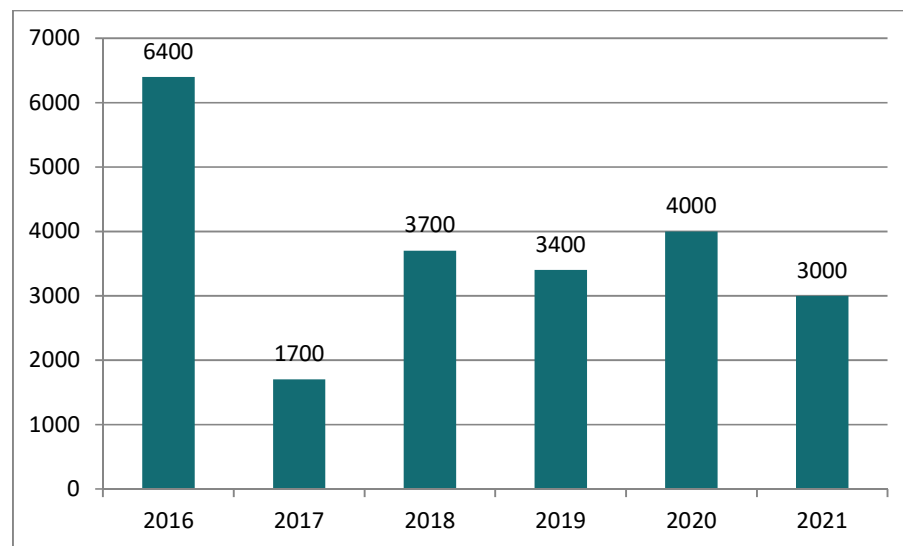
In 2021, general recommendations for HEIs provided in a format of country descriptions covered 84% of academic recognition cases dealt within HEIs. Still, there was a need for individual recommendations as provided in the chart below.





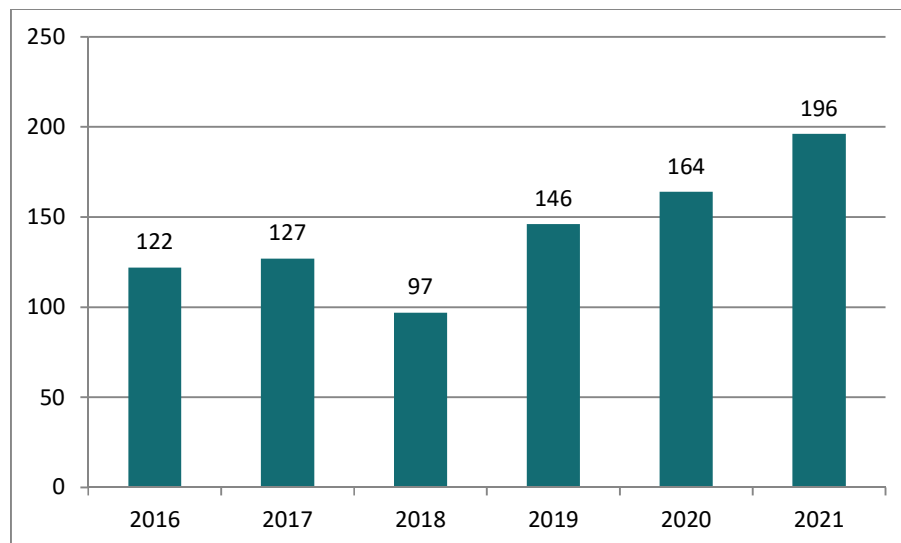
3 figure. Individual recommendations provided to HEIs by SKVC in 2016-2021

- We managed to diminish the total number of other inquiries received at SKVC regarding foreign qualifications, assessment and recognition of foreign qualifications, systems of education, grades conversion, due to more efficient provision of information via the website and directly to our main clients:



4 figure. Approximate number of general enquires received in 2016-2021

- Total number of applications received at SKVC for conversion of grades and establishment of correspondence of subjects (for holders of foreign or international qualifications eligible to apply for state funded study places) in order to process requests in the common admission system administered by LAMABPO has been increasing during the last three years:



5 figure. Number of applications for grade conversion received in 2016-2021

- Do you expect significant increases or decreases in the numbers, or changes in the type of enquiries/evaluations in the upcoming 3 years?<sup>11</sup>

The general trend since us starting our online application portal for recognition (on 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 2020), and from the start of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown (as of 17<sup>th</sup> of March 2020), was that the numbers of applications for recognition had noticeably increased, while other services remained only marginally affected.

Pending changes in the national legislation regarding the entire recognition framework would enable our office to perform academic recognition of vocational qualifications, as well as recognition of doctoral level qualifications. Such a development is likely from 2022 and is expected to increase our workload. We plan to cope with it by increasing efficiency of processing of applications via EPE IS.

While this is counterbalanced by the increasing number of higher education institutions in Lithuania authorized to perform recognition independently, this decentralization is only partial. Higher education institutions are mandated to seek individual recommendations from SKVC in some cases and SKVC is tasked with ensuring effective monitoring of their recognition activities, mostly to ensure consistency and application of the LRC. SKVC is in turn charged with monitoring recognition activities at HEI's and this monitoring role is becoming ever more important as both Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) under ESG 1.4, LRC and the national authorities expect more information on HEI procedures and decisions. Naturally, in this role SKVC also provides recognition related training and education to HEIs to support their recognition activities.

SKVC has put in a considerable amount of effort to expand automatic recognition via treaties as explained under Standard 6, in addition we are also looking to apply

<sup>11</sup> E.g. level of education/qualification, country of origin of education/qualification, specific aspects of education/qualifications.

automatic recognition not based on international or regional treaties, but on more standardised, commonly determined criteria under the PARADIGMS project, such as adherence to the LRC, an established QA system according to the ESG, comparability of education systems based on three cycles of higher education, and available information.

In summary, the general ease of access provided by digitization of the application process as well as increases in the types of applications/levels handled by our office would suggest that the number of applications and the workload in general will only increase in the next 3 years, though digitalisation of the process and greater decentralisation of the recognition system are expected to help cope with the workload.

## Human resources

- How many members of staff are employed by your centre?
  - ✓ Total numbers of persons and full time equivalent (FTE) of staff:
  - ✓ Total persons and fte working for your centre:
    - Leadership<sup>12</sup>: a) 3 and b) 3,5 fte (the number includes Head of Organization, Deputy Director of SKVC, Head of the Division for Qualifications Assessment);
    - Policy advisor(s): a) 2 and b) 2,5 fte (persons employed in civil service and also projects)
    - Credential evaluator(s): a) 8 and b) 10 fte (persons employed in civil service and also projects)
    - Administrative staff<sup>13</sup> a) 7 and b) 8 fte (the number includes Finance, Law, Public Relations and Human Resources)
    - Other<sup>14</sup>: maintenance a) 2 b) 2 fte

*NB. Senior leadership of SKVC (Director and Deputy Director), the administrative staff and other staff members also lead and/or provide services for the tasks of SKVC as an external quality assurance agency.*

- ✓ From the above categories, how many persons and fte are officially employed outside your centre<sup>15</sup>? [please include a) number and b) fte]  
None, but IT support is subcontracted.

## Finances

- How are the services of your centre financed?

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<sup>12</sup> Head of Organization, Deputy Head.

<sup>13</sup> E.g. Finance, law, Public Relations and Human Resources

<sup>14</sup> E.g. maintenance, IT support, etc.

<sup>15</sup> E.g. elsewhere in organization, or contracted outside centre

☒ Public funds

☒ 100 % of funds from public funding:

☒ structural:

☒ non – structural (tenders): under ESF, Erasmus+, EU Twinning etc.

☐ Private funds<sup>16</sup>

☐ Both. Please specify:

☐ % of funds from public funding:

☐ structural:

☐ non - structural<sup>17</sup>:

☐ % private funding:

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<sup>16</sup> E.g. through fees to individuals and/or clients for services provided

<sup>17</sup> E.g. tenders

## 2. Standards & Compliance

This section describes the compliance of SKVC as Lithuanian ENIC/NARIC centre with the standards and guidelines of the ENIC-NARIC networks.

### ○ Standard 1: Procedures, Criteria and Quality Assurance

**The ENIC/NARIC office aligns its recognition criteria and procedures with established good practice, reviews its procedures on a regular basis, and ensures that the criteria are consistently applied.**

#### Compliance of the centre under review

##### Rating standard 1

1. ☐ No compliance
2. ☐ Partial compliance
3. ☐ Substantial compliance
4. ☒ Full compliance
- ☐ Standard is not applicable

##### Evaluation compliance standard 1

- *Recognition criteria and procedures are in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and subsidiary texts<sup>18</sup> (especially the (revised) Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications), as well as with other good practice as collected in the European Area of Recognition Manual<sup>19</sup>.*

The Lisbon Recognition Convention, its subsidiary texts, and other good practice tools are applied to all qualifications, including qualifications issued in countries, which are not Parties to the Convention. The provisions of the Convention have been fully incorporated into the national legislation, and this is reflected in the latest Bologna Process Implementation Reports (2018, 2020).

Anybody can apply for recognition without any restrictions in terms of status and/or citizenship. However, non-EU citizens and non-residents are required to provide a document supporting their purpose for seeking recognition. The proof of purpose should be issued by a Lithuanian employer, a higher education institution, or another body and should indicate that recognition is needed for them. This measure has allowed us to balance the rising numbers of applicants outside Lithuania who apply

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<sup>18</sup> See for full Convention and Subsidiary texts: enic-naric.net: <http://www.enic-naric.net/the-lisbon-recognition-convention-97.aspx>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.enic-naric.net/ear-manual-standards-and-guidelines-on-recognition.aspx>

without having concrete plans just because the procedure is free and can be easily accessed. The proof of purpose should be e-mailed to us directly by the Lithuanian institution.

Applications are currently processed free of charge. However, there are plans to introduce a small fee as an alternative source for funding to at least cover the support costs of the electronic system for applications.

