

Questions and answers – about Recommendation (SUHF REC. 2023:1) on promoting automatic mutual recognition of qualifications in higher education and upper secondary education and results of study periods abroad, done by the Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions (SUHF) General Assembly of 16 March 2023¹.

Why does SUHF do this?

The Swedish higher education institutions agree with the common principles for automatic mutual recognition (as defined in the 2018 Council Recommendation²) because it promotes mobility, quality development and internationalization in higher education.

What is required to be able to do this?

A prerequisite for the universities to be able to operationalize the common principles is trust.

Firstly, trust is required between the national systems in the different member countries, which is built on the quality assurance that works through the Bologna process, its agreements and tools (i.e. EHEA, ESG, EQAR, ECTS, etc.). The implementation of the Bologna process is fundamental to the trust between the higher education institutions, which enables automatic mutual recognition in practice.

Secondly, trust is required between the Swedish higher education institutions, which is based on long-term cooperation within the national framework according to Swedish law and regulation as well as the higher education institutions' own internal quality work (in line with the principles in QF-EHEA/ESG).

How do we do this in Sweden?

Since many years, the Swedish higher education institutions have a well-developed and in practice functioning national co-operation for admission to first- and second-cycle courses and study programmes. In this national wide collaboration, the universities follow common principles for automatic mutual recognition. Also, when it comes to credit transfer, the Swedish universities already apply these principles by the regulation that exist for exchange studies.

The Swedish higher education institutions have now written it down in the new recommendation (SUHF REC. 2023:1) on promoting automatic mutual recognition of qualifications in higher education and upper secondary education as well as results of study periods abroad.

What is the advantage of doing this way?

It is important for the higher education institutions to being in charge of this issue themselves, in order to defend the institutional autonomy and ensure basic core values of academic freedom and responsibility. When the higher education institutions themselves own this issue, they also have the opportunity to continue working with detailed recommendations in cases where they agree that is needed. All with aim to develop national coordinated, flexible, legally secure and cost-effective administrative processes.

It is also an advantage that this way of handling the issue fits within the Swedish regulatory framework for higher education and does not need additional EU legislation.

¹ SUHF REC. 2023:1 is translated to English and published at the website <https://suhf.se/publikationer/rekommendationer>.

² European Council's recommendation of 26 November 2018 on promoting automatic mutual recognition of qualifications in higher education and upper secondary education and results of study periods abroad.