Our office accepts documents in English and Russian without a translation. Standardised documents (such as state standard diplomas and/or transcripts) are also accepted in Latvian, Estonian, Polish, French, and German.

However, credential evaluators interpret the titles of the qualifications and other crucial information, such as names of higher education institutions and study programmes in the original languages. Thus, for crucial information our office relies on documents in the original language. Titles of foreign qualifications are indicated in the original language, titles in scripts other than Latin are transliterated.

The assessment is carried out in several steps, which are outlined in the Regulations approved by the Director of the Centre and are in line with the revised Recommendations:

- determining whether a qualification is a recognised award and belongs to the formal system of education in the country of origin;
- determining the level, i.e. the relative position and function compared to other qualifications in the country of origin, of the award;
- identifying a Lithuanian qualification, which is the most comparable to the foreign qualification;
- assessing the qualification in terms of profile, workload, quality, and learning outcomes.

Qualification frameworks (overarching European and national ones) are considered in determining the level of the qualification in the country of origin, the most comparable qualification in Lithuania, and the learning outcomes.

The assessment focuses on the qualification for which recognition is sought and its learning outcomes. Our office uses the learning outcomes approach; therefore, education previously acquired by the applicant generally does not have a major effect on its assessment, but it is taken into consideration, especially for second cycle awards.

Past practice is always taken into account during an assessment. For many qualifications the default decision, which can be changed and/or modified if necessary, is integrated into the EPE system and is displayed to the credential evaluator as s/he moves to the decision making part of the process. Substantial changes of practice are always discussed within all levels of management. Major shifts in practice are very rare and communicated to the stakeholders through various events and on our website. For example, once a short cycle qualification has been introduced in Lithuania, and our previous statements and decisions regarding foreign short cycle qualifications could be reviewed to include comparability to this new type of Lithuania qualification, a notice regarding this has been published on our website.

Qualifications issued several years ago and/or under previous education structures are considered in the light of the status of the qualification in the issuing country by taking into account whether previous qualifications are included in the qualifications framework and/or whether comparability to the presently awarded qualifications has been determined in the country of origin. Our office does not consider to what extent the older qualification is outdated as it involves considering factors, which fall outside our sphere of competence, such as considering the profile of the activities undertaken by the applicant after the qualification has been issued and/or developments in the field. This is left to decide for institutions making the final decision, such as higher education institutions and/or employers.

- *Recognition criteria and procedures are reviewed on a regular basis in order to adapt to developments in the educational field and in the field of recognition (e.g. the introduction of new tools such as the national qualifications frameworks). Sources of input for reviewing recognition practice are applicants, clients and stakeholders;*

The review and the possibility to adapt our criteria and procedures are ensured through the following elements of our recognition system:

- Flexible legislative and working framework;
- The possibility to appeal our decisions;
- Informal discussions with higher education institutions and other ENIC/NARIC centres.

The system, which lays out the framework for criteria and procedures, is flexible enough to allow our office to adapt to the development in the field of recognition and education in general.

The main principles, such as the competences of institutions, processing time, the right to appeal, the types of decisions, the main criteria are laid out in the Governmental Resolution and follow the LRC and its subsidiary texts. The rest of the provisions are left to regulate to our office and it is done through:

- legislation adopted by the order of the Centre, which, prior to approval and/or amendment, is distributed and discussed with the main stakeholders (the Ministry of Education and Science and higher education institutions)
- office practice consisting of various elements, such as office practice guides, country profiles etc.
- our electronic system EPE, which allows for flexible decision making.

The fact that most of the provisions regarding criteria and procedures are internally regulated allows for a quick review and adaptation. In order to make sure that the provisions are in line with the general education developments, the most important legal provisions are discussed with other stakeholders.

The framework is regularly reviewed to adapt and reflect the main developments in the field of education, such as recognition of prior learning, automatic recognition, micro-credentials, etc.

In addition to the general framework of recognition, upon which our decisions are based, practice can also be reviewed based on the input of applicants and other stakeholders.

This is done through the applicant's right to appeal our decision to an external appeal body consisting of representatives of various stakeholders, such as higher education institutions, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, etc. If a decision of the Centre is not supported by the applicant and the appeal body, the Centre has to review its decision. In rare cases, it might result in the change of practice, but sometimes it also results in better substantiation of our decisions in terms of collected information and explanation to the applicant.

In addition to the aforementioned, we discuss and adapt our decisions based on informal information provided by higher education institutions and other ENIC/NARIC offices during various events. The Centre holds various seminars and training sessions on various systems of education where our decisions are discussed and higher education institutions share their experiences on how students with various backgrounds succeed in their study.

- *The ENIC/NARIC office has tools (e.g. internal guidelines, written procedures and internal handbooks for its employees) to ensure the quality of its procedures. Mechanisms are in place to check whether the information and evaluations provided to applicants and clients is appropriate and to guarantee that recognition criteria are applied consistently from one case to the next and from one employee to the next.*

Our office has the following types of tools to ensure the quality of its procedures:

- Legislative framework, which is set up to make sure that the fundamental rights of applicants and consistency of decisions not only in our office, but also in other competent recognition bodies is observed;
- A bespoke internal quality management system (based on elements of ISO 9001, ESG<sup>[1]</sup> and requirements in ENIC/NARIC Services Charter), which sets the framework and administrative standards for all of our processes and provisions regular audits;
- Internal electronic system, which allows for a standard handling of qualifications with:
  - standardised documentation requirements per type of qualification,
  - a checklist for steps to be taken within the process, which allow for some flexibility depending on the country and qualification,
  - default decisions,
  - standardised draft letters for communicating with applicants,
- Other tools for credential evaluators:
  - methodological guidelines for specific issues (documentation requirements, authenticity, etc.);
  - country profiles.



- Mentoring and working in region groups, which allows for close cooperation and mentorship of evaluators working within the same region;
- Decision making process, which involves several levels:
  - in routine cases, the decision is reviewed by at least two people in addition to the evaluator: the head of the department and the director or the deputy director of the institution who signs the actual decisions;
  - in difficult cases, there is an institutionalised collegial committee, which consists of several credential evaluators, the head of the ENIC/NARIC office, and legal advisors; the decisions of the committee are protocolled and used for decision making and change and/or formulation of our office practice.
- Regular audits of our processes within the framework of our internal quality assurance system carried out by colleagues from other departments.

The tools are in place to make sure that different evaluators go through the same steps every time and make the same decisions in similar situations.

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[1] Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, endorsed by Ministers of Education in 2005, revised in 2015.

#### **A list examples and sample documents standard 1:**

- Annex 1.1. Print out of information on our office criteria and procedure from our website
- Annex 1.2. Print out of our office general documentation requirements from our website
- Annex 1.3. Illustration of the use of default recognition decisions in EPE IS

## **○ Standard 2: Applicant-centred Recognition**

**Foreign qualifications are evaluated based on the purpose for which recognition is sought and recognized unless there is a substantial difference. Learning outcomes take precedence in the evaluation. An alternative form of recognition is granted if possible where full recognition cannot be granted. There should be a process in place that enables the applicants to appeal against the recognition decision. All persons in a refugee (like) situation holding a qualification without documentation are able to have their qualifications assessed.**

### **Compliance of the centre under review**

#### **Rating Standard 2**

1. ☐ No compliance
2. ☐ Partial compliance

- 3. ☐ Substantial compliance
- 4. ☒ Full compliance
- ☐ Standard is not applicable

## Evaluation compliance standard 2

- *The purpose of recognition (academic, occupational/professional) is taken into account and the qualification is assessed in a flexible manner, focusing on the requirements that are relevant for this specific recognition purpose. Ideally the evaluation or statement issued includes the purpose of recognition.*

Similarly as described in our previous self-evaluation report, there remain two types of assessment done by our office:

- Recognition statements for individuals seeking study and/or employment,
- Recommendations to higher education institutions and employers.

Recognition decisions take into account only the general requirements relating to qualifications and indicate the comparable qualification in Lithuania. As such, they can be used for many purposes and it is up to employers and/or higher education institutions to decide whether the specific requirements are met for access to a particular profession and/or study programme.

When assessing qualifications for the purpose of such a recognition statement, our office considers, on a general level, the purpose of the qualification (preparation for employment and/or further study) and any limitations that it might entail (such as access only to specific programmes). Our statement usually reflects the purpose of the qualification in the country of origin.

For example, some countries have access qualifications, which provide access only to non-university study programmes. Lithuanian *brandos atestatas* provides access to study programmes of all types of institutions. However, foreign qualifications with limited access can still be recognised for specific purposes of access to specific (e.g. non-university) study programmes.

In case of recommendations to institutions (which, contrary to the recognition statements, are not legally binding), focusing on the purpose allows our office even more flexibility.

In some cases, we may comment in more detail on the structure and content of the programme for HEI's, i.e. mentioning the balance of general/specialization subjects, whether an internship or thesis was mandatory, etc. In other cases, our office can even recommend recognition of qualifications awarded by non-recognised, but legitimate providers for certain purposes (i.e. employment). For example, this could apply to qualifications awarded by military institutions, which are outside the formal system of education, but are under control of the national Ministry of Defence.

The statements regarding recognition decisions and recommendations indicate the purpose of recognition.

- *Foreign qualifications are recognized unless there is a substantial difference, by:*
  - *focusing on the five key elements that together make up a qualification (level, workload, quality, profile and learning outcomes)*
  - *comparing the foreign qualification to the relevant national qualification required for the desired activity*
  - *determining whether the main requirements relevant for the desired activity are sufficiently covered by the outcomes of the foreign qualification.*
- *Qualifications are assessed against learning outcomes as much as possible. In the absence of clear statements of learning outcomes, the following may be consulted as an indicator of the output of a qualification: purpose, content, rights attached and orientation (e.g. research-based or professionally oriented).*
- *Where substantial differences are identified, provide a well-founded statement outlining the substantial differences between the foreign qualification and the home one and seek to offer alternative, partial or conditional recognition of the qualification.*
- *The applicant is informed about the possibility to appeal against the recognition decision. In the case of an appeal, the originally provided application together with new information - if provided by the applicant - is re-examined.*
- *With insufficient documentation, the assessment of a qualification of a person in a refugee (like) situation is based on a background paper. If deemed necessary, interviews are conducted with staff of higher education institutions and special examinations or sworn statements before a legally competent authority are arranged. Refugees are exempted from paying any assessment fees.*

In both cases (regarding decisions and recommendations issued) qualifications are assessed by focusing on the following key elements of a qualification: level, workload, quality, contents, profile, and learning outcomes.

The criteria are applied in the following way:

- Focus is placed on output rather than input. This allows us to place emphasis on the final result rather than various aspects of the delivery of the programme as well as allows recognition of qualifications obtained through flexible and/or non-traditional learning paths
- Quantitative criteria are considered only if they have substantial effect on the output (learning outcomes). This allows for recognition of qualifications, which may be different in some aspects, such as length, but are the same in learning outcomes.

Learning outcomes are still the most important criterion and are viewed not only in terms of formal statements of learning outcomes, but, in their absence, as an overall result (outcome) of the qualification encompassing all of its elements (such as profile, workload etc.). Certainly, it is agreed that learning outcomes can be considered as valid only if the qualification is quality assured and the achievement of learning outcomes has been demonstrated by successful accumulation of the minimum required number of credits. Other elements of a qualification, such as

workload, contents, are considered only if they have a substantial effect on learning outcomes.

A foreign qualification is compared to the most similar qualification in Lithuania based on their level. The focus is placed not on the particular qualification, which is required for the desired activity, but on the most similar qualification because our statement is general in nature and can be used by the applicant for many purposes. Our office determines whether the main requirements for the award of the national qualification are sufficiently covered by the foreign qualification in terms of two main aspects: employment and/or further study.

Qualifications are recognised unless there is substantial difference. When full recognition cannot be granted, the following alternative decisions are considered:

- partial recognition, which restricts recognition only to certain activity (for example, employment, but not further study);
- recognition with additional requirements (for example, one year of additional study).

All decisions, even the positive ones, provide information on the reasons for the decision and the appeal procedure as well as remedial measures that can be undertaken (if applicable).

Our decisions can be appealed to an external pre-judicial appeal body consisting of various stakeholders. After examining the appeal and additional information provided by the applicant (if any), the appeal committee may request for a review of our decision. In such cases, our office re-examines the file and, if necessary, collects additional information.

Our decisions can also be disputed in courts and this right is occasionally exercised by our applicants. So far, in all cases the court has supported the decisions taken by the Centre.

The administrative procedure as such can also be brought to scrutiny by unsatisfied applicants to the Commission of Administrative Disputes, and there were several of such cases in our practice.

Our decisions can also be re-examined if the applicant provides additional information, which was unknown at the time the decision was taken.

We have prepared a framework for the assessment of a qualification of a person in a refugee (like) situation without documentation. It is provisioned that the assessment could be based on a background paper and interviews. However the number of applicants in refugee-like situations in Lithuania are few, and in almost all cases they were able to provide full or partial documentation for recognition, which enabled us to perform recognition without this procedure, while several applicants refusing the procedure because of lack of language skills necessary to undergo it.

The example of how our office reports the existence of substantial differences to an applicant is attached as an annex to this self-evaluation document (Annex 2).

## ○ Standard 3: Quality, Legitimacy and Authenticity

The quality and legitimacy of a qualification is assessed by verifying that it is quality assured and awarded in accordance with applicable provisions and requirements. Quality assurance and accreditation systems are considered as sufficient evidence of compliance with quality standards. The authenticity of submitted documents, in case of reasonable doubt, should be checked using internal and, if necessary, external verification methods.

### Compliance of the centre under review

#### Rating standard 3

1. ☐ No compliance
2. ☐ Partial compliance
3. ☐ Substantial compliance
4. ☒ Full compliance
- ☐ Standard is not applicable

#### Description compliance standard 3

- *The status of the awarding institution and programme is checked with the appropriate authorities to ensure that the programme is of sufficient quality and to link it to a national education system. The following information is taken into account:*
  - *which national authorities are responsible for accreditation/quality assurance;*
  - *whether the accreditation is at institutional or programme level;*
  - *what is the accreditation status of the institution and/or programme when the qualification was awarded.**The information supplied by institutions and individuals is cross-checked with other official sources.*

The quality of a qualification is one of our assessment criteria and is verified as one of the first steps in our assessment procedure. The outcome of the research into the quality of a qualification will determine whether our office will continue on to further steps of assessment. All of the aforementioned parameters are considered in establishing the quality of a qualification.

The research into the quality of a qualification itself remains the same and involves several steps:

- our office determines what was the applicable system of quality assurance during the period of study and at the time of the award of the qualification:
  - whether it involves several stages, such as recognition and/or accreditation;
  - whether it is applicable to institutions and/or programs;
  - what were the competent quality assurance bodies;

- our office determines whether the qualification has been subjected to the applicable quality assurance mechanisms, such as recognition and/or accreditation:
  - if it has not been subject to the mandatory quality assurance mechanisms, our office considers the qualification as not recognised and goes on to consider the legitimacy of its provider;
  - if it has been validated and/or accredited by a body other than the competent national body, our office does research into the legitimacy of such body and the possible effects of such validation and/or accreditation (e.g. foreign providers validated by the UK institutions or providers accredited by the US accreditation bodies);
  - if the qualification has been subject to the quality assurance mechanisms and is properly recognised and/or accredited, our office considers the qualification to be recognised and goes on to other steps of assessment.

Lack of some elements or non-existence of certain quality assurance mechanisms in the country of origin is not considered to be an obstacle for recognition.

The outcome of the research into the quality of the qualification is noted by each credential evaluator in the checklist save in each processed file (up to March 2020) / in the Electronic Recognition Area (EPE) system (in use from 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2020).

Official sources (quality assurance agencies, ministries of education, ENIC/NARIC offices, DEQAR, etc.) are used as the primary sources of information to determine the quality of a qualification. Information provided by the education institution is considered as initial information, which requires double checking with official sources.

- *Qualifications based on non-traditional learning (such as flexible learning paths, recognition of prior learning (RPL), open/distance learning) are treated in the same way as traditional qualifications. If qualifications are based on transnational learning, additional provisions and/or requirements may be taken into account, such as whether transnational providers have permission to operate by both receiving (host) and sending (home) countries and adhere to other principles outlined in the legislation of both countries and the Code of Good Practice for the Provision of Transnational Education<sup>20</sup> and in the Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education<sup>21</sup>.*

Qualifications based on non-traditional learning are treated in the same way as traditional qualifications. The main criterion for assessment of all qualifications (non-traditional and traditional ones) is learning outcomes. If the non-traditional qualification has been properly quality assured, our office considers that the learning outcomes associated with that level and type of the qualification have been

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<sup>20</sup> See for full Convention and Subsidiary texts: enic-naric.net: <http://www.enic-naric.net/the-lisbon-recognition-convention-97.aspx>

<sup>21</sup> See for full Convention and Subsidiary texts: enic-naric.net: <http://www.enic-naric.net/the-lisbon-recognition-convention-97.aspx>

achieved, irrespective of the pathway taken. Our office accepts the fact that the competent awarding body established that the graduate has achieved the intended learning outcomes.

In case of transnational qualifications, our office considers whether the provisions regarding quality assurance in the Code of Good Practice for the Provision of Transnational Education have been met (adopted by the LRCC).

Our office considers whether the provider has been appropriately licensed (if applicable) by both the receiving country and the country of origin. If the quality of studies depending on the existing quality assurance system is ensured at least by the one side for that studies place our office considered that the quality of studies, which were provided in the receiving country, was assured.

For example, we had cases when the qualifications were awarded by the institution operating in Switzerland. This institution is not listed of federally recognised higher education institutions in Switzerland but the school is only recognised by the Canton of Wallis where it is situated in and this cantonal recognition is not applicable outside the canton. Also this institution is accredited by the recognized regional accrediting agency in the US (is listed at CHEA). In such cases, our office considered that the quality of studies, which were provided in Switzerland, was assured by the US regional accrediting agency. We would consider recognising it as any other quality assured US system degree.

- *Since the procedures for quality assurance and accreditation of joint programmes are still being developed, a certain amount of flexibility is exercised in assessing the status of joint programmes. In the European context, a single accreditation of the entire joint programme is considered to be sufficient evidence for the quality [ref 6 = European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes (October 2014)]. In other cases, it may be necessary to investigate the status of the institutions involved in the joint programme and status of the joint programme in all participating countries.*

If a joint programme has been accredited as a whole by a reliable accreditation agency, it is considered to be sufficient evidence of quality. Usually this would apply only in cases when programme accreditation is provisioned in the national systems of providers. This year our office assessed a joint qualification (International Master of Science in Marine Biological Resources) awarded by 9 universities from 7 European countries (Belgium, France, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Spain). The applicant studied in Belgium, France and Ireland. Our office verified that the programme was accredited in Belgium by the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) and it was treated as sufficient evidence of quality. Further checks were not considered to be necessary.

In cases when there is no evidence of such overall programme accreditation, our office verifies the recognition and/or accreditation status of the partners, which were actually involved in the provision of the completed programme. We may also verify whether the partners are authorised (if applicable) to offer this particular field and/or level of study in their country of origin.

We also take into consideration the fact some of the partners may be not higher education institutions. If other partners of the joint programme, which are recognised higher education institutions, take responsibility for the quality assurance of the programme, the existence of partners, which are not higher education institutions, is not considered to be an obstacle for recognition.

- *In case a qualification or the awarding institution is non-recognised, it may still be useful to investigate its legitimacy by taking into account any information of a third party's quality assessment. If relevant information is found, a statement or an advice may be issued explaining the status of the institution/qualification in cases where it is confirmed legitimate (but not officially recognised by the national educational authorities).*

In case a qualification or the awarding institution is non-recognised, our office cannot issue an official decision regarding recognition of the qualification. Nonetheless, SKVC investigates the legitimacy of the institution/qualification. Some of the cases when the provider/qualification can be considered as non-recognised, but legitimate are the following:

- the provider is operating within a framework set up by a competent national institution, such as the Ministry of Defence, etc., is quality assured under that framework;
- the qualification serves a particular function in the country of origin (for example, gives access to certain profession activity or can be transferred towards further study (for example, qualifications from non-accredited religious institutions or qualifications from accredited institutions, offered by this institution within their autonomy and addressed to professionals in a specific field but not leading to the award of an official degree).

In such cases, our office can issue a letter, which provides information on the qualification, its status, profile, further opportunities in the country of origin, and recommendations to employers and/or higher education institutions.

- *The authenticity of submitted documents is checked using internal and, if necessary, external verification methods. The internal information management could include a database of samples of both genuine and fraudulent documents, a glossary of common terms, information on the formats and contents of educational documentation and internal records of country-specific verification procedures. External information management might consist of checking with relevant authorities/awarding bodies and requesting and examining original documents if not provided initially.*

Our office considers authenticity of documents to be an important factor in our daily operations. However, we do stress that establishing the authenticity of documents is not the aim of the assessment, but merely an indicator of the quality of our process. Therefore, we attempt to establish authenticity to the best of our knowledge, but try to ensure that authenticity matters would not hinder our process or make it overly



lengthy, or even impossible. However, SKVC does put in a lot of effort and time in determining the authenticity of the submitted documents.

Our authenticity policy encompasses:

- documentation requirements;
- handling of documents during an assessment;
- imaging and storing the documents for future reference.

Our office has formulated general documentation requirements and country specific requirements. The requirements for documents are formulated with a view to assure the integrity of our process and to prevent fraud. Before introducing the Electronic recognition area (EPE) system our office requires submission of certified true copies or the originals of credentials. After the EPE system was introduced we require submission of documents scanned from the original (not copies) documents; the scans must be full-colour, of good quality and clearly legible. For certain countries, which offer limited possibilities in terms of external verification, only originals are accepted. However, our office reserves the right to request for originals, if in doubt.

In cases, when electronic documents, which are considered to be official by the awarding institution, are issued, our office accepts such documents and considers them to be highly reliable if received directly from the awarding institution (e.g. through an official results database).

During an assessment procedure, the authenticity of the submitted documents is checked using both internal and, if necessary, external verification methods.

The internal verification is carried out through the following steps:

- the format, the signatures, etc. of the document are compared against the collected samples and official information sources (e.g. a list of Rectors to make sure that the document was signed by a person who was the Rector of the institution at the time of the issuance of documents);
- if originals are available, the security features and the genuineness of the signatures and seals are checked and, if available, are compared against the descriptors of security features, which are developed by our office for certain credentials;
- searches are done through various official information resources and on the website of the institution or other official bodies to check whether:
  - any official online databases to check the results are available;
  - to determine whether there is any indirect evidence of graduation, such as a database of defended research papers, lists of students, etc.
- other factors may be considered as evidence supporting the authenticity of credentials, such as a license of a practitioner, which requires possession of certain credentials, etc.

If a credential successfully passes the internal verification, our office continues on to making an assessment decision. If, after the internal verification, there are some inconsistencies and/or deviations, SKVC turns to the external verification. The external verification is also applicable for some countries and/or credentials in cases when our office does not have sufficient practice to be able to carry out a proper internal verification (e.g. does not have sufficient number of sample credentials).

The external verification is carried out by directly contacting the issuing institution and/or another competent authority and indicating our institution's reference number to be quoted in reply. Usually, the applicant is informed about this and is requested to mediate in order to get an answer. The integrity of the answer (i.e. making sure that it comes from the issuing institution) is ensured by the reference number, which is never revealed to the applicant.

After an assessment, the credentials are scanned and its security features are described for the purposes of further reference. Once a sufficient number of the original credentials have been described, our office develops a document with information on the format and security features of a particular credential. Once our office has accumulated enough internal resources on a particular credential, the documentation requirements and the use of external verification is reviewed to remove the burden for the applicant and to make the procedure more efficient. At present, other external methods of the documents authentication are emerging (more online databases are available, more digitally signed diplomas are received for recognition, the databases by various projects, e. g. SCAN-D; Q-Entry, were created).

Authenticity is one of the issues that can make the assessment procedure too lengthy and sometimes impossible. While SKVC does consider external verification to be the most reliable form of verification, it can take a long time and the answer may never be received in some cases. For this reason, our office is improving our internal verification capacities by developing information tools and imaging and scanning incoming credentials. However, reliable internal verification resources take some years to develop and experience with particular countries, which may not be numerous, is required. For this reason, in many cases, our office still relies on external verification, but the internal verification resources are constantly built and improved.

From SKVC experience, the internal verification and even external verification do not guarantee authenticity of the credential one hundred percent. For this reason, all of our statements include a disclaimer regarding confirming the authenticity of documents.

#### **A list of examples and sample documents to Standard 3:**

- Annex 3.1. The joint degree International Master of Science in Marine Biological Resources awarded by 9 universities from 7 European countries in 2020 (Annex\_3\_Quality\_Legitimacy\_and\_Authenticity).
- Annex 3.2. The Bachelor of Arts in Integrated Development Studies (Development Communication Option) degree awarded by the University for Development Studies from Ghana in 2012 (Annex\_3\_Quality\_Legitimacy\_and\_Authenticity).

## **○ Standard 4: Evaluation Tools and Resources**

<b>Relevant and up to date information on recognition and education systems is actively collected. National Qualification Frameworks where available are used as a transparency tool for understanding the level, learning outcomes and workload</b>
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of foreign qualifications. Credits are accepted as an indication of the amount of study and the distribution of grades within a particular education system is taken into account when required or appropriate.

## Compliance of the centre under review

### Rating Standard 4

1. ☐ No compliance
2. ☐ Partial compliance
3. ☐ Substantial compliance
4. ☒ Full compliance
- ☐ Standard is not applicable

### Evaluation compliance standard 4

- *Up-to-date information is collected on relevant topics, such as education systems, qualifications awarded in different countries and their comparability to the qualifications in the home country, legislation on recognition, officially recognised and accredited institutions, admission requirements, recognition conventions, bilateral agreements, EU Directives, and other relevant bodies.*

Information on assessment and academic recognition and education systems and foreign qualifications is collected, stored and presented in several ways.

As was already mentioned, from early 2020, SKVC started to use an electronic recognition system “EPE IS” which enables our Centre to provide evaluation and academic recognition procedure in digital form fully. In addition to its other functions, EPE IS is also a database where information is collected and presented by country and consists of the following topics: educational sectors and levels of a country, description of a National Qualification Framework (if any), educational institutions types and accreditation status, awarded qualifications and their comparability to the qualifications awarded in Lithuania, a list of required educational documents for evaluation, examples of educational documents, relevant information sources, etc. Currently such information is for internal use, but is planned to make it open for HEIs too.

Seven country profiles, as an information tool for HEIs, were prepared up to 2016. Such an activity was extended further, and currently there are 33 country profiles developed (including Bangladesh, Cameroon, Egypt, Ghana, Pakistan, Syria and other country profiles). The profiles are available for use not only for our office staff, but also for HEIs and other institutions in Lithuania working with foreign qualifications. The profiles are presented at the website of SKVC, in the restricted area for HEIs (registration necessary, pending our approval). Each country profile consists of a description of the education system of a relevant country, examples of educational documents from various periods, description of qualifications and their comparability to the ones in Lithuania, checklists and advice regarding working with qualifications and information sources from a country, evaluation practice of the qualifications, and etc.

The Lisbon Recognition Convention and its supporting documents, bilateral agreements including the agreement on automatic recognition between Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and other documents relevant for academic recognition are available publicly at the website of the SKVC, [www.skvc.lt](http://www.skvc.lt). Translations into Lithuanian of the EAR-HEI Manual, the Lisbon Recognition Convention and its Explanatory Report, and the revised Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures on the Assessment for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications and Explanatory Memorandum are available at the website of the SKVC, in the aforementioned restricted area for HEIs. Recognition news – on the latest developments, events (e.g. on conclusion of the treaties, training offered locally and internationally) and thematic topics (e.g. on microcredentials) are disseminated via the website and newsletters of SKVC.

- *A database on previous evaluations is maintained, in order to ensure consistency in future evaluations.*

Such a role is maintained by the EPE IS system encompassing prepared statement templates on recognition, all recognition decisions taken, educational documents and other information helping to ensure consistency of the assessment practice. The recognition decisions (without personal data) are also available for external users, applicants and HEIs, employers.

In addition, General Recommendations (*Bendrosios rekomendacijos*) on assessment of foreign qualifications are prepared by the SKVC as a helping tool for those HEIs which have the right to provide academic recognition of foreign qualifications for study purposes (authorised HEIs). Such recommendations are available at the website of the SKVC publicly. The General Recommendations do not encompass all the foreign qualifications. In case there are questions regarding a qualification which is not included in the Recommendations, the HEIs have to contact the SKVC for getting individual recommendation regarding assessment of this foreign qualification. It helps to ensure consistency in the field of academic recognition and enables HEIs to receive the main relevant information about the qualification and recommendation on its assessment.

- *National qualifications frameworks are used as a key source of information to establish the level, generic learning outcomes and workload of foreign qualifications. Where a national qualification framework has been referenced to a meta framework (e.g. EQF), this is also taken into account.*

National qualifications frameworks are used, since they help to determine the place of the qualification in the national system of education, its relation with other qualifications within that system. The overarching frameworks (such as European Qualifications Framework, EQF) are used as an additional tool, which is especially helpful when the national qualifications framework has many different levels, more than EQF.

However, the assessment is not carried out solely on the basis of the qualification frameworks and their referencing as several qualifications, which may differ in profile, can be placed on the same level. Therefore, an assessment decision requires additional research into the profile of the qualification, further academic and/or professional rights with a view of the purpose of the qualification holder.

At the same time it should be noted that absence of a qualification framework is not considered to be an obstacle in recognition.

- *Information is collected on the many different types of credit systems that are used by higher education institutions all over the world, which are sometimes limited to an individual institution or may be applied across different national education systems (e.g. ECTS). Credits are especially relevant in the recognition of periods of study.*
  - *Foreign credits are accepted for what they represent in their own system.*
  - *Credits obtained from various sources (and lacking the framework of a coherent programme) do not have to be added up and accepted as a “qualification”.*

The practice of our Office remains the same. One factor, which is considered during a research on a qualification or the country's system of education, is the credit system. It is important not only for recognition, but also for transfer of credits, which is done by higher education institutions. Noteworthy, HEIs often require consultations with regard to the credit system before making their final decision.

The following information is taken into account when considering credits:

- Is the credit system nationally defined or is it set up by an individual institution?
- What is measured with credit: contact hours, student independent work, and/or learning outcomes?
- What is the level of credits (for example, some second cycle programmes may include credits from the first cycle)?
- What is the typical number of credits required for completion of an academic year?
- What are the typical requirements in terms of number of credits for completion of the programme?

Our office considers that it is impossible to compare qualifications by reducing the credits to hours because the understanding of the hour may vary greatly in different contexts. Therefore, we compare the credits by applying the principle that a full time academic year at one institution equals a full time academic year at another institution. Thus, the number of credits required to accumulate during the year is considered to be equal.

For the credits to be considered at face value, they have to be quality assured. It means that the institution and/or programme should be appropriately recognised and/or accredited.

In our office, credits cannot be added up to form a qualification if the qualification has not been awarded in the foreign system. If a quality assured qualification has been awarded, even if it is based on credits from various sources, our office does not question the pathway, but considers that the learning outcomes have been achieved because the qualification has been quality assured. Lithuanian higher education institutions can also consider transfer of credits from various sources towards their programmes.

- *The grades obtained by a student may have an impact on the evaluation of a qualification, especially if the average grade of a qualification determines the right of access to further study in the education system where it was awarded. Since the distribution of grades may vary greatly between education systems, the statistical distribution of grades in both education systems should be taken into account when converting foreign grades.*

Our practice did not undergo major changes regarding this issue. The grades are considered to be an indicator of the individual quality of a qualification and, as such, may have an impact on the final outcome of the assessment. The grades are most often taken into consideration when they determine the formal right of access.

For some qualifications (for example, the Irish Leaving Certificate or Nigerian Senior School Certificate), the award of the qualification does not automatically imply access to further study. Access is subject to a certain level of knowledge (grades) achieved. In such cases, in order for the applicant to be considered for the right of access in Lithuania, the same level of knowledge (grades) should be achieved.

In some cases, when the right of access in term of grades is not so clearly defined, our office may take into consideration the tradition or the most common requirement. For example, Indian Intermediate Certificate holders usually have access to Bachelor degree programmes only if they have achieved at least 50 percent of the required maximum.

Grade conversion and (or) interpretation is mainly based on the distribution of grades. However, in many cases, reliable information on the distribution of grades is not available or is insufficient. In such cases, a mathematical formula is used.

Examples of how our office uses national qualification frameworks, evaluates grades and acknowledges credit is provided in Annex 4 of this self-evaluation report.

## ○ Standard 5: Transparency and Information Provision

<b>Information on the recognition procedure and criteria is clear, accurate, up-to-date and readily accessible for applicants, stakeholders and the general public, and clear information on the status of their application is provided to applicants.</b>
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## Compliance of the centre under review

### Rating standard 5

1. ☐ No compliance
2. ☐ Partial compliance
3. ☒ Substantial compliance
4. ☐ Full compliance
- ☐ Standard is not applicable

### Description of compliance standard 5

- *Information provided is accessible, user-friendly (relevant and designed for non-expert users), available in a variety of forms (website, by phone and e-mail, hardcopy brochures), available in at least one international widely spoken language, regularly updated and free of charge.*

There are two main sources of information. The general information about the recognition system in Lithuania and its procedure at our office is available on our office's website ([www.skvc.lt](http://www.skvc.lt)). It is aiming to provide non-expert users with the main information on recognition clearly. Information on the website is in the state language (Lithuanian) and English. We can also be contacted through email or phone. Our staff communicates in three languages: Lithuanian, English and Russian. E-mails are usually answered within 1-2 days, with exception of the questions requiring more information. The information and news is updated when there is a need for this. All information provision is free of charge.

The other source of information is the electronic recognition system EPE IS. This system contains written and video instructions on how to submit applications on recognition of foreign qualifications and (or) grades conversion (in case of access qualifications with aim to study in state funded places). Applicants at the EPE IS system can follow the processing of application, receive all notifications concerning this processing and/or submitting necessary documents and receive recognition decisions consisting of a decision and its supplement. The decision supplement gives information about the status of the recognition decision, our policy on authenticity, explains the level of the qualification to which the foreign qualification was recognized as comparable in Lithuania, informs about the legal documents regulating recognition, and evaluation criteria, as well the right to appeal. Recognition decision and its supplement are issued in Lithuanian as a state language. An overview and additional explanations in English or Russian (depending on the language of choice of an applicant) are given to an applicant to understand the decision.

With the launch of the EPE IS system, starting from 2020 the academic recognition procedure is fully digitalised and it makes an impact on provision of information as well. Coming personally to our office is no longer necessary and the main information sources would be the website, the EPE IS system and consultation by email. While the EPE system is fully functional and provides much of the required information for applicants, there are still issues regarding user-friendliness of the systems as well as its stability, which require additional attention and improvement.

- *The information consists of:*
  - *a description of the national education system, recognition system, competent recognition authorities, assessment criteria, roles of the applicant, ENIC/NARIC and higher education institutions, and the rights and obligations of each of the parties;*
  - *a list of required documents and manner of their submission, time needed to process an application, conditions and procedures for appealing against a decision;*
  - *an inventory of typical recognition cases and/or a comparative overview of other education systems (or qualifications) in relation to the national ones.*

The following information concerning national education system and recognition system is available on the website of our office in Lithuanian and English:

- Description of the national education system consisting of the following parts: pre-school education, general education, vocational training, higher education and the National Qualifications Framework (LTQF). A section on higher education includes types of institutions, study cycles and awarded qualifications in relation to EQF level, quality assurance, credit and grading systems, outline of the higher education system, and name changes of HEIs.
- Information about academic and professional recognition systems and the links between them, competent institutions to provide recognition, right to appeal recognition decisions made by HEIs, criteria and procedures, and automatic recognition. A section “Criteria and Procedures” consists of the following topics: information about processing time, evaluation criteria, recognition decisions’ types and the right to appeal.

A list of required documents, as well as requirements for documents, processing time, information for undocumented refugees are available under the “General documentation requirements” on the website. For some countries, there are specific requirements, where the documents needed for recognition are named in original language, and other specific requirements are available under “Country specific requirements” on the website too. As mentioned before, all information is provided in Lithuanian and English.

An overview of our recognition practice by country and qualification is available at <https://epe.skvc.lt/en/portal/practice/> . The General Recommendations (*Bendrosios rekomendacijos*) aimed at HEIs also provide information on default recognition practice for specific qualifications. The Recommendations are available at: <https://www.skvc.lt/default/lt/uzsienio-kvalifikaciju-pripazinimas/institucijoms/rekomendacijos> .

- *During the application procedure the applicants are kept informed on the status of their application by providing them with:*
  - *an acknowledgement of receipt of the application, and an indication of the deadline;*
  - *information on any lacking documentation (and how to obtain it);*



- *information on delays or issues encountered while dealing with the application;*
- *information on any updates to the status of the application.*

The guidelines as above are ensured by the EPE system fully. Once an applicant submits an application for academic recognition through this system, the system allows monitoring of the progress of an application and which stage it is currently at. Receipt of the application, indication of the deadline, information on any lacking documentation, any updates to the status of the application is seen in the system and can be monitored by an applicant. Once the qualification assessment is completed and a decision has been made, an applicant can review the decision and share it in a secure way through the system with HEIs, employers, and other third parties. All decisions are issued as electronic documents signed with an electronic signature only. Such documents have the same legal power as documents containing a physical signature and must be accepted by all institutions in Lithuania.

A User's Guide (in written and video format) explaining how to use the EPE system is available in Lithuanian, English and Russian at <https://epe.skvc.lt/en/portal/how-to/>.

A print-out of the English description of the national recognition system on our website (provided as Annex 5.1).

## ○ Standard 6: (Inter)national Cooperation and Presentation

**The ENIC/NARIC office actively cooperates with national and international stakeholders on recognition issues and provides input in the development and dissemination of new recognition tools. It supports and promotes the activities of the ENIC and NARIC networks and mentions its membership of the networks in publications and branding activities.**

### Compliance of the centre under review

#### Rating Standard 6

- 5. ☐ No compliance
- 6. ☐ Partial compliance
- 7. ☐ Substantial compliance
- 8. ☒ Full compliance
- ☐ Standard is not applicable

#### Description of compliance standard 6

- *ENIC/NARIC offices are the national centres where all expertise on recognition is available. They make use of this expertise by contributing to higher education policy developments and legislation in the field of recognition at regional, national and European level. They also cooperate with other information centres,*

*higher education institutions and their networks and other relevant actors in the national context.*

From the very moment of establishment in January 1995, SKVC acted as both academic information and recognition centre, and external quality assurance agency for higher education, and we were very active in both fields throughout. This double task allowed us not only to build expertise in those specific fields, but also to more broadly contextualise activities, develop a wide range of services, and be at the centre of many events and processes both locally and internationally. To date SKVC is involved both formally (via membership in working groups) and informally (by the way of public consultations) in drafting national, regional, and international legislation, as well as various projects.

SKVC takes pride that late Ms Birutė Mockienė, the first Deputy Director of SKVC (in office in 1995-2004), contributed significantly towards drafting of the Lisbon Recognition Convention text and its adoption by national representatives in the Lisbon meeting on 8-11 April 1997. She was actively promoting LRC locally, which resulted in its ratification in Lithuanian Parliament on 17<sup>th</sup> December 1998. This was instrumental in achieving the LRC's entry into force internationally as Lithuania was the fifth country member of the Council of Europe and the UNESCO European Region, which ratified the Convention; thus, it became the functioning international legal treaty as of 1<sup>st</sup> February 1999. Ms Birutė Mockienė was well respected and trusted in the networks – she was elected Vice-President of ENIC Bureau (1994-1996), and served as the first President of LRC Committee (1999-2001). Under her leadership and organization, SKVC hosted an annual joint meeting of ENIC and NARIC networks in June 1999. On this occasion, one of LRC subsidiary texts – on International Access Qualifications – was adopted in Vilnius.

On the national level, SKVC was and is heavily involved in developing and agreeing among the main stakeholders of the principles, criteria, and procedures for assessment and academic recognition, which were imbedded in the regulations adopted by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania as mentioned below (several editions, of 1999, 2005, 2012, and 2016). We also take part in drafting and discussing of relevant laws (on Education, on Higher Education and Research, etc).

Over time, Lithuania is gradually moving from a very centralised to a more decentralised recognition system which includes more actors, while their roles are constantly evolving. The competences of institutions are established in the Law on Higher Education and Research (HE&R), and the procedure for recognition is regulated on the level of the Government. Three periods can be identified so far:

- I. Since the moment the Lisbon Recognition Convention was ratified in 1998 and up to 27<sup>th</sup> January 2005, the academic recognition system of full foreign qualifications was very centralized in Lithuania. Since 30<sup>th</sup> of December 1999, the Ministry of Education was charged with the task to assess and recognise professional education qualifications, secondary education qualifications, tertiary but not higher education qualifications; and higher education qualifications; and also to establish the appeals body. SKVC was nominated as the ENIC network member from Lithuania and trusted only with evaluation of

other qualifications and partial studies, and had the task to provide information needed for recognition of qualifications. HEIs, in taking decisions on recognition of partial studies, had to consider the advice of SKVC. Initially, starting from 1992 and till 2012, foreign doctoral degrees were left outside of the recognition system, but it was established that old Lithuanian doctoral degrees (awarded by Independent Lithuania between the two World Wars), Soviet doctoral degrees, and foreign doctoral degrees were subject to nostrification by the Lithuanian Research Council. Diplomas awarded by Higher Soviet Communist Party institutions are not recognised as higher education by the law issued on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1996.

- II. From 12<sup>th</sup> November 2003, the Ministry established that HEIs can do recognition of partial studies, following the procedure prescribed by the Ministry. The further period between 28<sup>th</sup> of January 2005 and up to 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2012 can be characterised as such when the role of SKVC increased. SKVC was designated as an ENIC/NARIC centre, in charge of assessment of qualifications related to higher education (access qualifications and higher education 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle qualifications), the Ministry of Education and Science performed academic recognition of such qualifications (took formal decisions based on assessment done by SKVC), and also housed the appeals commission. On 15<sup>th</sup> December 2010, the Ministry approved the general principles following which HEIs could recognise knowledge and skills gained in the adult education system by a way of non-formal education.
- III. Starting 29<sup>th</sup> February 2012 when the Government adopted a new general recognition framework by the Resolution No. 212, decentralisation is ever expanding. The role of the Ministry is to establish the principles of recognition of partial studies (to be done by HEIs), to give authorisations to HEIs to perform academic recognition for their admission purposes, and to run the Appeals Commission. SKVC is in charge of both assessment and recognition of full foreign qualifications related to higher education (access qualifications and higher education 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle qualifications), and to provide advice to HEIs, also monitor decisions made by authorised HEIs, and to report on academic recognition decisions made by authorised HEIs to the Ministry and other interested bodies. Following this Resolution No. 212, the nostrification of doctoral degrees done by the Research Council of Lithuania was abolished, and it was established that doctoral qualifications were subject to recognition (by the same Research Council of Lithuania). While the Law on HE&R and the Governmental Resolution of 2012 provided that authorised HEIs can perform academic recognition (based on guidance by SKVC), it was only in spring 2015 when the first two universities applied to the Ministry in order to receive such a right. From then on, more and more HEIs every year are joining the recognition system, subject to their successful application to the Ministry; currently 16 HEIs out of total 43 are part of the partially decentralised system. On 24<sup>th</sup> April 2017, the Ministry adopted the revised principles following which HEIs should recognise competencies gained in a way of both non-formal and informal education, and on 6<sup>th</sup>

August 2020 the procedure for recognition of partial studies was revised allowing also for recognition of prior studies.

Within the last five years, staff of SKVC contributed to drafting or discussions on revisions of all above mentioned legislation regarding recognition. Most recent examples of SKVC's input into the national debates was information and analysis provided to the Lithuanian policy makers on a number of issues, including introduction of the short higher education cycle qualifications, a possibility of establishing professional master programmes in colleges of higher education, consideration of new classification of studies and titles of degrees, deliberations regarding automatic recognition of qualifications, regulation and status of international schools in Lithuania, international qualifications, quality benchmarks for international activities of HEIs, etc. To this end, representatives of SKVC take part in meetings and discussions at the Ministry, at the Parliament, with the Conference of University Rectors', the Association of Directors of Colleges of Higher Education, and other venues.

As to our international engagement, we regard it as a prerequisite for success in our daily work and also as a way of recognition of our own expertise. SKVC holds to the policy to provide opportunities to develop professional capacities of all staff, so that they subsequently are able to contribute to a number of activities. The organisation and ENIC/NARIC part of it in particular is represented by many capable employees who can join international projects and events.

Over 27 the years from establishment, SKVC partnered in projects with many ENICs and NARICs, and also involving other stakeholders, such as HEIs, networks of stakeholders (EUA, ENQA, ESU, HRK, ECA Consortium, etc.) The total number of projects in which SKVC acted in the capacity as ENIC/NARIC centre and was partner is 40; the number of projects which we coordinated is 23. For most recent projects see the list on page 12.

Among the most significant projects, as a partner SKVC participated in the Erasmus+ funded NARIC projects, the outcomes of which were "*European Area for Recognition Manual*" (*EAR Manual*) for ENIC-NARIC centres produced and later on, a spin-off project, within which a version of *EAR Manual* for HEIs was drafted (later the products being updated and resulting in the third version already). The *EAR Manual* deals with the most important aspects of evaluation and contributes to the implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the development and dissemination of good practises in the evaluation of qualifications. The *EAR-HEI Manual*, aimed at embedding the best evaluation practice on the level of higher education institutions and development of individual professional capacities of credential evaluators. Lithuanian team, which drafted parts of the Manual and commented on other chapters, consisted of Ms Kristina Sutkutė, Ms Rima Žilinskaitė and Ms Aurelija Valeikienė. Notably, the *EAR Manual* was endorsed by Ministers of Education of the European Higher Education Area at the meeting in Bucharest in 2012.

To date, SKVC staff members also participated in the inter-institutional working groups led by the Ministry of Education and Science towards drafting or updating of

bilateral agreements concluded on the level of Governments regarding recognition of qualifications and study periods in a number of cases with the following states:

- the Republic of Poland (originally the treaty was drawn in 2005; Mrs Giedra Katilauskienė, Head of Department of Qualification Assessment participated in the revision process in 2019, came into force in 17th September 2020),
- the Holy See (in 2020, Mr. Almantas Šerpatauskas, Director).

From the earlier period, there are agreements concluded with countries as listed below:

- the Federal Republic of Germany, which entered into force in 2009 (Mr Eugenijus Stumbrys, Ms Rima Žilinskaitė contributed to that end);
- Ukraine, concluded in 2009, still subject to legal procedures (Ms Kristina Sutkutė participated);
- Moldova, signed in 2013 (Ms Rima Žilinskaitė and Mrs Raimonda Siaurusaitytė took part),
- the People's Republic of China, signed in 2015, subject to ratification (input by Ms Kristina Sutkutė);
- Since 2009, Mrs Raimonda Siaurusaitytė and most recently Ms Rima Žilinskaitė participated in drafting of a bilateral recognition agreement with Belarus, which, however, did not reach the signing phase;
- In 2021, SKVC provided input toward the bilateral agreement on cooperation regarding education and culture with Brazil.

Competence of our staff members is valued and utilised in various working groups at the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, to name a few examples:

- An ad hoc commission for conversion of grades and calculation of the competitive score for holders of foreign qualifications applying for state funded places in Lithuania (since 2013 – Ms Kristina Sutkutė) and admission of foreign citizens to Lithuanian higher education institutions (Mrs Giedra Katilauskienė and Ms Kristina Sutkutė);
- Interinstitutional working group on proposals for the grade conversions of the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the International Cambridge programs (Mrs Giedra Katilauskienė, most recently in 2019);
- Ms Aurelija Valeikienė, member of the Commission to analyse applications to receive authorisations for academic recognition at the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport.

SKVC is closely engaged with the main stakeholder organizations in higher education in Lithuania – we are regular speakers at meetings of the Study Committee and the International Relations Committee of Lithuanian Rectors' Conference; also the Conference of Directors of Colleges of Higher Education. We also accept invitations to contribute to the events by other organisations (e.g., Ms Aurelija Valeikienė speaking at the IGLO higher education working group meeting in October 2021; Ms Kristina Sutkutė providing training in terms of EAIE Academy in November 2021) on topics of relevance to us as ENIC/NARIC centre.

As to cooperation with other actors on the national level, SKVC cherishes both formal and informal linkages with a number of different institutions. We have signed

memorandums of understanding and maintain regular active relations with the following organizations:

- Qualifications and Professional Education and Training Development Centre (KPMPC), which is the VET authority and the National Contact Point for the development of the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework;
- The Educational Exchanges Support Foundation (SMPF), which among other is in charge of promoting Lithuanian higher education abroad, and also of such transparency instruments as Europass, ECTS, DS labels etc;
- Lithuanian Students' Union (LSS), which unites majority of student representatives from both types of higher education institutions (colleges of higher education and universities).

These framework agreements have symbolic value, as they formalise long-standing cooperation between organizations.

While serving our mission to contribute towards quality enhancement and promote internationalisation of higher education in Lithuania, we have a tradition of organizing yearly conferences (attended by 100-150 participants) choosing a different relevant topic. As a rule, they are targeted at our key audiences – representatives of higher education institutions, students, public bodies in charge of stirring and coordination in higher education, employers. Invited speakers are not only from local stakeholders, but our partners and esteemed colleagues from abroad. The list of conferences and their short descriptions were provided above, under the profile description of SKVC.

As was presented in the typology part of this report, traditionally, our office offers annual training seminars for higher education institutions. Such seminars are good tools to share practice of assessment of qualifications and information regarding educational systems around the world, trends in academic mobility and the newest instruments for recognition of qualifications and/or period of studies, etc.

Much is being done both nationally and internationally, however, when compared to another function of SKVC – external quality assurance of higher education – there is a tendency that recognition is overshadowed by matters of quality. It is understood, that to date recognition services were mostly used by individuals and the institutional involvement and appreciation is increasing with the expansion of decentralisation of the recognition system. By comparison, the visibility of multiple external QA procedures and their consequences for the academic community and the entire education system is much greater. From 2020 onwards more attention is devoted to all types of recognition (i.e. of study periods, RPL, full qualifications) within regular external QA procedures, in line with expectations of the revised Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), namely ESG 1.4.

Additionally, it should be noted that the last recommendation of the previous review of SKVC – to transfer the responsibility for recognition of doctoral qualifications from Lithuanian Research Council – although was discussed on many occasions both with the Council and the Ministry, has not been realised still. While there is a principal agreement, changes in legislation are needed, pending.

- *In the EU-context, and as far as NARICs have competence in professional recognition matters, they cooperate with the National Coordinator and the competent authorities for the professional recognition of the regulated professions (EU Directives).*

The situation has not changed from the last external review, because SKVC as Lithuanian ENIC/NARIC does not have a specific mandate in professional recognition matters, as our competence is focused on academic recognition. Still, there is contact with the National Coordinator for professional recognition within the Ministry of Economy in terms of exchanges of information, participation in events, public consultations regarding legal matters etc.

In situations when EU citizens file cases with the SOLVIT network offices, SKVC is contact with the local office at the Ministry of Economy and Innovation in resolving cases as much as this falls within our realm of responsibility, as majority of dissatisfaction is raised about the lack of professional recognition, which is not our area. However, to the degree academic recognition may be required as a pre-requisite for proper professional recognition, we are involved as much as we can help with information provision.

Notwithstanding, three SKVC staff members are included in the following external bodies:

- Ms Giedra Katilauskienė, Head of Department of Qualification Assessment is member of Appeals Commission for Regulated Professions at the Ministry of Economy and Innovation; also member of International Study Commission at the Educational Exchanges Foundation;
  - Ms Rima Žilinskaitė, Adviser of Department of Qualification Assessment, is part of the National Board for Regulated Professional Qualifications;
  - Ms Diana Saruolienė, Credentials Evaluator, is part of the Committee on Evaluation and Recognition of Qualifications of Teachers and Learner Support Specialists.
- *ENIC/NARIC offices co-operate within the ENIC and NARIC Networks on the dissemination and use of the overarching framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area and accordingly contribute at national level to the further development and dissemination of the national qualification frameworks.*

SKVC staff members were involved at the very beginning of preparatory work towards the launch of the National Qualifications Framework (LTQF) in 2004, then consulted in the process of development of it, subsequently – in referencing against the European Qualifications Framework (concluded in 2012) with institutions primarily in charge of LTQF. Cooperation with KPMPC, responsible for development of LTQF, takes various forms, from projects to joint events, and daily consultations. Notably, after official launch of LTQF (after the referencing report was approved in 2012), the Statutes of SKVC were amended to record our responsibility for LTQF

which manifests in terms of externally assuring quality of levels 6 and 7, and also performing our functions of the information centre.

From 2010 to 2017, Mrs Aurelija Valeikienė, Head of Lithuanian ENIC/NARIC was a member of inter-institutional Central Professional Committee (CPK), composed by the Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science. CPK was the coordinating body for the strategic issues in forming the National Qualifications' Framework in Lithuania.

Most recently, SKVC provided input towards introduction and regulation of the short higher education cycle. Amendments to the Law on Higher Education and Research were made in 2018; while the description of the higher education cycles modified in October 2020.

- *ENIC/NARIC offices participate in publications, surveys, comparative studies and other research activities undertaken by the European Commission, Council of Europe, UNESCO and other international organizations.*

SKVC is consulted and provides input into various surveys, studies, and research activities by international organizations (the European Commission, Council of Europe, UNESCO, International Association of Universities, OECD, CHE etc.), also thematic queries in the mailing list of ENIC/NARIC centres, this is part of our work routines. We also regularly contribute towards drafting national chapters of questionnaires for the Bologna Process Implementation Reports.

Professionalism of SKVC staff members is valued and recognized both in country and abroad. During the last two years, SKVC staff – Ms Aurelija Valeikienė and Ms Kristina Sutkutė – were included in the consultative expert group of MICROBOL project, dealing with the novel topic of microcredentials. We had the opportunity to contribute to development of the Council recommendation on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability [COM(2021) 770 final] through projects (MICROBOL and ENIC-NARIC projects) and through a presentation at a high-level consultation to the EC. We fully support the definition of the essential elements and principles behind the microcredentials.

- *ENIC/NARIC offices develop cooperation with relevant organisations in countries in other regions of the world working in the field of recognition and promote the activities of the ENIC and NARIC Networks in countries in other regions of the world.*

Lithuania is a small, but open country, enthusiastic about cooperation with other countries – neighbouring and further away.

As a follow-up to AURBELL project, SKVC staff contributed towards drafting the regional tripartite agreement among Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania on the automatic academic recognition of access and higher education qualifications (signed on 8<sup>th</sup> of June 18 in Vilnius, entered into force on 7<sup>th</sup> of January 2019). Noteworthy, on a regional level, there is a tradition of annual meetings with the Estonian and Latvian ENIC/NARIC centres since 2004, each year in a different country. We hosted in



Lithuania the events in 2017 (a physical meeting) and 2020 (online). The purposes of such meetings remain constant: to consolidate the cooperation of the three Baltic countries in the area of qualifications evaluation, exchange information about changes in our respective education systems, develop a common position and contribute to the improvement of ENIC/NARIC activities at the international level. As a rule, the agenda of such meetings consists of discussions of relevant issues relating to the evaluation and recognition of qualifications, also planning common activities and discussing their outcomes. Due to disruption in work and international travel caused by Covid-19 pandemic, in 2021 the Baltic annual meeting was cancelled.

Aside projects, there is a tradition of study visits organized to various ENIC/NARIC centres. Most recently, several SKVC staff members visited France (NARIC, 2018), Sweden (NARIC, 2019), Norway (NOKUT, March 2020). Study visits were organized with the purpose of gathering information on country education systems, methodology for academic recognition of VET qualifications, and development of IT tools. SKVC staff contributed to the peer review of Canadian ENIC (CICIC) in 2016, and Polish ENIC/NARIC centre (NAWA), done in December 2019. SKVC also accepts visits from other ENIC/NARIC centres, from such recent examples would be an online visit of Georgian colleagues from the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement could be mentioned (September 2020).

Starting early 2019, SKVC staff members (Ms. Aurelija Valeikienė, Ms Kristina Sutkutė, Ms Ieva Vaiciukevičienė) provided input as experts to the technical consultations regarding conclusion of the automatic recognition treaty between the six Baltic and Benelux countries. The joint work over several years resulted in the first inter-regional automatic recognition treaty signed; the process completed by exchange of written letters on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2021 and a celebratory launch event of this multilateral treaty held in Brussels on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2021. Currently, national procedures for ratification are ongoing; also internal consultation regarding procedure of admission of other eligible countries, after which this treaty will be open to other EHEA countries, satisfying the appropriate criteria, take place.

SKVC is actively involved in the ASEM working groups. Representatives of SKVC are participating in the working groups on recognition and credit transfer mechanisms.

SKVC, represented by Ms Kristina Sutkutė participated in the deliberations of the UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications for Higher Education which was adopted at the 40th Session of the UNESCO General Conference in Paris on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2019. The Global Convention is the first universally binding United Nations agreement in the field of higher education. It facilitates academic mobility between regions of the world and sets out universal principles for improving the recognition of qualifications. The Global Convention will complement the five existing UNESCO regional conventions on the recognition of higher education qualifications and provide a framework for the fair, transparent and non-discriminatory recognition of higher education qualifications worldwide. The Lithuanian Parliament has ratified the Global Recognition Convention and the President has signed the relevant law No. XIV-593 on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2021; the original document was received and registered by UNESCO on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2022. This way, Lithuania was the ninth country which acceded to the Convention. This is

an important step towards increasing student mobility worldwide and facilitating the recognition of higher education qualifications.

As already mentioned, SKVC staff contributed towards development of the European Approach for microcredentials. Ms Aurelija Valeikienė participated in terms of the the Consultation Group on Micro-credentials and was selected as a representative of recognition community to presentation the concept of microcredentials to Commissioner Mariya Gabriel on 16-17 September 2020, also in several other meetings organized by the European Commission by the means of a video conference. During the discussions, the definition of micro-credentials and the instruments ensuring their transparency were argued. In addition, challenges to the recognition and quality assurance of micro-qualifications analysed. The meetings of the advisory group were attended by representatives of the national authorities of the European Union, higher education institutions, ENIC / NARIC centers, quality agencies and international organizations, as well as individual experts. SKVC puts microcredentials into focus because it is one of the most recent priorities on the European Commission's Skills agenda, and they are also needed to be discussed from the point of view of Lithuanian national priorities for development. Recently, micro-credentials as an alternative study model have become increasingly popular. They are often seen as an opportunity to increase learning flexibility, provide alternative access to higher education, and as a way to implement the concept of lifelong learning in response of the up-skilling and re-skilling needs for competitiveness in the labour market.

Several staff members of SKVC (Ms Aurelija Valeikienė, Mr Šarūnas Šalkauskas) contributed to work of the Bologna Thematic Peer Group B on Key Commitment 2: National legislation and procedures compliant with the Lisbon Recognition Convention during the period of 2018-2020 and in the current iteration (2021-2023).

So far, SKVC staff provided input into the implementation of two EU Twinning projects, namely:

- “Support to Strengthening the Higher Education System in Azerbaijan (2018-2020), a number of international missions in which SKVC staff participated (Ms Nora Skaburskienė, Mr Almantas Šerpatauskas, Ms Aurelija Valeikienė, Ms Kristina Sutkutė) dealt with the range of topics, including quality assurance according to the ESG and recognition in line with the LRC and the subsidiary texts.
- In 2021 SKVC co-drafted the international project proposal “Further support to the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework” with the aim to assist authorities in North Macedonia. Among activities, is support towards further strengthening of both external and internal QA capacities and better alignment to expectations of the ESG, improvement of implementation of LRC principles both in legislation and practices of the Ministry of Education, which hosts the ENIC/NARIC office. Several staff members (Mr Almantas Šerpatauskas, Ms Aurelija Valeikienė, Ms Ieva Vaiciukevičienė, Ms Kristina Sutkutė, Ms Rasa Penkauskienė) committed to implementation of various activities which include desk research, training, hosting of visitors etc. to be implemented till end of 2023.

- *They refer to the membership of the ENIC and NARIC Networks in all publications and correspondence and on web sites and make appropriate use of its logo.*

Logos and active links to all networks, where SKVC is member, including ENIC and NARIC, are available from the front page of our website [www.skvc.lt](http://www.skvc.lt) both in Lithuanian and English. There is a standard electronic signature created for all employees (in EN and LT), providing reference to SKVC as ENIC/NARIC centre and our membership in networks. References to memberships is also given in relevant publications, e.g. publications with translations of the main legislation (the LRC text and its explanatory memorandum) and subsidiary texts (recommendations by LRC Committee), also promotional leaflets, and most recently commissioned informative cartoons.

### 3. SWOT Analysis

This chapter describes the outcomes of the Strength Weakness Opportunity and Threat (SWOT) analysis of our centre. The chapter consists of three parts:

1. Selection of standards that are a priority for my centre
2. SWOT analysis
3. Identification of action points

#### 3.1. Priorities of SKVC

The following table describes the priorities identified by our centre, based on the evaluation and analysis of compliance with the standards as described in the previous chapter.

Priority Standards for my centre		
Standard Number	Standard Name	Motivation why this standard is a priority for your centre
Standard 5	Transparency and Information Provision	This is the standard in which we identify not full, but substantial compliance. Further development of information system EPE is already under way to improve user friendliness, also functionality for institutions.
Standard 6	(Inter)national Cooperation and Presentation	The recommendation of the previous review of SKVC on allocating responsibility for the recognition of Doctorate degrees with the aim of achieving higher quality of work and for the benefit of individuals as well as institutions, has not been implemented yet. We also experience insufficient funding for activities from the state budget. Overall, there is a feeling among staff that SKVC's role as an ENIC/NARIC among national stakeholders is less appreciated of compared with other function (external QA of higher education), though a lot of useful work is being done and still planned – the provision of services, development of new initiatives, and dissemination of effective LRC-compliant practices.

## 3.2. Format SWOT analysis

The following table includes the SWOT analysis of SKVC as academic information and recognition centre:

PART 1		PART 2						
S T A N D A R D	C O M P L I A N C E *	Priority <sup>1</sup> (tick box )		Internal causes <sup>2</sup>		External causes <sup>3</sup>		Action points <sup>3</sup>
		High	Low	Helpful (Strengths)	Harmful (Weaknesses)	Helpful (Opportunities)	Harmful (Threats)	
1	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	-	-	-	-
2	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	-	-	-	-
3	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	-	-	-	-
4	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	-	-	-	-	-
5	3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Experience with IT development and implementation projects Clearly defined	Lack of professional IT competency in house The application portal is unstable and requires	SKVC is envisioned as a competent body to provide academic recognition of all types and levels of formal	The Lithuanian recognition framework does not encompass all qualification types	To conclude work on the development of evaluation methodology and IT tools for academic recognition of VET

				<p>administrative procedure Information on applications is provided to applicants in real time via our application portal</p>	<p>improvement in terms of user-friendliness Large number of applications for recognition of qualifications outside of the mandate of SKVC Our application portal does not take into account automatic recognition</p>	<p>qualifications</p>	<p>Expiring EU projects which were used for IT development and support</p>	<p>qualifications To conclude development of our IT system to increase user-friendliness, and implement automatic recognition To develop the potential for institutional users of IT system for recognition To ensure the administrative and technical maintenance and support of the IT tools</p>
6	4	■	□	<p>Experienced staff able to act as experts on the national and international level</p> <p>Active participation in ENIC/NARIC network, international WGs, projects to develop new tools and share good practices</p> <p>Close cooperation with HEI's in ensuring compliance with LRC, EAR Manual</p> <p>Trusted as a competence centre to provide expert advice on the development of the education system, recognition, etc.</p>	<p>Tried-and-true methods and avenues of communication with stakeholders are not bringing expected results</p> <p>Lack of human capacity to cover it all, staff turnover may threaten expert role and everyday activities</p> <p>Difficulties in finding co-financing for international activities</p> <p>Not always able to meet the needs of HEI's in terms of the speed of information provision and availability of information</p>	<p>Calls to initiate international projects</p> <p>Support of the Ministry of Education, Research and Sports for ENIC/NARIC activities</p>	<p>Insufficient funding for activities from the state budget Lack of appreciation of SKVC's role as an ENIC/NARIC among national stakeholders compared with other functions (QA)</p>	<p>Implementation of projects, which provide alternative sources of financing</p> <p>To be more active in including ENIC/NARIC issues as a constant agenda item in SKVC's Council meetings, Ministry meetings</p> <p>To focus on updating tools for HEI's</p> <p>Provide a platform for the exchange of experience among HEI's to advance fair recognition</p> <p>To intensify dialogue with the Ministry regarding various issues of recognition and development of the national HE system; to increase the dissemination of the results of international activities at the national level</p>

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\* (1) no compliance, (2) partial compliance, (3) substantial compliance, (4) full compliance.

<sup>1</sup> For further analysis please take into consideration only the standards with high priority.

<sup>2</sup> Please base on your answers given in part 1: name the reasons for your compliance or noncompliance with the standards and decide which of them are beneficial, and which are not.

<sup>3</sup> Please indicate how to convert your weaknesses into strengths, and threats into opportunities. This will give you your list of actions to achieve compliance.

### 3.3. List action points

1. *To conclude work on the development of evaluation methodology and IT tools for academic recognition of VET qualifications. This will be done by the means of a project, implemented together with the KPMPC by end of 2022. The proposal regarding formalization of this function as part of SKVC portfolio is submitted in the draft text for the revisions of the Resolution of the Government No. 212 of 29 February 2012.*
2. *To conclude development of our IT system to increase user-friendliness, and implement automatic recognition. This will be done by the means of the KAPRIS-2 project, by end of 2022.*
3. *To develop the potential for institutional users of IT system for recognition. Registered representatives of HEIs will have a module for an exchange of requests for information and received recommendations via the dedicated space within the recognition portal (EPE).*
4. *To ensure the administrative and technical maintenance and support of the IT tools. These questions are continuously discussed together with the Council of SKVC and the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport as founder of SKVC, in the package of all activities and functions to be performed, while developing the new medium-term Strategic Plan of SKVC for 2023-2026.*
5. *Implementation of projects, which provide alternative sources of financing. We plan to develop at least one new project proposal, to be submitted towards the NARIC call 2022.*
6. *To be more active in including ENIC/NARIC issues as a constant agenda item in SKVC's Council meetings and meetings at the Ministry. Regular meetings with the Ministry are planned on a monthly or bimonthly basis. Further continuous participation in informal working groups at the Ministry. To increase the dissemination of the results of international activities at the national level via newsletters of SKVC.*

7. *To focus on updating tools for HEI's. Six country education profiles will be updated in the restricted user area per year. Every year country specific requirements for documentation will be reviewed, also general recommendations for HEIs regarding recognition of qualifications. Specific attention will be devoted to recognition of short higher education cycle by end of 2022.*
8. *Provide a platform for the exchange of experience among HEI's to advance fair recognition. Every year two events on selected pertinent issues will be organized.*



## 4. List of annexes

### Annexes to Standard 1: Procedures, Criteria and Quality Assurance

- *Annex 1.1. Print out of information on our office criteria and procedure from our website (Annex\_1\_1\_Criteria\_and\_procedure)*
- *Annex 1.2. Print out of our office general documentation requirements from our website (Annex\_1\_2\_General\_documentation\_requirements)*
- *Annex 1.3. Illustration of the use of default recognition decisions in EPE (Annex\_1\_3\_Default\_decisions\_EPE)*

### Annex to Standard 2: Applicant-centred Recognition

- *Annex 2. Recognition decision, annex to decision and explanation in English. The decision explains the identified substantial difference, the annex provides additional information on our system of education and legal basis for the decision and the explanatory notes summarises the information for the applicant.*

### Annexes to Standard 3: Quality, Legitimacy and Authenticity

- *Annex 3.1. The joint degree International Master of Science in Marine Biological Resources awarded by 9 universities from 7 European countries in 2020 (Annex\_3\_Quality\_Legitimacy\_and\_Authenticity).*
- *Annex 3.2. The Bachelor of Arts in Integrated Development Studies (Development Communication Option) degree awarded by the University for Development Studies from Ghana in 2012 (Annex\_3\_Quality\_Legitimacy\_and\_Authenticity).*

### Annex to Standard 4: Evaluation Tools and Resources

- *Annex 4. Examples of how our office uses national qualification frameworks, evaluates grades and acknowledges credit (Annex\_4\_NQF\_grades\_credit).*

### Annex to Standard 5: Transparency and Information Provision

- *Annex 5. A print-out of the English description of the national recognition system posted the website (Annex\_5\_Recognition\_in\_Lithuania).*